After-shows:

Performance memories in (and out of) translation

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ABSTRACT

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What happens to live shows when they are over? *After-shows* started from a desire to collect intimate performance histories and re-present them, publicly: to examine what live performance events become, or might become, after they have formally ended, with particular attention to the personal histories associated with them. How to touch the absence of something that was once there and attempt to understand something about it, to inhabit a version of it, to interpret it, to make something else with those interpretations?

An interdisciplinary inquiry into methods and implications of researching, collecting, re-representing, reperforming, creating with, and (arguably) translating personal histories and memories connected to past live performances, *After-shows* encompasses: 1) oral history interviews with 16 performers and former performers, centered on memories of once-live shows; 2) performance research sessions with nine performers trained in different forms (circus, dance, music), experimenting with reinterpreting and creating off of fragments of memories collected in phase 1; 3) an event re-presenting variations of those reperformed memories, open to the public; and 4) a series of post-event spectator interviews with eleven attendees of that evening, held between four and ten months after they attended, and focused on the ways they remembered the event.

Throughout these processes, this hermeneutically inclined research-(re)creation project examined how the question of untranslatability — or "the energy of the untranslatables" as per philologist

Barbara Cassin — might be applied as a dramaturgical motor and/or as a research lens in considering the re-representations of performance memories.

Written both in and about the aftermath of a live performance event, this thesis echoes its on-site research-creation counterpart in considering untranslatability within representations of performance memories, drawing on oral history and research-creation methodologies, and looking across multiple interdisciplines including translation studies, memory studies, and performance historiography.

Keywords: performance historiography, research-creation, translation of/and/as performance, intersemiotic translation, memory studies, oral history, spectator studies, interdisciplinary dramaturgy, untranslatable memory

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This thesis is driven in part by a sense of absence of what and who might go unspoken. Apologies to those I've forgotten to mention, and thank you.

Territorial Acknowledgement

It would be strange at best to sit in what many now call Montréal and to write a paper that deals in any part with memory and translation without acknowledging the multiple names with which this city has been referred to and the histories carried within those names.

The following text is borrowed from Concordia's Indigenous Directions Leadership Group, and was written by Waháhshon Shiann Whitebean and Dr. Karl S. Hele, with contributions from Dr. Louellyn White:

> I would like to begin by acknowledging that Concordia University is located on unceded Indigenous lands. The Kanien'kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters on which we gather today. Tiohtià:ke/Montréal is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations. Today, it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples. We respect the continued connections with the past, present and future in our ongoing relationships with Indigenous and other peoples within the Montreal community.[1]

[1] Indigenous Directions Leadership Group, "Territorial Acknowledgement," Concordia University, February 16, 2017, https://www.concordia.ca/indigenous/resources/territorial-acknowledgement.html#history

Dedication

To the memory of my grandmothers,
Ruth Vigeland and Evelyn Devine Stewart, both performers.

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Introduction: *After-shows*

On a break between rehearsals in Toronto, in November 2023, I went to the studio of the cameraman who had filmed my July 2022 thesis event, *After-shows*. I was in town briefly on a contract, he had recently relocated, and we agreed it would be faster to meet on an afternoon off, to transfer the videos in person than it would be to send the oversized files online. I took two subways and climbed three flights of stairs to his flat, where, on an uneven desk, the tangible remains of my performance event stood in a black, plastic hard drive, with a hand-written label the only thing distinguishing them from dozens of otherwise identical, shimmering discs: My event and my "research-creation" had become "data," taking up shelf space, occupying digital clouds, requiring "management," and holding seemingly mutated traces of a series of moments that had once been live. Those moments, almost unrecognizable on video, removed from the emotions and surrounding events and people of that day, had emerged from a research process that had lasted several years and that had collected memories of previous performance events occurring across several decades.

Within the videos in those files, seven artists can be seen performing in what a spectator later described as the "immense" space of the Agora du Coeur des sciences on the campus of the Université du Québec à Montréal, a venue made available through a residency with the interuniversity network Hexagram, rescheduled throughout the pandemic multiple times: a stop-and-start, fragmented research process that reflected, in many ways, the questions to which I was trying to find answers, about the perhaps disjointed ways in which events that seem to disappear might remain, shift, and resurface across contexts and spans of time.

A few dozen audience members also appear in the footage, eleven of whom I interviewed about their memories of that evening in the four to ten months that had followed it. Not in the videos

are the interviews about performance memories with 16 performers and former performers I had held over the years leading to the residency. Not in the videos are of course the actual experiences those 16 interviews had referred to. Not in the videos of that late July evening is the feeling of holding the box of their files, sitting in another city, rain plunging on Bathurst Street outside.

What happens to live shows when they are over? Where do once-live performances *go*? *After-shows* started from a desire to collect intimate performance histories and re-present them, publicly: to examine what live performance events become, or might become, after they have formally ended, with particular attention to the personal histories associated with them.
How to touch the absence of something that was once there and attempt to understand something about it, to inhabit a version of it, to interpret it, to make something else with those interpretations? "There is history because there is the past and a specific passion for the past. And there is history because there is an absence," writes Rancière. "[…] The status of history depends on the treatment of this twofold absence of the 'thing itself' that is no longer there — that is in the past; and that never was — because it never was such as it was told."[2]
What to do when these absent 'things themselves' belonged to other people? What happens to the personal histories of people who took part in live shows? How might personal performance memories shape public performance historiography?

[2] Jacques Rancière, "The Names of History: On the Poetics of Knowledge," Translated by Hassan Melehy. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1994, p. 63.
The original French reads:
Il y a de l'histoire parce qu'il y a du révolu et une passion spécifique du révolu. Et il y a de l'histoire parce qu'il y a une absence [...] Le statut de l'histoire dépend du traitement de cette double absence de la "chose même" qui n'est plus là -qui est révolue -et qui n'y a jamais été -parce qu'elle n'a jamais été telle que ce qui a été dit.

How, as asks Amelia Jones, "does live art get remembered?"[3] What else does that remembering involve and become? If, according to the late Ana Mendieta, "culture is the memory of history,"[4] what is the memory of culture? Or, more specifically, what is (are) the memory (memories) of a cultural act or event?

How might we remember a show we never went to? What does a past show or performance event mean to someone who wasn't there? How might past performances we aren't even aware of affect us, in terms of the ripples of influence onto other performances and other events, and in terms of ways their echoes linger invisibly but decidedly?

If scholars such as Rebecca Schneider[5] and Diana Taylor[6] have persuasively refuted the notion that performance disappears — complicating beautiful, formerly convincing positions like Derrida's that "theater is born of its own disappearance"[7] — how might we (or how do we) then interpret, engage with, make sense of, and live with what remains?

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[3] Amelia Jones, "The Now and the Has Been: Paradoxes of Live Art in History," in *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History*, ed. Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield (Bristol: Intellect Books Ltd, 2014), 15.

[4] Ana Mendieta, "Joan Marter and Ana Mendieta in Conversation (edited excerpt) (February 1, 1985)," in *Ana Mendieta: Traces,* ed. Stephanie Rosenthal (London: Hayward Publishing, 2014), 231.
As cited in: Lynn Lukkas and Howard Oransky, ed., *Ana Mendieta: Le Temps et l'histoire me recouvrent* (Paris: Jeu de Paume, 2018), 92.

[5] Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reproduction* (London: Routledge, 2011).

[6] Diana Taylor, "Archiving the 'Thing': Teatro Da Vertigem's Bom Retiro 958 Metros," *TDR/The Drama Review* 59, no. 2 (2015).

[7] Jacques Derrida, "The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 233.

Chapter 1: Remembering the events

Le spectacle avait déjà commencé quand on arrivait dans l'espace.

— Gaëlle Scali, After-shows audience member[8]

Je me rappelle qu'il y avait une sensation qu'il y avait beaucoup de choses qui se passaient en même temps, même si c'était assez calme quand on est entré.

— Paloma Leyton, After-shows audience member[9]

D'abord quand on arrive, il y a tout le côté antichambre. C'est un peu comme les préliminaires [*rires*]. Tsé, tu arrives quelque part, *ah ok, c'est commencé, c'est pas commencé* ?

— Françoise Boudreault, After-shows audience member[10]

When we went to the second room, the images began to multiply. It was like you must constantly choose what to see, what to follow, where to put your attention. Maybe you would see a different performance depending on the place where you choose to be.

— Diego López, After-shows audience member[11]

On avait comme la permission de se déplacer d'aller d'un endroit à un autre, d'aller écouter un secret plus un autre.

— Stéphane Gentilini, After-shows audience member[12]

[8] "The show had already started when we got to the space." Gaëlle Scali, Interview with the researcher. November 24, 2022. Translations from the French in this thesis are mine, unless otherwise noted.
[9] "I remember there was this feeling that many things were happening at once, even if it was calm when we entered." Paloma Leyton, Interview with the researcher. November 17, 2022.
[10] "From the moment you walk[ed] in, there's the whole antechamber thing. It's kind of like foreplay [*laughs*]. You know, you get somewhere and*, ah, ok, has it started, has it not started*?" Françoise Boudreault, Interview with the researcher. November 29, 2022.
[11] Diego López, Interview with the researcher. December 2, 2022.
[12] "It was as if we had permission to move about from one place to another, to go listen to a secret and then to another." Stéphane Gentilini, Interview with the researcher. November 18, 2022.

Il y avait un groupe des performeurs, des hommes, des femmes, en train de faire des choses, en train de parler, en train de se déplacer dans l'espace, en train de tirer des chaises, en train de faire des actions. Voilà. Je me souviens de ça.

— Gaëlle Scali[13]

Je me rappelle des moments spécifiques.

Je me rappelle d'un acrobate avec un casque qui racontait un souvenir sur un moment où il faisait toujours, *tada !* dans son spectacle. Et il le racontait à tout le monde, et à un certain moment il commençait à le raconter à moi.

— Paloma Leyton[14]

Je sais que je me souviens d'une personne qui tenait des enfants sur ses épaules, et qui marchait. Je me souviens de ça. Je pense que c'était même son fils. J'ai cru comprendre ça après-coup. Quand il est allé chercher son garçon et ils ont fait la portée, il parlait donc du souvenir d'une personne qui performait avec son père qui devait être là.

— Gaëlle Scali[15]

Je me souviens du récit qu'un performeur racontait en faisant des figures avec ses enfants. Il parlait de quelqu'un qui parle de son lien avec son père.

Donc lui, clairement, était issu des arts du cirque, ça paraissait pas mal, le performeur qui a fait des figures avec son fils. Ou ses deux fils peut-être qui ont participé, je pense ? C'était un moment improvisé on sentait, de son côté, mais en même temps ça montrait un travail déjà fait.

— Maxime D-Pomerleau, After-shows audience member[16]

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[13] "There was a group of performers, men and women, doing things, talking, moving around the space, pulling chairs, performing actions. Yes, that's it! I remember that." Gaëlle Scali, Interview with the researcher. November 24, 2022.

[14] "I remember specific moments. I remember an acrobat with a hat on who was talking about a memory about a moment when he kept going, *tada!* in his show. And he was telling it to everyone, and at a certain point he started telling it to me." Paloma Leyton, Interview with the researcher. November 17, 2022.

[15] "I know that I remember the person who was holding children on his shoulders and walking. I remember that. I think it was his son. I learned that after the fact. When he went to pick up his son and he lifted him, he was talking about the memory of someone performing with his father who had to be there." Gaëlle Scali, Interview with the researcher. November 24, 2022.

[16] "I remember the story that a performer told while he was doing acrobatic tricks with his children. He was talking about someone who was talking about a bond with their father. Well, the performer doing acrobatics with his son clearly came from circus, that was pretty obvious. Or maybe it was his two sons who took part, now that I think

La personne qui portait le petit garçon, ça donnait… je sais pas si j'ai ressenti tout ça sur le moment, en fait, mais comme il s'agissait, je crois, de son fils, je me disais qu'il doit y avoir un lien familial et ça devait se faire ressentir pendant la performance… c'est surtout ce petit garçon… si je me souviens… ça y est, je me souviens de son visage, il était tellement heureux, focus… […] c'est vrai qu'il y avait une émotion de joie. Je sais pas comment le décrire exactement cette émotion, mais c'était … une force de joie, de jubilation.

— Gaëlle Scali[17]

And so the thing that was particular about this performance was that both my real father was there and my birth father, who was a theater technician—sound and lighting and whatever—and who was not my circus dad, because my mom and dad separated when I was basically like one or two years old, because my mom had fallen in love with this circus guy and created this circus.

We were touring in Alaska. And normally the Pickle Family Circus performed outside. […] But this was inside with lighting, and I think it was then that I fell in love with […] shows that had lighting, ‘

And so, on this tour, both my dads were with me. I don't know, I was like seven or eight. And I'd been training throughout the tour to do two tricks in the show in this acrobatic act, where I would come out, and I would stand on my stepdad's head and then I'd come down, and then we would build a three-high and I would jump down from the three-high. You know, nowadays that's not that big a deal. But it was kind of a big deal.

So, I'd fought it tooth and nail all year long. I didn't want to train. I'd have huge fights with my stepdad. And here we were, on tour, lights on the stage. I go out, I do the two routines, I come offstage, and I am so proud and so excited. And I run to my real dad and give him a hug. It was this like, trifecta of like, being with my real dad, achieving this thing with my stepdad, and just performing in and of itself. Yeah, and being in Alaska! Like, we didn't we tour in Alaska, we only went to Alaska once. […]

I don't really remember the audience. I remember feeling being seen and I remember thinking, *oh, this is so special* […] I would run out, through the center

about it? It was an improvised moment on his part, we could feel that, but at the same time it demonstrated work that had already been done." Maxime D-Pomerleau, Interview with the researcher. December 5, 2022.

[17] "The person lifting the little boy, it was like... I don't know if I felt all that at the time, in fact, but since it was his son, I believe, I was thinking there just had to be a kind of family bond and that we had to have been feeling it during the performance... it's especially that little boy... if I remember... there! I remember his face. He was so happy, focused. […] There was a feeling of joy, I don't know how to describe it exactly, this feeling, but it was... a force of joy, of jubilation."
Gaëlle Scali, Interview with the researcher. November 24, 2022.

slit, and it was like: cartwheel, cartwheel, cartwheel, cartwheel, *tada*! And then I would climb up, stand up on the shoulders, straight up onto his head. And then I would go from the head, take his hands, and jump down to the ground.

