Numbers Increase As We Count... a *Practice-Led* Research

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Abstract for Master

Numbers Increase As We Count... a *practice-led* research

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This thesis is a practice-led artistic research with accompanying critical self-reflection on a performative protest. *Numbers Increase As We Count…,* is based around a simple task: counting, 1, 2, 3, and so on during the entire length of the performance… This counting refers to the estimated number of victims of sex trafficking as a direct result of the invasion of Iraq: an endless performance if we were to continue the counting until we reach the actual numbers. But this is exactly the message: every second that passes brings more women into trafficking. The piece is about imperialism, war, destruction, about the way it affects women. *Numbers Increase As We Count…* was presented in many different incarnations during the last four years in Montreal, in Denmark, in Brazil, as well as in talk-performances in Italy, Vancouver, Ireland and the USA. The ever-evolving performance and the ongoing self-reflection on the creative and socio-political implications offer a dialectical process and set the stage for the emergence of the notion of "Performative Acting" as a mode of authentic engagement with the materials and the theatrical experience. Beyond its essential and timely theme, *Numbers Increase As We Count…* also tested this method of Performative Acting, offering some insights for future artistically engaged performances.

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This work has been long, and it's not even fully done yet. During the whole process that brought me from the original idea to the last dot of this thesis, many people have generously given their time, their advice, their expertise. They are too numerous for me to mention all of them. But some of them deserve a special mention.

Firstly, I want to thank Patrick Leroux, my supervisor. Patrick has been there from the very beginning and has supported me in so many ways… First by challenging my ideas, helping me redefine them and make them more relevant.

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1. Introduction. *Numbers Increase As We Count…*: a Practice-led Research

1.1. General introduction

In this first chapter, I will explain the aim of this thesis as well as the place that it occupies in the academic setting. After explaining how I see it emanating from the 'research-creation family' of academic work, I will define some core terms that occupy a special place in the thesis. I will then present the research questions that underlie this practice-based thesis; explain the aims of the thesis; and explain as well some of the aesthetic decisions I made in terms of format. The last section of this chapter offers an overview of what the reader will find in the rest of the thesis.

1.2. Situating this work in regard to academia

This thesis is the written companion to my performance *Numbers Increase As We Count...*, the performance script of which I have included for consideration (Chapter 2). In this thesis, I develop a theoretical framework that seeks to articulate both the process and intent that lies behind this performance. The focus will be a technique I call 'Performative Acting', which is the center around which the performance, and surrounding scholarship, is built: 'Performative Acting' (and what is involved in this term) is in that sense the (main) research question[1]. The performance itself is my practical answer to this question.

In that sense, this work can be categorized as a practice-research/art-research/research-creation process. This section specifies the category in which this work may be placed within the constellation of related but not identical methods and methodologies that currently exist in the

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[1] See next section for short definitions of important terms I use in this thesis.

academic world. Chapman and Sawchuk 2012 suggest that this constellation of methods share a 'family resemblance', and seek to

> integrate a creative process, experimental aesthetic component, or an artistic work as an integral part of the study. Topics are selected and investigated that could not be addressed without engaging in some form of creative practice, such as the production of a video, performance, film, sound work, blog, or multimedia text (Chapman and Sawchuk 2012: 6).

I see the combination of the performance *Numbers Increase As We Count...* and this written, self-reflective thesis as fitting into a '*practice-led* research' model. This is in contrast to the *research-creation* model more commonly found in Québec universities, where the study of the creative process has pre-eminence over the final artistic output.

Notwithstanding the difficulty of precisely define and differentiate the terms 'practice-as-research', 'practice-based research', 'practice-led research', 'research-creation' etc., my project may also be defined as 'Creation-as-Research', a term that appears in Chapman and Sawchuk 2012. They describe 'Creation-as-Research' as follows:

> This is perhaps the most complex of our categories, as well as the most controversial. "Creation-as-research" involves the elaboration of projects where creation is required in order for research to emerge. […] Research is more or less the end goal in this instance, although the "results" produced also include the creative production that is entailed, as both a tracing-out and culminating expression of the research process. […] It is a form of directed exploration through creative processes that includes experimentation, but also analysis, critique, and a profound engagement with theory and questions of method (Chapman and Sawchuk 2012: 19).

In a sense, this thesis is a personal answer to the following question: What exactly do I mean, as a performance artist developing an academic framework to articulate my artistic outputs, when I say that I not only am a performer, an artist, and a practitioner, but *also* a researcher? Brad Haseman writes that practice-led research "describes what practitioner-researchers do". The very term

> captures the nuances and subtleties of their research processes and accurately reflects the process to research funding bodies. Above all it asserts the primacy of practice and insists that because creative practice is both on-going and persistent; practitioner-researchers do not merely 'think' their way through or out of a problem, but rather they 'practice' to a resolution (Haseman 2007: 147).

Robin Nelson 2013 suggests that practice-based and practice-led artistic research opens the discussion such that there may be a wider acceptance of *Practice as Research* (PaR) as less process-driven, but nonetheless focused on both practice and knowledge production and dissemination of what that very artistic practice carries with it. "PaR involves a research project in which practice is a key method of inquiry and where, in respect of the arts, a practice [...] is submitted as substantial evidence of a research inquiry" (Nelson 2013: 8-9).

I see the present work as situated between 'practice-*based* (artistic) research' and 'practice-*led* (artistic) research'. My aim is to create a clear sense of my own emerging artistic and politically engaged theatrical practice, from conception to execution, ideation to production, as well as to create a non-complacent critical discourse. In that sense it is 'Practice-*led* research,' without neglecting the critical self-reflection. The *purpose* of the work was to develop these methods and

put them into practice. However, I also agree with Nelson's ethos that the process of discovering these methods is integral to the practice: the rehearsals were a necessary laboratory in which to consider the practice. For these reasons, I will use the term 'Practice-*led* research' for what the present work is, and keep the term 'Practice as Research' for the method I used in creating the performance (even if, as I said, a clear separation between these two endeavours cannot really be made, one feeding the other, feeding the other, and so on).

My thesis, in its conception, construction and presentation, reflect this practice-*led* orientation, placing my theatrical/performance practice at its heart, focusing on my performance *Numbers Increase as We Count...* and working outward from it. I question my creative process as a writer-director, as an immigrant to Canada from the Middle-East, and as an artist in an academic setting. This will reflect what I see as a dialectical process: from one basic theoretical and political question to practice; from this practice to new questions and reflections; from these, back to the practice; and so on. This dialectical process between questioning and practicing is an endless process, as Skains 2018 puts very accurately:

> Practice-related researchers push this examination into a more direct and intimate sphere, observing and analysing themselves as they engage in the act of creation, rather than relying solely on dissection of the art after the fact (Skains 2018: 84).

The practice gives shape to ideas, which are in turn affected by the practice: even when one works by herself, the practical results create a feedback loop. Some elements work, make us happy, are convincing, etc. while many others are in need of change, revision, or simply erasure, thus driving the practice forwards.

However, as Skains also recognizes:

> We experiment with our art in order to push boundaries, to ask questions, to learn more about our art and our role within it. This is nothing new. What emerges, then, from this methodology, is the exegesis that accompanies the creative work: that knowledge that has remained implicitly within the artist, made explicit and seated within the context of the scholarly field (Skains 2018: 86).

The key word that comes back again and again in discussions about the constellation of practice-as-research terms is 'knowledge'. When faced with a research creation project, Chapman & Sawchuk ask the following questions: "Does/will this project contribute to knowledge?". "In what way?", "What are its identifiable outcomes? (Chapman and Sawchuk 2012: 22)". Candy & Edmonds are even more forceful regarding the fundamental need of a project to generate some sort of knowledge:

> This form of research […] must also reach beyond the particular cases if it is to be perceived as contributing to knowledge in any way. That contribution is fundamental to the value placed on practitioner research by the wider community, whether academic, public or private (Candy and Edmonds 2018: 63).

Something must be communicated in an academic form that can serve as a new piece of knowledge for the community. Furthermore, as Candy says, "The crucial point is that in certain disciplines knowledge can be partly advanced by means of practice (Candy 2006: 5)". I hold that in some cases, the *only* way to advance knowledge is by means of practice: I am and have always been of the opinion that any work of art, as a practice, is a way to advance knowledge, even when the practice is not framed in an academic form with its characteristic argumentation style and demand for discussion. In this, I follow a long line of aestheticians, as Boal illustrates:

According to Aristotle, as well as Hegel or Marx, art, in any of its modes, genres, or styles, always constitutes a sensorial way of transmitting certain kinds of knowledge – subjective or objective, individual or social, particular or general, abstract or concrete, super- or infrastructural (Boal 2008 [1974]: 43).

This is the point of view of many advocates of practice-as-research, something articulated well by Nelson 2013. As Loveless 2015 points out, the real question (and debate) is: "can –or should- [artistic practices and outputs] count as research (Loveless 2015: 52)?". If we accept a positive answer to this question, then we call into question the traditional approach of the academy. I will accept in what follows Loveless' proposition that "to do research—of any kind—is not simply to ask questions, it is to tell stories-that-matter (Loveless 2015: 54)".

From research questions[2] to hypotheses; from hypotheses to practical solutions; from solutions to academic propositions: in the following pages I will tell the story of *Numbers Increase As We Count…*, a story that, I think, matters. Not only for my own maturing artistic and political discourse, but also for the audiences I reached and, most importantly, for the women to whom I pay homage in the performance.

1.3. Defining (roughly) some important terms I use in the thesis

In order to anticipate the discussions that will follow, and to provide the reader with a context, I want to offer in this section a rough definition of three core terms that will permeate this thesis:

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[2] It is important to note that the research questions (and the practical answers I gave them) informing this whole process ranged from practical, theoretical, methodological and political to what we could call 'meta-questions' about the role of the artist and in my case, the role of the *immigrant* artist in Canada. This thesis will reflect many of these different levels of questioning and reflect the way these questions were put into the practice that constituted the performance.

'Performative Acting', 'Structure' and 'Protest'. The two first terms are closely linked and concern the main object of this thesis, which is the method I call 'Performative Acting. 'Protest' is how I have, for the performance *Numbers Increase As We Count…*, created a certain type of structure for the performers to performatively act in.

Definition 1: Performative Acting

Performative Acting describes the role that is given to performers, a role that they will perform inside a structure that a dramaturge/director will create (see Definition 2 below for 'Structure'). The performers are asked to react *as themselves* within and in relation to the dramaturgical structure. The whole process that leads up to the performance –rehearsals, talks, exercises- is also part of Performative Acting in the sense that the performers are affected by this process. They cannot *actively perform* the same way at the beginning as at the end: they change(d), they learn(ed), they become/became, they find/found (Performative Acting is, as we will see, built around three keywords: 'Know', 'Find' and 'Become'). Performative Acting is centered around giving a simple and specific task to the performers which grounds their performance in the Structure.

Definition 2: Structure

A structure is a (thoughtful) dramaturgically organized dynamic flow of information that surrounds and affects the performers while they performatively act. This information can come in many different forms, e.g. video archives; audio archives; documentary material; speeches made by the director; music. The structure can be completely predefined (for the performers, that is: they know exactly what will happen and when); but it can also be left open until the performance (so that the performers are surprised by what they encounter,

the same way the audience is when they see the performance). Structure in this context includes story, narrative, plot, action, but also exposition.

The flow of information (the structure) can be linearly organized –as in a linear narrative or even a plot-, or not. The most important aspect of the Structure is that it contains material that will somehow affect how the performers are performing, and cause reactions to the information at any given moment. 'Structure' is therefore a notion that can be situated at the level of dramaturgy as well as at the level of direction. Since it is open to the dramaturge-director to envision and create the structure, I decided on a term that is as general and abstract as possible, a term that includes multiple possibilities and remains open-ended. *Numbers Increase As We Count…* uses a specific type of structure –a flow of information about the specific situation it deals with, flow that is dramaturgically facilitated/prepared- because of the nature of the material that it works with. But any dramaturge-director will have to discover for herself the type of structure that fits with the task the performative actors will execute, as well as the nature of the content the performance is dealing with.

Definition 3: Protest

When talking about *Numbers Increase As We Count…*, I will often use the term 'performance'[3]. However, as will become clear in the course of this thesis, this term is used in a broad sense. *Numbers Increase As We Count…* is firstly a *protest*, set up as or in the form of a performance., but it also *performs* the function of a protest.

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[3] The term 'performance' is used in this thesis in a non-technical and general manner. It encompasses the terms 'theatre play'; 'multidisciplinary work'; as well as more technical definitions of 'performance'. Basically: it encompasses any event that is created for an audience member.

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, 'protest' can be defined in the noun and verb form:

Protest (noun):
1: a solemn declaration of opinion and usually of dissent […] ; 2: the act of objecting or a gesture of disapproval […] *especially*: a usually organized public demonstration of disapproval; 3: a complaint, objection, or display of unwillingness usually to an idea or a course of action […]

Protest (verb):
-transitive verb 1**:** to make solemn declaration or affirmation of […]; 2**:** to execute or have executed a formal protest against (something, such as a bill or note); 3**:** to make a statement or gesture in objection to […]
-intransitive verb 1**:** to make a protestation; 2**:** to make or enter a protest.

Numbers Increase As We Count… encompasses all the nuances of 'protest' found in these definitions. While *it is* a performance, insofar as there is a very important aesthetic component and is staged for an audience, even these elements do not separate clearly the protest and performance aspects of the piece. Protests can have extremely detailed aesthetic components, and can be staged for a non-participatory audience. One of the main reasons this piece works as an act of protest is the fact that the performers, including me, are using the Performative Acting technique, meaning that they are encouraged to perform as themselves, engaging in an act of protest, the same way someone goes to a protest and participates in the contestation.

This resonates with some parts of the Merriam-Webster definitions above: in *Numbers Increase As We Count…*, we have performers publicly disapproving of a situation, solemnly putting themselves in front of people who might later join the protest. It is a transitive as well as an intransitive action: they protested while in the rehearsals when there was no audience, and protested *to/for* an audience at the moment of the performance. And the most important notion here is that they did, *we* did, all that in our own names: on stage there were no characters, only us performatively acting, thus in a way, changing the world by performing[4] –maybe not much; but I believe that even just passing information is often enough to create a potential for change.

The best analogy I can find in the history of performance is Invisible Theatre, a technique where the performers perform in the 'real world', as if they were not performers, but actual persons, for an audience that is not aware of their role as such. In *Numbers Increase As We Count…*, the invisible part, the part that was not expected by the audience is that what they were coming to see was a protest: it was a protest under the guise of a performance.

Now that I have defined these important terms, I will now turn to the research questions that guide the whole performance and thesis.

1.4. Research questions
There are two main research questions and several sub-questions that inform this practice-led research. Some are purely technical/methodological and concern creative processes and

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[4] Here, I take my inspiration from the teachings of Austin 1962's *How to Do Things with Words*.

pedagogical tools; some are political/moral/ethical; some are directed towards the performers, others towards the audience members. These questions are closely related, with each answer and decision affecting the subsequent steps.

Research questions:

1) How do we apply this technique of 'Performative Acting'? How do we create the Structure that serves as the framework for Performative Acting? How do I train the performers in this technique? How can the performers keep their spontaneity after many rehearsals?

These questions about 'Performative acting' are related to the sub-questions:

1a) How can we create a protest on stage? As I tell the audience at the end of the first section, this performance is not just a performance: it is an act of protest. Protest is the structure, with a beginning, a process, and an end, it is a form that is agreed on by the protesters, but in which they are free to express their individuality. A protest can be rehearsed or not. In all these senses, the protest is the structure inside of which Performative Acting can take place (the 'Protest-as Structure', as I will call it later);

b) How do we collaborate with artists within such a structure? The collaborative aspect of this work, between myself who structures (facilitates) the protest and the artists/performers who give themselves fully, is what makes this technique (and performance) ideal for working with many different people in an efficient way: I can go somewhere and work a couple of days with performers, show them the structure, and explain what I need or expect from them. Because of this, the performance can be as different as the artists differ from each other, while at the same time, we can consider this specific performance the 'same'

performance as the other ones.

2) How can I use a task as simple as counting as the basic idea to build everything else around? This was the first question of this creation process. To elaborate: How can I use archives of the process of creating the performance in order to show that the counting is infinite, and therefore, that each rehearsal and performance was itself a protest? Each time we have met we have counted, we have honoured these women who have been sex-trafficked, we have protested this situation, we have talked about the tragedy, and it has affected our daily lives (not only inside the rehearsal rooms, but outside of it: it has tainted our quotidian in a specific way). The separation of performance and 'rehearsal' is nonexistent for this project: we are dealing with a situation that is ongoing while we perform. Since I have filmed many of the rehearsals, these films are now materials that can be shared with an audience. In one iteration of the performance, I layered videos of rehearsals at different steps of the creative process, showing the protest we've been part of since we started working on what would become *Numbers Increase As We Count...*

1.5. Aims and objectives of the thesis

The research questions were the principal motors to create the performance. The way I have worked is dialectical: the academically informed research questions formed a creative and intellectual tension with the actual creation and staging of the performative matter. The thesis is a companion to the performance, and the performance is a companion to the research questions, a sort of embodiment. The aim of this thesis is to develop a theoretical framework around the question of what I call Performative Acting in the context of a given structure (the 'protest

setting'), all in relation to the basic task of counting. I have done this experientially in facilitating-directing *Numbers Increase as we Count....* and through a critical self-reflection.

The main practical objective has been to create a performance following the questions. This was done in the Winter of 2019 and I presented the performance from February 27 to March 2nd, 2019 at the MAI (Montreal, arts interculturels), with subsequent altered versions of the show in Europe and South America where I performed solo or with local actresses.

The objectives that I am now pursuing in the rest of the thesis are the following:

1) To reflect upon and define the technical terms to develop a theory of Performative Acting based on this experience;

2) To link this theory to already existing frameworks;

3) To reflect on the way this theorisation helped me in constructing my performance. This includes the changes I had to make in the process so the performance could be dramaturgically in line with the theory. Both the theory and performance were constructed through an interaction between practice and reflection. In that sense, the term *practice as research* is an appropriate term to describe the process of creating the performance: practice helped me think about dramaturgical questions, which in turn shaped the practise, etc. The academic work I was doing in parallel also served to shape the critical tools I used to understand this process.

1.6. On the form/aesthetics of this thesis

This thesis is a continuation of the performance. I do not intend to offer a mere comment of a practice, or an explanation. I do not want to give the impression that I am writing about something that is over, and that I can thus observe and analyze as if it were. Since the central topic, the ongoing sexual violence of women during the war, is endless, so too is the performance.

I also have decided to shape this thesis as a text that can be read alone, and that can give the reader (my audience) a sense of what audience members did, are, and will witness while experiencing my piece *Numbers Increase As We Count…*

In writing this thesis I try to apply the same method(s) applied while building/designing/imagining/writing/directing/'dramaturgizing' the performance:

1) 'Performative Acting', a description of which I have given in the practical part of this thesis: the performance itself (and therefore, this thesis as well since it is a continuation of it).;

2) The recursive use of archives to build the structure of the performance: a) texts about the reasons I do this performance and that audience members (and now readers) read aloud; b) archives of rehearsals; c) interviews and research I did to understand the situation.

The structure is an integral aspect of 'Performative Acting'. For *Numbers Increase As We Count…* I used a "Protest-as-Structure", making the performance a form of protest[5]. Together, the thesis

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[5] But it is important to note that for what I call Performative Acting, any structure could have been used: Performative Acting does not need to be taking place in a protest. In that sense, these two terms, Performative Acting

and performance can be seen as a research-based practice. In writing the thesis, I actively perform the task of delivering to the audience (the readers) an experience. I work with a lot of archival material which serves as the structure in which I try to honestly tell what I did, what I do, what I will do. This material influences the way I write, and the way I think: I do not aim for a 'cold' theoretical work that would ring differently from the 'warm' presence of performers on stage. In writing this thesis, I want to honour the women that suffer. I want to protest injustices. I want to share some knowledge with the reader. The material and archives (physical or memorial) are structuring this thesis, not the other way around.

The writing itself can therefore be labelled 'Performative Writing'. Analogous to the relationship between performative acting and structure, the thesis format as structure is in dialogue with the performative protest. Because of the way my approach engages with archives, anything that is connected in some way to the performance becomes archive, and can therefore be used as material inside future iterations of the performance: in that sense, this thesis is material for the future of the always developing performance-protest *Numbers Increase As We Count…*

1.7. Overview of the thesis
In this first chapter, I have made an overview of the aims of this thesis, and the place it occupies in the academic setting. The following chapters offer a series of entryways into the creative process, including intellectual, artistic and socio-political elements that fuelled the performance of *Numbers Increase As We Count...* Chapter 3 consists of the performance score of the presentations at the MAI. I include this score to show how I built a structure in which the simple

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and Structure-as-Protest are independents. But for *Numbers Increase As We Count…*, there are linked very tightly. In fact, the structure that is created for the Performative Acting aspect of a performance is directly responsible for the type of acting that will take place, as I hope everything that follows in this thesis will make evident.

task I gave the performers was to be executed –counting one by one, representing the number of women that have been sex-trafficked after the US-coalition's invasion of Iraq. Preceding the performance score, Chapter 2 offers a short summary of the performance, and explains some techniques I used. Chapter 4 explains how I position myself in front of the history of performance, where I come from, what I did before, what is my artistic background. It explores the dramaturgy that I see as the core of my practice, and how this is related to my facilitating role in organizing performances, something I have taken from my extensive work around Augusto Boal's *Theater of the Oppressed*. These are not merely biographical notes: I believe that they will illuminate how I arrived at specific solutions to my research questions. Chapter 5 is the connection of Performative Acting and Boal's Theater of the Oppressed, which introduces some major concerns regarding the creation of a new performance. Chapter 6, is devoted to an explanation of Performative Acting. Chapter 7 is devoted to indirect learnings garnered from working on and presenting *Numbers Increase As We Count…* including the role of immigrant artists (like me) in the Canadian theatre world; what is expected from them (from me); and what we, immigrant artists, should do about that. Chapter 8 is a general conclusion including some strengths but also weaknesses, and from there, suggestions for future research.

2. The performance *Numbers Increase As We Count…*: how to read the performance score

2.1. Introduction

This short chapter is a guide to the performance score (as presented in the next chapter). I offer a short summary and present techniques that were used during the performance. I want to highlight the important components of *Numbers Increase As We Count…,* that will be discussed in the chapters following the performance score. Finally, I offer a brief history of the different incarnations of the performance to show how it has evolved according to its reception thus far.