Then, after standing on his head, I would climb up, I would go to the two-high. So, I'm holding on to his waist, then I would take both hands up to his shoulders, then I would have one foot that would go into a hand that was like below him, so he's you know, his left hand would be low, that was where I put one foot, and my right hand was holding on to his right hand, and I'd have to pull up his right hand and then my left hand is on his shoulder, and then my left foot is in his hand, and climb up to the top and then I would do, *tada*.

And I always put my arms too far back and I was really like, *tada*! And then, I remember this, I had to put my arms in front and like open them like that, because I would jump down and they would catch me under my armpits and my wrists. And I remember like, I knew my feet were going to hit the ground if they didn't catch me well under my arms and my armpits. I don't know. I was terrified. I was pissed. I hated jumping off. I hated how serious the whole thing had to be.

It kind of felt senseless, in a way, the climbing up just to jump down.

And yet, you have these challenges, and you have these very sort of like, obscure reasons for doing things that have to do with, you know, relationships with your parents, or relationships with yourself, or relationships with a group. … The group around me, watching me proving it and then at the end, coming down, and I'm getting that hug from my real dad, and it just marking me so deeply considering in a way it was a very futile thing.

And yet the applause afterwards… if you see me doing the *tada* in all the pictures and everything, it's just like, *woohoo*! So I don't know what was going on with me. I remember understanding what crying for joy was, 'cause I cried after that show when I got offstage. And I was very young, you know. I don't know, maybe someone said, *Oh, why are you crying?* and I said, *I'm so happy.* And it was tears of joy, it was just that whole concept… I didn't know that you could cry when you were happy, 'cause I was just a kid.

It would have been in the summer… well, it could have been spring… It could have been the early fall, but I'm going to say it was '77 or '78. I can probably call my mom, but she'll hate me for asking her. She just hates it when I ask her anything that's like, memory…

— Gypsy Snider, After-shows interviewee [18]

[18]Gypsy Snider, Interview with the researcher. March 17, 2020.

The first series of comments above are from audience members who came to a July 2022 event that I called a non-presentation of *After-shows*, my Concordia research-creation project, hosted by the Agora du Coeur des sciences at UQAM (L'Université du Québec à Montréal) in Montréal's Quartier des spectacles. The excerpts stem from a group of eleven interviews conducted four to ten months after that research showing, centered on spectators' memories of the evening.

The eleventh, last, and longest quotation above is from an artist speaking in late March 2020, an interview rescheduled four times that month amid turns of events in the early and strange days of Montréal's first COVID-related shutdowns. Her interview is one of 16 conversations I recorded with performers and former performers over the course of about two and a half years, asking them to describe memories of no-longer-live shows.

The "acrobat with a hat on" who one interviewed spectator remembered saying *tada* is not actually an acrobat, but a dancer. He is not the acrobat mentioned by the other spectators who carried his sons on his shoulders. But the actions those spectators described and the images they recalled of the acrobat lifting his sons and of the dancer saying *tada* all emerged in response to the same story from Alaska: the story of a daughter and her two dads; the story of being lifted in the air and saying *tada*; a story whose protagonist knew and agreed that other artists would later interpret and perform fragments of what she said.

Project structure and paths of inquiry

An interdisciplinary inquiry into methods and implications of researching, collecting, re-representing, reperforming, engaging with, creating with, and (arguably) translating personal histories and memories connected to past public performances, *After-shows* encompasses: 1) oral

history interviews with 16 performers and former performers, centered on memories of once-live shows; 2) performance research sessions with nine performers trained in different forms (circus, dance, music), experimenting with reinterpreting and creating off of fragments of those interviews; 3) an event re-presenting variations of those reperformed memories, open to the public; and 4) a series of post-event spectator interviews with eleven attendees of that evening, held between four and ten months after they attended, and focused on the ways they remembered the event.

Throughout these steps, instead of discovering a common narrative thread, as I had anticipating finding in conducting the interviews and the project, the equivalent of a sort of musical dissonance arose— full of gaps, of seemingly unrepresentable or unrepeatable occurrences, of unanswered questions — with the memories and reperformances that amassed seeming as wide-ranging as they felt incomplete. I found myself as concerned with how to acknowledge the absent histories in my project as how work with the ones that were there.

When presenting someone's memory, how to handle the infinite pool of their other, unspoken memories? How to recognize the absences and incompleteness within stories? What to do with the overwhelming acknowledgement that the world is pulsing with billions of other performance (and other) memories of no lesser importance or interest?

How to justify presenting one person's memories and not another's? Why speak about one past performance and not another? If archeologists have uncovered evidence suggesting that multidisciplinary performances were happening in caves at least 40,000 years ago,[19] how to handle the dizzying scale of unknowable performance histories and memories? Why tell (or translate) one history at all, and how to choose which aspects to tell?

[19] Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2002), 220.

"What is the use of telling a story since there are so many and everybody knows so many and tells so many … so why tell another one?" asks Gertrude Stein,[20] preluding historian Frank Ankersmit that "[t]he main problem of all historical writing […] is a problem of selection." [21] How to select what histories and what angles of histories to retell? How to create something that recognizes and plays with the fragmented nature of what has and what hasn't been documented and hasn't been told?

In terms of the histories that *were* recounted, while I knew from the start of this project that literal representations would be off the table — along the lines of translator scholar Anthony Pym's observation of a "recent call" (including his own) "for translations that work as experiences in themselves, rather than as representations of anterior experiences," [22] similar to Heiner Goebbels' aim to produce "[t]heatre as a 'thing in itself', not as a representation or a medium to make statements about reality"[23] — how to translate and create with or off of what was there? What was untranslatable, and how to approach it?

What was (is) untouchable, not only artistically and pragmatically, but humanly, in terms of pasts that belong to other people? Why this interest in others' pasts anyway and how to expound on this without reverting to voyeurism? Could acknowledging the untranslatable as viewed

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[20] Gertrude Stein, "Plays," in *Lectures in America*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1935, p. 260.

[21] "The main problem of all historical writing, and the problem we wish to solve if we are concerned with historical knowledge, is a problem of selection. […] The main difficulty for the historian is not that of making true statements about the past. This is a comparatively easy thing to do, though of course posing challenges of its own. The more intractable problem is how to select the right ones among all the available true statements."
Frank Ankersmit, *Meaning, Truth, and Reference in Historical Representation*, (Cornell University Press, 2012), 32.

[22] Anthony Pym, "Uncertainty," in *Exploring Translation Theories* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2023), p. 97. Pym cites both his own work and that of Lawrence Venuti. See:
Lawrence Venuti, *Translation Changes Everything: Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2013), 184-186;
Anthony Pym, *On Translator Ethics: Principles for Mediation between Cultures* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2012), 122-123.

[23] Heiner Goebbels, *Aesthetics of Absence: Texts on Theatre*, ed. Jane Collins and Nicholas Till, trans. Christina M. Lagao and David Rosener (Routledge, 2015), p. 1.

through Jacques Lezra, among others, as a "position of resistance" to homogenization[24] provide an ethical standpoint from which to relate with others' lives without pretending to own or fully understand their original experiences?

Could notions of untranslatability help inform how to see and work with the ungraspability of pasts and histories belonging to others and of performances that are gone, looking for example to translation theorist Emily Apter's suggestion of viewing "the universe of comparison as more dark space than connective constellation; a cartography that added voids and subtracted from solids"[25]?

Could looking to philologist Barbara Cassin's connection between the untranslatable and "what one never ceases to (not) translate" [26] ("ce qu'on ne cesse pas de (ne pas) traduire"[27]), inform the increasing sense of incompletion that both drove and emerged from these research processes, and could it offer an angle from which to look, research, and create from the absence that remains of performance memories belonging to, performed, and recounted by others?

Formal research question

This hermeneutically inclined research-(re)creation project examined how the question of untranslatability — or "the energy of the untranslatables" as per philologist Barbara Cassin[28] —

[24] More specifically, Lezra points to his concept of "untranslatability which-is-not one" as "a position of resistance to, even rebellion against, the globalization of culture that does not stand on, commit us or lead to fundamentalism." Jacques Lezra, Untranslating Machines: A Genealogy for the Ends of Global Thought (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2017), p. 2.
[25] Simona Bertacco. "An Interview with Emily Apter." *CR: The New Centennial Review* 16, no. 1 (2016): 10.
[26] Barbara Cassin, "Introduction," translated by Micheal Wood, in *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, ed. Barbara Cassin (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), xvii.
[27] Barbara Cassin, ed., *Vocabulaire Européen des Philosophies: Dictionnaire des Intraduisibles* (Paris: Seuil, 2004), xvii.
[28] Barbara Cassin, "The Energy of the Untranslatables: Translation as a Paradigm for the Human Sciences," trans. Michael Syrotinski, *Paragraph* 38, no. 2 (July 2015): 145–58.

might be applied both as a dramaturgical motor and/or as a research lens in considering and reinterpreting re-representations of performance memories. As such, written both in and about the aftermath of a live performance event, this thesis echoes its on-site research-creation counterpart in asking how considering untranslatability within representations of performance memories might inform performance historiography, public engagement with performance histories, cultural engagement (*médiation culturelle)* practices, audience research, and performance creation processes.

Thesis structure

Drawing on oral history and research-creation methodologies and looking across multiple interdisciplines including translation studies, memory studies, and performance historiography, this written thesis examines the question of untranslatability within representations of performance memories through excerpts and analyses of project interviews, through reflections on in-studio creation exercises and on the resulting public event, and through readings into literature from associated interfields.

Chapter One of this thesis presents the project's research context, driving questions, and formal fields of inquiry. While Chapter Two is not a traditional literature review — in lieu of a formal review, this thesis attempts to converse with relevant literature throughout its whole — it briefly situates the shifting interdisciplinary contexts this research-creation process has been working within, and describes the predominant theories on untranslatability, performance aftermath, and memory research with which the project is engaging. Chapter Two also discusses some of the many other projects with shared concerns. After bringing readers in Chapter Three into the project's methodologies and research practices, Chapter Four discusses questions and findings

that emerged from the project, namely, ways in which notions of untranslatability interplayed throughout this research-creation project with: a) reconstructions of performance memories, b) experiments in repetition, and c) questions of voice. Chapter Five considers potential extensions or applications of the project's research concerns and recognizes areas that merit further attention. In closing (a paradoxical task for a study interested in incompletion), I argue that while untranslatability can admittedly feel abstract and is a topic of frequent disagreement, it can offer a powerful research and/or creation lens to approach another person's memory of a past live show, in terms of its allowances of grappling with working with respect to temporal and personal boundaries, while attempting to *not cease to (not) translate* what remains.

Researcher context

Driven by an onslaught of initial and emerging questions, this thesis is also informed by my own performance memories, multiplied through about 20 years in circus and other interdisciplinary art contexts[29] — although the research in this project suggests having many professional performing experiences is not a reliable indicator of vivid performance memories (Even the most seasoned performers I interviewed mainly discussed memories from their schooling and from very early, often awkward experiences in their careers. The one time, for example, someone mentioned their Broadway premiere, it was in order to discuss stomach cramps before going on stage[30]). It is also informed by a 14-year practice alongside (and often intertwined with) my artistic life as a professional translator, mainly for circuses and other arts groups.

[29] This thesis is informed in part by about 20 years in the circus field (about 5 training and 15 working).
[30] Kate Mc Gregor Stewart, Interview with the researcher. March 1, 2021.

If the project draws on my background in circus — as well as the circus backgrounds of roughly half the participating performers and interviewed artists — it looks freely to other performance forms and other artists, partly out of an interest in the bleeding and crossover between art forms across history, but mainly because what was important to the research was not the genre but the relationship to interpretations of liveness and the past.

A two-headed creature: Writing about/after/alongside the event

If a "Research-Creation thesis comprises two synthesized components: a creative production component, which may be presented in a variety of media, communicative, or performative platforms; and a written component,"[31] as per Concordia's thesis instructions (as of 2024), then we could say that questions of absence, (un)translatability, and (un)representability are embedded in the exercise of structuring and developing such a project, in the sense that both components deal with the remembered or projected presence but immediate absence of the other. This thesis wrestles with the coexistence and interdependence of a "creative production component" and a written component (which, if we want to argue, is also a form of creative production), knowing that none of the people attending the performance event or research sessions had access to the written component (which wasn't completed at the time), and the majority of the people who will read the written component will not have attended the performance research sessions or the live event.

How to conceptualize, structure, and realize multiple expressions – in this case, 27 interviews, a series of collaborative working sessions with performers in the studio, a public event, and a paper – of the same project without succumbing to lean on some to explain, legitimize, or

[31] "Thesis Preparation Guide - Concordia University," School of Graduate Studies, Concordia University. Copyright 2013, updated September 1, 2023, https://www.concordia.ca/content/dam/sgs/docs/handbooks/thesispreparationguide.pdf p.12.

represent others? What is the relation of these research extensions to one other? What is the relevance, for example, of the paper being read by someone who didn't watch the event, or the event being attended by someone who will never read the paper? What does the project mean to those who only encountered the project through an interview? Finally, how to work beyond the assumption, so clearly disrupted by Rebecca Schneider, "that performance disappears and text remains"?[32]

In many ways, writing after and about a performance, an event, or a research process shares similar traits and problems as translation. Just as "there is no such thing as a translation that provides anything like a transparent window through which a reader can see the original," as reiterates Homeric translator Emily Wilson,[33] so too is an experience's documentation another experience in itself. Just as "[t]ranslation creates knowledge about the differences between languages," as writes translation theorist Anthony Pym (responding to Benjamin),[34] so too are differences between mediums, in this case writing and live performance, put into relief when they refer to one another or when they seemingly address or attempt to examine the same things. In "The Performativity of Performance Documentation," theorist Philip Auslander suggests that rather than viewing a documentation of a performance "as an indexical access point to a past event" that we might see "the document itself *as a performance* [...] for which we are the present audience."[35]

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[32] Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains*, (Routledge, 2011), p. 87.
[33] Emily Wilson, "Translator's Preface," in *The Odyssey*, Homer, trans. Emily Wilson (New York: W. W. Norton, 2018), p.105.
[34] Anthony Pym, "Uncertainty," in *Exploring Translation Theories* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2023), p. 95. Pym is responding here to Benjamin's *Task of the Translator.* See:
Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator" in *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968).
[35] Philip Auslander, "The Performativity of Performance Documentation," *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 28, no. 3 (2006): 9.