2.2. Short summary of Numbers Increase As We Count…[6]

Numbers Increase As We Count…, is based around the simple task of counting. 1. 2. 3…, etc. This counting refers to the estimated number of victims of sex trafficking as a direct result of the invasion of Iraq: an endless performance if we were to continue counting until we reach the actual numbers. But this is exactly the message: every second that passes brings more women into trafficking.

The piece is about imperialism, war, and destruction, and the way women are affected by such. It touches on questions of why people flee their countries and seek refuge in places, like Canada my place of residence for the past 6 years, countries that are directly responsible for what is happening in the so-called 'Middle East'[7].

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[6] This summary refers to the performance of *Numbers Increase As We Count…* as presented at the MAI (February 27-March 2nd 2019). Unless I specify that I speak about another version of the performance, this will be the performance that will be discussed when I use the title *Numbers Increase As We Count…*

[7] About Canada's imperialist role and strategies, see e.g. Engler 2005, 2009, 2010, 2012a, 2012b, 2015, 2019, 2020; Sayle 2015; Barnes 2020).

The performance *Numbers Increase As We Count…*, is built in three parts:

1) The first part, taking place in the lobby of the MAI (Montréal, arts interculturels), was interactive. I had the audience read some of my texts in English or in French (their choice) while I simultaneously translated these words to my mother tongue, Turkish, thus creating a sense of strangeness in the audience as well as an intimate familiarity with my own experience. Those texts highlighted the reasons for doing this performance, and gave some background facts. I then invited audience members to follow me to the main stage, where the counting began. This counting served as the 'structure' with its flow of information and created space for the Performative Acting.

2) The second part was the performance proper. It involved counting by two performers; video projections; complex music and light installations; interviews with Yanar Mohammed, an activist working in womens shelters in Iraq; interviews with artists from different artistic backgrounds; and interactive sections with the audience members reading reports. At the end of this part, myself and the two performers left the stage and went back to the lobby. The audience followed and were brought to the video installation;

3) The third part consisted of the video installation: three screens next to each other, two showing the performances of nineteen women artists counting while practicing their art; and the one in the middle devoted to them talking about how it felt to count.

2.3. Techniques used in the performance
In this performance I explored many techniques to carry this heavy message I wanted to convey:

1) Counting: as an unending, obsessive litany, represents the infinite nature of war and its victims, specifically here, the continually growing number of women that are being trafficked in the world;

2) Physical movement: based on documentary images/archives of women in war;

3a) Testimonials: both mine, as a new immigrant who left a country by free choice while knowing the deep effects of colonization and of the geopolitical games the super powers are playing and how it affects the region; and others, who escaped their country out of necessity.

3b) Testimonials of the performers who became providers of Source-Material: they also are originally from the region; testimonials related to the process of working on this topic, about this region and as women talking about the suffering of women;

4) Immersive/interactive performance: I ask the audience to read some of my testimonials through a microphone, while I translate what they read into my own language, Turkish. The effect created by having them hearing themselves in speakers creates a very alienating effect: it is 'my' voice that speaks the words of someone else; but I still hear myself as an 'other'. The weight and the urgency of what the "audience" says is thus emphasized and 'amplified';

5) Using my own language- one which the majority of my Canadian audience did not understand- alienated the audience so that they may understand that it is happening elsewhere (creating a distance), but also as a way to make them also remember that it *is* happening. To further solidify this, I asked the audience members to read through a microphone texts I wrote about why I am doing this performance, and about facts regarding the violence. These texts were in English and French and I was translating simultaneously in Turkish;

6) Archiving the rehearsals and workshops in video format. I then use this material in multiple layers in the performance, including projection of the video into the performance space. This serves to illustrate that we are counting and thinking about these women in the past, but also now, in front of you, and unfortunately, probably the future as well. Since the performers interact with images of themselves counting, it is a reminder of the repetitive nature of the situation: the multiplicity of women's bodies being used and discarded in the name of war and the patriarchy. However, it also calls into the spotlight an aspect of performative acting since the audience gets a glimpse into the process and how it has affected these women-performers.

7) Using Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed both as a dramaturgical tool to expose lived oppression, as well as for its emphasis on Image Theatre. Boal shows the importance of the body as the primary symbol of embodied oppression. In all his work, but especially in *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (Boal 2005), he argues that the person embodies oppression, while the mind does not necessarily understand the source(s) of said oppression: the body of the Oppressed is, so to speak, an oppressed body, with all the reflexes that it acquired in the long years of 'serving' the oppressed person in the oppressed situation (therefore serving the Oppressor). One of the most freeing thing a person can do is to free the body. Boal's physical exercises are meant to help the Oppressed in doing so. From there the mind can start to sense a beginning of freedom;

8) Using my voice to consistently question the performers as to why they are counting, and what they are doing onstage. As such, I place myself as the creator and director of the project directly into the performance, and the performance repeatedly refers to itself as the numbers increase;

9) Creating a video installation from performances with twenty collaborating women artists. They were all practicing their art while counting. Excerpts of these videos were shown on two screens.

On a third screen, in the middle, these same women talked about what it felt to count.

2.4. Ethical notes

Since I am working with real people, in both the audience and performers, I must address some ethical questions concerning the material presented in *Numbers Increase As We Count…*, and the emotional safety of those affected. I got a Certificate of Ethical Acceptability from the College of Ethics Reviewers (CER) for the tasks I gave the participants, and had the participants sign consent forms. Before starting the process, I explained to them what themes and material were going to be approached. Many of the performers had already seen the solo version of the performance or heard about it before joining in, and even asked me to be part of it somehow. As for the audience members, it was a public performance. In the first part, while still in the lobby, I explained the topics treated in the piece (see First Part in the performance score). I made eye contact with them and had a 'conversation' with them. I ask: "Can you read that for me?" Some of them did not want to read, and I pass to the next audience member. Then I invite them to join us in the main room. They know what they are going to witness and experience. They are free to join or leave. The reviews in the media are another way to confirm that it was not a threatening experience: even if most of them note the intensity of the performance, none of them raised concern about the emotional safety of the audience members. Furthermore, the promotional material made it explicit that they were not going to see a light piece of work: the topic was clear (women trafficking, Iraq, war, invasion, etc.) and a suggested age group (16+) was explicit.

2.5. The history of *Numbers Increase As We Count…* through its different incarnations

Numbers Increase As We Count… started, as I tell the audience at the beginning of the performance, with a simple report on sex trafficking in Iraq that I read while still in Turkey. I wanted to address this situation. The idea of counting came to me.

For some time, I carried this idea, waiting for the right moment and conditions to appear. In 2017, I took a workshop about very short performances with Sherry Yoon from Boca del Lupo. There, we worked on the idea of counting, and I came up with a very short solo performance involving recordings of counting and the audience reading my short explanatory texts. It was very well received by the other participants in the workshop, and I quickly understood that incorporating these readings in the performance (my voice, as the director-dramaturge-facilitator), and the first interactive and introductory part, would make the performance much stronger than a more traditional performative approach could.

I began seriously working on the process of Performative Acting, the counting proper, with Itır Arditi and Burcu Emeç. At the beginning, I did not intend to put myself inside the performance. In 2018, I then presented a reworked version of my work from Sherry Yoon's workshop as a 20-minute performance at the *Revolution They Wrote* feminist festival. There, audience members (mainly women) approached me, asking me how they could participate and add their voices to the 'protest'. At that time, the idea of this performance as protest was not yet clear. I knew I was protesting somehow, but it remained a normal part of my artistic output, something that had always been present in my artistic history. As these women joined, I was reminded of how protests work: they begin with a small number of people; by word of mouth, the protest grows and gains traction. Sometimes, only one person openly speaking about a situation is needed to catalyze the whole process.

Later that year, I participated in a Research-Creation seminar with Patrick Leroux, centered in circus practices. During this short period, we had to develop a piece. I presented a new version of

the interactive part of *Numbers Increase As We Count…*, but in this iteration I added one live circus practitioner for the counting. I asked the Colombian circus artist Agata Quintero Villegas to perform a physical task of her choosing while counting. I asked her to performatively act, and allow herself to react to the concurrent performance of the audience members reading my texts while I simultaneously translated them. I recorded this performance so that I could later watch her reaction and how it blended with her performative acting performance. At the same time, three videos of other circus artists –Morgan Anderson, Zita Nyarady, and Valentine Remels-, counting while practicing their art, where screened. This sparked the idea of how to incorporate the women who approached me to be involved. I asked them to performatively act while practicing their art (or any other chosen task), film them, and include that in the production at the MAI. I ended up working with nineteen artists for this (see the list in the performance score).

This led to the performances at the MAI (Montréal, arts interculturels) in February-March 2019. All the described elements were integrated: the first interactive part with the audience; the Performative Acting with the performers on stage, and with other performers in the video archives at the end of the show. I will not further comment on these performances, since the reader will find all the details in the next chapter (the Performance Score).

I then presented a similar version of the performance at the Odin Theatre, Denmark. The German theatre artist Marianne Klausen performatively acted the counting while I translated my texts, read by the audience members, into Turkish. Organizers of the O'Levante Festival were present and found the performance quite evocative so they invited me to present the full work at their festival in Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

This last version of the performance was given as a solo performance: with me, in front of the audience, performatively acting an adaptation of the MAI performance, surrounded with the different archives as the structure. The decision to make it a solo performance was, in part, due to circumstances outside of my control: I was supposed to work with a Brazilian theatre artist on the tasks, so that she performatively acts with me on stage. In the end, she was not able to come to Belo Horizonte. I turned this constraint into an opportunity: in having to carry everything by myself in front of the audience, I learned many things about Performative Acting.

I had a line-up of other festival presentations and adaptations of *Numbers Increase As We Count…*, but could not due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Now it is time to offer the performance score to my audience. This is an offering of the Structure of this version of the performance –the structure in which the performers performatively acted during the four evenings at the MAI (something that unfortunately, cannot be put on paper).

3. Performance Score for *Numbers Increase As We Count…* As presented at the MAI (Montréal, arts interculturels) from February 27-March 2nd 2019

Figure 1: Poster for *Numbers Increase As We Count…* Photo: Cédric Laurenty.

TEAM

Creator / Director:	Ülfet Sevdi
Live Performers:	Itır Artidi, Burcu Emeç, Ülfet Sevdi
Performers in Video (3rd Part)	Ines Adan, Morgan Anderson, Sheena Bernett, Lesley Bramhill, Rougui Diop, Heather Eaton, Claudia Funchal, Tesha Goodary, Dengbej Halide, Madeline Hoak, Nairi Khandjian, Diyar Mayil, Zita Nyarady, Agata Quintero Villegas, Avery Reid, Valentine Remels, Christine Royer, Ayam Sabah, Kristina Troske
Dramaturgical Consultation:	Emma Tibaldo, Sherry Yoon, Louis Patrick Leroux
Composer / Sound Designer / Live Musician:	Nicolas Royer-Artuso
Lighting Designer / Technical Director:	Michael Tonus
Video Designer:	Tori Morrison, Nicolas Royer-Artuso
Production Assistant:	Deniz Başar
Translations:	Nicolas Royer-Artuso
Public Relations:	Alex Nitsiou

Presented in English, French and Turkish.

FIRST PART: Interactive part with the audience

(In the lobby. Audience members are waiting for the performance to start. The Audience members are asked to come to the front by the Director-Performer (Ülfet Sevdi). She asks them to form a semi-circle. In the hands of the Director-Performer, there are pieces of papers. The Director-Performer takes a microphone and goes to the right of the Audience members' line. She gives the microphone to the last Audience member on the right and looks at all the Audience members. She gives the first piece of paper to the last Audience member in the semi-circle. Eye contact is very important.)

Director-Performer

-Can you read it for me?

Figure 2. Ülfet Sevdi. ***Numbers Increase As We Count…* 2019. Photo: Cédric Laurenty.**

(The Audience members are now Audience-Performers. The first Audience-Performer reads the testimonies of the Director-Performer.)

Audience-Performer 1

-One of the questions I always asked myself is the following: When men die or are wounded during a war, they reach the status of heroes. But what about women?

(At the same time as the Audience-Performer reads the text, the Director-Performer translates the same text in her native language, Turkish. During this whole interaction between the

Audience- Performers and the Director-Performer (around 20 minutes), on the right of the Audience- Performers the other two performers start the counting. The counting never stops.)

Director-Performer

-Kendime her zaman sorduğum sorulardan biri; erkekler savaşta öldüklerinde yada yaralandıklarında büyük bir onurla adlandırılırlar, peki kadınlara ne olur?

(The Audience-Performer and the Director-Performer end the reading. The Audience-Performer wants to give back the piece of paper she read back to the Director-Performer.)

Director-Performer

-It's yours!

(The Director-Performer takes the microphone from the first Audience-Performer and gives it to the second Audience-Performer. The same scenario takes place again.)

Audience-Performer 2

-Many years ago, after the 'end' of the Iraq-USA war, I learned about the kidnapping of women by sex traffickers. Nobody hears their voices. When I started working on this project I found out that - according to a dated report - 4000 women were reported kidnaped in the North of Iraq and nothing further was known about them. But no news talked about that.

Director-Performer

-Yıllar önce Irak-Amerika savaşından sonra sex-trafiği için kaçırılan kadınları öğrendim. Kimse seslerini duymuyor, bazı raporların içinde numaraydılar sadece. Çok eski bir rapora göre sadece

Kuzey Irak'ta 4000 kadın kaçırılmış ve hiç bir haber alınmıyordu.

Audience-Performer 3

-Even if people have heard about the situation, nobody has been searching for them, or trying to rescue them. Virgins are sold at high prices, then start working in brothels. *Forced* into prostitution. They are just called 'Prostitutes', reported as numbers. In a 'Normalizing' way. And this is happening right now.

Director-Performer

-Haber alınanları da kimse arayıp sormuyor, kurtarmaya çalışmıyordu. Bakireler yüksek fiyata satılıyor sonra da genel evlerde çalışmaya başlıyorlardı. Birleşmiş milletler onlara savaş oruspuları adını koymuştu.

Audience-Performer 4

-Years later, their number have reached the hundred thousands. And thousands of others are at risk. The United Nations refer to them as 'War Prostitute".

Director-Performer

-Aradan geçen yıllar içinde kaçırılan ve trafiğe sokulan kadınların sayısı arttı, şimdilerde yüzbinleri bulan rakamlara ulaştı. Ne yazık ki yüzbinlerce kadın hala tehlike altında.

Audience-Performer 5

-I wonder about the ones that took refuge in Europe. The ones that left their homes, their countries. How many of them work in the brothels of Europe? Many young girls and women from refugee camps entered the sex trade because of a lack of money, or of ways to sustain themselves, or their family... Refugees.

Director-Performer

-Şimdiler de asıl merak ettiğim Avrupa'ya göç eden, evlerinden, yurtlarından ayrılmak zorunda kalan kadınların ne kadarı Avrupa genel evlerinde çalışıyor. Bir çok kız çocuğu ve kadın parasızlıktan kamplarda bu trafiğin içine girmiş durumdalar.

Audience-Performer 6

-Many war heroes have their names somewhere in television programs, news, newspapers. Medals are given to them for their courage. Their families are highly respected. Nobody talks about dead women. They do not exist.

Director-Performer

-Bir çok savaş kahramanın adı televizyonda ve gazetelerde yer alır. Madalyalar verilir, ölenlerin aileleri onurlandırılır ama savaşta ölen kadınlardan kimse bahsetmez. Yoklar ve sanki hiç olmamışlar.

Audience-Performer 7

-I left Turkey with many Syrian and Iraqi refugees in the streets. I came here... There, in the streets, every day, I used to pass by them in the parks, on the corner of apartment buildings. I would see them there, lying on the ground, waiting for a sandwich or a piece of bread. I witnessed a lot of young girls begging for money all day long.

Director-Performer

-Türkiye'den bir çok Iraklı ve Suriyeli göçmeni sokaklarda bırakıp geldim. Öylece yanlarından geçiyordum. Parklarda, apartman köşelerinde yatıyorlar, bir ekmek, bir sandviç bekliyorlardı bütün gün. Bir çok küçük kızın bütün gün dilendiğine şahit oldum.

Audience-Performer 8

-One day, I was eating falafel with a friend. A young blond girl came to us, twelve or thirteen years old. She asked for just a bit of what we were eating. I told her to sit and that I would offer her a sandwich. We were not speaking the same language. We looked at each other. We understood each other. She waited in silence for the food to come. When the sandwich came, she was ready to go with it. I told her to sit, that she didn't need to go. She wanted to. When I asked her why, with her few Turkish words, she explained that her parents were waiting for her. She was not searching for food only for herself: she had brothers and sisters, and a family. It was not money that they wanted: they just wanted food.

Director-Performer

-Bir gün arkadaşımla birlikte güneşli bir günde dışarda oturmuş falafel yiyorduk. Küçük sarışın bir kız geldi yanımıza, on iki on üç yaşlarında. Yediğimizden biraz istedi. Ben, ona da ısmarlamak için oturmasını söyledim... Aynı dili konuşmuyorduk, bakıştık. Anlaştık. Sessizce bekledi yemeğin gelmesini. On-on beş dakika sonra önüne konan falafel sandviçi aldı, gidecek. Ben otur ye, gitmene gerek yok dedim. Gitmek istedi. Neden diye sorduğumda bir iki kelime olan Türkçe'siyle anne babasının beklediğini söyleyip gitti. Açlığı halinden, gözlerinden anlaşılıyordu oysa. Sadece kendisi için dilenmiyordu, ailesi vardı. İstedikleri para değil, yemekti.

Audience-Performer 9

-Food stays in your throat on a daily basis: How can I swallow that food after witnessing that?

Director-Performer

-Gündelik hayatta yemekler boğazıma diziliyor böyle. Nasıl yutacağım ise bana kalmış

Audience-Performer 10

-Being in Montreal does not keep this suffering far away from me, does not protect me from

knowing it. It is something that even in the days of happiness, can and does hurt like a needle. As a woman I have a responsibility, and I cannot forget.

Director-Performer

-Şimdi Montreal de olmam yaşanan bu acılardan uzak da tutmuyor beni. Her bir refah, mutluluk üzerinde oturduğum bir iğne gibi canımı acıtıyor, rahatsız ediyor. Bir kadın olarak sorumluluğum var.

Audience-Performer 11

-Last year, I witnessed from afar a conversation in a friend's meeting. I could not believe my ears. Two people were talking about the 'Middle East' and about war. A tall white middle aged Canadian man; he said that 'Middle Easterners' were enjoying killing each other, and he was trying to prove what he was claiming.

Director-Performer

-Geçen sene bir arkadaş toplantısında uzaktan bir sohbetin tanığı oldum. Kulaklarım inanamadı duyduklarına. İki kişi 'Ortadoğu' ve savaş hakkında konuşuyorlardı. Uzun boylu orta yaş üstü beyaz Kanadalı erkek, 'Ortadoğuluların' birbirlerini öldürmekten zevk aldıklarını söylüyor ve iddia ettiği şeyi kanıtlamaya çalışıyordu.

Audience-Performer 12

-I also was a 'Middle Easterner'. Do we really enjoy killing each other? Who are we? Who are the 'Middle Easterners' he was talking about? Which kind of species was he, so distant from us? Where did he think he was from! I was angry. War is a huge dirty lie. From a distance, this lie is another big lie reproduced again by some. I live in one of the most sheltered countries in the world. Huge beliefs are built on lies.

Director-Performer

-Ben de 'Ortadoğulu' idim. Biz birbirimizi öldürmekten zevk mi alıyorduk. Kimdik biz? Kimdi 'Orta Doğulular'? Kendisi, biz 'Orta Doğulu' insanlardan ne kadar uzak bir türdü? Tepeden aşağı sinir kesildim, öfke oldum. Savaş koca kirli bir yalandır. Uzaktan bu yalan, bazılarının yeniden ürettiği başka büyük bir yalan oluveriyor birden. Yalanlar üzerine kocaman inançlar inşa ediliyor.

Audience-Performer 13

-The war is not just men who kill each other. There are women in war. Kidnapped, unprotected, raped, sold. Trying to come to Europe with a lot of hope, sold into the brothels of Europe.

Director-Performer

-Kadınlar vardır savaşta. Kaçırılan, yerlerinden edilen, korunmasız, tecavüz edilen, satılan. Yeni bir umutla Avrupa'ya gitmeye çalışan, ama Avrupa genel evlerine satılan.

Audience-Performer 14

-When I was working on this project, the United Nations was what made me angry the most. Because according to them the women who were raped, kidnapped, sold and forced to work in the sex business were 'war prostitutes'. The sex trade of women was not treated as a war crime. Even worse: the soldiers had permission to go to these brothels; some were even specifically designed for them. In these houses, all sorts of torture were committed against these women; none of them were protected. In Baghdad, there were brothels only reserved for American soldiers. After two American soldiers were kidnaped and killed in 2009 in one of those brothels, the soldiers were forbidden to go to these brothels by the army. Therefore the face of the sex trade changed: these women started to be smuggled illegally into the army camp.

Director-Performer

-Bu proje için araştırma yaparken en büyük kızgınlığım Birleşmiş Milletlere oldu. Onlar için kaçırılan, tecavüz edilen, zorla evlerde çalıştırılan kadınlar "savaş oruspusuydu". Kadın ticaretini bir savaş suçu olarak saymıyor ve hatta askerler için olan evlere izin veriyorlardı. Bu evlerde kadınlara türlü işkenceler yapılmasına rağmen hiç biri koruma altına alınmıyorlar. Bağdat'ta sadece Amerikan askerleri için açık bulunan evler vardı. 2009'da iki Amerikan askerinin kaçırılıp öldürülmesinden sonra, şehir içinde bulunan genel evlere askerlerin gitmesi yasaklandı ve böylece bu pis ticaret yasadışı bir biçimde askeri üstlerin içine taşındı.

Audience-Performer 15

-The women that suffered from their condition have almost no shelter to go to. The shelters that exist are not enough to provide these women with a possibility of being protected from violence and to start a new life. Even worse: the shelters built by feminist organizations like OWFI are considered illegal.