Considering a similar set of questions, performance scholars Susan Melrose and Stefanie Sachsenmaier, writing together with the late dance artist Rosemary Butcher, ask: "What is at stake in the relatively recent urge to document, annotate or archive decision making processes in creative practices?" What is left out, or what, they write, "evades" what are "almost desperate attempts" to "capture" or to hold on to live performance-making process, after the fact?[36]

I don't view my written component as a documentation or a capturing of a performance event or research process so much as a different and overlapping means to explore and propose the same questions, perhaps leading to differing responses.

The written component also contains information that was missing, or at least not explicitly expressed in the live presentation (and vice-versa). For example, the first day of the Coeur des sciences residency in January 2022 took place on an empty UQAM campus. Montréal was under another lockdown, all classes had been canceled, and the project had been granted an exception at the last minute to be conducted in what were locked buildings, requiring multiple security checks and official documents to enter. We started the residency in a small, seventh-floor production studio, with big windows looking out to deserted courtyards with deep snow and dark neon light.

[36] Susan Melrose, Stefanie Sachsenmaier, and Rosemary Butcher, "Just in Time." *Performance Research* 20, no. 6 (2015): 88.

Figure 1:

Photo from the window of the Coeur des sciences residency onto the empty UQAM campus. January 2022. Taken from my phone.

It was the first time I'd been in a room with artists testing out what I had been trying to plan with broken starts for more than two years. Watching and hearing them read and re-(mis?)embody the interview excerpts I'd been collecting and then slowly, almost painstakingly, transcribing felt strangely sudden, like have tried to locate and prepare a valve for so long, that it seemed shocking that once open, materials would start to pour out of it.

In order to stretch out the limited budget I was working with, but to work with a multitude of performers, which felt essential to the project's rejection of a single voice, and to accommodate the participating freelance artists' lives and schedules in the face of my short-notice request, I divided up the time between the performers and often worked with two or three at a time, but the first day, almost everyone was there.

We are often told in oral history training programs that interviewees might reveal some of their most vivid memories at the end of the interview, right after the recording has been stopped and the conversation appears to be over. At the end of that session, the group of performers and I sat and talked, first formally, with my phone recording, going over project-related questions, and then informally, and unrecorded. In the unrecorded, informal segment, one performer, Catherine Tardif, remembered time she had spent in the same area in the 1980s, and recounted taking part in a dance film recorded in a studio close by with the great Harlem choreographer Blondell Cummings. Catherine told us that she danced in the film as a nun with a close friend, Claire, who, shortly after, died in a violent and senseless crime. She also recounted their choreography and other aspects I can't recall clearly enough to repeat.

"I don't know why I just told you all that," she said, right afterwards. "It just made me think of that, being here." Deeply taken by the story, I came home and tried to piece it together. Sure enough, the video of the dance film is online, with an astonishing solo by Blondell Cummings followed by a trio where she is joined by Catherine and Catherine's late friend Claire (the video, with Catherine and Claire unnamed and surely unfindable and unrecognizable to most viewers, showing up around seven minutes into the film, is available on YouTube and, with the dancers credited, on MUBI[37]).

Further research that evening led to a 1990 article from La Presse titled, *Claire Samson: une fille douce qui aimait beaucoup la danse*, reporting, "[…] Claire Samson, 34 ans, est morte

[37] Here is the version on YouTube with the dancers uncredited:
Blondell Cummings , "Blondell Cummings - Commitment: Two Portraits," YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6MXAdEAFr4A
Here is credited version on MUBI:
Blondell Cummings, "Commitment : Two Portraits (1988)," MUBI, January 1, 1988, https://mubi.com/films/commitment-two-portraits

assassinée... pour rien."[38] She was attacked and killed in the basement of a boutique she worked at to support herself between contracts as a dancer.

I don't know why I spent so much time researching these women and this film when I got home rather than preparing for the studio the next day. It was as if, in this way, that dancer, Claire Samson, came to haunt a part of the process, and even a tiny part of Blondell Cummings's ghost (or my interpretation of her ghost) made her way into the veins of the project, despite the obvious fact that neither of the two artists are concretely tied to my research.

This strikes me as one of the clearest examples of some of the unspoken performance histories in the project, which were those of the participating performers, and the vicarious access their briefly and inadvertently revealed memories offered towards fragmented histories of their own and of encounters with others.

None of this would be clear from watching the presentation of this project or a video of the event, and that leaves me questioning both where I might have made mistakes in the studio, and what the written extension of a performance project might offer: rather than attempting to defend or represent an event that was once live, maybe it can attempt to examine or reveal something else.

[38]The title could be translated as "Claire Samson: a sweet girl who loved to dance" and the reporting, "[...] Claire Samson, 34, is dead, murdered... for nothing."
Suzanne Colpron, "Claire Samson: une fille douce qui aimait beaucoup la danse," *La Presse*, March 15, 1990, accessed at: https://numerique.banq.qc.ca/patrimoine/details/52327/2168717

Chapter 2 - Before and beside *After-Shows:*

Infiltrating theories and parallel projects

This research-creation project stands on the shoulders of an abundant, growing body of works interested in working/creating/researching within the aftermath of live performances, and looks to theoretical analyses from a broad range of literature. While this chapter is not an exhaustive, formal literature review — considerations of related projects and literature are explored throughout every chapter of this paper — it situates predominant, previous and parallel interdisciplinary currents that informed and shaped this research — namely, shifting theories[39] on performance "remains," on untranslatability, and on intersections between translation and

[39] I use the term *theory* broadly in this thesis. Philosopher and logic scholar Gary Hardegree notes that *theory* can be traced to the Greek *theoros* or *spectator,* and, he writes, "probably comes from 'thea' [a viewing] + 'oros' [seeing]." I found it helpful in this project to approach *theory* in this wide-ranging sense: as a way, or as a set of ways, of seeing something.
Linking *theory* to *viewing* or *seeing* or *spectator* invites re-examining the act of spectatorship, which can be brought to light through Rancière's presenting of spectatorship as a highly engaged act, similar to Michel de Certeau's view of reading as "an 'art' which is anything but passive" and poet Erín Moure's insistence that "the act of reading is a practice of embodiment." Through these views, the person *seeing* (or watching or reading) is also *participating* in something. I also found it helpful, in terms of considering *theory,* to approach *seeing* as a kind of active observing or framing: attentively exploring angles from which to attempt to "take in" or frame information or phenomena. Hardegree points to further etymological links between *theoros* and *theater* and between *spectator* and *speculate*. He also examines multiple definitions of *theory*, among them a layperson's explanation in *The Skeptic's Dictionary,* authored by philosopher Robert Todd Carroll, who writes:
"In the strong sense, a theory is a principle or set of principles for explaining, organizing, unifying, and/or making sense out of some range of phenomena. In the weak sense, a theory is a belief or speculation."
While the problem of "what theory is" can't be solved through this thesis, "a set of principles" or, more aptly in this case, a set of concepts or observations that facilitate the "making sense" of a "range of phenomena" is an accurate working definition for this project, as is the notion of a network of active viewpoints.
See: Gary Hardegree, *Notes on Philosophy of Science* (Amherst, MA: UMass Amherst, 2001) https://people.umass.edu/gmhwww/382/text.htm.
Jacques Rancière, "The Emancipated Spectator," *Artforum International*, vol. 45, no. 7. (March 2007).
Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), xxii.
Erín Moure, "Elisa Sampedrín and the Paradox of Translation, or The Intranslatable," (Leslie Scalapino Memorial Lecture in Innovative Poetics. Lecture at Naropa University, Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics, Boulder, CO, July 2021, text available via chapbook from Zat-So Productions [Montréal]: https://erinmoure.mystrikingly.com/), p. 8.
Robert Todd Carroll, *The Skeptic's Dictionary* (Wiley, 2003), p. 420.

memory — and recognizes this project's indebtedness to many prior performance (and other) initiatives with connected concerns.

Vanish/remain/return

This project is predicated on the position that live performances[40] do not "vanish" when they are over, looking with particular reverence to theories put forth by Rebecca Schneider and Diana Taylor. Rather than assume "that performance disappears and text remains,"[41] that the temporal "now" of liveness is straightforward (Schneider refers here to Gertrude Stein's notion of "syncopated time" during theater performances, and wrestles with the strange phrase "real time"[42] — her reflections bring to mind discussion on diachronic and synchronic time[43]), and that "memory cannot be housed in a body and remain, and thus that oral storytelling, live recitation, repeated gesture, and ritual enactment are not practices of telling or writing history,"[44] Schneider and Taylor assert that performances "participate in acts of transfer, transmitting

[40] This thesis makes frequent use of the terms *performance, translation, dramaturgy, research, creation, culture, history,* and *memory,* while referring to scholars and practitioners who often offer or work with deviating definitions of these words.
I have attempted to work in recognition of the shifting meanings and unstable aliveness of these words. Katalin Trencsenyi and Bernadette Cochrane write of a "paradigm of new dramaturgy" that "is not a stable one" and that "acknowledges the multitude of theories and aesthetics, and the diversity of practices (some sympathetic, others clashing) that coexist within our expanded […] field." I have aimed here to apply a similar acknowledgment of multiple, unstable uses of language within the sources I refer to and to contexts I have co-operated in.
See: Katalin Trencsenyi and Bernadette Cochrane, "New dramaturgy: A post-mimetic, intercultural, process-conscious paradigm" in *New Dramaturgy: International Perspectives on Theory and Practice* (Huntingdon: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), xi.
[41] Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (Routledge, 2011), p. 87.
[42] Rebeccca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (Routledge, 2011), p. 87. See also:
Gertrude Stein, *Lectures in America*, (Random House, 1935).
[43] Joel Burges and Amy J. Elias, eds., *Time: A Vocabulary of the Present* (New York: New York University Press, 2016).
[44] Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*, (Routledge, 2011), p. 99.

memories"[45] and point out that "temporality is volatile, easily swerved."[46]: performance, writes Schneider, remains both in terms of leaving traces (albeit "remain[ing] differently or in difference,"[47]) and in terms of unfolding as an act of remaining, recording, remembering.

As Schneider suggests:

> When we approach performance not as that which disappears [as the archive expects], but as both the act of remaining and a means of re-appearance and 'reparticipation' [though not a metaphysic of presence] we are almost immediately forced to admit that remains do not have to be isolated to the document, to the object, to bone versus flesh […] As theories of trauma and repetition might instruct us, it is not presence that appears in the syncopated time of citational performance but precisely [again] the missed encounter – the reverberations of the overlooked, the missed, the repressed, the seemingly forgotten. Performance does not disappear when approached from this perspective, though its remains are the immaterial of live, embodied acts. Rather, performance plays the 'sedimented acts' and spectral meanings that haunt material in constant collective interaction, in constellation, in transmutation. [48]

This argument is echoed by Taylor:

> When we look around us — at everything from teeming cities full of people to all the discards that refuse to evaporate from city dumps — we recognize that things do not in fact 'disappear' — they exist in a constant state of transformation and again-ness.[49]

These statements respond, dramatically, to preceding theories such as Herbert Blau's notion of performance being forever in a "vanishing point"[50] or Peggy Phelan's much-cited argument that "[p]erformance's only life is in the present,"[51] and complicate wide-held presumptions about the

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[45] Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, (Duke University Press Books, 2003), 97.
[46] Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*, (Routledge, 2011), p. 89.
[47] Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (Routledge, 2011), p. 104.
[48] Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reproduction* (London: Routledge, 2011), 143.
[49] Diana Taylor, "Archiving the 'Thing': Teatro Da Vertigem's Bom Retiro 958 Metros," TDR/The Drama Review 59, no. 2 (2015), 59.
[50] Herbert Blau, *Take up the Bodies: Theater at the Vanishing Point* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985).
[51] "Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology. Performance […] becomes itself through disappearance."
Peggy Phelan, "The Ontology of Performance: Representation without Reproduction," in *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), 146.

impermanence of live performance.[52] They also challenge the presumption of permanence of material traces.

Just what is it that might be disappearing (or not)? In an essay examining the state and nature of literature (writing in 1959), Maurice Blanchot employs similar phrasing as the performance theorists: "Literature is going towards itself, towards its essence, which is disappearance."[53] Arguably, through some lenses, literature could be viewed as a form of performance, a problematic word that notoriously resists clear-cut definition (as writes Diana Taylor, "the many uses of the word *performance* point to the complex, seemingly contradictory, and at times mutually sustaining layers of referentiality" — Taylor actually suggests that *performanc*e as used in English, is often untranslatable[54]).

Schneider's re-examining of performance not as an act of disappearing but as an act of remaining is further wrought with by artist and theorist Eirini Kartsaki and reframed an act of returning.[55] "Performance returns," writes Kartsaki. "Here I am returning to the same stories again and again," she recounts, speaking of her own performance practice. "[…] Here I am returning to that moment when I feel a gap, a hole opening up, some kind of supple space, inviting me in. Here I am desiring to re-live that moment in the theater, sitting on the narrow bench looking at people looking at me. Here I am going back to revisit, to re-experience, to see again." [56]

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[52] As an example, I came across a review in the paper one morning as I was editing this chapter that began by stressing the "notoriously impermanent" nature of dance:
Brian Seibert, "Under Fabric and around Sculptures, Dancers Respond to Art," The New York Times, July 23, 2024, https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/23/arts/dance/dance-and-art-sculpture.html

[53] Maurice Blanchot, "The Disappearance of Literature" in *The Book to Come*, ed. Werner Harnacher, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2003 [*Le livre à venir*, Editions Gallimard, 1959]), p.195.

[54] Diana Taylor, "Translating Performance," *Profession*, no. 1 (2002): 47.

[55] Eirini Kartsaki, *Repetition in Performance: Returns and Invisible Forces* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2017).

[56] Eirini Kartsaki, *Repetition in Performance: Returns and Invisible Forces* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2017), p. 97.