Director-Performer

-Bu evlerden zarar gören kadınların gidebilecekleri sığınma evi yok denecek kadar az. Var olan siginma evlerinin kosullari kadinlari siddetten koruyup yeni bir yasam vermekte yetersiz kaliyor. Hatta OWFI gibi feminist kurulusun sahip oldugu siginaklar yasadisi sayiliyor.

Audience-Performer 16

-There is another big tragedy in Iraq. There are lots of brothels in the city of Baghdad. The news and photos that are coming out right now are about the massacres of women in these houses. Dozens of dead female bodies covered in blood in bathrooms. A room full of murdered, weapon-sculpted bodies. They are killed because they are too many.

Director-Performer

-Irakta yaşanan bütün bu trajedinin üstüne bu günlerde daha büyük başka bir acı yaşanmakta. Bağdat şehrinde bir sürü genel ev bulunmakta. Şimdilerde gelen haberler ve fotoğraflar bu evlerdeki kadınların toplu katliamıyla ilgili. Banyoya kapatılmış onlarca ölü kadın bedeni. Bir evin salonu dolusu öldürülmüş, silahla taranmış bedenler.

Audience-Performer 17

-The biggest fear in Turkey right now is that it would become like Afghanistan, like Iraq, like Syria; that same suffering will arrive. It is a fear that comes as a panic from time to time. I have a family in Turkey, friends, nephews. If needed, I would go back, and protect them. I could fight; at least, these are the kind of thoughts that come to my mind.

Director-Performer

-Türkiye'deki en büyük korku Afganistan, Irak, Suriye'de yaşanan acıların benzerinin Türkiye'de yaşanması. Bu beni de ara ara endişelendiren bir korku. Ailem, kardeşlerim, yeğenlerim var. Onlar için bazen büyüyen, bazen artan ve azalan korkularım var. Gerekirse geri dönüp, onları korumak için savaşmayı düşünen ağlamaklı fikirlerim.

Audience-Performer 18

-Knowing is the biggest responsibility. To see and to tell what you've seen. Life is passing in front of me, with its oppression and massacres. We read history books taking many lessons from them. We cannot believe what our ancestors have done, and blame them for many things. It is as if our own lives are far from suffering, and as if we are not responsible for current massacres and tragedies.

Director-Performer

-Bilmek büyük bir yük. Görmek, gözlerini kaçırmadan bakmak huzursuzluğa atılmış büyük bir

adım. Hayat önümden geçip gidiyor, zülüm de katliamlar da. Tarih kitaplarını büyük bir ibretle okuyor, atalarımızın yaptıklarına inanamıyor, onları bir çok şey için suçluyoruz. Sanki kendi hayatlarımız acılardan uzak ve yaşananların sorumlusu değil.

(The Director-Performer goes to the center of the stage. She looks at the Audiences. She takes the microphone from the hands of the last Audience-Performer and leaves it in its place.)

Director-Performer

-It is very important for me to share the pain. To open the closed eyes for them to see; and to make the ears that do not hear, hear. The numbers are increasing at every moment. Numbers have never been just numbers for me. But it is so easy to talk this way and go on. This is not a performance. It is a protest.

Figure 3. Ülfet Sevdi. Numbers Increase As We Count… 2019. Photo: Cédric Laurenty.

(The Director-Performer invites the Audience members to follow them in the main room, where they will sit.

The performance of the counting is still going on. At that time, the second part of the performance starts.

SECOND PART

(This Part is at the beginning choreographed and slowly turns into improvisation. It is based, inspired and developed from Augusto Boal's Image Games and Image Theatre (see Boal 2002: 139-148 and 174-216). It uses photo archives of women in different wars, photos found from the internet. These photos appear a few seconds each on the screen as an image bombardment.
The audience members enter the main room. They hear the sound installation: George Bush's speeches just before the 2003 Iraq invasion.)

George Bush (On the left, on the small screen. https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/iraq/news/20030319-17.html)

-American and coalition forces are in the early stages of military operation to disarm Iraq, to free its people, and to defend the world from great dangers.

(The stage: on the left, four chairs are in line, facing the right side of the stage. In the middle of the stage, there is a huge white screen that covers all the back wall. On the right side, there is a huge pile of colourful woman clothe.
After the audience members are seated, the Director-Performer puts the archives-photos of women in war on the stage floor.

We hear Dengbej Halide singing a song in Kurdish. It is processed live and distorted.

The two performers start looking at these pictures. They look at each picture, put them on the floor, spread them out. These pictures are shown on the big background screen as a bombardment (less than one second each: some of these pictures are very violent).

The performers continue counting.

Preparing the first image: chairs are put in front of the screen. One performer invites the other performer for the first image. She shapes her body as a sculpture. She then puts herself inside the image. On the big screen, the original image of the picture is shown. (For a while, the two performers exchange the role of sculpting the body of the other.)

Music is off. The counting is heard very clearly.)

George Bush (On the big screen. https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/iraq/news/20030319-17.html)

-Every nation in this coalition has chosen to bare the duty and share the honour of serving in our common defense. The people you liberate will witness the honourable and decent spirit of the American Military. In this conflict, America faces an enemy who has no regard for conventions of war, or rules, or morality.

Figure 4. Ülfet Sevdi. *Numbers Increase As We Count…* **2019. Photo from Video Recording: Christine Royer.**

George Bush (On the big screen. https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/iraq/news/20030319-17.html)

-More than thirty-five countries are giving crucial support, from the use of naval and air bases, to help with intelligence and logistics, to the deployment of combat units. Every nation in this coalition has chosen to bare the duty and share the honour of serving in our common defense.

Figure 5. Ülfet Sevdi. *Numbers Increase As We Count…* **2019. Photo: Cédric Laurenty.**

(Chaotic electro-acoustic music by Nicolas Royer-Artuso until the end of the first section of the second part.)

Figure 6. Ülfet Sevdi. *Numbers Increase As We Count…* **2019. Photo: Cédric Laurenty.**

Figure 7. Ülfet Sevdi. *Numbers Increase As We Count…* **2019. Photo from Video Recording: Christine Royer.**

SECOND PART, second section

(Archives of the rehearsal on the big screen. The two performers are watching a video of an interview about prostitution, trafficking in Iraq and allegations against US military contractors in Iraq. Photographs are still on the floor. The chairs and the performers are on the floor, staying in the position they were in from the precedent scene:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k2rbMOHzVS8

The two performers are now independent: they continue sculpting their bodies according to the pictures, the images. They repeat the first section but are now improvising on the images with what they feel. They are in a dialogue with the video projected on the screen. They continue counting…

On the screen, we are still in the video archives of January 2019. We move to a rehearsal of the performance where a back screen is used projecting an earlier rehearsal: We have now the performance on stage with the two performers; on screen a rehearsal of the performance using a third layer of rehearsal; for a total of three layers of counting, in different times. (Everything they worked in the rehearsals with the women's bodies in war; how they sculpted their bodies according to these images. They continue to count and use the determined movements of the first section of the second part, within a space of improvisation, both internal and external).

January 2019 archive: One the performers in the rehearsal is stuck in an oppressive position. I ask here what and how she feels.)

Director-performer:

-What do you feel Burcu?

Burcu:

-I feel constrained.

(The performers are becoming the images, and answering, dialoguing, talking to this archive, entering the image on stage, with their bodies.)

Figure 8. Ülfet Sevdi. *Numbers Increase As We Count…* **2019. Photo from Video Recording: Christine Royer.**

January 2019 archive:

Director-Performer
-Itır, I know I am asking you always the same question. What do you…. Hmmm… not feeling.

Do you feel, what you are counting? Who are they? Do you feel it?

Itır
I can't feel it all the time. But I of course feel it. Time to time. If I feel it all the time, then I won't

be able to do, what I'm supposed to do. I have to count. I have to honour these women. I have to

acknowledge their existence. Because that's what I have to do, I want to do. Sometimes I do the

task: I count. And from time to time, in and out, I feel, I see.

Director-Performer
But what do you feel now? (silence) You are counting for me? For this project?

Itır
Yes of course, I'm counting not for you. For people to hear, for people to see. For you of course.

For those who will see it.

Figure 9. Ülfet Sevdi. *Numbers Increase As We Count…* **2019. Photo from Video Recording: Christine Royer.**

Director-Performer
Burcu, same question for you. I know it's a little difficult. But why are you counting? For me?

For this project?

Burcu

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I started counting because you asked me to. But now I have to stop, because I have to now reconnect with why I am counting. So I don't want (like) going back to the images until I reconnect with them. I also feel this and this [showing what's around her]. A lot.

Director-Performer
Yes we are here.

I think we should remember that each rehearsal is our performance. And each time when we count, it should be… Or, not it 'should' be. It's kind of honouring them. It's kind of a ritual for them, for us also. And it does not care if we are good or bad. It's not important. Sometimes yes, but… Actually no.

Burcu
It's not that I'm like 'I'm good or bad'. It's more that I'm not connecting to them. That's what is frustrating me. Because they deserve at least that.

Director-Performer
Sometimes I feel so bad. I'm saying 'Oh my God'. I'm using their pain for my career. For my future. My CV. Or something. And without any feeling. Continue to do this work and develop. And really yesterday I had a big kind of depression. And big something. And all night I thought this: I had this idea. I had a big shame. And I have this feeling. It is important to me to be successful? They will like me? They will like us, all this project? And after: look at this picture. I thing they deserve, and we deserve all this pain and all this work. They deserve. To honour them. We should honour, we should create a space. And each time: they are not numbers.

(Silence)

(Same archive, different exercise. The two performers are lying on the floor next to each other. We see older archives playing in the background.)

Director-Performer

Think (about) all these images. Take off the oppressors' bodies. I think we had one exercise, probably you remember. And always to be oppressor, to be oppressor, to be oppressor. You answer each other, your body. Always, each time. Can you try? But you can use these images, theses bodies [mentioning the photos]. But please go out of them. And find new ones. Think your life. Don't harm yourself, of course. But think your life, and bring your daily life. Oppression here. But don't harm yourself, be careful. And if you feel something, go out.

Burcu

You are saying, we are building like oppressor, and the other one is the oppressor. And the other one is you're building that, right.

Director-Performer

Yes! Not oppressor.

Burcu + Itır

Oppressed!

Director-Performer

Oppressed. Yes, always oppressed person.

(On the screen, they improvise during the rehearsal. The performers do that as well on stage.)

(Mourning song in Turkish starts)

SECOND PART, third section

(The mourning song continues. The Director-Performer enters the stage, goes to the pile of clothes. The other performers join her. They all bring the cloth one by one and make an installation, sculpting bodies as if each cloth was containing a body of a woman or was a body. They are designing the third part's installation.)

Figure 10. Ülfet Sevdi. Numbers Increase As We Count… 2019. Photo Cédric Laurenty.

(In this section, videos parts of an interview I made with OWFI's president, Yanar Mohammed, in Toronto, December 2018, are shown.

When the video starts on the screen, the performers watch it.)

Ülfet Sevdi

-After the US occupation, after the US has given the control of the country to the group they chose; soon after groups like the DAESH appeared. You, as a feminist, tell us about the recent history of Iraq. This is kind of really…

Yanar Mohammed

Well, the reality is that the occupation has divided the country based upon religious lines. They have divided the country into the Shia south, the Sunni west, the Kurdish north and the Turkmen middle, who like don't have a place to go, and many other so called "minorities" who are under pressure all the time. The US occupation made us aware that we are not one people. They gave us very strong reasons for us to be fighting among each other, and they made it such a difficult job for us to function as one people, one government or under one state. The current reality is that when you ask somebody in Iraq "who you are?" or where you are from, you are asking people's identity – and this is a new thing – the identity were sort of internalized by the Iraqi people. So somebody will tell you "I'm Sunni from this city" or "I'm a Kurd from that part that is not Iraq" or "I'm a Shia from…" so these divisions have taken place for fifteen years now, with the occupation they were imposed on us and if they continue to be forced on the people there will be no more Iraq in the future. It is already the project of cutting it into pieces, and have already reached somewhere. I think the only group that has the credibility to pull it all together are the seculars at this point, not the… not those who were chosen by the US occupation or the British occupation. US occupation always prefer a religious group who has no political tendency or if it has any political tendency, it has to be an extreme right wing political tendency. So their interests are shared and they can have access to as much Iraqi oil as they want.

(The performers continue to sculpt the women bodies with the clothes.)

Second Yanar Mohammed's interview.

(The Director-Performer walks to the middle of the stage. The video is projected over her body, her body becoming a screen.)

Yanar Mohammed

The United Nations are the united governments against women's humanity and women's well being. [They] support the patriarchs who are ruling and they empower them over everybody else and especially over women. And who is more vulnerable than a poor woman in a war zone who has lost her family, who has no more wellbeing, who has no more support and who was forced into prostitution. So prostituted women in a war zone is the utmost case of victimization, of being as weak as you can. And the United Nations do not have a history; neither do they have the respect, in Iraq, [to claim] that they are the supporters of the victims. They are supporters of the Iraqi government against the women, they are supporters of the officials against vulnerable individuals and they are supporters of the governments against women. This is the United Nations. They better reform their language, they better reform their mindset, they better switch their mandate and write it as it is and [acknowledge] the reality. They are supporters of nations, not of individuals, not of human rights – specifically not of human rights.

Figure 11. Ülfet Sevdi. *Numbers Increase As We Count… 2019. Photo: Cédric Laurenty.*

Third Yanar Mohammed's interview.

(This interview is only an audio recording. The performers keep going with sculpting the women bodies with clothes on stage.)

Yanar Mohammed
-Immediately when the occupation took place in 2003 the American companies were invited to invest in Iraq and the US administrator Paul Bremer had advertised it very strongly then that all the companies around the world can come and invest in Iraq and that they will have minimal taxation, that they will have all the facilitation for them to invest in Iraq. It sounded [like] that he was supporting the country while in reality he had cutting down the Iraqi economy into pieces

and they were selling them to the foreign companies. What made Iraq special in the Middle East was that --- Okay, people are watching us… Okay, maybe they don't want us to…

Ü. Sevdi
-Because they were sitting here, they moved, they didn't want to disturb us but [I think] they are immigrants like us and they might –

Yanar Mohammed
-They might be interested -

Ü. Sevdi
-Yeah, in the topic. And they want to continue to…

Yanar Mohammed
-But don't think of everybody as supporters. You would be surprised.

Ü. Sevdi
-Yeah, you are right.

Yanar Mohammed
-Sometimes people really don't like your anti-American positions. They are so many of them within the immigrants. Let me go back to that…

The US administrator of Iraq was sort of celebrating the selling of the Iraqi economy to the foreign companies in bits and pieces and he was in a rush to put it into the constitution and to make it go so fast that in his – they were thinking something along [the lines of] shock therapy. Thinking that as long as Iraq is under so much threat of occupation and militarization people will have no will power to say no to anything. But they were mistaken. They were unable to sell all the Iraqi economy to foreign companies. And I was about to say one thing about what was special about Iraq in the Middle East, [which] was that the boost of Iraqi oil passed in the last decades of the 20th century and it [has] been closed to the outside world, it managed, it helped to create a strong industrial basis for the country. Iraq had one of the strongest industrial companies in the Middle East. And it was able to produce light and heavy industries, and it was sort of independent from its exports so [it was] strong economically. What happened is that with the American

invasion there was a very well set plan to sell all of that to foreign countries. In other words, to sell our factories of the Iraqi people to the foreign companies without the Iraqi people getting anything from it.

The only thing that Iraqi people got from it was mass layoffs of more than I would say half a million people from their governmental jobs. Just imagine, half a million governmental employees lose their jobs causing all their families to go through something like a starvation mode and calling it democracy. So in reality the invasion of Iraq is an occupation and it is the confiscation of all the industry of Iraq and selling it to foreign companies. Which did not go that well, because of the resistance and the military resistance and even the people's resistance. The parliament that was put in place, which was a puppet parliament, they did not dare to sell off, to sign on all the sell offs because they were afraid that people would go totally against them. So, Iraq was totally sold out by this occupation. It was confiscated. It was sold in pieces. We were made poor and that is how colonization works.

Figure 12. Ülfet Sevdi. *Numbers Increase As We Count…* **2019. Photo: Cédric Laurenty.**

(After the video is over, the performers take off their clothes leaving only a tight and a shirt. They sculpt their own clothes the same way they did with the other clothes. Light changes into fluorescent blue. The performers walk to the audience area and watch the installation on stage as audience members. They them return to the stage. They put on the clothes one by one. While doing this, the counting becomes an actual saying of women names from the region, e.g. Ayşe, Fatima, Deniz, Ülfet, Khadija, Itır, Burcu, etc.)
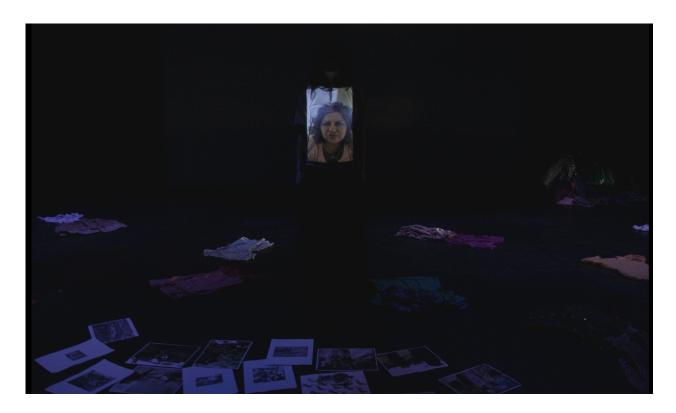
Figure 13. Ülfet Sevdi. Numbers Increase As We Count… 2019. Photo: Cédric Laurenty.

Fourth Yanar Mohammed's interview.

(They wore all the clothes that were on the floor except their own clothes. They sit in front on the right side of the white screen (according to the perspective of the audience). We see Yanar Mohammed next to the performers, a small size video, as if she is the fourth performer.)

Yanar Mohammed
-My main issue of the whole story is that nobody comes and occupies the country and sells all our industry and breaks our homes and then tells us that women have no right to life. So for the US occupation, to support the most background, the most backward Iraqi government and to select the most extremist individuals in the community and make them the rulers of Iraq and decide that women, Iraqi women do not have right to life and those who protect Iraqi women –

shelters like ours – not legal… Like this is the most crime that could have been done on a people around the world. Somebody should correct this. They should not continue victimizing women in the way they are doing. The West has [been] supporting it, the West is empowering the extremists in Iraq in a way and the West has turned Iraqi women into a victimization that has never been the case in our past history. This is the first of its kind.

Figure 14. Ülfet Sevdi. *Numbers Increase As We Count…* **2019. Photo from Video Recording: Christine Royer.**

SECOND PART, fourth section

(We hear a mourning song in Arabic. The performers are getting back to the exercise of the Oppressed that we found in Part 2C: performers embody images of women in war found in the photo. They react to the other performers and improvise according to what the others do. Until the end of the mourning song. When this song ends, the improvisation finishes.)

Figure 15. Ülfet Sevdi. *Numbers Increase As We Count…* **2019. Photo: Cédric Laurenty.**

SECOND PART, fifth section

(The performers each take a microphone from the side of the stage. The Director-Performer takes reports, in small pieces of paper, from the OWFI organization, about woman trafficking in Iraq. They all sit in the middle of the stage, in front of the audience. They read in English or French parts of the reports. On the screen, these reports appear in tables. Reports from OWFI: https://www.peacewomen.org/node/89862.)

Figure 16. Ülfet Sevdi. *Numbers Increase As We Count…* 2019. Photo from Video Recording: Christine Royer.

The table visible on the screen in the photo contains:

Location (Région/ District) & date du rapport	Trafiquant principal/ solliciteur et assistants	Nombre de femmes/filles trouvées dans la maison	Destination du trafic	Commentaires
Karrada 15-8-2008	Um Rasool (sollicitrice)	Une fille et une femme	Non-applicable	-Filles louées aux membres des milices. -Quand elles sont détenues par des gardes nationaux, personne ne les réclame.

Figure 17. Ülfet Sevdi. *Numbers Increase As We Count…* **2019. Photo from Video Recording: Christine Royer.**

1 - BURCU (FRENCH)

Le matin du 13 Juillet 2014, les corps criblés de balles de vingt-huit femmes et de cinq hommes ont été récupérés de deux appartements, des bordels apparemment, dans un ensemble de buildings à Zayouna, un quartier de l'Est de Bagdad. J'ai vu les corps quelques heures plus tard à la morgue de la ville, étendus sur le sol… L'incident de Zayouna est le plus grand assassinat des dernières années, et il a entrainé au moins quinze pimps du quartier, que Layla connaissait, à fuir avec leurs filles au Kurdistan.

(On the screen) On the morning of July 13, 2014, the bullet-ridden bodies of twenty-eight women and five men were retrieved from two apartments, said to be brothels, in a building complex in Zayouna, a neighbourhood in eastern Baghdad. I saw the bodies a few hours later, at the city morgue, laid out on the floor… the Zayouna incident was the largest killing in recent years, and it

prompted at least fifteen neighbourhood pimps whom Layla knew to flee with their girls to Iraqi

Kurdistan.

2- ITIR (FRENCH)

Location (Area\District) & date of report	Main Trafficker\solicitor and assistants	Number of women\girls found in house	Trafficking destination	Comments
Shorja 6-8-2008	Sabreen Nouri (female solicitor)	4 girls	Not Applicable House is a brothel – no trafficking practiced.	-Solicitor hunts for young runaway girls in crowded public places. She found her last victim –13 year old– in the downtown Shorja market. -One of the girls, a 13 year old, is pregnant in her 7th month.
Location (Région\District) & date du rapport	Trafiquant principal/solliciteur et assistants	Nombre de femmes/filles trouvées dans la maison	Destination du trafic	Commentaires
Shorja 6-8-2008	Sabreen Nouri (sollicitrice)	4 filles	Non-Applicable La maison est un bordel – aucun trafic n'y a été pratiqué.	-La sollicitrice cherche des filles qui se sont enfuies, dans les places publiques bondées de monde. Elle a trouvé sa dernière victime -13 ans- dans le marché Shorja au centre-ville. -Une des filles, une fille de 13 ans, est enceinte au 7$^{\text{ième}}$ mois.

Figure 18: Table from report 1 (shown on screen).

3- ÜLFET

Location (Area\District) & date of report	Main Trafficker\solicitor and assistants	Number of women\girls found in house	Trafficking destination	Comments
Karrada 15-8-2008	Um Rasool (female solicitor)	1 girl and 1 woman	Not applicable	-Girls rented to militia members -When detained by national guards, nobody claimed them

Figure 19: Table from report 2 (shown on screen).

Location (Région\District) & date du rapport	Trafiquant principal/solliciteur et assistants	Nombre de femmes/filles trouvées dans la maison	Destination du trafic	Commentaires
Karrada 15-8-2008	Um Rasool (sollicitrice)	Une fille et une femme	Non-applicable	-Filles louées aux membres des milices. -Quand elles sont détenues par des gardes nationaux, personne ne les réclame.

Figure 20: Table from report 3 (shown on screen).

4- BURCU

Location (Area\District) & date of report	Main Trafficker\solicitor and assistants	Number of women\girls found in house	Trafficking destination	Comments
Al Alawi – public transportation bus and car station 10-8-2008	Unknown	1 woman	From Mosul to Baghdad	Taxi drivers of the intercity routes take advantage of runaway girls and women. First driver planned to sell her to a brothel in Fadhil district. Policemen planned to take her in for similar purpose when OWFI activists intervened and took her to OWFI shelter.

Figure 21: Table from report 4 (shown on screen).

Location (Région\District)	Trafiquant principal/solliciteur	Nombre de femmes/filles trouvées	Destination du	Commentaires

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& date du rapport	et assistants	dans la maison	trafic	
Al Alawi –station d'autobus 10-8-2008	Inconnus	Une femme	De Mosul à Bagdad	Les chauffeurs de taxi des routes entre les villes, tirent profit des filles et femmes qui se sont enfuies. Le chauffeur a planifié de la vendre à un bordel dans le district de Fadhil. Les policiers planifiaient de faire quelque chose de semblable avant que les militants de OWFI n'interviennent et l'emmènent à l'abri du OWFI.

Figure 22: Table from report 5 (shown on screen).

5- ITIR

The city of Mosul is devastated.

The stories my colleagues and I have heard from the women who somehow survived this journey are heartbreaking. Families who must choose between staying and starving, or fleeing at a high risk of death. Children abandoned along the route, some run over by tanks.

When they finally arrive at Khazir Camp, they find themselves locked in, forgotten. Many women we speak to are badly traumatized. They won't make eye contact, in fear of questions about rape or ISIS fighters. In most cases, their husbands are dead. Some are pregnant. Where can they go? How long can they hide? The fact of their abuse is used as a reason for their own families and tribes to murder or abandon them.

La ville de Mossoul est dévastée.

Les histoires que moi et mes collègues ont entendues des femmes qui ont survécu tout cela sont à briser le cœur. Des familles qui doivent choisir entre rester et mourir de faim, ou s'enfuir avec un risque très haut de mourir. Des enfants sont abandonnés sur les routes, certains écrasés par des tanks.

Quand ils arrivent finalement au camp de Khazir, ils se retrouvent pris dedans, oubliés. Beaucoup de femmes à qui l'on parle sont énormément traumatisées. Elles n'établissent pas de contact visuel de peur d'avoir à répondre à des questions à propos de viol ou à propos des combattants de l'État Islamique. Dans la plupart des cas leurs maris sont morts. Certaines sont enceintes. Où peuvent-elles aller? Combien de temps peuvent-elles se cacher? Le fait d'avoir été abusées est utilisé par leurs familles et tribus comme raisons pour les tuer ou les abandonner.

6 - ÜLFET

When Rana Jalil, 38, lost her husband in an explosion in Baghdad last year, she could never have imagined becoming a prostitute in order to feed her children.

Quand Rana Jalil, 38 ans, a perdu son mari dans une explosion à Bagdad l'année dernière, elle n'aurait jamais pu imaginer devoir se prostituer pour arriver à nourrir ses enfants.

7- BURCU (FRENCH)

Location (Area\District) & date of report	Main Trafficker\solicitor and assistants	Number of women\girls found in house	Trafficking destination	Comments
Adhamiya 16-8-2008	Hussein Saleh (translator for US base in Tikrit) and wife (forced to assist) Khaldoon(assistant)	11 - variable	Not applicable	Wife was forced into fake marriage after her brother (a militia member) was imprisoned by US troops. The translator married her and opened an apartment with her to entertain US military officers.

Figure 23: Table from report 6 (shown on screen).

Location (Région\District) & date du rapport	Trafiquant principal/solliciteur et assistants	Nombre de femmes/filles trouvées dans la maison	Destination du trafic	Commentaires
Adhamiya 16-8-2008	Hussein Saleh (traducteur pour une base militaire états-unienne à Tikrit) et sa femme (forcée d'aider) Khaldoon (assistant)	Onze - variable	Non-applicable	La femme a été mariée de force dans un faux mariage après que son frère (un membre d'une milice) a été emprisonné par les troupes états-uniennes. Le traducteur l'a mariée et ouvert un appartement où elle devait servir les officiers militaires états-uniens.

Figure 24: Table from report 7 (shown on screen).

8 - ITIR

Location (Area\District) & date of report	Main Trafficker\solicitor and assistants	Number of women\girls found in house	Trafficking destination	Comments
Karrada 21-8-2008	Bashar Gorkis (male trafficker) Rita (girlfriend- and assistant) Abeer (female assistant)	4 girls	To Dubai and Syria	Bashar and his female assistants visited the Sheraton-Ishtar hotel on the date of this report. Bashar marries young girls in a court and smuggles them to Dubai or Syria.

Figure 25: Table from report 8 (shown on screen).

Location (Région\District) & date du rapport	Trafiquant principal/solliciteur et assistants	Nombre de femmes/filles trouvées dans la maison	Destination du trafic	Commentaires
Karrada 21-8-2008	Bashar Gorkis (trafiquant) Rita (sa copine et assistante) Abeer (assistante)	Quatre filles	Vers Dubaï et la Syrie	Bashar et ses assistantes ont visité l'hôtel Sheraton-Ishtar à la date du rapport. Bashar marrie les jeunes filles dans une court et les trafique vers Dubaï et la Syrie.

Figure 26: Table from report 9 (shown on screen).

(Lights open on the audience side. The performers walk to the audience with the microphone. They give one by one the microphones to the audience members and ask them to read what is written on the paper (which are again parts of reports from OWFI organization). The texts are

given in French and English so the audience member can choose which language he/she wants to

read in).

Figure 27. Ülfet Sevdi. Numbers Increase As We Count… 2019. Photo from Video Recording: Christine Royer.

Text 1

He told Al Jazeera: "I'm sure that whatever she is, at least she is having food to eat. I have three other girls and a son and what they paid me for Lina is enough to raise the remaining ones."

Il a dit à Al Jazeera: "Je suis certain que peu importe où elle se trouve, au moins elle a de la nourriture à manger. J'ai trois autres filles et un fils, et ce qu'ils m'ont payé pour Lina est suffisant pour prendre soin des autres qu'il me reste."

Text 2

Outside Iraq, women are sold up to $20.000. Inside Iraq men may pay $200-$500 for a night with a virgin, according to an Iraqi rights group. In some cases girls have been forced to undergo hymen reconstruction surgery so they can be retrafficked as virgins.

Les femmes sont vendues jusqu'à 20.000$ à l'extérieur. À l'intérieur de l'Iraq, les hommes paient entre 200 et 500 dollars pour une nuit avec une fille vierge, selon un groupe pour les droits iraquien. Dans certains cas les filles ont dû subir une reconstruction chirurgicale de l'hymen de manière à pouvoir être re-trafiquées comme vierges.

Text 3

The situation is very grim in Iraq. We run into many young women who have run away from their homes, who have been trapped by a trafficking group who have put them in brothels, who want to escape to have a better life, and they cannot go back home because they will be killed. Millions of women are being displaced in Iraq at this moment. They are vulnerable to trafficking because of poverty and having to feed their children.

La situation est très sinistre en Iraq. On rencontre beaucoup de jeunes femmes qui se sont enfuies de leur maison, qui ont été attrapées par des groupes de trafiquants qui les ont mis dans des bordels, qui veulent s'en enfuir mais qui ne peuvent retourner chez elles parce qu'elles seraient tuées. Des millions de femmes sont en train d'être déplacées en Iraq en ce moment. Elles sont vulnérables face au trafic à cause de la pauvreté et parce qu'elles doivent nourrir leurs enfants.

Location (Région\District) & date du rapport	Trafiquant principal/sollicite ur et assistants	Nombre de femmes/filles trouvées dans la maison	Destination du trafic	Commentaires
Al – Jihad 22-12-2008	Amal um Ali (sollicitrice) Adhab (trafiquant) Adel (traducteur)	Cinq femmes (18-19 ans)	Emirats & Kurdistan	-La sollicitrice Amal a une badge pour accéder à la base militaire états-unienne, son client principal. -Les femmes sont louées pour 400 dollars la nuit; 300 dollars vont à la sollicitrice.

Figure 28: Table from report 10 (shown on screen).

Location (Area\District) & date of report	Main Trafficker\sol icitor and assistants	Number of women\girls found in house	Trafficking destination	Comments
Al Jihad 22-12-2008	Amal um Ali (female-solicitor) Adhab (male-trafficker) Adel (translator)	5 women (18-19 years old)	Emirates & Kurdistan	- Solicitor Amal has a badge for access to the nearby American military base who are the main clients. - Women are rented for 400$\night, 300$ goes to the solicitor.

Figure 29: Table from report 11 (shown on screen)

Text 5

As we drove around Baghdad, Layla and Mohammad pointed out dozens of brothels. Many had boarded-up or blacked-out windows, Arabic music blaring from within, and police vans parked outside. Layla rattled off the prices for girls of various ages. The most expensive were "rosebuds," thirteen or fourteen years old, at three hundred to four hundred dollars a night.

Alors que nous roulions dans Bagdad, Layla et Mohammad nous ont pointé du doigt des douzaines de bordels. La plupart avaient les fenêtres fermées ou noircies. La musique arabe hurlait de l'intérieur et des camions de police étaient stationnés à l'extérieur. Layla nous a donné les prix pour les filles de différents âges. Les plus chères étaient les 'boutons de rose", des filles de treize ou quatorze ans, à trois cents ou quatre cents dollars pour la nuit.

Text 6

It was the American occupation of Iraq that started the genocide of Iraqis at the hands of the American military arsenal, and later on the hands of sectarian Islamic groups who were supported into power by the US occupation, and who became later on the heroes of women enslavement and exploitation by Daesh and other extremist groups.

C'est l'occupation états-unienne de l'Iraq qui a été le point de départ du génocide des Iraquiens, d'abord des mains de l'armée états-unienne, ensuite des mains des groupes sectaires islamiques qui étaient supportés et mis au pouvoir par l'occupation états-unienne, et qui sont devenus les héros de l'esclavage et de l'exploitation de Daesh et des autres groupes extrémistes.

Figure 30. Ülfet Sevdi. Numbers Increase As We Count… 2019. Photo from Video Recording: Christine Royer.

(Black out. Video from the archives starts.)

Director-Performer

-How long have you been counting, Itır? For this project… (Silence) Two years?

Itır

-Two years… probably. Two years.

Director-Performer

-Estimate the number.

Itır

-How many times that I counted?

Director-Performer

-Kind of, How much did you count?

Itır

-In terms of lenght. Maybe six days, in total, four days. Twenty-four hours multiply by four days.

Each hour, maybe…

Director-Performer

-How many women?

Itır

-Twelve thousands, Fifteen thousands…

Director-Performer

-Until now?

Itır

-Yes.

Director-Performer

-You Burcu?

Burcu

-Just over one year… counting. The number of hours you're asking me?

Director-Performer

-Yes.

Burcu

-At least a hundred. But I don't know exactly the total.

Director-Performer

-We're not even close…

(The performers leave the main room by the exit bringing to the lobby. The audience members understand that they have to leave. In the lobby, they are welcomed by a video installation consisting of three televisions. The two televisions on the side show video of women artists counting while doing an artistic or non-artistic task. The television in the middle shows these artists talking about the experience of counting.)

Figure 31. Ülfet Sevdi. *Numbers Increase As We Count…* **2019. Photo: Cédric Laurenty.**

4. The position from which I speak: a personal contextualisation for the performance *Numbers Increase As We Count…* in relation to my artistic practice and the history of theatre/performance.

> *Theatre is a form of knowledge; it should and can also be a means of transforming society. Theatre can help us build our future, instead of just waiting for it.* (Boal 2005: 16)
>
> *[T]he theatre is a weapon. A very efficient weapon.* (Boal 2008 [1974]: xxiii)

4.1. Introduction

In a work like the present one, as in any political work[8], I feel it is important to explain the position from which I speak. Situating one's work within a tradition, a history — in the present case, the tradition/history of (political) performance/theatre practice — in addition to being a prerequisite of the academia, is also a way of contextualizing the artistic and political decisions that were taken, for what reasons, and what the emotional impact of these decision can signify.

I am a woman artist from Turkey. I immigrated to Montreal in 2014[9]. In Istanbul, Turkey, I was active as a dramaturge, for my own directorial work, as well as for the work of others. I simultaneously wrote, directed and 'dramaturged' theatrical plays and/or performances with the collective I had formed, *nü.kolektif* (2008-2014). I was also involved in building experimental

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[8] This work is a masters thesis, but at the same time it is only one of the steps of the whole project *Numbers Increase As We Count…* (and in fact, not even its last step). I do not see a separation between the performance and the thesis, as I said earlier, and I would like the reader to read the following keeping this intention in mind. In that sense, this thesis is as much a political work as the performance/protest itself.

[9] The reason for coming has to do with personal circumstances (including making this master thesis, and producing some work in Canada). That is: nothing political; even if often I have felt that this was the expected answer.

performances using non-traditional techniques and drawing from research in the social sciences, e.g. psychology, sociology and social psychology[10]. Finally – and this will become important in the following discussion – I was active as a practitioner of Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, facilitating seminars, forum theatre plays with some communities, working with diverse groups of people on a wide range of socio-political issues. Everything I have done up to now was (and remains) *openly* political. What animates me, as an artist, is a deep conviction that theatre/performance has a role to play in provoking or prompting change in society.

In the above short 'artist statement', there are two separate but closely related aspects of my work: first its *content*, and second its *form*. The most important part of my work has always been to try to find a way to bridge these two different aspects. The content is central, but as an artist, my work also involves putting up something that is powerful aesthetically so that the content passes through to the audience members[11], thus enacting some potential change. This will come as no surprise when we return to the research questions and to the performance score (especially the first part of the performance score) given that many of these questions revolve around a heavy topic; about finding a way to express my indignation, a way to protest a situation. I am also protesting a method and a tradition of art-making (what could be summarized, using a *cliché* sentence, the *"art for the sake of art"*).

Returning to my research questions, very few of them have to do with form. The Structure has many formal elements that are clearly worked out from an aesthetic point of view. But still, this

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[10] I understood while working on this thesis that all these years I was already doing 'Practice as Research', without putting the results I achieved in an academic form.

[11] If not, I would concentrate my activities around activism, something I always did in parallel.

aesthetic research is only there to *serve the content*. Perhaps this is what should be expected from someone who places herself in front of a project mainly as a *dramaturge*, despite also being the writer, director and, eventually, a performer, which brings us to the next section.

4.2. Dramaturgy as the core of my practice

In my self-presentation, the reader will have realized that in the list of my artistic roles, the first role I gave myself was that of being a *dramaturge*. I always felt that this was the central part of my creative work and that the rest, the writing and the directing roles, were only the visible parts of what is fundamentally a process of dramaturgical analysis, combined with a work inside the rehearsal spaces, i.e. in my 'laboratory'. This has been the case even when creating traditional theatre work (what we could call more linear, 'Aristotelian' work), and has also been the case for my more experimental work.

A dramaturgically minded approach is acknowledged as a common practice in contemporary theatre/performance creative processes. Trencsényi & Cochrane 2014 explain:

> Dramaturgy, having been freed from its historical association with Aristotelian poetics or considered only as an attribute of a dramatic text and/or textual analysis, gradually reconfigured itself by the late twentieth century, and has become synonymous with the totality of the performance-making process (Trencsényi & Cochrane 2014: xi).

> The dramaturg is no longer a critic or a 'third eye' in these processes, brought in during the later stages of the work. The 'new dramaturg' is a curator and a facilitator who helps with respectful negotiating between different cultural values, and supports interweaving of various systems (Ibid: xiii).

Here we find the word *facilitator* that encompasses many of the different aspects and roles that were previously reserved for different artists in a given production -including the role of dramaturge. 'Facilitator' is also the word used by Augusto Boal when he speaks of the role of the person in charge of conduction, supervising and organizing Theatre of the Oppressed workshops and forum theatre pieces. I will explain later in detail the relation of different aspects of my artistic practice (both in the past, and for *Numbers Increase As We Count…*, specifically) with the work of Boal, as he is the one who has most shaped my understanding of how to be an effective political theatre/performance practitioner.

What is important to underline is the position I give myself when working on a performance, as I see it as crucial to understanding how I work, and to understand what I did with Performative Acting and *Numbers Increase As We Count*… This position is the one of a *dramaturge-facilitator*. In the next section, I explain what I mean by putting these two roles together.

4.3. Facilitating in Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, and dramaturgy

The work of the facilitator in Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed consists of mastering some of the tools for social change through art-making that Boal has developed over the course of his career. These tools range from games, exercises with images, imagining possibilities, work on understanding manipulation, newspaper analysis, building small plays, to the most known technique: Forum theatre. With these techniques, the facilitator goes to a community (any type) and works on some topic related to oppression that is experienced in that community. The goal is to help the community members find *themselves* ways of resolving these lived oppressions[12].

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[12] There are many possible ways to change the causes of oppressive situations, from very specific to systemic ones. It is the community members' decision that matters in the end: the facilitator should be neutral and only help in

"Forum Theatre" is the culmination of all the other aspects of this framework. In its preparation as well as its actuation, we have all the elements that we can find elsewhere in Boal's methods and tools. Forum Theatre consists of building a short theatre play that addresses a specific situation of oppression. The play is the result of workshops where many exercises are used to address oppression indirectly at first, starting from body exercises, and moving to more verbal exercises where oppression is addressed more and more directly. Once we have a play, it is presented to the audience made up of members of the community. Jackson 2005, a close collaborator of Boal, describes very accurately what comes next:

> After one showing of the scene, which is known as 'the model' (it can be a full-length play), it is shown again slightly speeded up, and follows exactly the same course until a member of the audience shouts 'Stop!', takes the place of the protagonist and tries to defeat the oppressors (Jackson 2005: xxiv).

> Many different solutions are enacted in the course of a single forum – the result is a pooling of knowledge, tactics and experience, and at the same time what Boal calls a 'rehearsal for reality' (Ibid.: xxiv).

In my experience, the real challenge of the facilitator is the following: they need to understand the situation addressed by the members of the community using only what these members have offered during the workshop. Since the work done during the workshops is always about specific points of view on a situation, it is impossible to address all the details of the situation. The

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providing the necessary tools for discussions and rehearsals of change to take place. This is what the name 'Theatre of the Oppressed' comes from: it is *their* theatre, not the theatre of an external writer or director, as I hope will become clear in what follows.

facilitator must fill in the blanks: they need to coax the community members to make explicit all the necessary information so that the play can be seen as a 'real' depiction of what is happening. When it comes to the play, they need to see how the story of the play can trigger the audience to try different solutions: not every story allows this to happen and therefore, the dramaturgy must be carefully considered. During the rehearsals of the forum, some of the actors will try to act solutions to prepare themselves for any outcome that may occur when the audience members will take the place of the protagonist, and therefore, there will be a collective effort exploring what changes are possible and which ones are not. In fact, the community is rehearsing for their necessary change. A careful, nuanced and sensitive dramaturgical work is essential here to allow for the forum to truly serve the community and to bring a sense of possible and effective change.

4.4. Conclusion

In this chapter I have explained my positionality as an artist-researcher. I have tried to place *Numbers Increase As We Count…* in relation to my past work and the appropriate artistic and intellectual traditions. I have explained the role(s) I give myself when I decide to start a new project: I have put an emphasis on dramaturgy and facilitation. I would like the reader to keep these in mind while they read the rest of this thesis. This is central to understanding how I came up with Performative Acting and the ideas that relates to this method (especially the notion of Structure); this is also central to understanding how Performative Acting draws its essence from Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, and could even be considered a new chapter of this framework. The next chapter explores the links between the Theatre of the Oppressed and Performative Acting, where they meet, and where they depart from each other.

5. From Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed to Performative Acting (and *Numbers Increase As We Count…*)

5.1. Introduction

In what follows, I will explain how the method I call Performative Acting[13] is related to Boal's work. Precisely, I aim to explore how my own practice has evolved from the Theatre of the Oppressed model in the traditional sense, to developing this new method of Performative Acting. I will explain how the core ideas of Boal are still present in my conceptualisation of the way performers work and transform when engaging with Performative Acting (this is also true of the facilitator; in the present case: me). This will allow me to place different conceptual decisions I took while developing Performative Acting in a historical context/framework, as well as in a political-aesthetic one. From there, the particularities and originality of my own contribution will be emphasized more clearly.

5.2. Brecht's criticism of the Aristotelian model of drama

Augusto Boal has written that his main contribution to theatre practice and methodology/methodologies is a continuation of what Berthold Brecht wanted to achieve. His Theatre of the Oppressed is posited as an actualisation of Brecht's Marxist ideals for the theatre as a tool for social engagement and change.

Bertolt Brecht criticized the Aristotelian model of drama, writing that it was a drama made for the ruling class. In Boal's words, the Aristotelian model is a "Coercive System of Tragedy" (Boal 2008 [1974]: xxiii). Boal, clearly establishing his theoretical debt to Brecht, writes that:

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[13] See definition in the first chapter. Further discussions about Performative Acting will take place in the next chapter.

Brecht, writing about Aristotle, made a suggestion. He began by saying that this Empathia thing was all right for the ruling classes, who even ruled their characters' ideology; but it wouldn't suit the workers, for it helped perpetuate exploitation (Boal 2008 [1974]: xix).