Kartsaki hasn't strayed far from Richard Schechner's influential description of restored behavior as "the main characteristic of performance": "strips of behavior" that might be "rearranged or reconstructed" even if "the original 'truth' or 'source' of the behavior may be lost, ignored, or contradicted."[57] Leaning on Schechner's definition, Mark Franko and Annette Richards point out that performance is therefore "fundamentally repetitive or reiterative" and that it "necessarily brings back the past to unsettle the present."[58]

Peggy Phelan reflects on this "dramatization of the past in the present" by drawing connections between "Schechner's understanding of performance as 'twice behaved behavior'" and "Freud's term for psychoanalytic understanding, *nachträglichkeit*, 'afterwardness.'"[59]

Adrian Heathfield and Andrew Quick evoke related positions:

> Coming to formation through a process of remembering, all performance acts are built upon the drive to repeat, rearticulating the (absent) rehearsed into the (present) moment of the live event and by this repetition reconfiguring the 'real' world, which exists outside the representational space of the theater, upon its various stages. In performance, the lost originary moment is (partially) retrieved and reconstituted in the space-time of a reenactment, and this description comes close to defining how memory itself does its work. If memory ensures that something remains, then representation enables the remainders to endure, to be perceivable. Viewed like this, the act of rememberance can be seen as a form of theatricality, a bringing into appearance, and the theatrical act a form of rememberance.[60]

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[57] "Restored behavior is living behavior treated as a film director treats a strip of film. These strips of behavior (1) can be rearranged or reconstructed; they are independent of the causal systems (social, psychological, technological) that brought them into existence. They have a life of their own. The original 'truth' or 'source' of the behavior may be lost, ignored, or contradicted— even while this truth or source is apparently being honored and observed. How the strip of behavior was made, found, or developed may be unknown or concealed; elaborated; distorted by myth and tradition. Originating as a process, used in the process of rehearsal to make a new process, a performance, the strips of behavior are not themselves process but things, items, 'material.' […] Restored behavior is used in all kinds of performances from shamanism and exorcism to trance, from ritual to aesthetic dance and theater, from initiation rites to social dramas, from psychoanalysis to psychodrama and transactional analysis. In fact, restored behavior is the main characteristic of performance."
Richard Schechner, "Restoration of Behavior," in *Between Theater and Anthropology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), p. 35.

[58] Mark Franko and Annette Richards, "Actualizing Absence: The Pastness of Performance," in *Acting on the Past: Historical Performance across the Disciplines* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), 2.

[59] Peggy Phelan, "Introduction," in *The Ends of Performance*, ed. Peggy Phelan and Jill Lane (New York: New York University, 1998), p. 6.

[60] Adrian Heathfield and Andrew Quick, "Editorial: On Memory," *Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts* 5, no. 3 (2000): 1.

The question of reperformance

If live performance is arguably already imbued with the past and already composed of repeated acts, elements that already occurred elsewhere in space and time, what to make of formal reperformance, reenactment, or restaging?

Where to draw the line as to what qualifies as a restaging or a re-enacting or a re-performance? Any remounted show from a repertoire? Anyone learning a dance sequence that has already been danced or a reciting line that has already spoken by another performer? A musician or group of musicians replaying a composition? A circus student learning and then (re)executing technique that has been transmitted and adapted across generations?

Looked at broadly, as asks Diana Taylor, "[i]sn't all performance a re-performance?"[61] The artist Orlan notes tendencies for references to past performances to surface in present-day ones even when the performer isn't aware or when the evoked past performance goes unnamed because "we are only formatted memories, trapped by the déjà-vu, the déjà-dit."[62] Similarly, as writes Amelia Jones, "[d]rawing on theories of performativity by authors from Austin to Derrida to Butler, one could argue that the arts are *all* redoings of one kind or another: either repetitious re-stagings based on a script […] or a process of reworking past styles and themes to move art forward in a fantasy of increasing sophistication and/or aesthetic improvement."[63] Looked at

[61] Diana Taylor, "Saving the 'Live'? Re-Performance and Intangible Cultural Heritage," *Études Anglaises* Vol. 69, no. 2 (August 1, 2016): p.53

[62] Orlan, "We Are Formatted Memories," in *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History*, ed. Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2012), 270.

[63]Amelia Jones, "The Now and the Has Been: Paradoxes of Live Art in History," in *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History*, ed. Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield (Bristol: Intellect Books Ltd, 2014), 13.

broader still, “re-performances can be unconscious,” writes Taylor, when considering, for example, the replaying of psychological trauma.[64]

Named efforts to “re-perform” past performances as a way to “keep them alive” are predicated on a fantasy, Taylor writes. “It’s a widespread fantasy—one shared by individual artists such as Marina Abramović and world organizations such as UNESCO—that specific performances (or ICH, ‘intangible cultural heritage’) can be kept alive, separated from their moment of knowing and being, and safeguarded, and performed for other audiences at another moment.”[65]

That the “moment” of a performance cannot be preserved even if a version of that performance is repeated seems obvious enough, even outside of approaches that explicitly stress ephemerality like Abramović’s. No reasonable person seeing or performing a play today by Sophocles, for example, believes they are accurately reliving an experience from a specific day in ancient Greece, even if those two representations of the piece have quite a lot to do with one another and repeat many of the same words and stories and actions.

Taylor is more interested in “the friction between the frames” in the “bracketing of one performance within another” that she observes in practices in some contemporary art currents well as in ancient Mesoamerica and Maoist China, rather than in “reperformances” that masquerade as presenting “the ‘historical,’ ‘authentic’ or ‘truth value.’”[66]

But if the fantasies Taylor describes don’t bring back the same life or moment, they undeniably give way to other lives, and are a way not of refuting but of responding, and maybe even — in

[64] Diana Taylor, “Saving the ‘Live’? Re-Performance and Intangible Cultural Heritage,” *Études Anglaises* Vol. 69, no. 2 (August 1, 2016): p.160.
[65] Diana Taylor, “Saving the ‘Live’? Re-Performance and Intangible Cultural Heritage,” *Études Anglaises* Vol. 69, no. 2 (August 1, 2016): p.149.
[66] Diana Taylor, “Saving the ‘Live’? Re-Performance and Intangible Cultural Heritage,” *Études Anglaises* Vol. 69, no. 2 (August 1, 2016): p.160.

their inevitable failure to faithfully repeat a moment — of highlighting or echoing Artaud's famous pronouncement:

> […] that an expression does not have the same value twice, does not live two lives; that all words, once spoken, are dead and function only at the moment when they are uttered, that a form, once it has served, cannot be used again and asks only to be replaced by another, and that the theater is the only place in the world where a gesture, once made, can never be made the same way twice.[67]

It is in response to Artaud that Derrida writes that the "theater is born in its own disappearance"[68] (note here a porousness with which texts, written across varying time periods and contexts, switch between the terms *theater* and *performance* — one of the many reasons this thesis attempts to work in recognition of multiple, shifting understandings of these words, rather than impose or stick to a single definition). It is also in response to Artaud that he writes that "[w]hat is tragic is not the impossibility but the necessity of repetition" [69] (echoed by Gayatri Spivak on translation, proclaiming, "In every possible sense, translation is necessary but impossible"[70]). Whether they are failingly attempting to repeat a gesture or reperform the past, whether they are "(re)embodying history"[71] (or hoping to) — as dance scholars Ann Dils and Ann Cooper Albright describe as they examine some of the ways in which dancers engage with past dances — whether, as per Taylor, they are "bracketing" a past performance within another, or whether they are pursuing something else, the host of projects formally engaging with specific past

[67] Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958), p.75.
[68] Jacques Derrida, "The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 233.
[69] Jacques Derrida, "The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 248.
[70] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Translation as Culture," in *Living Translation* (London: Seagull Books, 2022), 69.
[71] Ann Dils and Ann Cooper Albright, "First Steps: Moving into the Study of Dance History," in *Moving History/Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2013), xiii.

performances is overwhelmingly large, enough to cause historian Jennie Klein to describe "[a]n entire industry of reenactments and reperformances."[72] Summarizing all such projects exceeds the scope of this paper, especially given the fluid grounds by which to define reperformance, after Taylor. Amelia Jones's non-exhaustive *Timeline of Ideas: Live Art in (Art) History, A Primarily European–US-based Trajectory of Debates and Exhibitions Relating to Performance Documentation and Re-Enactments* documents many Western re-performance and re-enactment projects between the 1950s and early 2000s.[73] Expanding such a timeline to include re-enactment projects outside the frames of the formal "performance art" or "live art" genres Jones is attending to and including circus, theater, music, and dance and other forms would be an exciting but almost boundless project that again, is beyond the aims or capacities of this thesis. That said, I would like to point to a few initiatives especially relevant to *After-shows*.

The first is the wonderful "The 'Big Top' Show Goes On: An Oral History of Occupations Inside and Outside the Canvas Circus Tent"[74] by the Oklahoma Oral History Research Program, which includes 24 oral history interviews with former circus workers linked to Hugo, Oklahoma (where at one point as many as forty circuses wintered, according to one interviewee, the deeply charming Mary Rawls[75]; another project document lists that number as twenty[76] – still astonishing). The interview collection is accessible to the public online — though the videos, at

[72] Jennie Klein, "Re Re Re: The Originality of Performance and Other (Post)Modernist Myths," *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 35, no. 2 (2013): 109.
[73] Amelia Jones, "Timeline of Ideas: Live Art in (Art) History, A Primarily European–US-based Trajectory of Debates and Exhibitions Relating to Performance Documentation and Re-Enactments" in *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History*, ed. Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield (Bristol: Intellect Books Ltd, 2014), p. 425-432.
[74] Oklahoma Oral History Research Program, "Big Top Show Goes On," Home - Oklahoma State University Library, no publication date (interviews led in 2011 and 2012), https://library.okstate.edu/search-and-find/collections/digital-collections/circus/
[75]The Oklahoma Oral History Research Program, "Mary Rawls: Big Top Show Goes on (Second Interview)," published on YouTube on August 24, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Qov-xZ5jk8
[76] Tanya Finchum and Juliana Nykolaiszyn, "Everybody Works: Documenting Circus Life in Hugo, Oklahoma: Folklife Today," The Library of Congress, December 3, 2018, https://blogs.loc.gov/folklife/2018/12/everybody-works-documenting-circus-life-in-hugo-oklahoma/.

the time of writing, have garnered a low number of views, suggesting, perhaps, some of the challenges facing circus-related public history initiatives and research dissemination[77] — and includes footage of a play called *The Circus Show*[78] inspired by the interviews.

The differences between *After-shows* and *The 'Big Top' Show Goes On* are numerous: they did not share the same research questions; the primary objective of the Oklahoma Oral History Research Program project was historical documentation (excellently done!), and the project was centered on a specific town. The theatrical component of the project was performed by students: simply a different set of "rules of engagement" than *After-shows,* which involved performers with their own decades of performance memories reperforming the memories of others. But the project is a strong example of conducting and presenting oral histories of circus.

Examples of initiatives collecting and preserving oral histories of dance include the New York Public Library's Dance Oral History Project, which houses over 600 interviews,[79] and San Francisco's Legacy Oral History Project, "designed to prevent the loss of historic continuity by preserving the artistic and personal records of San Francisco Bay Area dance community elders and other members who are confronting life-threatening illness, with a special interest in those challenging ARC or AIDS," founded by oral historian and dance artist Jeff Friedman.[80]

Other projects of note include an initiative by the UK-based Performance Re-Enactment Society who "use archival documents and audience's memories to revive past art experiences and create

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[77] One of my favorite interviews, the one with Mary Rawls, had 21 views at the time of writing this (several of which were me re-watching it), and none of the circus professionals or circus academics I spoke with here in Montréal were aware of the project.

[78] Oklahoma State University Library, "Behind the Circus Show," published on YouTube on January 9, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjBiNufe6xA

[79] "Dance Oral History Project," The New York Public Library, accessed August 14, 2024, https://www.nypl.org/research/divisions/jerome-robbins-dance-division/oral-history-project-dance.

[80] "Collections Detail," Museum of Performance + Design, https://www.mpdsf.org/collections-detail (Scroll down to "Legacy Oral History Project" for description.)
See also: "Legacy Oral History Program," Spark, August 3, 2015, https://ww2.kqed.org/spark/legacy-oral-history-program/

them anew."[81] The rules of engagement in this series of works are also different than *After-shows* — the group focuses on formal "performance" genres (i.e., not circus) and does not, from what I can tell, work with or collect first-hand artist accounts — but the project is concerned with similar questions.

The 2006 *Performance a Domicilio* initiative in Mexico, in which artists created a "performance delivery service where the client could order a performance to their home," including a "cover" option in which "the client could choose off a menu" of past performances by artists such as Rocío Boliver (La Congelada de Uva), Ana Mendieta, and Esther Ferrer[82] is another (wonderful) example of forms these questions can take.

Here in Montréal, dance artist Enora Rivière interviewed other dancers about past experiences as performers and then wove "rewritings" of those interviews into spoken text during her piece, *manifestement*. I had a double experience of the project as an audience member in 2022, similar to the recollections described by multiple spectators of *After-shows*: knowing nothing about what I was about to see in advance and simply receiving a work in front of me, and re-experiencing it completely differently after understanding in the post-show discussion that the artist was performing other people's stories and words.[83]

[81] The Performance Re-Enactment Society." Accessed March 6, 2022. http://clarethornton.com/prs/

[82] From the project curator Débora Carnevali Ramírez's website: "Performance a Domicilio [2006]," Débora Carnevali Ramírez, http://deboracarnevaliramirez.weebly.com/performance-a-domicilio-2006.html

[83] In reality, during the post-show talk, I formed the false belief that the artist had incorporated the interviewed performers' memories into her movement and her entire choreography. The clarification of this misperception led to a *third* understanding of the piece. Upon correspondence with Enora, I learned that the movement, music, and spoken text of *manifestement* were in fact developed separately:

Also locally, dance artist Dorian Nuskind-Oder, circus artist Elena Lev, and dramaturg Simon Grenier-Poirier revisited the act Elena has been performing for several decades in *Looper,* reframing its presentation in part through expanding and exploring its duration.[84] Meanwhile, Montréal-based multidisciplinary artist Dulcinea Langfelder worked on re-creating and transmitting a solo she had developed and performed in the 1980's, *Vicious Circle,* adapting the ring she had performed with and working with a specialist in the circus discipline roue Cyr.[85] In a 2020 interview on translations in/and/of her performances, Dulcinea told me: "I'm opening it up. It was created so long ago, and it's so personal to me, that I need to make it contemporary, it needs to change."[86] To be clear, these three examples are a tiny, very incomplete sampling of local, recent performance projects interested in performing memories of other performances and/or in recreation, both loose and explicit.