Brecht's solution was that popular audience members, usually the Oppressed (as opposed to the theatre of and for the ruling class), needed a theatre that could help them understand the conditions of their oppression: the Oppressed need to understand their true situation. Theatre, according to Brecht's assessment, is first a tool for enlightenment. Once we have enlightenment, we can then have informed, non-emotive decisions, and from there, concrete actions for the betterment of all social classes. In other words: theatre can and should provoke change. This is expressed in strong words by Boal in the following quote about Brecht:

> We must emphasize: What Brecht does *not* want is that the spectators continue to leave their brains with their hats upon entering the theatre, as do bourgeois spectators" (Boal 2008 [1974]: 86). "Brecht was a Marxist; therefore, for him, a theatrical work cannot end in repose, in equilibrium. It must, on the contrary, show the ways in which society loses its equilibrium, which way society is moving, and how to hasten the transition (Ibid.).

> Marxist theatre demands decisions (Ibid.: 87).

The Aristotelian model of theatre/drama aims to create performances corresponding to the ruling class's cares and obsessions, with their definitions of the world and of the role of the citizens of this world: a world for the ruler where the Oppressed serves them. For the ruler, this world should not change: if it were to change, the ruler would inevitably lose his privilege. Brecht and Boal, after him, argue that theatre is therefore one of the tools the ruler uses to protect their status by

manipulating the Oppressed into seeing representations of a status quo, a world that cannot and should not change. Boal explains that

> the "juxtaposition of two universes (the real and the fictitious) also produces other aggressive effects: *the spectator experiences the fiction and incorporates its elements*. The spectator – a real, living person – accepts as life and reality what is presented to him in the work of art as art. Aesthetic osmosis" (Boal 2008 [1974]: 93).

The ruler offers a representation of the world (through onstage mimesis and anticipated public emulation) that is offered as being a representation of reality. Many techniques are utilized in Aristotelian theatre/drama to manipulate the audience members into accepting this representation as the only possible reality available to them. We have already seen that for Brecht, empathy was a powerful tool. But empathy is only one of the tools, and it is not the purpose of the production of art. The real tool used to manipulate the audience members into accepting the actual living conditions that follow from the representation of the world offered in theatre/drama, is *catharsis*.

According to the Meriam-Webster dictionary, *catharsis* is defined in the following way:

> 1 a: purification or purgation of the emotions (such as pity and fear) primarily through art b: a purification or purgation that brings about spiritual renewal or release from tension.

According to this definition, Art (and therefore theatre), has a potential role and function. It is:

1) to release the emotional content of the audience member (this is implicit in the definition); and

2) to bring him or her back to a 'normal' or better condition (this is explicitly stated in the definition).

This, as we saw in the discussion in the preceding section, happens because the audience member is able to project him or herself into the role of the protagonist through Empathy. The pleasure the audience member experiences at the end of the play is a direct result of the difficulties he or she experiences during it: we suffer with the protagonist, but it is worth it because we feel good after it when things go back to 'normal'.

This is a standard and classical vision of the way theatre works that has been accepted in the West and that is still generally accepted in the academic world. It is what we learn in any class dealing with dramaturgy in the theatre schools, and has been since Aristotle[14].

Other dramaturgical tools, e.g. peripeteia, anagnorisis, catastrophe (including the triggering of empathy), refer to techniques that 'thicken the plot' and therefore activate some emotional reaction in the audience member. They are used to achieve the ultimate desired result in the audience member: catharsis. Boal explains:

> And why is the repressive function the fundamental aspect of the Greek tragedy and of the Aristotelian system of tragedy? Simply because, according to Aristotle, the principal aim of tragedy is to provoke catharsis (Boal 2008 [1974]: 22)

> Tragedy, in all its qualitative and quantitative aspects, exists as a function of the effect it

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[14] With some exceptions in the 20th century, like Brecht and Boal, and more recently, in what Trencsenyi and Cochrane 2014 called 'New Dramaturgy/New Dramaturgies'. With that term they include different approaches and at the same time, group these approaches under it: "The term suggests change but does not identify the nature of that change. In fact, 'new' could be easily replaced by words such as 'open', 'expanded', 'contemporary', 'slow', 'porous' or even 'postdramatic' (Trencsényi, Katalin & Bernadette Cochrane 2014: xi)". I will sometimes use 'New Dramaturgy' in the same way, to talk about non-Aristotelian, non-linear dramaturgical ideas.

seeks, catharsis. All the unities of tragedy are structured around this concept. It is the centre, the essence, the purpose of the tragic system. Unfortunately, it is also the most controversial concept. Catharsis is correction: what does it correct? Catharsis is purification: what does it purify? (Ibid.: 23)

It is in Boal's answer to this last question that we find the reason he developed his whole system as well as the practical solution(s) he found to go beyond catharsis, thus turning theatre into a revolutionary tool[15]. Boal found in Butcher 1951 the key to understanding the real meaning given by Aristotle to catharsis:

> Butcher goes to Aristotle's own *Politics* to find the explanation of the word *catharsis* which is not to be found in the *Poetics*. Catharsis is utilised there to denote the effect caused by a certain kind of music on patients possessed by a given type of religious fervour. The treatment 'consisted in applying movement to cure movement, in soothing the internal trouble of the mind by a wild and restless music'. According to Aristotle, the patients subjected to that treatment returned to their normal state, as if they had undergone a medical or purgative treatment – that is, cathartic […] Butcher adds that, according to Hippocrates, catharsis meant removal of a painful or disturbing element in the organism, purifying in this way what remains, free finally of the eliminated extraneous matter. Butcher concludes that applying the same definition to tragedy, one will arrive at the conclusion that 'pity and fear' in real life contain a morbid or disturbing element. During the process of tragic excitation this element, whatever it may be, is eliminated. 'As the tragic action progresses, when the tumult of the mind, first roused, has afterward subsided, the lower forms of emotion are found to have been transmuted into higher and more refined forms (Boal 2008 [1974]: 27-28).

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[15] It is also, as we will see in the next section, the main point on which Boal disagrees with Brecht, finding the solutions brought by the later not politically convincing.

Boal states that the main reason the ruling class uses tragedy is to purge the individual of something that could go against the way the system is organized. In other words: tragedy is a tool used by the ruling class to have the Oppressed enjoy an "emotional orgy" (Boal 2008 [1974]: 87) after which they are purged and cured of any thought that could spark some discussion regarding the organization of the system, discussions that could lead to transformative/revolutionary actions:

> [C]atharsis takes away from the character (and thus from the spectator, who is empathically manipulated by the character) his ability to act. That is, it takes away pride, haughtiness, unilateralness in the love for the gods, etc., which are conducive to attitudes favourable to social change (Boal 2008 [1974]: 87).

5.3. Boal's criticism of Brecht

Boal agrees with Brecht's criticism of the Aristotelian model of theatre/drama but says that Brecht did not go far enough:

> In Brecht's plays, however, the unbridgeable gulf between stage and audience remains. The stage belongs to the characters and the actors (Boal 2008 [1974]: xx).

> The spectator, who sits stock-still, is encouraged to think in a way which is presented as being the right way of thinking, the Truth. It is the dramatist who tells this Truth, who points the way: he is affirming, not asking. We are a long way from Socratic dialogue and close to the Democratic Centralism of some political parties (Ibid.)

For Boal, reaching a state of knowledge, of understanding, is not enough. The spectator must be transformed into an Actor of change, into what he dubs a 'Spect-Actor', who uses the

theatrical/performance framework to test different possibilities of action (at least, it is an invitation to do so):

> Should actors and characters go on dominating the stage, their domain, while I sit still in the audience? I think not. I think we could go much further: we need to invade! The audience mustn't just liberate its Critical Conscience, but its body too. It needs to invade the stage and transform the images that are shown there (Boal 2008 [1974]: xx).

> To transform is to be transformed. The action of transforming is, in itself, transforming. The members of the audience must become the Character: possess him, take his place – not obey him, but guide him, show him the path they think right. In this way the Spectator becoming Spect-Actor is democratically opposed to the other members of the audience, free to invade the scene and appropriate the power of the actor (Ibid.: xxi).

> By taking possession of the stage, the Spect-Actor is consciously performing a responsible act. The stage is a representation of the reality, a fiction. But the Spect-Actor is not fictional. He exists in the scene and outside of it, in a dual reality. By taking possession of the stage in the fiction of the theatre he acts: not just in the fiction, but also in his social reality. By transforming fiction, he is transformed into himself (Ibid.: xxi).

Theatre is, for the Spect-Actor, a tool to try different options inside a structure -a play- that has been built by the people *themselves*[16]. There is no real difference between creator and audience: a collective process imposes itself, and acting roles can be envisaged as socially active roles. We

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[16] An important note is needed here: when I say *by the people themselves*, I mean *not* by the writer and/or director and/or dramaturge. The reason is contained in the notion of *facilitator*: the facilitator is there to help the Oppressed themselves come out with their own theatre, with their own problems and solutions. The facilitator has no word in the content and form used by the creators, since that would therefore be the imposition of a message from outside, which goes against the whole philosophy of the Theatre of the Oppressed. But the facilitator has experience, expertise, understands dramaturgy, and so on. This is where she can be helpful in helping the message the Oppressed wants to carry to pass without distortions.

observe, we act, we transform, we observe, we act, we transform, and so on. The process of creation is always open to new possibilities, and the 'final' result, the play, is an open structure where the Spect-Actor can intervene to change the outcomes of the situation experienced by the Oppressed and represented on stage.

This perspective is Boal's answer to the history of poetics: a poetics of, by, and for the Oppressed; with the ultimate aim being the liberation of the Oppressed *in their own terms*. This is in contrast to what we generally see, i.e. the poetics of, by, and for the Oppressor, used for themselves to reify the status quo; and on the other hand, the same poetics of the Oppressor for/against the Oppressed, to make them accept the idea that the status quo is 'natural', thus impossible to change. The aim is the continuation of the oppressive situation:

Catharsis is what we must fight against since it is a tool to reassert the status quo. What we should ask from theatre/performance is that the world as it is represented and as it works is able to change: everything is directed towards this. It is in that sense that theatre/performance can be a revolutionary endeavour, and it is also for this reason that the rulers fear its potential. If it is not revolutionary, at least it is a "rehearsal for the revolution" (Boal 2008 [1974]: 98).

5.4. How Boal's ideas influenced *Numbers Increase As We Count…*: Steps towards Performative Acting

In building *Numbers Increase As We Count…*, the dramaturgical work consisted of building the protest structure, with all the information that it carries. The first part explicitly gives the context, with concrete information about the situation, as well as reasons why I am doing this work; and the second part uses documentary techniques, and archives of rehearsals to recall the social

context and give dramaturgical shape to the performance. Inside this dramaturgical space, the performers were given the simple task of counting.

The result was the protest itself, with the performers 'performatively acting' inside the limits (and sometimes beyond) given by the tasks they had to perform as well as the structure in which these tasks were to be performed. These limits were shaped by the documentary material, the videos and music, as well as the different tasks they had to perform, e.g. counting, embodying images of women in war, wearing different clothes one over the other. Because they were performatively acting, they could decide whether or not to complete the tasks, or do something else, as long as they felt this was the right thing to do at the moment. The performers were at the same time interacting performatively with this structure and with the audience members –audience members who were also sharing the dramaturgical space, just by being present and aware of the information surrounding them.

Some of these methods-techniques and dramaturgical ideas resonate with the way Boal has conceived of theatre. These techniques question the relation between performers and audience members, between the stage and everyday life. Especially when we consider his method of game-playing[17] and his most famous technique for social change: Forum Theatre.

These links, between 1) the way I have created (facilitated) the structure for *Numbers Increase As We Count…* and developed the method of Performative Acting; and 2) the teachings of Boal on

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[17] See Boal 2005, a book devoted to this topic and to the reasons why these games are essential for the Oppressed to find a way out of oppressive situations, or at least to arrive at an understanding of the situation and therefore a to a beginning of questioning and to trying to find solutions.

the other, will be the topic of the next section. In a sense, the next section is written to make explicit how I see Performative Acting as a new tool that could take its place alongside Boal's other techniques inside the general framework of the Theatre of the Oppressed. I will also explore how Performative Acting addresses the need I have always felt as a creator to go beyond what already was available in this framework, especially at the level of form/aesthetics.

5.4.1 Brecht/Boal's anti-cathartic poetics

The first aspect of my work that follows the teachings of Boal (as an extension from Brecht), is his thesis about/and refusal of Aristotelian poetics, and its central mechanism, *catharsis*[18].

We saw the criticism of catharsis by Brecht, as being a manipulative tool for keeping the Oppressed effectively oppressed. We also saw how he understood the transformational role theatre/drama could/should have in bringing change by informing the audience about the real but invisible functioning of society: theatre/drama can only have a revolutionary function if the audience member is enlightened in the process, and leaves the theatre with a clear understanding of the way the ruling class keeps him/her in his/her place and benefits from this situation.

I accept Brecht's criticism of catharsis. I also think this applies, especially in the present time, to all media, and that we are fed with discourses that allow power dynamics to remain unacknowledged by hiding or not focussing on the real, fundamental causes of many of the events that are taking place around us. This is especially true of everything that has to do with the so-called 'Middle-East', especially since 9/11. We are fed orientalist discourses that explain what

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[18] This is true for my past work as well as for *Numbers Increase As We Count...*

is happening there as being tied with some 'essential' features of what this supposed 'Middle-East' is (see e.g. Said 1978; Mohanty 1984, 2003; Memmi 1991; Hoodfar 2003; Dabashi 2011). Much information regarding the beginnings of this crisis, the real causes of what is happening there, have been forgotten and replaced with rhetoric that allows the western audience to shed any sense of responsibility[19]. In a way, mainstream media uses the same techniques as the ones used by Aristotelian drama as analyzed by Brecht (and Boal after him). It is almost as if in the end, the invasion of Iraq had in fact been beneficial, or at least, was a step in the direction towards the way of a better 'Middle East'. After this kind of understanding, the Western (or 'westernized') audience member feels some sort of catharsis and can return to his/her normal life, without feeling the burden of what is happening to Others. In other words, we watch or read the news, and experience a sort of catharsis: we are purged of the feeling of responsibility. But this is exactly what, as an artist, I should not let happen in building a performance about the fate of women after the invasion of Iraq. I must give the audience members access to a different narrative. But since, as in Boal's criticism of Brecht's hierarchical framework, I do not see a difference between the artists (writer, director, dramaturge, performer) and the audience, the work starts in the workshops (which are often undistinguishable from the actual performance itself): the artists must pass through the same steps as the ones the audience members will. What we all become during this process is *not* new selves purged by catharsis of some tension, able to return to our new life. Instead, we all become transformed individuals able to think differently

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[19] This is related closely to the topic of the last chapter of this thesis, about the role of the immigrant ('Middle Eastern') artist in North America (or the West). This is why many of the discussions here will be kept to their minimum.

regarding the inherent structures. We are now in possession of knowledge that is filled with urgency: we become potential actors of change[20].

Boal's reasons to search for different dramaturgical tools (other than the ones offered in the Aristotelian model) are political. However, he is not the only scholar concerned with moving beyond Aristotelian dramaturgy. It seems to be a concern of many of the (experimental) creators during the 20th century, e.g. theatre artists, performance artists, happening artists, storytellers. This search for new dramaturgical tools is described in Lehmann 2006, who coined the term 'Post-Dramatic Theatre'. Lehmann describes the core of Dramatic Theatre:

> theatre in Europe amounted to the representation, the 'making present' (*Vergegenwärtigung*) of speeches and deeds on stage through mimetic dramatic play. Bertolt Brecht chose the term 'dramatic theatre' to designate the tradition that his epic 'theatre of the scientific age' intended to put an end to. In a more comprehensive sense (and also including the majority of Brecht's own work), however, this term can be used to designate the core of European theatre tradition in modern times. Inherent in it is a certain conglomeration of motifs – partially conscious and partially taken for granted as self-evident – that is frequently still unquestioningly regarded as constitutive for 'the' theatre. Theatre is tacitly thought of as the *theatre of dramas*. Among its consciously theorized elements are the categories of 'imitation' and 'action'/'plot', as much as the virtually automatic intimate connection of the two.

This is one aspect of theatre where I do not think Boal brought a new contribution. Boal's dramaturgy remains linear: there is a plot with all the traditional elements (beginning,

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[20] Here, I embrace Boal's analysis of catharsis. This does not mean that cathartic work cannot make us think differently or gain knowledge. Here it is catharsis as a *strategy* that is criticized.

catastrophe, ending). What Boal wanted was to bring the Spect-Actor to see that the plot is not *a given,* but only *one possibility among others*, and that the story (the representation of the world) is generally told by the ruler who has no desire of seeing it changed. I feel that we could make Boal's contributions to theatre more powerful if we developed and researched new methods of storytelling, something that has always been very much at the core of my artistic practice.

5.4.2. The dramaturgical approach to *Numbers Increase As We Count…*

In *Numbers Increase As We Count…*, I do not have a story written in a conventional manner. I have facts, testimonies, and statistics: 500 women, 40 000 women, 500 000 women, etc. This is merely a phrase: "40 000 women have been trafficked, killed, sold". So, I respond with a challenge: "this is too easy. Let's count them one by one!"

Counting is a function of time. The performer is exhausted physically by counting, the numbers become bigger, physically more difficult to say, mentally more difficult to hold with attention, and emotionally more difficult to deal with because these are real women being counted. In that sense, there is still a progression. As the numbers are increasing, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6… the performers are getting more tired, exhausted. There is a linearity in the physical work and in the counting. But the storytelling is not linear: it is a presence, the presence of all these women that are not here but that nonetheless haunt the stage as we count them. The performers channel the women and are confronted with their growing numbers.

The performance is a ritual because we are honouring all these women who were raped, sold and forced to become sex workers, because of war. In that sense, this piece fits the 'ritualistic' definition of performance given by Richard Schechner. As with drama, ritual has a beginning, an

end, and stylistic conventions, but it is not linear storytelling. It is more like life itself, with its organic rhythms, a sort of circularity, an iterative character, a rhythm that drama can take inspiration from. Schechner describes this rhythm:

> Drama modeled on life-rhythms contains episodes of varying length, usually short, where tensions increase, explode, and return to the original situation (figure 1.8). X and Y are the forces or individuals in conflict. Although tensions are released through the explosive discharge of energy, the underlying conditions have not changed, nothing has been resolved; the release is temporary, and the situation is returned to a starting point where it begins all over again. Often the rhythms are set within the context of a game, and in many dramas structured this way *rules* replace *plots*. A single game, or a series of related games, usually of the rhythmic-explosive kind, are played. Instead of an action being "completed," permutations on a given set are explored. The story yields to the game as the generative matrix of the theatrical situation (Schechner 2005 [1979]: 21).

Counting gives us a rhythm. Every day the situation returns to its starting point. In that sense, the piece is 'iterative' since it is a repetition of a ritual that took place before, during the rehearsals, and during the performances with audience. But in my piece, there is no release of responsibility that comes with an ending. The goal is not to produce catharsis in the audience member, for catharsis brings passivity. The goal is to awaken the audience members and make them think for themselves. In the end, the goal is to change social reality, to illuminate power structures and show the audience members that they have a choice on how to act based on what they have learned through watching the performance.

One other technique I use, both to break with linear storytelling and cathartic effects, is to give all the information before the play. By this, I do not mean to 'expose', in the Aristotelian sense, the plot, what will happen to the characters, etc. Since there is no linear story, there cannot be an exposition of this type. In the first part, I give all the information that is needed to understand what kind of performance (i.e., a protest) the audience members are going to witness. There is no real suspense or surprise since all the facts are known and these facts are staring the audience in the eyes. This is a structure that is also found in protest settings: the protesters know why they are there; they know what situation they are protesting against. They might lack specific information, but this can be given by people during speeches or just in conversation with the other protesters. Like theatre, which is set in the perpetual present tense, time does not evolve during a protest, it is always a *here and now*.

Another aspect of *Numbers Increase As We Count…* that breaks with the linear storytelling of Aristotelian dramaturgy is the way reference to *actual time* –the time of the performance, the time of the audience member- is exploited. The subject of the performance has happened in the past, it is happening now and it will continue happen in the future. It is not a separate time from the performance as, for example, in a play that would take place in the theater at 8pm but in which the story happens in the morning, or in a different decade. We do not open a 'parenthesis' in time or in the life of the audience. Both the performance and its subject are happening in real time. We give a rhythm to their own time; by counting each second, we bring attention to the current moment, which may even seem to slow down their life. We cut the hour of the performance into seconds and they feel all these seconds and realize the tragedy these seconds involve and represent. We trap the audience into this counting. We, as performers, are also trapped in the counting: not inside a role, but inside our own identity. I, as a director, trapped the

actors in the counting, and the only thing they can do, is to continue counting. But I am also trapped in it since I put myself on stage and talk about myself reflecting on why I am doing all this. And this is the role, the mission, we give the audience, to continue counting when they leave the hall, so that they can be aware of the count continuing well after the actresses have stopped vocalizing it and have left the theatre.

The time of the performance includes past times in which we counted, therefore the protest is ongoing when we begin a 'new' performance. The use of documentary archives of the rehearsals and past work that led to the actual point of reference help to bring the 'then' into the 'now' of the performance.[21] These archives are used during the performance: the past is therefore in the present, and the present we live now with the audience could also be archived, and reused in the future, during other performances, to talk about the same topic (unfortunately…). Time is collapsed into the moment of the performance.

Another dramaturgical question I had to solve for this performance was how it should end, since the situation, and therefore the protest, continues, but there are limits to an audience's willingness to participate and they must somehow be released.

> Ending the show and going away also involves ceremony: applause or some formal way to conclude the performance and wipe away the reality of the show re-establishing in its place the reality of everyday life. The performers even more than the audience prepare and then, when the show is over, undertake "cooling-off" procedures (Schechner:162).

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[21] This new 'now' can become archives of the protest that I can use for future work/protest, and is actually a material that I have been using already in two talk-performance-protest, Sevdi 2021a and Sevdi 2021b.

I do not want to wipe away 'the reality of the show' and even if I wanted to, it would not be possible since the reality outside the show does not end. I agree with Schechner that:

> Too little study has been made of how people—both spectators and performers—approach and leave performances. How do specific audiences get to, and into, the performance space; how do they go from that space? In what ways are gathering/dispersing related to preparation/ cooling off (Schechner:162).

In a sense, it is exactly the same question that is raised after a protest: how do we stop it, when are we going back home and start our 'normal life' again?

My answer has been to simply leave the stage, without any word signalling that the performance-protest was over. We leave the stage and go in the direction of the lobby. There, the audience members were met with my second answer, that is: to give the voice to nineteen other artists that have accepted to learn about the situation, count, and talk about what it felt like to count. They see that there is a way for the protest-performance to continue with them by pledging to learn more and speak out. However, regardless of their reasons or intentions, any audience members leaving could be perceived as a rejection of the act of protest. The future of the protest rests in their choice.

This brings me to another aspect of Boal's framework that I adopt in my work, his main contribution to Brecht's work: the vision of non-separation between the audience and the artist,

and the vision of a transformative practice that makes the audience member become a performer, an active participant in the work, and therefore, an active participant in change.

5.4.3. The Spect-Actor and the 'performative turn'

The questions raised by Boal gesture towards a subject that is larger than just political theatre/drama/performance. Rather, they question the place of theatre within the world, how it distinguishes itself from 'normal' life, and the role that theatre has in the society in which it is performed. This question informs much of the discussion surrounding 'performance' since the 'performative turn' (e.g. Fischer-Lichte 2008: 6). This 'performative turn' has affected many branches of the academic disciplines (e.g., linguistics, cultural studies, anthropology, philosophy), and has allowed interdisciplinary collaboration regarding a vision of what social actors are doing in their daily life. The central idea is that much of what we do is performative, therefore social life is, so to speak, 'theatrical'. We perform identities, roles, norms, and so on, and this performativity affects the social world: it can help to bring change, or on the contrary, help in the stability of this world. In this light, if social life is a drama where people perform in such a way as to garner particular results, drama and life are more closely related than we previously considered. Theatre is not merely representative or symbolic, it shares roles and tools with the 'real life' that it 'imitates'. Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed made these analyses before the performative turn became mainstream. But his approach was practical, and he reversed the analysis: theatre/drama can perform a social function, at least as a preparation for the Oppressed to fight against oppressive situations.

Now the main question about performance seems to be: what is performance and more importantly, what is *not* performance? Erwin Goffman writes that everything is a performance[22], while Josette Féral posits that some things are performances because there are rules, intentions in the actors or the audience, a stage, an element of non-reality[23].

A problem to be address is how to trace a limit between life and the stage: the stage can be anywhere and everywhere. We do not need to take the audience to a different and special place to give a performance. Everyone can be an actor, a performer, every place a stage. These are themes that we find in Boal as well as in Goffman. Everyone can also refuse to be an active actor, to actively pursue change, for a great variety of reasons.

Even if I agree with many things I read regarding performance art, my main position is always the following, a position I will translate in the language of performance (a position I think would have been Boal's as well):

> Everything is not a performance.
>
> The Oppressed are never performing their oppression.
>
> Nobody can enjoy the fact of being oppressed.
>
> There is no stage there (if there is one, it can only be the Oppressor's).
>
> The oppressor might be performing a very sadistic ritual for an audience he chooses. No oppressed person or group has this privilege.

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[22] A position that is expressed powerfully in Goffman 1959 and 1967, works that, with Austin 1962, come back often in the theoretical works about performance art.

[23] See for examples Féral & Bermingham 2002 for interesting discussions.

This is where I draw the line between the stage (the performance) and 'normal' life; both in my work as a facilitator in the Theatre of the Oppressed, and in my work as a writer, director and dramaturge. I can put oppressive situations on stage and make performances out of them. But I do not treat the Oppressed as a person playing their oppression. A performance artist wants to be on stage and present the performance to an audience, even if the performance broaches heavy topics. The Oppressed, who understand they are oppressed, want to use the drama to find a way out of the oppressive situation. They often do not know how to do so; or, more often, *do know* but *cannot*, because the system is built in a certain way. Of course, there is also the case the Oppressed who do not understand their oppression, thus the facilitator is both illuminating the situation as they see it as well as proposing a way out.

Let's take the following quote by Schechner:

> But these performance activities are something different. Only theater (music, dance) is art in the strict sense. Individuals engaged in ritual, games, or sports must conform to the rules which separate these activities from "real life." Although I do not wish to elaborate here, I think these activities are the social counterparts to individual fantasy. Thus their social function is to stand apart from ordinary life, both idealizing it (in these activities people play by the rules) and criticizing it (why can't *all* life be a game?) (Schechner 2005 [1977]: 11).

This is a very strong definition of 'theatre' or 'performance'. Schechner sees theatre as 'fantasy', 'imaginary play', or a 'game' with rules. If this is a correct definition of what performance is, then I am breaking the rules in many ways, especially in *Numbers Increase As We Count...* In this piece, I am not separating art from the real life. I am not creating a fantasy world for people to

come and escape from reality or go outside of 'reality' for the duration of the performance: the performance is an act of protest through which I am searching for a way to bring the stage to the street, achieving the contrary effect described by Schechner.

Theatre practitioners have often staged theatre in alternative, popular, accessible venues: the street, the metro, etc. to show that there is no limit with life and/or to make theater democratic. For this, they used many different techniques, e.g. invisible theatre, propaganda theatre, happenings, etc. What I intend to do is to clearly designate the stage as a site of protest. The standard Middleclass-bourgeois audience wants to laugh, cry, experience something different, feel emotions, experience catharsis, etc. So, they buy a ticket with these expectations, generally to hear a story, possibly a linear one. As artists, we can play with these expectations. We can bring the audience to the stage, which in itself allows a protest against these very values. At this moment, the audience member needs to make decisions. It is at the moment when decisions are taken that the audience member becomes active: the simple fact of having making a decision is already a transformation. The audience member is in the same position as the performer who is asked to participate in the performance, in the protest. That is the proposition to the audience. The second step consists in the audience members feeling that they are complicit in what is happening. This is the protest to the audience, in this way, it is participatory.

In that sense, this piece breaks with what we read in Schechner's definition. Instead of an *imaginary world* created on stage, we could talk of Hyper-Reality or Hyper-Realism[24].

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[24] The question is then if Schechner would accept my performance as theatre or as a 'performance'. However, this concern for a dramaturgy that goes beyond illusion would also connect *Numbers Increase As We Count…* to what has been called by Lehmann 2006 and his followers 'Post-Dramatic Theatre' for which, as Carroll, Jürs-Munby and

Schechner writes about the transformation of natural spaces into cultural ones (Schechner 2005 [1977]: 149). I'm transforming the stage (the black box) into a space for protest. I put the stage in the street: you are not only an audience, you are a participant who has to make a decision, take a position. You cannot just listen, enjoy and go: you will carry this play with you regular life as well. The audience becomes a protester as well, but is also the object of protest, in the sense that we are all complicit in what is happening. Which brings to the 'transformative' aspect of performance art, something I feel is a very important contribution in Schechner's work.

Schechner often talks about 'transformative' theater or the transformative aspect of performance (Ibid.: 159). This is a principle intention in this piece and in all of my work, and something that Boal was successful in as well. He talks about the 'Spect-Actor' (as opposed to the 'spectator'), referring to an audience member who is an active, as opposed to passive, consumer of theater. In forum theatre, a small play is presented to the audience and the audience is asked to find

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Giles explain, "the common ground between the postdramatic mode and certain strands of European modernism, whose political and aesthetic force derived in large part from its destabilising of norms of language and representation. In terms of modernist theatre, the primary norm of theatrical representation since the late eighteenth century is mimetic illusionism, and one might trace its undermining – along with the picture-frame stage that mediates it architecturally (Carroll & al.)". As Lehmann tells us: " it can be stated that dramatic theatre was the formation of illusion. It wanted to construct a *fictive cosmos* and let all the stage represent – be – a world (this inversion is the aesthetic implication of the Shakespearean 'All the world's a stage . . .') abstracted but intended for the imagination and empathy of the spectator to follow and complete the *illusion* (Lehmann 2006: 22)".

solutions to the oppression that is lived by the characters. The audience members are asked to go on stage to try these solutions by acting them out in the play.

This is what I am trying to do with the piece: to offer a space for individual and social transformation, for the audience members to experience war and its consequences as citizens of the world, for the performers to transform themselves into knowledgeable protesters, and to transform myself from a facilitator to a protester (it is the first work where I have put myself on stage as myself). The addition of an immersive/interactive part in this project gives this participatory element: the audience is no longer passively listening, they become performers and witnesses.

I also think that there is a transformative aspect to the counting feature of the performance: the audience becomes aware as they are immersed in information, dropped into this 'reality'. This is not done through a linear story made up of actions, situations and character struggles: the counting itself is the only element with linearity. Reality in that case is like a trance: counting and repetition produces another state of mind, but also introduces an element of urgency.

Schechner evokes the power of trance for the performers (Ibid.: 168). In *Numbers Increase As We Count…*, the performers are entering this sort of state. Counting produces it naturally, but when we add the physical component, it becomes even stronger: they move constantly, make images with their bodies, all while keeping the count. It is physically, mentally and emotionally a very tiring and demanding performance.

Let us contrast this with Stanislavski's approach, a canonical reference for acting methods. In the following, Schechner summarizes nicely what I have always thought of Stanislavski's method:

> Stanislavski's approach is humanist and psychological, but still a version of the ancient technique of performing by becoming or being possessed by another. (Schechner 2005 [1977]: 169)

Coming from a Boalian background, it is unsurprising that I do not want to use this method rooted in Aristotelian representation. First of all, it brings a dead actor on to the stage: it erases their existence and personality and gives presence only to the character. Furthermore, the actor becomes a puppet in the hands of the director and/or author, thus the performance can only ever be a parenthesis in the life of the actor.

What I want to do is to encourage the performer to put himself/herself on stage and to realize who he/she is (it is also true of me) through performing a particular role. This is the only way we can reach what Boal considers as the term Spect-Actor. It is not possession of the actor/performer by the character/protagonist, rather, it is self-discovery, with the goal to empower the actor and give them tools and strength to return to the outside world ready to face it. This is what I mean by the power of transformative performance. But this transformative power is not to be found only in the staged performance: it starts beforehand, in the rehearsals, which are not only rehearsals in the sense of practice through repetition, but also the creation of materials for the work itself as preliminary acts of performative protest and resistance. This power continues after the performance. Rehearsals are already performances, the same way the performance is also a rehearsal. In Boal's theatre, rehearsal is a rehearsal for revolution and reconsidered reality. It is a preparation; it is a way to empower people to act with integrity in future circumstances of

oppression. The rehearsal is a place for creation, a place to actively research: where performers are enmeshed with their testimonies, with their feelings, with their ideas. This is what we bring to the stage, not merely our bodies sculpted into the character of another's creation. In that way, the performance remains a rehearsal because the outcome is not fully predictable and will change every night. It resembles Boal's Forum Theatre where all possibilities are open within a given structure: the structure is open to the action of different performers, performers will shape the outcome differently simply because they are different people, with different experiences, analyses, personalities; with different minds, visions and dreams.

5.5. Provisional conclusion

The performance I offer does not work as a conventional play. As I have shown, *from the beginning* I offer the information, I offer the ending. I have reversed the order of the traditional theatrical plot. In that sense, the dramaturgy I use is a form of New Dramaturgy (see Trencsenyi and Cochrane 2014). It is also a dramaturgy of a performative type, and I think this is where the main difference lies: contrary to conventional theatre, there is no plot. The audience witnesses something happening, has a chance for concrete participation (at the beginning) and is transformed into audience-performers since I put them inside the act of protest from the beginning. As such, they remains within the protest, though it is presented as an aesthetic experience.

In the next chapter, I will explain Performative Acting from a more detailed, theoretical perspective. This next chapter should be read keeping in mind the connections I drew between my method and Boal's framework in the present chapter.

Before delving into this next chapter, I just want to add the following remarks, which will read somehow like a manifesto for the development of Performative Acting:

Make the performer become a dramaturge

Make the audience member become a dramaturge

Facilitate this becoming

Become as you facilitate

6. Towards a Performative Acting methodology

6.1. Introduction

Many years ago, after the 'end' of the Iraq-USA war (what many of us consider the *invasion* of Iraq), I learned about the kidnapping of countless women by sex traffickers. But nobody hears their voices.

When I started working on the performance *Numbers Increase As We Count…*, I read a report stating that by that time , four *thousand* women were reported kidnaped in the North of Iraq, and nothing more was known about them. No mainstream news reported their disappearance. Years later, this number is thought to have reached into the hundred-thousands, with thousands more at risk. The report states that virgins were sold at high prices, and were forced into prostitution in brothels. The United Nations refers to them as 'War Prostitutes'. They are just called 'Prostitutes', reported as numbers[25].

"*This is not a performance. It is a protest*". These are the last words of my address to the audience in the lobby before inviting them to the main theatre space. They have just read through a microphone the short pieces of text I gave them, and heard me translating these words into Turkish. These texts explain the tragic situation of women thousands of miles away, the reasons I am doing this performance, and the history of this performance. I give a context.

The kernel of an idea for the performance came from my desire to scream my pain, to share the horror I felt; I wanted to honour these women by humanizing them instead of allowing them to exist only as numbers. But how do we address this sort of horrific 'everyday' in our

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[25] This text –as other ones taken from the performance that are found in the core of the thesis- is slightly changed for the needs of the discussion and argumentation. For the original ones that were used during the performance, see the Performance Score (Chapter 3).

performances[26]? What form, what methods, what aesthetics, should carry this sort of content? And with what purpose? As a theatre and performance artist, I always felt that I have a role, a responsibility to raise awareness of such situations. Our work is giving form; but also, to carry content. How do I talk about such a tragedy?

I left Turkey in 2014, there were many Syrian and Iraqi refugees in the streets. I came here, to Montreal... There, in the streets, every day, I used to pass by them in the parks, on the corner of apartment buildings. I would see them there, lying on the ground, waiting for a sandwich or a piece of bread. I witnessed a lot of young girls begging for money all day long.

One day, I was eating falafel with a friend. A young blond girl came to us, twelve or thirteen years old. She asked for just a bit of what we were eating. I told her to sit and that I would offer her a sandwich. We were not speaking the same language. We looked at each other. We understood each other. She waited in silence for the food to come. When the sandwich came, she was ready to go with it. I told her to sit, that she didn't need to go. She wanted to. When I asked her why, with her few Turkish words, she explained that her parents were waiting for her. She was not searching for food only for herself: she had brothers and sisters, and a family. It was not money that they wanted: they just wanted food. Food stays in your throat on a daily basis: How can I swallow that food after witnessing that?

Being in Montreal does not keep this suffering far away from me, does not protect me from knowing. It is something that even in the days of happiness, can and does hurt like a needle.

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[26] In what follows, I discuss in some places the question of the different aspects of the 'everyday'/'quotidian'. This way of framing parts of the following discussion comes from a paper-performance I gave at the CUNY Conference "Negotiating Quotidian: Performing the Everyday" (April 2021). I found in this title a strong resonance with what I have tried to do with *Numbers Increase As We Count…*, and preparing the video for the talk helped me in framing some of the ideas that are found in the present discussion.

As a woman I have a responsibility, and I cannot forget" (Text from the First Part of *Numbers Increase As We Count…*).

How do I address this tragedy for a *privileged* North American audience member (the typical theatre-goer), whose quotidian existence is very removed from what is happening in the Middle-East? Yet, they are citizens of the countries that are directly responsible for this tragedy (see e.g. Sayle 2015; Barnes 2020).

6.2. Counting
The performance, *Numbers Increase As We Count…*, is based around a simple task: counting. 1. 2. 3…, etc. This counting refers to the estimated number of victims of sex trafficking as a direct result of the invasion of Iraq: an endless performance if we were to continue the counting until we reach the actual numbers. But this is exactly the message: every second that passes brings more women into trafficking.

In choosing the title '*Numbers Increase As We Count...*' I played on the ambiguities that are carried in its formulation:

1) a compositional semantics gives us the actual description of the performance: the actual counting where numbers in fact increase as we count;

2) a causal reading gives the meaning "because of the counting, numbers increase." This is a political statement - until we start counting, we cannot have a real idea of what is happening, and numbers stay as they are (i.e. abstractions for masses of real facts); and

3) the verb to count is polysemic: it can refer to a mathematical operation, but can also refer to

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the fact of giving importance to something; which is the main aim of the performance.

Most importantly here, counting is a tool to fight the anonymity of statistics: under numbers that we see everyday in the news (tragedies, natural catastrophes, etc.) lie real people; in the case of *Numbers Increase As We Count…*, real women who are suffering extreme violence.

While I use counting to make the statistics more 'real', numbering (quantifying and making things, people, events more predictable, measurable, and hence comparable) is also the preferred modern Western Scientific methodology[27], and is most often used to talk about whole populations in general terms, thus hiding differences, devaluing and dehumanizing human beings. Numbers ground discourse, which then ground strategies to legitimize colonialism, slavery, Orientalism, imperialism, and atrocities conducted in the name of these.

The piece is about American imperialism, war, destruction, about the way it affects women, and therefore touches on the question of why people flee their countries and seek refuge in countries like Canada, which contribute to what is happening in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and more generally in the Global South (see e.g. Engler 2005, 2009, 2010, 2012a, 2012b, 2015, 2019, 2020; Sayle 2015; Barnes 2020). In this performance, I therefore question the different layers of what we call the 'Quotidian' –as if there was only one quotidian, one belonging to a comfortable (Canadian) audience member or artist.

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[27] I thank Dr. Gülden Özcan for this remark.

I have witnessed directly the consequences of the Iraqi and Syrian wars in the streets of my country, Turkey.

Knowing is the biggest responsibility. To see and to tell what you've seen. Life is passing in front of me, with its oppression and massacres. We read history books taking many lessons from them. We cannot believe what our ancestors have done and blame them for many things. It is as if our own lives are far from suffering, and as if we are not responsible for current massacres and tragedies.

It is very important for me to share the pain. To open the closed eyes for them to see; and to make the ears that do not hear, hear. The numbers are increasing at every moment. Numbers have never been just numbers for me. But it is so easy to talk this way and go on (Text from the First Part of *Numbers Increase As We Count…*).

Counting grounded the rest of the material and structural needs of the performance-protest. However, from the theoretical-dramaturgical point of view of a facilitator dealing with performers, counting was not the only possible material. I could have gone on stage, counted, and given a little bit of information to the audience members, which could have created an effective *happening*. But I wanted more than this: I wanted transformation and empowerment.

There are two main reasons why I developed and theorized Performative Acting:

1) We are outsiders in this situation of Oppression in the sense that we are not suffering what these women, girls and children are suffering. From my experience with Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, and especially with Forum Theatre, I have come to understand that transformation comes first to the participants in the workshop who will present the theatre play they built for the Forum: it is *their* theatre play addressing *their* own issues with oppressive situations.

Here, with *Numbers Increase As We Count…*, the situation is different: I address a tragedy that is happening right now, very far away. In no way can a Forum Theatre play be organized/facilitated with these women, girls and children due to the volatility of the current political climate in their area. We can only address the situation from the outside, we must fight, protest, raise our voices!

2) This is happening now, the tragedy becomes more horrific by the day as more women are affected. The more we learn about what is happening, the more we and our protest evolves. I needed to find a way to show this in the performance. But I also needed to reflect in the methodology that I was going to document the work with the performers (including myself, since I have put myself *as myself* on stage) and use it as creative materials. My greatest fear was that the performing would become fixed, choreographed; that it would become a *'work of art'*, a 'product', or something with definite boundaries[28]. I did not want the performers to get stuck in pre-rehearsed modes to be merely repeated during the performance in front of the audience. Their reflexes must transform as they do, hence my development of 'Performative Acting'.

6.3. From counting to Performative Acting
Everything up to now has been a historical background to my artistic practice, explaining the theoretical, political and aesthetic groundings of my artistic output, including the performative acting method employed in *Numbers Increase As We Count…*.

What I call 'Performative Acting' is a method of:

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[28] I will come back later to theoreticians like John Cage and Umberto Eco who have given a different perspective on what a 'work of art' is, and who both gave a much bigger role to the audience members in giving a definition and a meaning to specific works of art. Since my present discussion is about the performing itself (without the audience), these arguments do not hold for now.

1) enabling dramaturgical structures for performances, inside which… 2) performers are given specific tasks, and asked to perform this/these task(s) authentically after a process of searching, finding, learning and becoming[29].

Performative Acting is the combination of these two elements, as well as the interaction between them (for 'structure', please see the definition I gave in the first chapter).

If we take *Numbers Increase As We Count…* as an example:

a) The specific task that was given to the performers was to count, from one to any number they could reach.

b) The structure that I created was the protest itself, the performance itself, with its flow of information –the dramaturgical-facilitating aspect- inside which the Performative Acting was taking place.

Therefore, in *Numbers Increase As We Count…*, we have a 'protest-as-structure' and the counting. What the performers are asked to do is to 'Performatively Act' inside these constraints. That combination is a performance where performers are put inside this structure, the protest, and are asked to interact in specific ways with it; to immerse themselves in the structure, in the information that it carries; to know something they did not know before and understand their

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[29] I need to say that this method is still a work in progress. I have researched theoretically and practically a tool and got some very promising results. As I write this thesis, I am aware more and more of the multiple layers that still need to be discovered until I fully understand everything involved in Performative Acting. I am also aware of the need to make further connections with other frameworks and methods to enrich it.

responsibility. And to take decisions. We have to note that the audience members are also put inside the structure and therefore are part of the elements of the structure for the performers.

The core of Performative Acting revolves around three words: "To Know-To Find-To Become". These are all active verbs referring to a process of transformation and epistemological-methodological activity: research and the creation of knowledge through such. This knowledge allows us to be something else after the process: if no knowledge is gained, we do not *become*. The performer dwells inside the research process devoted to the topic or the methodology of the performance. She reads, listens, and is changed during this research. This is an infinite process.

While she performs the task, she is encouraged to act as herself: with each iteration of the performance, she responds from the new or different self that she became and is becoming. She should not role-play, rather, if she feels something, she is encouraged to express it as her newly affected. If not, do nothing. This makes each rehearsal a performance, an opportunity for this new self to be performed. But since this process is infinite (due to the infinite nature of both personal evolution and the subject matter) each performance is also a rehearsal: there is no separation between rehearsal and performance. The only difference is the audience. When the audience is there, she must perform as honestly as possible, and accept the audience input as affective.