Examples of other projects involving reperforming other people's histories and words extend to a vast scope of verbatim theater, documentary theater, and oral history performance works — a summary of which, again, would be another thesis or (very exciting) project in itself. Histories of these genres occasionally look as far back as Phrynichus' *The Capture of Miletus* (circa 494

"je ne voulais pas que la matière chorégraphique découle des entretiens ou l'inverse, ni même de la musique. je voulais travailler sur texte et danse et musique de façon autonome et ensuite réfléchir à leur mise en dialogue, tension...etc d'abord j'ai créé une matière chorégraphique (qui tentait de répondre aux même types de questions que j'allais poser plus tard aux danseur·euses) puis j'ai fait des entretiens à partir desquels j'ai écrit, réécrit les textes qui sont dit ou entendu sur scène et ensuite j'ai mis en scène le tout." (Loose translation: "I didn't want the choreographic material to flow from the interviews, or vice versa, or even from the music. I wanted to work on the text and dance and music independently, and then think about how to put them in dialogue, tension... etc. First, I created choreographic material (which attempted to answer the same types of questions I would later ask the dancers), then I conducted interviews, off of which I wrote or rewrote the texts that are said or heard on stage, and then I staged the whole thing.")
Enora Rivière, email to the researcher, August 14, 2024.
See also: "Manifestement (2022) : Un Trio," Enora Rivière, accessed August 14, 2024, https://enorariviere.com/manifestement/

[84] In a series of written exchanges, Dorian confirmed that she would situate this work as a project relating to memory. Dorian Nuskind-Oder, email to the researcher, August 19, 2024.
See: "Looper," Le Radeau, accessed August 19, 2024, https://leradeau.ca/looper-2

[85] "Vicious Circle: New Generation," Dulcinée Langfelder & Cie, May 11, 2022, https://dulcinee.org/vicious-circle-new-generation/.

[86] Dulcinea Langfelder, Interview with the researcher. November 23, 2020.

BCE)[87]; usually cite the Living Newspaper projects, often traced to early 20th-century Italian futurist performance, Soviet agitprop (especially the Blue Blouse Theatre), and post WWI Viennese experimental theater, [88] later linked to the Living Newspapers initiatives of the Great Depression-era US Federal Theatre Project, involving plays based on newspaper clippings[89]; and pay tribute to Brecht's collaborator Erwin Piscator's influential development of the documentary theater genre,[90] before sprawling into hundreds of contemporary variations and examples.

After-shows is neither formal documentary performance, reenactment, or reperformance — the web of interpretations of performance memories being (re)performed were memories of fragmented moments, not of full performances; the project was more concerned with attempting to research and create from internal moments remembered by performers than in attending to a specific past performance — but it is indebted, of course, to many of these prior initiatives, sharing a vested interest in working and creating off of/with/in relation to other people's histories.

Broadly speaking, this project is also indebted to many "memory projects" (too numerous to name, once again). Aby Warburg's Bilderatlas Mnemosyn project[91] is of special mention in part because of its wide influence — cultural memory scholar Astrid Erll calls Warburg "an

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[87] Attilio Favorini, *Voicings: Ten Plays from the Documentary Theatre* (Hopewell, N.J: Ecco Press, 1995).
[88] John W. Casson, "Living Newspaper: Theatre and Therapy," *TDR/The Drama Review* 44, no. 2 (June 2000): 107–22.
[89] See, among other sources:
Bonnie Nelson Schwartz, *Voices from the Federal Theatre* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003).
Lorraine Brown, "A Story Yet To Be Told: The Federal Theatre Research Project," *The Black Scholar* 10, no. 10 (July 1979): 70–78.
[90] Minou Arjomand, "Performing Catastrophe: Erwin Piscator's Documentary Theatre," *Modern Drama* 59, no. 1 (March 2016): 49–74.
[91] See: The Warburg Institute, "Bilderatlas Mnemosyne," accessed September 23, 2022, https://warburg.sas.ac.uk/archive/bilderatlas-mnemosyne
Also see: Aby Warburg, *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne*, ed. Haus der Kulturen der Welt and The Warburg Institute; Roberto Ohrt, Axel Heil. Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2020.
Martha Schwendener, "This Atlas of Art and Memory Is a Wonder of the Modern World," The New York Times, May 14, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/14/arts/design/aby-warburg-memory-atlas.html

important forefather of the modern, interdisciplinary study of culture" [92] — but also because its eclectic collection of nearly 1000 images seems both vast and incomplete: were he still alive and in one of his periods outside of institutional treatment, it's easy to imagine that Warburg would still be "never (not) ceasing" to assemble and collect.

Untranslatability

Translation theories have been looked at to inform performance re-enactment, re-creation, and dramaturgy by scholars such as André Lepecki, who "redid" performances of Allan Kaprow's *18 Happenings in 6 Parts*[93] and who theorizes re-enactment and related issues in the essay, *The Body as Archive: Will to Re-Enact and the Afterlives of Dances* with explicit reference to Benjamin's Task of the Translator[94] and by Jess McCormak, who examines the application of translation studies to verbatim dance-theater choreography, leading her to consider "translation as a dramaturgical device and choreographic practice."[95] This thesis looks attentively at their research while turning its particular focus — in regard to the translative nature of seeking to re-represent performance memories —to untranslatability.

Barbara Cassin defines untranslatability as "symptoms of the difference between languages, not that which we do not translate, but that which we never stop (not) translating." [96] Cassin reaches her definition in part through her close reading of Wilhelm von Humboldt, who, she notes, in the introduction to his 1816 translation of Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*, "begins […] by qualifying this

[92] Astrif Erll, *Memory in Culture*, trans. Sara B. Young (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 19.
[93] "18 Happenings in 6 Parts (Re-Doing)," Performa Archive, https://archive.performa-arts.org/archive/07b-pc-0008.
[94] André Lepecki, "The Body as Archive: Will to Re-Enact and the Afterlives of Dances." Dance Research Journal 42, no. 2 (2010): 28.
[95] Jess McCormack, *Choreography and Verbatim Theatre: Dancing Words* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), vi.
[96] Barbara Cassin, "The Energy of the Untranslatables: Translation as a Paradigm for the Human Sciences," trans. Michael Syrotinski, *Paragraph* 38, no. 2 (July 2015), p. 149.

tragedy as 'untranslatable,' and then straight away goes and translates it." As such, Cassin later remarks, such a work "always remains to be (re)translated."[97]

As Cilliers van den Berg writes, in response to Cassin, "[t]he thing one does not stop (not) translating, or untranslatability, becomes the very impetus for translation itself."[98] Or, slightly more reservedly, for Theo Hermans (referring to examples from Erasmus and Averroes): "Untranslatability does not prevent translation from taking place; at most it slows it down, and the reflection about the renderings in question […] highlights their tentative nature, their provisionality, the sense that different circumstances might have led to alternative choices—the sense, in short, that while the act of translating subdues the untranslatable, it does not quite eliminate it." [99] Hermans joins Marco Buzzoni (and others) in rejecting "the idea of absolute untranslatability" although Hermans is quick to acknowledge that this "does not mean that translatability is unproblematic."[100]

Of note, of course, is that translation, called by Derrida a "sublime and impossible task,"[101] and translatability aren't necessarily easier to pinpoint than untranslatability. As Klaus Mundt points out, "there actually seems to be no clear agreement in translation studies regarding the definition of translation."[102] In her exploration of translation as a choreographic informant, Jess McCormack leans on definitions put forth by theorist Maria Tymoczko, who writes that to

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[97] Barbara Cassin, trans. David Nowell Smith, "Humboldt, Translation and the Dictionary of Untranslatables," in *Untranslatability*, Duncan Large et al., ed. (Routledge, 2018), p. 15.
[98] Cilliers van den Berg, "Notes on Memory Culture and the (Un)Translatable, with Illustrative Reference to Elfriede Jelinek's Die Kinder der Toten (1995)," *Literator* 40, no. 1 (November 26, 2019).
[99] Theo Hermans, "Untranslatability, Entanglement and Understanding," in *Untranslatability*, Duncan Large et al., ed. (Routledge, 2018), p. 28.
[100] Theo Hermans, "Untranslatability, Entanglement and Understanding," in *Untranslatability*, Duncan Large et al., ed. (Routledge, 2018), p. 29.
[101] Jacques Derrida, "What Is a 'Relevant' Translation?," trans. Lawrence Venuti, *Critical Inquiry* 27, no. 2 (Winter 2001): 174.
[102] Klaus Mundt, "Against the 'Un-' in Untranslatability: On the Obsession with Problems, Negativity and Uncertainty," in *Untranslatability: Interdisciplinary Perspectives,* Duncan Large, Motoko Akashi, Wanda Józwikowska, and Emily Rose, eds. (Routledge, 2018), p. 64.

translate something means to “break it up and tell it (in a different form).”[103] In the case of *After-shows*, Cassin’s notion of "the energy of the untranslatables"[104] brought the strongest dramaturgical motor and offered the clearest research angle. The objective of *After-shows* isn’t to prove right (or wrong) existing definitions of translatability or untranslatability, although looking at these drove and informed the project.

While looking most heavily to Cassin, *After-shows* also leaned on Theo Hermans’ linking of untranslatability and entanglement, which doesn’t “undo” translation but “sidelines,” “shadows,” and “haunts” it: “Untranslatability, the perennial uncertainty that stalks our renderings, may be neutralised through the pressure of circumstances, but it continues to shadow translation.”[105]

This relation or friction between the translatable and untranslatable evokes Derrida (who Hermans critiques), who quickly follows his provocation of “I don’t believe that anything can ever be untranslatable—or, moreover, translatable,” with a reflection on the “condition of a certain *economy* that relates the translatable to the untranslatable, not as the same to the other, but as same to same or other to other.”[106]

This tension is summarized slightly differently by Duncan Large, Motoko Akashi, Wanda Józwikowska, and Emily Rose: Referring to Roman Jakobson’s argument that there is generally “no full equivalence between code-units”[107] in interlingual translation, they conclude, “if that is

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[103] Maria Tymoczko, *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators* (Manchester, UK: St. Jerome Publishing, 2007), p. 71. As cited by: Jess McCormack, *Choreography and Verbatim Theatre: Dancing Words* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), vii.

[104] Barbara Cassin, “The Energy of the Untranslatables: Translation as a Paradigm for the Human Sciences,” trans. Michael Syrotinski, *Paragraph* 38, no. 2 (July 2015): 145–58.

[105] Theo Hermans, “Untranslatability, Entanglement and Understanding,” in *Untranslatability*, Duncan Large et al., ed. (Routledge, 2018), p. 34.

[106] “As a matter of fact, I don’t believe that anything can ever be untranslatable—or, moreover, translatable. How can one dare say that nothing is translatable and, by the same token, that nothing is untranslatable? To what concept of translation must one appeal to prevent this axiom from seeming simply unintelligible and contradictory: ‘nothing is translatable; nothing is untranslatable’? To the condition of a certain *economy* that relates the translatable to the untranslatable, not as the same to the other, but as same to same or other to other.” See: Jacques Derrida, “What Is a ‘Relevant’ Translation?,” trans. Lawrence Venuti, *Critical Inquiry* 27, no. 2 (Winter 2001): 178.

[107] Roman Jakobson, “On Linguistic Aspects of Translation,” ed. Reuben Arthur Brower, *On Translation*, 1959.

the level at which you are setting the bar when you define translation, then all words are effectively untranslatable and successful translation is an impossibility."[108]

In spite of a long (and beautiful) reflection on the "aporia" that is "the spectre of untranslatability,"[109] Theo Hermans expresses fatigue with "the now familiar deconstructive paradoxes" of "we can't translate, we must translate. Everything is translatable, nothing is translatable," arguing that "Derrida took aim at a relatively easy target" as "his criticism was directed at a rather routine concept, the idea of translation as exact replica, the transport of an invariant."[110] But this "routine concept" is still widely maintained, and is a view for example, of many translators' clients (including some of mine!), and thus one we still have to deal with. Equivalence, writes Brian Mossop, is "the theory of translation implicitly held by the average person, and thus the average paying client and the average reader of translations."[111]

Challenging that average reader, or perhaps simply holding them capable of greater complexity, Emily Apter and Jaques Lezra champion untranslatability as a position of resistance.[112] Apter describes recognizing untranslatability as a requestioning of "First-World, normative notions of 'equality' that presume linguistic and cultural equivalence,"[113] pointing to an example (among many), in which Gayatri Spivak, working on a Bengali into English translation of Mahasweta Devi's *Breast Stories*, justly "took a stance of 'No-translation,'"[114] and kept certain words in

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[108] Duncan Large, Motoko Akashi, Wanda Józwikowska, and Emily Rose. *Untranslatability: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Routledge, 2018), p. 2.
[109] Theo Hermans, "Untranslatability, Entanglement and Understanding," in *Untranslatability*, Duncan Large et al., ed. (Routledge, 2018), p. 37.
[110] Theo Hermans, "Untranslatability, Entanglement and Understanding," in *Untranslatability*, Duncan Large et al., ed. (Routledge, 2018), p. 27.
[111] Brian Mossop, "Review of Pym, Exploring Translation Theories," York University, accessed March 13, 2024, http://www.yorku.ca/brmossop/PymExploring.htm
[112] Jacques Lezra, *Untranslating Machines: A Genealogy for the Ends of Global Thought* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2017).
[113] Simona Bertacco and Emily Apter, "An Interview with Emily Apter." *CR: The New Centennial Review* 16, no. 1 (2016): 16.
[114] Simona Bertacco and Emily Apter, "An Interview with Emily Apter." *CR: The New Centennial Review* 16, no. 1 (2016): 16.

Hindi and Bengali, bringing attention to the impossibility of decontextualizing them, linguistically and culturally, into English.

Historian Vicente Rafael, speaking with translation scholar Christopher Rundle, reflects a similar position:

> As historians, we tend to be more sceptical because, I suspect, we think of translation as a kind of unresolved dialectic. The possibility of translation is undergirded by its impossibility, and thus the persistence of the untranslatable. At the same time, I take this impossibility, or this untranslatability as in fact the workings of a kind of resistance. Not everything can be reduced to a unitary meaning or to the categories of the receiving culture. As you know, the ancient Romans tried to do this with Greek texts, and succeeded only when they obliterated and conquered the original, substituting Latin names for Greek. Successful translation comes at a price: the repression and the forgetting of the original, the vernacular, and the complexity of the life worlds they are part of. But the persistence of untranslatability, thanks to what I've been calling the insurgency of language, is a sign that such conquest is not and never will be complete. There is always resistance.[115]

Concepts of untranslatability might be clung to by adherents as pluralist recognition of difference, as per Cassin and Rafael and Apter, and, by contrast, as Aria Fani critiques, may be linked to "ontological nationalism obsessed with cultural purity," centered on monolingualism as "the default mode of cultural production and interaction" and under the illusion that languages are "bounded and fixed."[116] The latter position would not have fit into *After-shows* — which dealt with transfers of an eclectic collection of performance memories, extracted from artists from varying, sometimes hybrid, artistic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds, and which had no interest or agenda in promoting the superiority of a specific art form, memory, language, or culture — but is important to mention.

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[115] Vicente Rafael and Christopher Rundle, "History and translation: The role of translation in historical studies - Vicente Rafael responds to questions posed by Christopher Rundle," in *Border Crossings: Translation Studies and Other Disciplines*, Yves Gambier and Luc van Doorslaer, eds. (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2016), p. 32-33.
[116] Aria Fani, "The Allure of Untranslatability: Shafiʿi-Kadkani and (Not) Translating Persian Poetry," *Iranian Studies* 54, no. 1–2 (March 2021), p.8.

Cassin's and Apter's writing on untranslatability has been sharply criticized by some theorists, among them translation scholar Lawrence Venuti, who, in a scathing review, bafflingly calls Cassin's definition of untranslatability "cryptic," ("readers should treat her notion of untranslatability with suspicion," he warns) and takes issue with what he sees as untranslatability being conflated with mistranslation.[117] Klaus Mundt frets overs what he sees as a "fixation on the impossibility of translation and its incessant problematization," positions that are "not helpful for and can indeed be harmful to translation as an academic discipline and as a profession" arguing that "the alleged impossibility of translation might be a matter of deliberate choice rather than an a priori condition."[118] Theo Hermans takes a softer approach but is concerned about the "negativity of the 'not'" in Cassin's theorizing: "In the definition of the untranslatable as 'what one keeps on (not) translating,' it is the negativity of the 'not' that I object to."[119]

Of note is that the English translation Hermans is working with, *what one keeps on (not) translating*, is missing the double negative of other translations, like the one cited earlier, *that which we never stop (not) translating* [120] or like poet Erín Moure's version, *what one does not cease to (not) translate*. It is the double negative in Cassin's *ce qu'on ne cesse pas de (ne pas) traduire* that leads Moure to remark that "Cassin's *point* is the struggle involved in the negational complex of the positive activity of '(not) ceasing.'"[121] Upon coming across a translation without it, Moure is adamant:

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[117] Lawrence Venuti, "Hijacking Translation: How Comp Lit Continues to Suppress Translated Texts," *Boundary 2* 43, no. 2 (2016): 187.
[118] Klaus Mundt, "Against the 'Un-' in Untranslatability: On the Obsession with Problems, Negativity and Uncertainty," in *Untranslatability: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* Duncan Large et al., eds. (Routledge, 2018), p. 64.
[119] Theo Hermans, "Untranslatability, Entanglement and Understanding," in *Untranslatability: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, Duncan Large et al., ed. (Routledge, 2018), p. 38.
[120] Barbara Cassin, "The Energy of the Untranslatables: Translation as a Paradigm for the Human Sciences," trans. Michael Syrotinski, *Paragraph* 38, no. 2 (July 2015), p. 149.
[121] Erín Moure, "Elisa Sampedrín and the Paradox of Translation, or The Intranslatable," (Leslie Scalapino Memorial Lecture in Innovative Poetics. Lecture at Naropa University, Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied

> I want to return to the double negative, to its doubling and to its necessary crisis in articulation. […] 'what one keeps on (not) translating' is NOT the same thing as 'what one does not cease to (not) translate.' In the 'not cease to (not) translate,' the '(not) translate' and 'not cease' simultaneously exist, negate, doubly negate, and by their existence, negates the negation. This double negation is an integral part of what is being communicated. [122]

That said, Moure isn't pleased with the "un" either — "In one sense, the *untranslatable*, this formula in English detaining *l'intraduisible,* adds a veil or a slippage. To be *untranslatable* bears the mark in English of a critical posture or judgement" [123] — preferring the neologism *intranslatable,* borrowed from German-Portuguese theorist Burghard Baltrusch.[124]

Moure is interested in the "possibilities of the 'intranslatable'"[125] both in a conventional, linguistic view of a lacuna or lexical gap (when, summarizes Christelle Maginot, there is "no one-to-one equivalence between the word, expression, or turn of phrase in the source language and another word, expression, or turn of phrase in the target language" [126]) and in more complex, cultural, temporal, and poetic shifts: "How can we think and act upon, and alongside, the

Poetics, Boulder, CO, July 2021 (text available via chapbook from Zat-So Productions [Montréal]: https://erinmoure.mystrikingly.com/#es-and-the-paradox-of-translation-or-the-intranslatable-pdf), p. 21.

[122] Erín Moure, "Elisa Sampedrín and the Paradox of Translation, or The Intranslatable," (Leslie Scalapino Memorial Lecture in Innovative Poetics. Lecture at Naropa University, Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics, Boulder, CO, July 2021 (text available via chapbook from Zat-So Productions [Montréal]: https://erinmoure.mystrikingly.com/#es-and-the-paradox-of-translation-or-the-intranslatable-pdf), p. 20-21.

[123] Erín Moure, "Elisa Sampedrín and the Paradox of Translation, or The Intranslatable," (Leslie Scalapino Memorial Lecture in Innovative Poetics. Lecture at Naropa University, Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics, Boulder, CO, July 2021 (text available via chapbook from Zat-So Productions [Montréal]: https://erinmoure.mystrikingly.com/#es-and-the-paradox-of-translation-or-the-intranslatable-pdf), p. 21.

[124] Baltrusch, Burghard. "On Translability and Intranslability in Walter Benjamin," *Translation Notebooks* 38, no. 2 (May 2018): 32–60.

[125] Erín Moure, "Elisa Sampedrín and the Paradox of Translation, or The Intranslatable," (Leslie Scalapino Memorial Lecture in Innovative Poetics. Lecture at Naropa University, Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics, Boulder, CO, July 2021 (text available via chapbook from Zat-So Productions [Montréal]: https://erinmoure.mystrikingly.com/#es-and-the-paradox-of-translation-or-the-intranslatable-pdf), p. 21.

[126] Christelle Maginot, "Untranslatable Text: Myth, Reality, or Something Else? A Translator's Reflections on Translation and 'Untranslatability,'" in the *American Translators Association (ATA) Chronicle,* May 2015, https://www.atanet.org/translation/untranslatable-text-myth-reality-2/

translatable, with its (ever present) insistence on the *intranslatable,* and how might we attend to what the 'intranslatable' may give rise to?" [127]

Moure, like Cassin and many others, also stresses the temporal complications of translation — "'What *was* written' (the text of departure) is not only, in the process of translation, becoming 'what is now written but *what is now written* is hurtling back and grasping the 'what was,' inventing it entirely in the present" — as well as its ongoing incompletion: "The idea of 'never having done' with translation occurs despite publication, and every translator is aware of it. There is always another nuance, another expression, a proliferation of registers, either in the translator's own reading or of what is newly (in time) perceived by others (critics, readers) to emanate from the original, which continues to change in time because readers change, their perception of the originary culture and the conditions of reception change."[128]

Similarly, evoking Benjamin's and Derrida's theorizing in which the "original and translation are in a relation of mutual debt," Siobhan Brownlie writes that such a "process is potentially never-ending, since dynamic otherness and change are principles of language and history."[129]

In other words, as per Cilliers van den Berg: "Untranslatability, mainly understood as an awareness of differences between peoples, languages, and texts that cannot be bridged in an absolute sense, does not preclude translation. On the contrary, it promotes translation as a

[127] Erín Moure, "Elisa Sampedrín and the Paradox of Translation, or The Intranslatable," (Leslie Scalapino Memorial Lecture in Innovative Poetics. Lecture at Naropa University, Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics, Boulder, CO, July 2021, text available via chapbook from Zat-So Productions [Montréal]: https://erinmoure.mystrikingly.com/), p. 24.

[128] Erín Moure, "Elisa Sampedrín and the Paradox of Translation, or The Intranslatable," (Leslie Scalapino Memorial Lecture in Innovative Poetics. Lecture at Naropa University, Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics, Boulder, CO, July 2021, text available via chapbook from Zat-So Productions [Montréal]: https://erinmoure.mystrikingly.com/), p. 22.

[129] Siobhan Brownlie, *Mapping Memory In Translation* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p. 2.

provisional and tentative attempt to unlock the riches of the source text. Translation becomes a process and not a destination that can be reached."[130]

Theo Hermans looks to hermeneutic philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher to come to a similar conclusion: that "For Schleiermacher, hermeneutics, as the art of understanding both within and across languages, starts from non-understanding" complicated by the fact that the "ultimate aim of hermeneutics […] to reach complete understanding […] will never be reached." Hermeneutics "is a never-ending task; it does not bring interpretive closure." As such, "[i]f the hermeneutic task is unending, and if translation is the cross-lingual application of hermeneutics, then translation, too, must remain forever provisional."[131]

It is here and as well as through his view that "full equivalence lies beyond translation" that Hermans echoes Cassin (despite his criticism of her writing), concluding that "provisionality, the impossibility of reaching a definitive version, pertains to all translating."[132]

Historian Vicente Rafael repeats this focus on ongoingness: "Translation does not convey meaning whole and untouched; rather it inflects and distorts it, leaving it open-ended, hence, available for on-going revision, subversion and supplementation. […] There is in the very working of untranslatability the hope for some other possibility to emerge […]." [133]

Such contemporary reflections are not far from parts of Benjamin's seminal *The Task of the Translator*, his 1923 introduction to his translation of poetry by Baudelaire.[134] "Benjamin makes

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[130] Cilliers van den Berg, "Notes on Memory Culture and the (Uu)Translatable, with Illustrative Reference to Elfriede Jelinek's Die Kinder Der Toten (1995)," *Literator* 40, no. 1 (November 26, 2019).
[131] Theo Hermans, "Untranslatability, Entanglement and Understanding," in *Untranslatability*, Duncan Large et al., ed. (Routledge, 2018), p. 37.
[132] Theo Hermans, "Untranslatability, Entanglement and Understanding," in *Untranslatability*, Duncan Large et al., ed. (Routledge, 2018), p. 34.
[133] Vicente Rafael and Christopher Rundle, "History and translation: The role of translation in historical studies - Vicente Rafael responds to questions posed by Christopher Rundle," in *Border Crossings: Translation Studies and Other Disciplines*, Yves Gambier and Luc van Doorslaer, eds. (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2016), p. 32-33.
[134] Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator" in *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968).

the interesting claim that translations themselves are untranslatable," writes Anthony Pym, "'not because they are difficult or heavy with meaning, but because meaning adheres to them too lightly, with all too great fleetingness'" (the cited passage from Benjamin is Pym's own translation). For Benjamin, Pym summarizes, "The act of translation would be like quickly opening a window on differential signification, then seeing that window close as the subjectivity of the translator disappears and history moves on."[135]

While operating within a vastly different practical and conceptual context (Klaus Mundt suggests that links between concepts of the untranslatable and the impossible are quite recent[136]), as early as 868 CE, the "Arabic-language littérateur and polemicist" [137] al-Jāḥiẓ deemed poetry untranslatable:

> Poetry [shiʿr] cannot be translated; it cannot be transferred from one language into another. Translation breaks its metrical arrangements [naẓm] and spoils the rhythm [wazn], ruins its aesthetics [ḥusn], and flattens the element of wonder [mawḍiʿ al-taʿajjub]. Translation turns poetry into prose, and prose originally written as such is preferred over what has been turned into prose as a result of translating verse.[138]

While scholar Aria Fani contextualizes, critically, that al-Jāḥiẓ's statements were rooted in a cultural competition with Greece ("Arabic poetry vis-à-vis Greek philosophy"),[139] parts of al-

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[135] Anthony Pym, "Uncertainty," in *Exploring Translation Theories* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2023), p. 95. The cited passage, translated by Pym, is from Benjamin's original German *Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers*

[136] Klaus Mundt, "Against the 'Un-' in Untranslatability: On the Obsession with Problems, Negativity and Uncertainty," in *Untranslatability: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* Duncan Large et al., eds. (Routledge, 2018), p. 64.

[137] Aria Fani, "The Allure of Untranslatability: Shafiʿi-Kadkani and (Not) Translating Persian Poetry," *Iranian Studies* 54, no. 1–2 (March 2021), p.4.

[138] Abū al-Jāḥiẓ, ʿUthman ʿAmr ibn Baḥr. *Kitāb al-Hayawān*. ed. ʿAbdol Islām Muhammad Hārun. Vol. 1. N.p.: n.p., 1965, p. 75.
As cited by Aria Fani:
Aria Fani, "The Allure of Untranslatability: Shafiʿi-Kadkani and (Not) Translating Persian Poetry," *Iranian Studies* 54, no. 1–2 (March 2021), p. 4.
Fani refers here to an essay anaylyzing al-Jāḥi by Shafiʿi-Kadkani. See:
Mohammad-Reza Shafiʿi-Kadkani, "Dar tarjomeh nāpaziri-ye sheʿr," *Bokhārā* 80 (April–May 2011): 82.