This will result in an apparently different performance. However since the structure is rigid, it is not improvisation. It is more akin to an 'Open Composition' (as seen in contemporary music), or in more general terms, to an 'Open Work', as theorized by Eco in *The Open Work* (Eco 1989). Talking about Eco's book, Robey says that:

Opera aperta [Umberto Eco's book] in particular is still a significant work, both on account of the enduring historical usefulness of its concept of "openness," and because of the striking way in which it anticipates two of the major themes of contemporary literary theory from the mid-sixties onward: the insistence on the element of multiplicity, plurality, or polysemy in art, and the emphasis on the role of the reader, on literary interpretation and response as an interactive process between reader and text. The questions the book raises, and the answers it gives, are very much part of the continuing contemporary debate on literature, art, and culture in general (Robey 1989: viii).

The notion of 'Open Work' has been developed for the analysis of contemporary literature. However, as Robey summarizes,

The idea is illustrated in its most extreme form by what Eco calls "works in motion" (*opere in movimento*); he cites (Chapter i) the aleatory music of Stockhausen, Berio, and Pousseur, Calder's mobiles, and Mallarme's *Livre*. What such works have in common is the artist's decision to leave the arrangement of some of their constituents either to the public or to chance, thus giving them not a single definitive order but a multiplicity of possible orders (Robey 1989: ix-x).

This is how Eco describes developments that composers have brought to musical performance theory and methodology[30], and the examples he gives to show some of this different advances and experimentations[31]:

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[30] Eco does not frame it in terms of 'performance theory'. But since it is about the role of the performer, I think it is safe to connect Eco's theorizing with the theories developed in Performance Studies.

[31] I will quote Eco extensively here. Many of the ideas he expresses are extremely relevant for what follows, and I will therefore ask the reader to keep in mind Eco's long discussion.

A number of recent pieces of instrumental music are linked by a common feature: the considerable autonomy left to the individual performer in the way he chooses to play the work. Thus, he is not merely free to interpret the composer's instructions following his own discretion (which in fact happens in traditional music), but he must impose his judgment on the form of the piece, as when he decides how long to hold a note or in what order to group the sounds: all this amounts to an act of improvised creation. Here are some of the best-known examples of the process.

Eco continues with some famous examples of composers who have tried to give as much autonomy as possible to the performer/interpret. He gives the example of Stockhausen who, in *Klavierstiick XI* "presents the performer a single large sheet of music paper with a series of note groupings. The performer then has to choose among these groupings, first for the one to start the piece and, next, for the successive units in the order in which he elects to weld them together. In this type of performance, the instrumentalist's freedom is a function of the "narrative" structure of the piece, which allows him to "mount" the sequence of musical units in the order he chooses" (Eco 1989: 2). Eco mentions Berio's *Sequence* for *Solo Flute* in which "the performer is free to choose how long to hold a note inside the fixed framework imposed on him, which in turn is established by the fixed pattern of the metronome's beat" (Ibid.).

Perhaps more topical to the method of Performative Acting is Henri Pousseur's comment regarding the intention of his piece, *Scambi:*

Scambi is not so much a musical composition as *a field of possibilities,* an explicit invitation to exercise choice. It is made up of sixteen sections. Each of these *can* be linked to any two others, without weakening the logical continuity of the musical process. Two edits sections, for example, arc introduced by similar motifs (after which they evolve in

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divergent patterns); another pair of sections, on the contrary, tends to develop towards the same climax. Since the performer *can* start or finish with any one section, a considerable number of sequential permutations are made available to him. Furthermore, the two sections which begin on the same motif can be played simultaneously, so as to present a more complex structural polyphony. It is not out of the question that we conceive these formal notations as a marketable product: if they were tape-recorded and the purchaser had a sufficiently sophisticated reception apparatus, then the general public would be in a position to develop a private musical construct of its own and a new collective sensibility in matters of musical presentation and duration could emerge (all these quotes and discussions can be found in Eco 1989: 1-2).

This idea of 'field of possibilities' will become extremely relevant for what comes next.

While Eco 1989 does not cite or make reference to John Cage, he is an important theoretician to consider in light of this 'field of possibilities' and has been a strong influence on my own artistic outputs. The first production that our company *Thought Experiment Production* staged was *4'33"* *Baghdad*. Amongst other things, it dealt with performance theory, the invasions of Iraq, the role of the academics, and Cage and his vision of performance.

Cage has been one of the most important practitioners-theoreticians of (conceptual) performance art of the 20th century (especially of music, but he has been a reference figure for artists of many other artistic disciplines[32]). What Eco admires in the work of the composers he cites is something

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[32] See for examples the different texts collected in Sandford 1995 on the topic of happening for good illustrations of the influence of Cage. If we also look at Allan Kaprow's answer to the editors, "taking exception to the emphasis given to John Cage and Marshall McLuhan as "germinal influences" on Happenings (Sandford 1995: Preface)", it shows indirectly the influence of Cage and the need felt by practitioner to position themselves relatively to his

for which, many would say, Cage is the main theoretician. In many of his works, he gives complete freedom inside structures he pre-arranged[33]. Another legacy is his tendency to give total freedom to the audience members in deciding what is art and not; what is part of the work of art and what is not; and what is aesthetically pleasant or not. In his famous book *Silence* (Cage 1961) he has framed and paved the way for the audience-member-as-dramaturge, and for the composer-as-facilitator insofar as they need not prescribe every moment, rather give only enough input for this collective dramaturgy to occur.

When we look at John Cage's outputs (ideas, theories, and experiments) from a political perspective, it may be perceived as problematic insofar as 1) it speaks for the privileged of this world, who have the possibility to experience art the way Cage tells us we should or could experience it; and 2) some of the messages are extremely (neo)liberal even if covered up in apolitical discourse[34]. That said, the anti-hierarchical aspect of his work is very satisfactory from the point of view of the Theatre of the Oppressed –or from any framework that is meant as a transformative tool against many forms of oppression. This anti-hierarchical stance is found in

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outputs.

[33] We could also say *facilitate*; and this would apply, at least from my point of view, to many of the works of the composers Eco refers to in the quote above.

[34] You can find some of this criticism in our performance *4'33" in Baghdad* and its adaption to a multimedia academic-performative paper for the Canadian Theatre Review (Royer-Artuso & Sevdi 2018). Kaprow 1977 describes some of the happenings of his time as "intellectual games, treasure hunts, spiritual exercises, and the behavior of street eccentrics, beggars, and petitioners" (Kaprow 1977: 186). This is also how I often feel in relation to many historical descriptions of or contemporary 'happenings' and performance art practice (see the collection in Sandford 1995 for many examples). The technique of Performative Acting can remind of some concepts/techniques that were used. But the real connection is to be found in Boal's approach which is centered around the performer as an actor of change, both at the personal level (i.e. becoming a better 'dramaturge') and at the socio-political level.

the theorizing, as well as in the methods used in the creation of performances, and the role he gave to the performers and to the audience members.

In this rejection of hierarchy, Cage is not alone. When we look at all the musical 'compositions' Eco refers to in the long citation above, all have something in common: the composer gives some indications, but the performer is free to interpret these indications as she wants. As Eco says of Pousseur's composition *Scambi*, it is "not so much a musical composition as *a field of possibilities,* an explicit invitation to exercise choice (Ibid.)". There is clearly a socio-political character in this proposition, a call for change. For somebody familiar with Boal's Forum Theatre, it is impossible not to see some similitudes.

I cannot speak as a specialist of music in any regard, but I highlight this work as it has a long history with facilitation through structure and freedom. However, there is one key difference between what music composers/performers/improvisers do when they work with sounds and what we, as theatre/performance practitioners do when we do our work. This main difference has to do with representations[35]: *instrumental* music practitioners do not deal with references, with representations of events/situations. To use the vocabulary of the theory of theatre: there is no mimesis, at least not in our use of the term. The choices and field of possibilities that the theatre/performance practitioner have are connected to some realities outside of the theatre stage; something that sounds cannot bring to mind (at least without an explicit context): an 'Open Work' in theatre/performance is not of the same kind as one in music. In the words of Kirby,

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[35] In the last chapter, I will discuss the topic of representation.

Traditional theatre makes use of an *information structure*. There we need information in order to understand the situation, to know who the people are, to know what is happening, or what might happen; we need information to "follow" the play, to apprehend it at all (Kirby 1995: 4).

Even in emerging forms of theatre that are less verbal and dramaturgically steeped in newness (in the sense of Trencséni & Cochrane 2014) –like happenings, closer to visual art (Kirby 1995: 3)-, there are queues that allow the audience to connect the performance to the world. These queues are not as immediately obvious in the abstract world of instrumental music. This information structure need not be a traditional, linear method of storytelling; it can be disconnected, simultaneous, cumulative (Ibid.: 4)[36], but dramaturgical codes and conventions nonetheless emerge and mould the artistic piece.

This idea of an open work is also at play in writing, though it too differs from an Open Work in theatre/performance insofar as the writer offers the reader a finished work (in the sense that it does not change once it is printed). Meanwhile, as we have seen, the ephemerality of theatre and performance gives it the potential to always be different (even traditional theatre with a fixed script) since there is no way to fix the stage, audience, public context or internal transformations of the performers. This is another sense in which the difference between performance and rehearsal collapses: both are part of the same world that changes constantly.

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[36] I want to thank Luis Sotelo-Castro for this reference and many others at a time when I really needed it to deepen my analyses.

Since each rehearsal is a performance, each rehearsal is valid as a meaningful 'Now'. During the performance, I used archives of rehearsals, thus introducing layers of 'Now' that constitute the history of the performance. The different counting that took place added up (even if we are still very far from the actual numbers…). By using archives of rehearsals, there is also additional material input for the performers on stage to interact with. The 'Now' of the present performance can also be archived and used in the future. This method also permits us to emphasize that the tragedy and our awareness did not just begin: these numbers have been increasing for a long time, and are continuing to increase as we count. The urgency increases with the numbers, and something must be done. Thus we call upon the audience. Not directly: but now that they know, they have a responsibility, just as I felt when I learned of the dire situation.

In this regard, 'Performative Acting' is related to the idea of 'performing the quotidian', insofar as it is not 'performing' but in fact *becoming*.

1) *it is not acting* since the performers are themselves. Perhaps this gleans over some difficulties of knowing what it is to be ourselves in a social world, whether or not we *play* our social roles or *act* according to some outside norm. Regardless, they interact with the structure as a regular human being: just as they would be in the quotidian, they are immersed in a constant flow of information and needs to make decisions about it, about what is relevant, what is important;

2) *it is performative* in the sense that it brings change. John Austin in *How to do Things with Words* (Austin 1955) called some language acts 'performative' because, just by the fact of uttering them, something in the world changes (e.g. "I pronounce you husband and wife", said by a religious figure or a legal figure, changes the world in some way).

Performative Acting is the transformation of actors into performers: from a simple task that serves as the acting trigger, the actor is transformed into a performer, which means someone who has the potential to take decisions in a flow of possibilities. It transforms the actor who is at the beginning somehow only a 'puppet' in the ends of the facilitator ("do this and that!"), into an agent in front of the information that needs to be found, known and embodied: it is the acceptance of a responsibility (even if we do nothing, we *do nothing* responsibly). This is a transformation of the same type as the one proposed by Boal when he worked to transform the traditional role of the audience member from spectators to Spect-Actors.

This is an invitation to the audience members to change their quotidian. In the case of *Numbers Increase As We Count…*, an invitation to join the quotidian of performers who are protesting by counting on stage. And who have been counting in the past; and will count in the future. Counting numbers that literally increase as we count...

At the end of the theatrical performance, the audience members left the theatre and found themselves in the original lobby, in which three televisions displayed further performances. Two of them featured artists performing the counting after having been given information about the situation. On middle screen, were testimonials by the artists about how it felt to count and to perform. In using these recorded performances and testimonials as a final moment in *Numbers Increase As We Count…*, the message to audience members was that the protest is not over and that it continues. And that they can join the protest by counting and raising awareness themselves. After each presentation of the performance over the last three years, artists or other audience members asked me how they could contribute to the performance, what they could do. They felt the responsibility, thus I invited them into the performance by asking them to perform the

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counting while practicing their art, and to archive these performances. This transformed the spectators into performative actors, thus completing the cycle, and creating new material to integrate into the structure.

These increasing layers of quotidian moments and 'Nows', both in time and space; inform the audience members of other realities; they see that others have been transformed into active participants, beyond the opening moments of reading my texts aloud. They feel the call to responsibility, thus their action is carried out of the theatre and into the quotidian sphere. Since everyone becomes a performer, everyone now has a structure in which to challenge their individual role in the ongoing oppressions and injustices in the world.

6.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have articulated important features of Performative Acting and showed how it relates to methods that allow for transformative autonomy in other artistic practices by creating open structures for the performers. There is much more to be done to fully theorize Performative Acting and to further explore its full artistic and social potential. Due to space and time restrictions; as well as a necessary emphasis on the practical part of the present project (its time-consuming conception, rehearsals and performance); and of course, the necessary next step of experimenting with this method in other performances as the practice-based laboratory, this present work is a scratching at the surface of this new method. I am convinced that it has a depth and breadth of possibility that makes it worthy of continued exploration. I intend to pursue this research in the near future as a doctoral project.

The next chapter is about things I learned indirectly, and that I felt should be acknowledged in this thesis. I explore my response to the role I felt was expected from me in the Canadian theatre world, when, as an immigrant artist –especially as a woman, and especially as a woman from the Middle East- I was dealing with topics like the one I dealt with in *Numbers Increase As We Count…* From radio interviews to articles in the press; from comments by art institutions managers to artists, I always felt that a specific message was expected of me, and that I wasn't delivering that expected message. I had always to explain myself, as if it were very strange for me to adopt certain unexpected positions. The next chapter is a sort of answer –the same way doing the performance the way I have decided to do it was also an answer.

7. The role of the immigrant artist in Canada[37]

> "*Akıllar ve gönüller işgal altındaysa coğrafyanın işgal altında olması kaçınılmazdır. Coğrafi işgal tek başına kurtarılacak işgal değildir. İslam dünyası coğrafik işgalden daha çok akıl işgaline uğramıştır.* (Ihsan Fazlıoğlu)"[38]

In this final chapter, I take the opportunity to reflect on the overall process of research, practice and creation, from a different angle, one that takes into account my sociopolitical position in Canadian society. In a Practice-based (and/or –led) Research project, some pre-existing questions and hypotheses animate the steps that will be taken to answer these questions and confirm or infirm the hypotheses. Some hypotheses will receive confirmation and will therefore generate forms of artistic and process-driven knowledge; while some others will reveal themselves to be incorrect, or at least not productive. The same applies to the questions we start with, and the way they are framed; in the present case, my own research questions.

The preceding chapters were written from the perspective of the research questions with which I began this Practice-based/led Research project, and explained the process that led to the performance *Numbers Increase As We Count...* as well as the techniques I developed for it. I

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[37] In this chapter –in addition to original material, and material developed during seminars- I will use material that has been presented or published during the last two years, mainly after the presentation of the performances at the MAI (Montréal, arts interculturels). I have decided not to reference these works with quotation marks to make the text run smoothly from one idea to the other.

[38] "If minds and hearts are under occupation, it is inevitable that the inhabited space will be under occupation. Geographical occupation alone is not an occupation that we can get rid of. The Muslim World is more mentally occupied than geographically occupied (my translation)".

drew from historical theatrical perspectives from which these techniques emerged and insisted on the political context informing the Marxist and interventionist theatrical history. There is so much more to be researched in order to fully develop a theory of Performative Acting, but I have reached the limits of scope of a Practice-based/led Research Masters Thesis which holds the performance and its practice as the core. The past chapters have offered self-reflection and historical context, and this thesis is only a complement to understand what animates the creative *and* academic steps involved. The in-depth theoretical work on Performative Acting is a topic that I intend to carry further in my doctoral studies.

This later chapter offers a series of unexpected answers I got without asking to questions I initially did not even realize would inevitably be asked. The experience of creation and its reception in the Canadian context provoked much thinking This chapter is about what this whole process taught me about the role of the (immigrant) artist in Canada. In a way, the chapter is connected to the political sub-questions that always informed my practice. But in the context of practicing my artistic activities in Canada, these questions took other meanings, and required other new answers. Since theatre has always been for me a form of social science next to the other ones (e.g. sociology, psychology, anthropology) –and a transformative one, including the transformation of the performer (Performative Acting) and anybody involved in the artistic process- it is only normal that in the transformation I discovered other things that I did not know about myself, about the world, and about the relation between me and this world, and the various contexts in which I have lived and created work.

In what follows, I explain the slow process of discovering how my own body and mind were colonized (and how this has been reflected in my work until now). This realization began gradually soon after immigrating to Canada, when I started working with artists and established institutions. However, the most profound understanding was catalyzed by the extensive preliminary work required for *Numbers Increase As We Count…* It was the first large scale production I staged in Montreal since emigrating from Turkey in 2014[39], and involved exchanges with the media, before and especially after the performance was presented at MAI. Through this change of countries, languages and contexts, I discovered that I had suddenly become a 'Woman "Middle-Eastern" Immigrant Artist', which brings with it a set of expectations relative to discourse and aesthetics. In collaborating with different art institutions, funding institutions, artists from a variety of artistic backgrounds, and the media, I began to realize some of these expectations of me that were rooted in my new status as opposed to myself as an individual artist. In this chapter, I want to discuss some of the things I have learned directly and indirectly from this creative process. I also want to explain how the performance that I intended to stage was changed by these new circumstances, and became something somehow different.

Here are some of the questions framing my exploration of what it means to be an immigrant artist in Canada:

1) How can we help to decolonize an imperialist mainstream discourse?

2) How are our aesthetic decisions informed by this discourse?

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[39] I also have to mention *4'33" in Baghdad*, the other work that we put on stage with our company *Thought Experiment Productions* (almost thirty representations already). With this work, which is also a sort of protest, I saw what it meant to work in Canada with artistic institutions, grant and funding institutions, and the media, and what the role of the immigrant artist was understood to be, consciously or not.

3) How can we avoid being complicit in this discourse?

4) How can we create performances to protest the *framing* of some tragic situations, a framing that institutions, funding and artistic, and the media want us, in a way, to reassert?

How do I address a tragedy like the one I deal with in *Numbers Increase As We Count…* for a North American audience, whose every day life is very removed from what is happening in the Middle-East? What techniques should I use, and with what purpose? More importantly: How do I represent what is happening in a manner that will resonate with this vastly different quotidian?

Theatre and performance practice largely deal with the representation of situations, real or imagined. The topic of 'representation' is central to many scientific approaches, from cognitive psychology to sociology and history[40]. As theatre and performance artists, we are involved with creating representations on a very practical level[41]. We are creators of representation for an audience that will eventually interact with these representations (absorbing, recognizing, rejecting, fantasizing, projecting...). Both creators and spectators are conditioned by where they come from, how they were educated, what conventions they expect. Therefore, certain representations are more powerful than others and some can be illegible or unintelligible, given the context.

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[40] See for example the following titles which are representative of contemporary topics in the social sciences, at the border between (social) psychology, sociology and history on one side, and the philosophy/methodology of science on the other: *Historical Representations* (Ankersmit 2002) or *Social representations: Explorations in Social Psychology* (Moscovici 2010), amongst many others.

[41] Theoretically as well: at least since Aristotle an emphasis of the notion and role of *mimesis* is one of the centers around what theatre practitioners construct their models of dramaturgical analysis.

Edward Said, amongst others, has brought awareness to different webs of representations the West has created and disseminated. He called this web of representations 'Orientalism'. Orientalism is a world of representations[42] used "for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient (Said 1978: 3)". It is a discourse; a theory; a definition; a description, written by a group who consider themselves to be higher in the hierarchy of civilization. In this process of definition and description, the Orient is made Oriental (Said 1978: 6): something seen as fixed and homogeneous historically, sociologically, culturally and politically. I would argue that this has become even more true after 9/11 and what has been dubbed the 'War on Terror'. When we talk about something like sex trafficking following the *invasion* of Iraq, we adopt a certain perspective on the events, even if it is not conscious. I see there to be two main perspectives that we adopt (at least, in the context of what I am discussing in this chapter):

1) The perspective of the artist expressing ideas that inform her vision of the world and/or the way she practices her art (both at the level of content and at the level of form); and

2) Some expectations about the perspective that you, the creator, are or *should be* adopting.

7.1. Representations, expectations: encoding according to…[43]
I will build on the work of Stuart Hall (Hall 1993 and 1997) to demonstrate how, for the theatre and/or performance artist, *encoding* and *decoding* are not separate actions, since we build according to expectations that we have about the audience to whom we address the work. We

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[42] Historical and social, in the words of Ankersmit 2002 and Moscovici 2010, at the same time as being psychological, cognitive.

[43] I thank Dr. Gülden Özcan for directing me to many of the authors' work that I cite in this chapter.

encode for a specific, presumed decoding (and must acknowledge that these expectations could be wrong).

Hall 1993 writes about a model of media communication in which the elites in power are seen to be encoding meaning for the 'average' populations to decode, thus communication is a process of encoding messages and meanings through signs in a discourse. A message is a representation of events, not the events themselves. This is why there can be domination through communication: we can manipulate the decoder by playing on the message (i.e. on the encoding). Discourse makes stories out of events –and what is more central than stories and storytelling methods for the theatre/performance practitioner (at least until the advent of New Dramaturgies)? .

The system of communication in a society is not closed: it is open to all the topics, agendas, definitions of situations that exist in a socio-cultural and political structure. These topics, agendas, and definitions of situation, become, with communication, experienced as 'natural' by the people living in these societies: they are the shared representations of a society[44]. Representations and concepts are manipulated in the process of encoding and decoding, as described by Hall 1993. This is also made very clear in Hall 1997. This is apparent in the media world where elite power exists, as well as in everyday communication. Together, the members of a society construct the world through communication. Language is not only a tool used by the elite to construct images of the world: it is a tool to construct representations about the world even when no such obvious power structures are involved.

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[44] To be fair, Hall also admits that communities are not homogenous, and that some people do not accept the definitions and the way the elites frame the messages.

Hall 1993 delves into questions of ideology and how to manipulate the audience (in a broad sense of the term) through communication, while Hall 1996 is a more general discussion about the construction of representations of the world. If we take these two texts together, the overriding impression is that communication is always about manipulation, even if power is not explicitly involved[45]. Based on this overarching manipulation, another conclusion is that we must use the same tools to fight the production of representations and its underlying ideology. We must understand the ideology created by a society's elite, and then work from there to change the resulting representations, or at least offer a different framework of representations that raise doubt in the audience members regarding its necessity and truth. In other words, if, "in a society not totalitarian, then, certain cultural forms dominate over others, just as certain ideas are more influential than others; the form of this cultural leadership is what Gramsci has identified as hegemony (Said 1978: 7)", then, what we must fight against is this hegemony of representation to correct the hegemonic discourse. The stage becomes a place for protest using the tools of this hegemonic world against itself.