[139] al-Jāḥiz's comments on untranslatable poetry are preceded by the statement that "the art of poetry is restricted to the Arabs and those who speak the language of Arabs."
Fani turns to scholar Abdelfattah Kilito to consider that "the larger context in which al-Jāḥiẓ expresses this viewpoint […] concerns the merits of Arabic poetry vis-à-vis Greek philosophy."
See: Abdelfattah Kilito, *Thou Shalt Not Speak My Language*, trans. Waïl S. Hassan (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2018).

Jāḥiẓ's argument foreshadow influential translation theorist Roman Jakobson's 1959 pronouncement:

> […] poetry by definition is untranslatable. Only creative transposition is possible: either intralingual transposition—from one poetic shape into another, or interlingual transposition—from one language into another, or finally intersemiotic transposition—from one system of signs into another, e.g., from verbal art into music, dance, cinema, or painting. [140]

Under Jakobson's terms, *After-shows* would fall most closely into the category of intersemiotic transposition, although it's unclear how he might have theorized (or rejected) the idea of (not) translating memory.

Intersemiotic (un)translatability

"What the body speaks is untranslatable," writes Jamaican poet Safiya Sinclair.[141] For the late choreographer Merce Cunningham, dance was reportedly untranslatable, Cunningham believing, writes Susan Leigh Foster, that "dance speaks messages in its own language that can never be repeated in another."[142] Recalling studying with mime Étienne Decroux ("a real talker") in Paris

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Abū al-Jāḥiz, ʿUthman ʿAmr ibn Baḥr. *Kitāb al-Hayawān*. ed. ʿAbdol Islām Muhammad Hārun. Vol. 1. N.p.: 1965, p. 74-75.
As cited and commented on by Aria Fani:
Aria Fani, "The Allure of Untranslatability: Shafiʿi-Kadkani and (Not) Translating Persian Poetry," *Iranian Studies* 54, no. 1–2 (March 2021), p. 5.

[140] Roman Jakobson, "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation," ed. Reuben Arthur Brower, *On Translation*, 1959, 238.

[141] Safiya Sinclair, "Dreaming in Foreign: After Caliban" in *Cannibal* (University of Nebraska Press: 2016).
As cited by:
Emily Apter, "Theorizing in Untranslatables," HKW – Haus der Kulturen der Welt Youtube video, 2:00, Lecture on Jan 11, 2019, published on YouTube on Feb 26, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PSNOhLPvLjM

[142] Susan Leigh Foster, *Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), p.88.
As cited by:
Jess McCormack, *Choreography and Verbatim Theatre: Dancing Words* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), vii.

in the 1970's, Dulcinea Langfelder told me that Decroux believed they were certain things impossible to "translate" into mine — an example she said he gave was *homeland.*[143]

If untranslatability might be conventionally viewed as "a property of a text, or of any utterance, in one language, for which no equivalent text or utterance can be found in another language when translated,"[144] then accepting Sinclair's and Cunningham's and Langfelder's statements — which it seems many readers instinctively do — leans on a broad view of *utterance,* and of translation. To inform her analysis of verbatim dance choreography via translation, Jess McCormack considers Bahkin's notions of *utterance* and notes that "[t]ranslation is a word that is used in the field of dance-theatre to address something other than an interlingual transfer between two separate verbal sign systems."[145]

This view connects to positions set out by translation scholar Kobus Marais who insists: "When I talk about translation, I also think about semiotic processes in which language does not play a role at all."[146] Marais is persuasive in his argument that the "process of 'turning signs into other signs'" is a "family resemblance that all semiotic processes share."[147]

Even if one feels, like Umberto Eco, that "the concept of intersemiotic translation, that is, the translation of a novel into a film, or a painting into a poem, and so on" is an "exaggeratedly

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[143] "You're reminding me once again of Decroux," Dulcinea told me, in response to a question about semiotic equivalence. "I'm smiling because I so remember Decroux, the master. He was well in his 80's when I worked with him and he was quite an eccentric fellow. […] He would have us sitting on the floor in the studio listening to him go on and on and on and on […]. He used to say: *There are certain things that you just can't do in mime.* Mime cannot express everything. And the example he would give was the notion of *homeland*. If you want to express *homeland,* don't try to do it in mime, you won't be able to!"
Dulcinea Langfelder, Interview with the researcher. November 23, 2020.

[144] Christelle Maginot, "Untranslatable Text: Myth, Reality, or Something Else? A Translator's Reflections on Translation and 'Untranslatability,'" in the *American Translators Association (ATA) Chronicle,* May 2015, https://www.atanet.org/translation/untranslatable-text-myth-reality-2/

[145] Jess McCormack, *Choreography and Verbatim Theatre: Dancing Words* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 6.

[146] Kobus Marais, *A (Bio)Semiotic Theory of Translation*, (Routledge, 2018), 121.

[147] Kobus Marais, *Translation Beyond Translation Studies* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), p. 6.

indulgent idea of translation,"[148] certainly one can agree that such processes share certain traits and issues with translation, among them, the question of untranslatability.

"The choice of translation theory as a source of concepts for adaptation studies is far from arbitrary," states Lawrence Venuti, writing primarily about film adaptations. Calling for a hermeneutic rather than a communicative "relationship" between "second-order creations and their source materials"[149] Venuti credits his "reliance on translation research" to examine "the two theoretical discourses that prevail in adaptation studies, fidelity and intertextuality."[150]

For the purpose of this research-creation project, distinctions between interpretation, translation, transposition, representation, and adaptation are secondary, in recognition that untranslatability is being taken out of its initial context and applied as a dramaturgical informant and research lens. In this way, the project shares art historian and cultural theorist Luke Skrebowski's interest in "transposing untranslatability to art history"[151] (which could easily include performance histories), drawing on untranslatability "as a term and a methodology" to "reposition" thinking about mediation and to reconsider "what is at stake in the conveyance of an artistic work, and indeed an artistic practice, from one place to another, and from one domain of artistic and linguistic competence to another." [152]

Distinguishing between linguistic and cultural untranslatability, theorist Susan Bassnett recognizes that "this second category is more problematic."[153] Although this project's central focus is not cultural (un)translation, Bassnett's consideration of untranslatability outside of linguistic boundaries is helpful.

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[148] Umberto Eco, *Mouse or Rat?: Translation as Negotiation*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), 1.
[149] Lawrence Venuti, "Adaptation, Translation, Critique," *Journal of Visual Culture* 6, no. 1 (2007): p. 25.
[150] Venuti, "Adaptation, Translation, Critique," 28.
[151] Luke Skrebowski, "Untranslating the Neo-Avant-Gardes," *ARTMargins* 7, no. 2 (June 2018): 6.
[152] Luke Skrebowski, "Untranslating the Neo-Avant-Gardes," *ARTMargins* 7, no. 2 (June 2018): 15.
[153] Susan Bassnett, "Untranslatability" in *Translation Studies* (London: Routledge, 2014), 39.

Dominic Glynn and James Hadley link untranslatability to unperformability as they consider strategies employed by artists, who, in the face of the "unstageable," (due to multiple reasons: conceptual, practical, aesthetic, formal, ideological, commercial; for example, limited staging resources, non-literal or impossible stage directions in a text, etc.) attempt to "render the unperformable performable."[154]

Questions of the untranslatable and the unperformable quickly lend themselves to comparison with the unrepresentable or the incommunicable. Without naming translation, novelist Rachel Cusk wonders if a "representation […] is in any way equal to the thing itself" asking "whether there are certain experiences that are incommunicable that you cannot… that you have to experience them to know them."[155]

Augustine of Hippo expresses separate but related concern over language's inability to fully represent ideas and thoughts, notes Anthony Pym, who cites and translates a passage from *De catechizandis rudibus* (circa 400):

> the idea erupts in my mind like a rapid illumination, whereas my speech is long and delayed and not at all like the idea, and while I speak, the thought has hidden in its secret place. The idea has left no more than a few vestiges imprinted in my memory, and these vestiges linger throughout the slowness of my words. From those vestiges we construe sounds, and we speak Latin, or Greek, or Hebrew, or any other language. But the vestiges are not Latin, nor Greek, nor Hebrew, nor of any other community. They are formed in the mind, just as a facial expression is formed in the body.[156]

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[154] Dominic Glynn and James Hadley, "Theorising (Un)Performability and (Un)Translatability." Perspectives 29, no. 1 (2020): 23.

[155] This comment comes in the context of speaking about writing about motherhood.
Passa Porta, "Julia Kerninon interviews Rachel Cusk," YouTube Video, 18:35 to 19:10, January 26, 2022, https://youtu.be/oulbarWviC4

[156] Augustine of Hippo (Aurelius Augustinus), '*De catechizandis rudibus*,' Aurelii Augustini Opera, vol. 13.2, (Turnhout: Brepols, Belgium, [c.400] 1969).
Cited and translated by:
Anthony Pym, "Uncertainty," in *Exploring Translation Theories* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2023), p. 97.

While this thesis does not try to claim that the limits of representation confronting Augustine and Cusk *are* formal issues of untranslatability, it presumes they are connected to similar questions, and that they are linked to the idea of what might be untranslatable in memories of performances.

(Un)translating memories

Translation theory can shed light on how we revisit memories of performances, from Benjamin's recognition that "a translation comes later than the original"[157] to Siobhan Brownlie's reiteration that "[t]ime and contextual difference (a translation comes after the thing it translates and is necessarily in a different context) mean that translation is always a vehicle of both remembrance and transformation: the work of memory is both performed and diffracted."[158] Echoed by Susan Bassnet: "Translation implies that something has come before […] Translation, like memory, is therefore a combination of the present and the implicit absent."[159]

"Remembering and translating," write Sharon Deane-Cox and Anneleen Spiessens, are both "premised on a return to and a reworking of a source, across and against the strictures of accuracy and comprehensiveness. "[160] In other words, "[t]ranslation and memory are intimately connected," as writes Bassnett.[161]

This linking between memory and translation is also in keeping with comparative literature theorist Bella Brodzki, who claims: "Through the act of translation, remnants and fragments are inscribed —reclaimed and reconstituted as a narrative—and then recollected collectively; that is,

[157] Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator" in *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 71.
[158] Siobhan Brownlie, *Mapping Memory In Translation* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 8.
[159] Susan Bassnett, "Thoughts on Translation and Memory," in *Translating Memories of Violent Pasts: Memory Studies and Translation Studies*, ed. Claudia Jünke and Désirée Schyns (New York: Routledge, 2023).
[160] Sharon Deane-Cox and Anneleen Spiessens, *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Memory*, (Routledge, 2022), p. 1.
[161] Susan Bassnett, "Thoughts on Translation and Memory," in *Translating Memories of Violent Pasts: Memory Studies and Translation Studies*, ed. Claudia Jünke and Désirée Schyns (New York: Routledge, 2023).

altered and reinscribed into a history that also undergoes alternation, transformation, in the process."[162]

When we are thinking about our own past, we are interpreting and reimagining what happened, notes neuroscientist Lisa Genova in her description of the "creative editing" inherent in episodic memory.[163] Fellow neuroscientist and memory researcher Charan Ranganath repeats this notion: the way that we "replay the past" while remembering is "through a lens of interpretation and imagination."[164]

Similar comparisons are considered in different ways by historians (while I am not suggesting memory and history are the same thing, they both connect to the re-interpretive nature of perceiving the past, which is at stake in this thesis): Historian Frank Ankersmit claims that "[t]he past is not a text that has to be *translated* into narrative historiography," and that rather, "it has to be *interpreted*,"[165] connecting to R. G. Collingwood's position that historical comprehension involves re-enactment: "that the historian must re-enact the past in his own mind."[166]

Just as "[b]oth the asymmetry between languages and the interpretive nature of translation make for omissions, additions and shifts in meaning" a "historical account does not present the past 'as it was'. It adds to, omits from and interprets the archival record for the sake of the narrative it presents," writes Theo Hermans, adding: "Both translations and histories are representations that embody interpretations of their object. As interpretations they open up prospects and, in so

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[162] Bella Brodzki, *Can These Bones Live?: Translation, Survival, and Cultural Memory* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 6.
[163] Lisa Genova, *Remember: The Science of Memory and the Art of Forgetting* (New York, NY: Penguin Random House, 2021).
[164] Charan Ranganath, "A Leading Memory Researcher Explains How to Make Precious Moments Last," interview by David Marchese. *The New York Times*, February 4, 2024, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/02/04/magazine/charan-ranganath-interview.html?searchResultPosition=2
[165] Frank R. Ankersmit, *History and Tropology: The Rise and Fall of Metaphor* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), 33.
[166] R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946), 282.

doing, draw attention to similar and contrasting interpretations and invite alternative approaches. That is why the past is inexhaustible and translation an open-ended series."[167]

This sense of ongoing interpretation is reflected in historiographical discussions of the ever-shifting nature of history writing and memory: "The past cannot be altered, but memory and history change all the time," writes Alistair Thompson.[168]

If the translatability of memory and history is of issue, untranslatability is, of course, never very far. As writes Amira D. Kashgary, "If equivalence is the essence of translation, non-equivalence constitutes an equally legitimate concept in the translation process."[169] Examining the interjection or entanglement of untranslatability with cultural memory, Cilliers van den Berg writes that "the untranslatable advocates the very particular historical singularity of coming to terms with a difficult past" suggesting that "the untranslatable becomes the catalyst of continuous attempts to engage with a difficult past from an outsider perspective."[170] While van den Berg focuses here on untranslatability in the context of trauma-informed collective memory (his comments here are from an essay on the "untranslatable nature" of Austrian author Elfriede Jelinek's *Die Kinder der Toten* [*The Children of the Dead*]), some of his comments can be applied, it seems, to looking at other (not just difficult) pasts "from an outsider perspective." Again, substituting "difficult pasts" simply with "different pasts," we might consider that a statement like, "because the engagement with difficult pasts is continuous, no translation of the

[167] Theo Hermans, *Translation and History* (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2023), p. 139.
[168] Alistair Thomson, "Anzac Memories Revisited: Trauma, Memory and Oral History," *Oral History Review* 42, no. 1(2015):
[169] Amira D. Kashgary, "The Paradox of Translating the Untranslatable: Equivalence vs. Non-Equivalence in Translating from Arabic into English," *Journal of King Saud University - Languages and Translation* 23, no. 1 (January 2011): 47–57.
[170] Cilliers van den Berg, "Notes on Memory Culture and the (Uu)Translatable, with Illustrative Reference to Elfriede Jelinek's Die Kinder der Toten (1995)," *Literator* 40, no. 1 (November 26, 2019).

works created in its wake can be definitive," [171] could be transposed to consider a broad range of histories.