Another side of the picture is that the Oppressed, the Colonized, or any other oppressed community, often accepts the representation of the world given by the Oppressor, the Colonizer. In his 2006 paper "Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native", Wolfe offers a profound discussion about Settler Colonialism, in which he states that the defining criteria of Settler Colonialism is *direct occupation*. While I cannot speak as a specialist in imperialism, colonialism and occupation/settler colonialism, I argue that in an neo-imperialist globalized world (in an extended sense of the term) settler colonialism is precisely what we are experiencing. We all became 'natives' of this Anglo-American and Western European world. Contrary to what Wolfe

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[45] The term 'manipulation' has a bad connotation, but I intend to use it without this negative (?) connotation.

2006 describes, there does not need to be direct invasion for settler colonialism to take place: one can invade from a distance with the proper tools, which may be economic, geopolitical, cultural or ideological in nature. You do not need mass killings[46]: "Whatever settlers may say— and they generally have a lot to say—the primary motive for elimination is not race (or religion, ethnicity, grade of civilization, etc.) but access to territory" (Wolfe 2006: 388). This summarizes a trend we see in modern imperialism where geopolitics alter the world by the dividing it into zones of control and influence, and then use these lands for profit. Considering the work of many de-colonialists have already said[47]: the mind of the people is another of the territories that can be accessed, colonised, and eventually occupied. I would even propose that the mind is the most effective first place to colonize: if it is successful, there cannot be any more resistance (since to resist means that you understand there is something wrong with what is happening).

As non-European/non-white immigrant artists proposing work in the West, we must always be careful not to enter the dominant discourse, we must not give the audience, the media and the institutions (art and funding institutions) exactly what those who frame the 'mainstream' representations want: another iteration of their messaging regarding our home countries. However, some immigrant-artists do in fact accept the definitions and descriptions given by the West of their own native place, and its explanation of the reasons their native place is the way it

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[46] Even if the recent wars of invasion in the Middle-East can easily be called 'mass murder', invasion, occupation (and soon after, 'proxy occupation', with the putting of puppet leaders). All this, under the pretence of bringing democracy.

[47] I am thinking specifically about the following works: Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Mask*; Albert Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized*; and Hamid Dabashi's *Brown Skin, White Masks*. In these books, the authors have all showed in details how real colonization is first of all a mental colonization, and how the colonized end up internalizing the discourse of the colonizers about themselves and about herself, and end up using this discourse herself. See also the quote by Ihsan Fazlıoğlu at the beginning of this chapter.

is. From my own experience and from what I have witnessed in others, there are two primary reasons I see this to happen:

1) if they accept directly the orientalist perspective without trying to find causes outside of the reasons given in the orientalist discourse (which says that the Orient is backward, does not and cannot change, is culturally authoritarian, non-rational). This leads them to always try to find the causes of the situation in themselves and not in the actual state of the imperialist-capitalist world and its geopolitical agenda, a world inside which the Orient is under attack, physically and cognitively.

2) capital, may it be economic, relational, or any other: if they feel that they need to speak from a certain perspective, because if not, they might lose credentials, reputation, work opportunity.

I now want to offer a personal analysis of some of the ties that connect the immigrant artists with the other parts of the Canadian system that form theatre/performance practice, in relation with the expectations this system has when it comes to this immigrant artist. It is written as an answer to why (2), above, is often how the immigrant will react to these expectations[48].

What is generally expected from 'ethnic' –or any minority, visible or invisible- or immigrant artists (in the case that something is expected from them), is that they will speak from their perspective as 'foreigners', this becomes our sole identity. We are expected to speak about our place of origin as inferior or less enticing to live in (if not, then why did we or our family come here in the first place?). We should also talk about the destination land (Canada) as a great, or at

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[48] I have tried to answer to (1) earlier in the present chapter.

least better, place. This can take many forms. The artist can talk about repression in the homeland, about atrocities committed, from the point of view of the majority group, or from the point of view of a minority group that is treated badly in terms of its ethnicity, gender and/or religion. The result, however, is the same: the homeland is a bad place, an 'underdeveloped' place compared to more 'modern' places we have chosen to immigrate to. That adopted nation and culture is not up for discussion. Such an approach even comforts the audience's sense of living in the greatest place that exists, which is essentially akin to watching an aesthetic version of the news. And for the 'ethnic' audience, such approaches comfort that audience's choice to have stayed here, in Canada[49]. The Western audience will accept such work with open arms because it will bolster their belief in the Orientalist rhetoric: it will act as confirmation of some omnipresent narratives. For this reason, the work of the immigrant artist who speaks the orientalist language can become proof of concept, and material for propaganda, adding to the message of mainstream medias. The artist will be invited to talk publicly as an expert on the 'Orient'. Her ethnic identity is now her main commodity, to be used to gain economic and socio-cultural capital and sympathy.

What was more surprising was my realization that I had internalized this sort of thinking. I have been shaped by departments of theatre in Turkey; by art journals and performances; by all sorts

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[49] "Last year, I witnessed from afar a conversation in a friend's meeting. I could not believe my ears. Two people were talking about the 'Middle East' and about war. A tall white middle aged Canadian man; he said that 'Middle Easterners' were enjoying killing each other, and he was trying to prove what he was claiming. I also was a 'Middle Easterner'. Do we really enjoy killing each other? Who are we? Who are the 'Middle Easterners' he was talking about? Which kind of species was he, so distant from us? Where did he think he was from!" (text from the First Part of *Numbers Increase As We Count…*).

of 'intellectual' material that was implicitly offering the same vision of the world. A positivistic world that was going in the only possible direction, the direction of which West was the latest chapter. Making modern art was making my world modern (since art is the ultimate tool for advancing consciousness). Doing modern art meant doing Western Art. With this logic, I was modernising the art of my country, and thus my country, but this also meant that I was westernising it. The history of Western theatre was the history of democratisation, of secularisation towards *modernization*: these processes that brought the possibility of modern theatre began in the West. The *rest of the world* who had not *yet* adopted these apparently unavoidable and obvious advances, was now considered to be backwards. The best teachers we had (and still have) were (and are) formed in the universities of the West. They were teaching us what we needed to do to become artists, to have a voice that could make changes[50].

Years later, while in Canada, I read Naomi Klein's *Shock Doctrine*. In the book, there is a chapter about the US bringing the Chilean elite to study economics in the most renowned Neo-Liberal department in the US with the intention that they will bring this information back to their country and teach what they learned. This was not an innocent intellectual endeavour, it also served to prepare the atmosphere for a future invasion: the people in Chile would be ideologically ready to accept neo-liberalism/neo-imperialism, with their arms wide open because they have already been groomed to believe that this economic system is superior. This story has resonance with my

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[50] It is also evident in the fact that producing our work in the West makes us international artists while producing our work in other places in the Global South does not give this status as easily. I also often felt the same thing in Canada: even with my long artistic history in Turkey, I have needed to show double effort to be accepted as a 'professional' artist. When I obtained government arts grants, I felt the assessment of artists of my work changing around me. While in Turkey, I saw artists from the West that had not produced anything of importance in their country or elsewhere being received like artists of international status.

experience as a student in Turkey learning about the history of art and about new ways of creating a theatrical language. It resonated as well with my experience as a student in the West, some twenty years later, where I saw students from everywhere who were, like me, totally caught up in the Western discourse about itself and about the world.

At the same time, I was seeing and understanding the situation in Canada and the USA with a new perspective of someone inside of it: colonialism on one side; and the awful treatment of the Indigenous people on the other. Poverty. Inequality. Racism. Hate crime. Anti-Islam. Police brutality. Nothing I had been prepared to encounter when I was learning about 'the perfect democracies of the West'. Imperialism of a modern type. Being situated in the West also brought a deeper realisation of the degree to which the West was complicit in the so-called crisis in the 'Middle East', in the different wars and the creation of terrorist groups (in fact mercenaries). These techniques have been used for years in the Global South to destabilize, divide, and conquer.

A theatre practitioner from England, managing political feminist theatre festivals in many places, but generally in the Global South, told in a workshop that we ('we'='Westerners' here) did not have priests anymore, but we have art. She was clearly on a 'divine' mission. What kind of mission did I have in this framework as an artist, an immigrant artist, a woman artist, a 'Middle Eastern' artist?

7.2. Encoding Numbers Increase As We Count…

"Coğrafyalarımız işgal edilmeden önce zihin ve vicdanlarımız işgal edilmiştir. Çünkü isim ve mefhumu icat eden idare eder. Dolayısıyla kendi kavramsal modellerimizi oluşturmadan bulunduğumuz coğrafyalarımızı özgürleştirmemiz zordur (Ihsan Fazlioglu)[51]".

The topic of my performance could not be treated as it is treated in the media, with its orientalist discourses and its accusations towards the people from the region, most of whom are direct victims of more than a century-long imperialist reorganisation of the land and its power, as opposed to backwards thinking simpletons that media suggests they are. So I decided to play the game *without playing it*, to break expectations, putting together a protest rather than a traditional performance. As I discussed above, as artists we must know who we are performing for, and this creates anticipations of the reaction of the audience members. I anticipated that the audience members would come to the performance with certain ideas about what would be encoded and how to go about decoding. This performance is made by someone with a special status here: I am a woman and theatre artist from a Muslim country, Turkey; living in Canada (an immigrant); working on a performance about women and sex trafficking in an 'oriental' war zone; *therefore* a feminist; who maybe came to Canada to live a better life, a less oppressed life than the one she was living in the 'patriarchal' Muslim Turkey; a more democratic (artistic) life than the one she was living in the authoritarian *Turkiye*.

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[51] "Before our geographies were occupied, our minds and consciences were occupied. Because the one who invented the name and notion rules. Therefore, it is difficult for us to liberate our geographies without creating our own conceptual models (my translation)".

As Homa Hoodfar 2003 shows in her paper, colonial images of women from the Muslim world persist in the West and influence the perception of citizens of the Western world, and therefore of the audiences, and, especially relevant here, to the Western feminist audience. The Third World Woman, as Mohanty 1984 and 2003 shows very accurately, is a "monolithic subject in some recent (Western) feminist texts" (Mohanty 1984: 333). The Muslim woman is also a monolithic subject, as is the Muslim world: it cannot change, because this would not fit the definition the West gave it, especially in the context of the War on Terror discourse and Islamophobia that fed/feeds it. In some ways, the Muslim world now occupies the role that the Soviet Union played during the Cold War, insofar as the West self-defines by defining against this Other. Collins 1990 gives a very good description of the importance of definitions. As she shows, along with Mohanty 1984 and 2003, the problem is that these definitions are accepted, because they are imposed by the West and its prolific propaganda tools (that take different forms, from media to academia –see good examples in Klein 2007).

According to these assumptions, the story I was supposed to offer would have echoed the stories produced by mainstream media about women in Iraq, in which the horrors are always committed by the Muslim terrorists/fundamentalists. The victims are victims of (the bad aspects of) Islam. The larger picture (which the West has a heavy hand in) involving invasion, creation of Al-Qaida by the US, putting far-right fundamentalists puppet governments in place is never described in these stories. In that sense, the decoding is already done before the performance starts.

This is probably how many audience members constructed their representation of what they were going to see: the main points of information (Turkish, woman artist, war in Iraq, sex trafficking) are written clearly in the advertisement. The expectation is that I will produce a performance that

supports the clichés about women in the so-called 'Middle-East'/Muslim world, and the way men treat them (not only in war, but *always*). These facts about my 'identity' create many expectations about what I will talk about in my art, and more importantly, about *how I will talk about it*: many definitions –in the sense of Collins 1990- are involved here. We are supposed to act as if these definitions are correct and stable. As Third World ('Oriental') Artists, our mission is prescribed[52]. If we do not act accordingly and play the game; if we do not use our minority identity as the (only) cultural and social capital (in Bourdieu 1986's sense) that is given to us in this society, then there can be repercussions: we may have our funding opportunities refused, the art institutions including media may not promote or acknowledge our work[53].

However, I did not play the prescribed game to the letter. Instead what I offered was the information I collected regarding the reasons for the invasion, which included the way the US and their coalition put the rulers in place; the way the militias and/or the so-called 'Freedom Fighters' were created; interviews of an activist in Iraq dealing with women. I had the audience read reports; I used images of women in war and had the performers embody these images; I had the performers count the number of victims. I shared information that highlighted the influence of the West, and hence gave the audience an opportunity to acknowledge their responsibility.

In a sense, the first part of the performance gave them some of what they want, but also gave criticism about the North American perspective on the Middle East and the events. The second part really broke with this way of telling the story: the US is pointed at directly for bringing about

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[52] See Anzaldua 1981 for similar conclusions.

[53] See Hoodfar 2003 for other good examples.

the chaotic state of the country. In my video interviews with the activist Yanar Mohammed, she denounces the US and Britain for installing a puppet government that is responsible for allowing things happen as they do. Of course, many Iraqis and terrorists are also involved and accused, but the emergent picture shows the heavy responsibility that West has in what is happening there and therefore, for what is happening to these women[54]. Women are the most vulnerable persons in times of war, thus the ones that initiate the war are directly responsible to what happens to these women. This sharing of information through performance was the only thing I could do. In the middle of so many very one-sided discourses about the so-called 'Middle East', the only thing we can do is to break expectations and offer (encode) other representations, and remind the West of its role in the Global World (decode).

As I have explained, these expectations are rooted in how a (Muslim) woman from the Middle East should talk about sex trafficking in her region. Through comments I got when I was producing the performance, questions they asked me in interviews and which parts were actually reported, I came to understand that I was supposed to talk about the region as backward. I was expected to talk about sex trafficking and the treatment of women I described in the performance as a 'normal' aspect of 'hyper-patriarchal' (Muslim) societies; I was supposed to somehow take the 'West' as a model to be followed and discuss ways to 'modernize' and 'democratize' the Middle East bringing it closer to this model. Instead, I have accused the West of bringing this chaos for imperialist goals, and to have backed the extreme right parties and put them in positions of power. I showed that the West actualized the power dynamics that were previously assumed to be implicit in the Middle Eastern culture. More importantly, I have told the audience members that

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[54] When I say women, I mean young girls as well. We also cannot forget also the boys.

our biggest fear is that (one of) the next country's to be 'democratized' in the Afghan-or/and-Iraqi way could well be Turkey. As I am finishing this thesis in Istanbul, this (now) old text, that the audience reads in the first part, seems increasingly more accurate. I fear for what could happen here: the patterns of invasion of the Middle East that we have seen in the last twenty years –direct or seemingly indirect- are obvious. And this is why protesting, may it be after, while or before the facts, is (still) very important.

8. Conclusion

This practice-led-research project has been composed of two main components: the performance/protest *Numbers Increase As We Count...* and the analytical/academic discussions that make up this thesis. From that point of view, the thesis has two centers which inform each other dialectically. Some political urges informed the basis of the project, which in turn demanded specific conceptual/aesthetic decisions. These decisions followed research questions that necessitated the performers and the stage, to explore possibilities. In that sense, the process is multidirectional and has necessitated simultaneous research on many fronts. This made for an extremely interesting (albeit emotionally difficult) journey at the political and artistic levels, but putting this journey into an academic format was a complex challenge: it would be impossible to make explicit every aspect of the work we carried, e.g. the techniques and exercises employed; the literature I read; the dramaturgical work we did; not everything could enter this already too long thesis. However, the thesis is not the whole project: an enormous amount of time has been devoted to the creation/production of the performance, and the work could in many ways speak for itself, if, of course, the main feature of performance art was otherwise, i.e. always available to the reader to consult and compare with the accompanying writing. The Performance Score that is included gives an idea of what the performance was/is, but unfortunately, much of what made it have the impact it had, including how Performative Acting unfolds on stage, is lost in the process of putting it on the page. Neither the performance nor the thesis can truly stand alone.

In Chapter 1, I have placed the connection between the thesis and the performance in the framework of work that has recently begun to be acknowledged as academic work under the different terms, e.g. 'Practice-Based/Led Research', 'Practice as Research'. We saw that while theoreticians of this style or approach differ in some ways and give varying definitions of the

terms, they nonetheless hold that a form of knowledge must be gained from the practice itself and that this knowledge must to be passed through academic writing to be given the title of research. To generate this knowledge, a process of hypothesis-testing must be set up that will address very specific research questions.

In this Practice-based/Practice-led research, I strove to give answers to research questions that stemmed from practical concerns and questions pertaining to performance quality, actor direction, dramaturgy and, fundamentally, the moral and social role of the artist in society. This thesis is dialectical insofar as the creation of the performance helped to generate questions that I could explore in this thesis format, which in turn generated more questions to bring back to the performance setting. It has mapped my creative and intellectual process and therefore is a cornerstone to much more to come, as many of these questions and complexities have gone unacknowledged or fleshed out due to the scope of this project.

I have tried to *not only* ask questions, raise hypotheses and give a answers to these. I have also tried to tell, following Loveless, "stories-that-matter" (Loveless 2015: 54), and from this storytelling, to reach some form of knowledge or reckoning. From these stories, I have acquired knowledge at various levels, including:

1) At a personal level I have learned about a horrific situation and its causes; about my place as an (immigrant) artist; about my own artistic history and the reasons I do what I do; about how to academically self-reflect on a creative process;

2) At a group level with the performers, through the development of Performative Acting, as we attempted to find practical solutions to theoretical questions in a very specific theatrical context, challenging ourselves and audiences with difficult materials;

3) Collectively, with audience members who came to share the result of this learning and creative process by experiencing the performance and act of protest we titled *Numbers Increase As We Count…*;

4) At an academic level, with the thesis which I hope will provoke further thoughts and questions in readers.

In the introduction, I stated that this written essay –in addition to its companion, the performance itself- was a personal answer to what some call research-creation; practice-led research; creation as research. Along with this thesis, I feel that in some ways, Performative Acting is similarly a form of research, in the sense that it places the researcher in front of (academic) knowledge and expects her to come out with practical outputs. The analogy finds its source in the three words I use as I work creatively: "Find-Know-Become". The main difference resides in the fact that in practice-based research, there is: 1) not necessarily a dramaturge-facilitator who fixes the parameters of the structure in which the task is to be performed; and 2) no director-facilitator who fixes which task will be accomplished inside this structure. At the same time, at the moment the intuition is put into research questions, these research questions start to take a life of their own, and guide the researcher in the immense flow of information that is relevant for the task that is being pursued: the flow of information somehow takes shape, and give form to a structure, which will affect how the task will be carried out, dialectically. The performer as researcher is put in a practice-led research.

An important part of the thesis has been devoted to biographical elements that connected my past work, and especially my work inside Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed and what I have discovered during this work (Chapter 4 and 5). I have tried to show how my past work, especially inside the

framework of Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, was already pointing towards my embracing of practice-led research with a sociopolitical intent. For Boal, theatre is not only theatre: it is a method to gain knowledge, and from there, to act on the world. Even if the world sometimes does not change much, at least we have performatively acted somehow. And we can never predict what the effects will be in the future. For this reason, Performative Acting was set up in a specific way, i.e. the protest (but it is important to repeat that Performative Acting does not need to be set up in such a structure). I felt it was the most direct analogy to what an individual who cares does when facing extreme injustice. For all theses reasons, I propose that Performative Acting be researched as a new method inside the framework of the Theatre of the Oppressed which is the basis for my emphasis in the thesis on the connections with Boal's work but also on what makes Performative Acting different. At the same time, I strongly believe that Performative Acting can be explored alone, without regard to what Boal did. Unfortunately, for reason of space, I have decided not to try to connect this technique to other methods that could have some similarities[55]. The emphasis has been on the method as a way of bringing the performer to engage with the world and in this, as a sort of dramaturge. And to *be* on stage, inside a structure with which to interact (Chapter 6).

One important fact to mention is that, in the present thesis, I decided not to discuss the role and response of the audience members, or the response of the media. Much could have been said, analyzed and theorised about this dimension, including the way Performative Acting as I describe

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[55] In fact, I feel that this would have been an artificial academic exercise, forcing Performative Acting to look like or differ in relation to pre-existing approaches. Performative Acting has grown 'organically' from my past work during the last twenty years. At the same time, I also feel practical knowledge needs to be experience in practice, not only in academic discussions: exploring practical frameworks that might bear some similarities with Performative Acting would have made the process extremely heavy in terms of time and organization.

it can take inputs from the audience members; the way the audience members reacted to being given a voice –my voice- in the protest; the way this manner of having them participate in the performance acted as an emotional triggering that would influence the experience these audience members would have for the rest of the performance (in the lines of, e.g., Kaprow 1977; Sotelo-Castro 2009; White 2013). I took from Boal many dramaturgical ideas. But when it comes to audience participation, I veered away from the Forum Theatre model, which is clearly participative: I did not invite audience members on stage to change the course of the performance. The structure of the performance was set up in advance. In the thesis, I have decided instead to focus on topics that were more central to the research questions that informed my artistic (and academic) decisions. To put it shortly: Performative Acting does not necessarily need an audience as it is concentrating everything around a task and a structure in which this task is practiced, something that can arguably be done alone (which is one of the aspects that makes this technique different than what we generally call 'happening', something in which the audience plays a very important role, if not *the* important role).

I have included a chapter on the 'role' of the immigrant or marginalised artist (Chapter 7) because I feel that it is closely related to the *theme* of the performance *Numbers Increase As We Count…* Performative Acting could have been explored in any performance in which a dramaturgical structure was have been built. But this is my practice-led-research project, thus this was an integral feature of this research. The chapter deals with the reactions I received for being a Middle Eastern woman working on the topic within a North American, and more generally Western, context. A dramaturgical analysis of these reactions influenced the performance: I have encoded according to specific expectations and reactions, and decided not to sit comfortably and accuse. Performative Acting is also a personal tool I used as a creator in front of a 'foreign'

audience; it arose in every aspect of the production process that led to the presentation of *Numbers Increase As We Count…*

In a near future, I will work on Performative Acting and refine its methodology, aims, and techniques. I strongly feel that I have only scratched the surface of something that can deliver incredible outputs. For this, I will have to build (facilitate) different types of structures, to see how the performers are to deal with the given tasks I will ask them to perform according to these structures. I am really looking forward to see what we'll all learn from it.

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