If untranslatability, as writes van den Berg, "acknowledges that (memory) cultures may sometimes overlap in meanings, but never in a complete and total way,"[172] this research-creation project explored the incomplete, overlapping meanings and "retranslations" or "untranslations" that emerged in collecting, researching, and re-representing other people's memories of shows.

A quick word on what this project does not do

This thesis asks, in part, if and how we might remember a show we never went to, via vicarious "inhabiting," reinterpreting, or less explicit echoing of other people's memories of past live performances. It explores, additionally, how extensions or reverberations or remnants of performance memories might take form in other contexts and within other people than those present in the "original" experience. This attention to afterlives of memories, and to the nature of remembering an experience belonging to someone else's past, so to speak, may lead to questions about inherited epigenetic memory or transmitted cultural memory.

At the time of writing this paper, there is a wave of epigenetic research that has recently or semi-recently been conducted and published examining inheritance of associative memories,[173] inheritance of traumatic memory,[174] and potential transgenerational aftereffects of sensory

[171] Cilliers van den Berg, "Notes on Memory Culture and the (Un)Translatable, with Illustrative Reference to Elfriede Jelinek's Die Kinder der Toten (1995)," *Literator* 40, no. 1 (November 26, 2019).
[172] Cilliers van den Berg, "Notes on Memory Culture and the (Un)Translatable, with Illustrative Reference to Elfriede Jelinek's Die Kinder der Toten (1995)," *Literator* 40, no. 1 (November 26, 2019).
[173] Noa Deshe, Yifat Eliezer, Lihi Hoch, Eyal Itskovits, Eduard Bokman, Shachaf Ben-Ezra, and Alon Zaslaver, "Inheritance of Associative Memories and Acquired Cellular Changes in C. Elegans," *Nature Communications* 14, no. 1 (July 15, 2023), https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-023-39804-8.
[174] See, for example:
Jana Švorcová, "Transgenerational Epigenetic Inheritance of Traumatic Experience in Mammals," *Genes* 14, no. 1 (January 1, 2023): 120, https://doi.org/10.3390/genes14010120

experience,[175] not without controversy.[176] Researchers Rachel Yehuda, Amy Lehrner, and Linda M. Bierer warn of public misunderstanding of these concepts due in part to "overly simplistic and sensationalistic claims" or "global dismissal" in popular media, and stress "the importance of countering popular interpretations that imply a reductionist biological determinism."[177] Analyzing or commenting on data relating to potential biological inheritance of memory is far outside the scope or aims of this study (and far outside my training or qualifications), but given this project's focus on engaging with memories of others, I wish to acknowledge the burgeoning research on inherited memories, albeit working with vastly different aspects or concepts of memory (researchers Agustina D'Urso and Jason H. Brickner define epigenetic memory as a "heritable change in gene expression or behavior that is induced by a previous stimulus"[178]), under starkly different stakes, and addressing highly different questions than the ones operating in this project.

Ali Jawaid, Martin Roszkowski, and Isabelle M. Mansuy, "Transgenerational Epigenetics of Traumatic Stress," *Progress in Molecular Biology and Translational Science*, 2018, 273–98, https://doi.org/10.1016/bs.pmbts.2018.03.003

Hannah Critchlow, "Can You Inherit Memories from Your Ancestors?," The Guardian, June 17, 2024, https://www.theguardian.com/books/article/2024/jun/17/the-big-idea-can-you-inherit-memories-from-your-ancestors

[175] See, for example:
Brian G Dias and Kerry J Ressler, "Parental Olfactory Experience Influences Behavior and Neural Structure in Subsequent Generations," *Nature Neuroscience* 17, no. 1 (December 1, 2013): 89–96, https://doi.org/10.1038/nn.3594

[176] See, for example:
Ewan Birney, "Why I'm Sceptical about the Idea of Genetically Inherited Trauma," The Guardian, September 11, 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/science/blog/2015/sep/11/why-im-sceptical-about-the-idea-of-genetically-inherited-trauma-epigenetics

Meenu Ghai and Farzeen Kader, "A Review on Epigenetic Inheritance of Experiences in Humans," *Biochemical Genetics* 60, no. 4 (November 18, 2021): 1107–40, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10528-021-10155-7.

Benedict Carey, "Can We Really Inherit Trauma?," The New York Times, December 10, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/10/health/mind-epigenetics-genes.html

[177] Rachel Yehuda, Amy Lehrner, and Linda M. Bierer, "The Public Reception of Putative Epigenetic Mechanisms in the Transgenerational Effects of Trauma," *Environmental Epigenetics* 4, no. 2 (April 1, 2018), https://doi.org/10.1093/eep/dvy018

[178] Agustina D'Urso and Jason H. Brickner, "Mechanisms of Epigenetic Memory," *Trends in Genetics* 60, no. 6 (April 26, 2014): 230–36, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tig.2014.04.004.

Similarly, much research on the extended lives of memories has been led by scholars examining the aftermath of extreme collective trauma. While this thesis looks with deep interest to scholarship on post-memory — including the influential work of Marianne Hirsch as well as Ellen Fine's research and coining of "absent memory"; Henri Raczymow's notion of *Mémoire trouée* (translated into English as "Memory Shot Through With Holes"); and James E. Young's writing on "received history"; among other important contributions[179] — it is not focused or positioned to speak on intergenerational transmission of traumatic memory.

"[P]henomenological and functional qualities" of "vicarious memories" have been researched under a psychological lens by David B. Pillemer, Kristina L. Steiner, Kie J. Kuwabara, Dorthe Kirkegaard Thomsen, and Connie Svob, who draw on the expression to refer to "recollections people have of salient life episodes that were told to them by another person."[180] This project employs the same term outside of psychology.

Finally, philosophies of haunting have been analyzed under much different angles by Derrida to examine the "spectrality" of political influence (in this case, of Marx)[181] and by Avery Gordon to

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[179] "'Postmemory' describes the relationship that the 'generation after' bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before—to experiences they 'remember' only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right. Postmemory's connection to the past is thus actually mediated not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation."
Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (Columbia University Press, 2012), p.5.
See also (as cited by Hirsh in *The Generation of Postmemory,* page 4):
Ellen Fine, "Absent Memory: The Act of Writing in Post-Holocaust French Literature," in Writing and the Holocaust, ed. Berel Lang (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1998), p. 41-57.
Henri Raczymow, "Memory Shot through with Holes," translated by Alan Astro, *Yale French Studies*, no. 85 (1994): 98.
James E. Young, "Toward a Received History of the Holocaust," *History and Theory* 36, no. 4 (December 1997): 21–43.

[180] David B. Pillemer et al., "Vicarious Memories," *Consciousness and Cognition* 36 (November 2015): 233–45, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.concog.2015.06.010.

[181] Jacques Derrida, *Spectres de Marx: L'état de la dette, le travail du deuil et la nouvelle internationale* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1993).

refer to unresolved historical trauma and injustice,[182] among other theorists, just as much scholarship on performance, memory, and disappearance refers to disappearing as a consequence of violent political acts.[183]

If this paper repeats words such as *haunting, disappearance, absence, vicarious memory,* and *re-embodied histories*, it is with deep respect and debt to scholars who have employed these terms to advance research relating to the aftermath of trauma and violence, to epigenetics of memory, and to the psychology of "second-hand"[184] memory, and it is equally with the acknowledgment that I am working and commenting firmly outside those critical fields.

Shifting interdisciplinary contexts

This project employs an interdisciplinary approach almost by default and is interested in the types of practices Heike Roms describes in which historians and artists (and others) "blur the boundaries of between archival and scholarly (and artistic) work as distinct activities and reconsider them as mutual sites of collaboration."[185]

Memory studies, performance studies, and translation studies are frequently described as interdisciplines by leading scholars in those (inter)fields: Astrid Erll, "one of the leading and

[182] Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).
[183] See, for example:
Diana Taylor, *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina's "Dirty War"* (Duke University Pressiversity Press, 1997).
See also:
José A. Sánchez, "Presence and Disappearance," *Performance Research* 24, no. 7 (October 3, 2019): 6–15.
Also see:
Kaitlin M. Murphy, *Mapping Memory: Visuality, Affect, and Embodied Politics in the Americas* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019).
[184] Emily Pond and Carole Peterson, "Highly Emotional Vicarious Memories," *Memory* 28, no. 8 (September 1, 2020): 1051–66, https://doi.org/10.1080/09658211.2020.1812663.
[185] Heike Roms, "Archiving Legacies: Who Cares for Performance Remains?," in *Performing Archives/Archives of Performance*, ed. Gunhild Borggreen and Rune Gade (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 2013), 38.

fundamental forces within the 'cultural memory studies' research field"[186] maintains that "memory is a transdisciplinary problem" and that "the connection between culture and memory cannot be approached solely within the purview of one single discipline"[187]; translation scholars Sharon Deane-Cox and Anneleen Spiessens call for "continued and more concerted cross-fertilization between translation studies and memory studies"[188]; Susan Bassnett, described by an interviewer as the "reigning queen of translation studies,"[189] writes of the "chameleon quality" of the "interdiscipline"[190] of translation studies; and Rebecca Schneider, former Chair of the Department of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies at Brown, insists that "[t]he more performance studies keeps on the slip, remains diffuse, and resists congealing within delimited boundaries, the greater service it provides to our collective inquiries in the academy."[191] Research-creation — the term used here to point to "artistic research [that] seeks to uncover and not to pose a hypothesis"[192] — lends itself naturally to inquire between and across disciplines in an attempt to "create a new object that belongs to no one," as per Barthes' view of the aim of interdisciplinarity.[193]

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[186] "New Honorary Doctors Change Our View of the Past," University of Copenhagen Faculty of Humanities, September 7, 2023, https://humanities.ku.dk/news/2023/new-honorary-doctors-change-our-view-of-the-past/.
[187] Astrif Erll, *Memory in Culture*, trans. Sara B. Young (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 2.
[188] Sharon Deane-Cox and Anneleen Spiessens, *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Memory*, (Routledge, 2022), p. 8.
[189] Nazry Bahrawi, "Theorising Translation with Susan Bassnett," Asymptote, accessed January 17, 2024, https://www.asymptotejournal.com/interview/an-interview-with-susan-bassnett/.
[190] Susan Bassnett, "When Is a Translation Not a Translation? ," in *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation*, ed. Lefevere André and Susan Bassnett (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1998), 25.
[191] Rebecca Schneider, "Intermediality, Infelicity, and Scholarship on the Slip." *Theatre Survey* 47, no. 2 (2006), 253.
[192] This framing (one of many) of research-creation is from Louis Patrick Leroux's paraphrasing of concepts laid forth by Desmond Bell:
Louis Patrick Leroux, "Conservation, Dissemination of the Research-Creation Materials & Maintaining the Creative Impulse in an Academic Setting." Concordia University. Lecture presented at the PAG Seminar, May 2022.
See:
Desmond Bell, *Research in the Creative and Media Arts: Challenging Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2019).
[193] The original French of this much-cited passage reads: « L'interdisciplinaire, dont on parle beaucoup, ne consiste pas à confronter des disciplines déjà constituées (dont, en fait, aucune ne consent à s'abandonner). Pour faire de l'interdisciplinaire, il ne suffit pas de prendre un « sujet » (un thème) et de convoquer autour deux ou trois sciences. L'interdisciplinaire consiste à créer un objet nouveau, qui n'appartienne à personne. ».

At the time of writing this paper, practices and concerns in these fields are rapidly changing, inevitably impacted by digital technologies, new scholarship, and shifting geo- and socio-political realities. The increasing presence of AI has raised theoretical and practical questions in all of these fields, from working practices in almost every area to the already complex notions of voice and the "original" in translative and other creative processes. The digital mediatization of memories has given rise to Andrew Hoskins's concept of a "new memory ecology,"[194] raising new complications in regard to concepts such as Pierre Nora's notion of "memory sites," and leading some researchers to challenge certain definitions of collective memory, "on both theoretical and empirical grounds."[195] Newly published translation scholarship is urging for a "long-overdue reckoning with race and racism in translation theory and practice."[196] Performing arts (and most other) industries are reexamining practices in response to worsening ecological crises.[197]

This project does pretend to investigate or directly address the whole of these concerns (which are only a tiny and incomplete sampling of factors affecting these fields), but I have attempted to work in recognition of these shifts and increasingly urgent issues. In its continuation of what it

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Roland Barthes, "Jeunes Chercheurs," *Communications* 19, no. 1 (1972): pp. 1-5.

[194] Andrew Hoskins, "The Mediatisation of Memory," in *Save As ... Digital Memories*, ed. Joanne Garde-Hansen, Andrew Hoskins, and Anna Reading (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 27–43.

[195] "'[M]emory sites' (Nora) seem to be vanishing as the locus of memory (and memory studies) in a world of global, connective, mediatized, digital, transnational, transcultural, cosmopolitan, and multidirectional memories. The notion of a collective memory has thus been challenged on both theoretical and empirical grounds."
Amanda Lagerkvist, "Embodiments of Memory: Toward an Existential Approach to the Culture of Connectivity," in *Memory Unbound: Tracing the Dynamics of Memory Studies*, ed. Lucy Bond, Stef Craps, and Pieter Vermeulen (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017), p. 178.

[196] Corine Tachtiris, *Translation and Race* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2024).

[197] See (among many other sources):
Jørgen Bruhn, "Intermedial Ecocriticism: The Anthropocene Ecological Crisis Across Media and the Arts," *Ekphrasis. Images, Cinema, Theory, Media* 24, no. 2 (December 15, 2020): 5–18.
Fanny Martin, IETM Report: Art and Activism I Environmental crisis: a dilemma for the artist? Report from the IETM Aarhus Plenary Meeting (Aarhus, December June 12-16, 2023).
https://www.ietm.org/en/resources/reports/art-and-activism-i-environmental-crisis-a-dilemma-for-the-artist.
Natalia Skolczylas, Climate Action and the Performing Arts: Report from the IETM Galway (Satellite Meeting, December 2020).https://www.ietm.org/system/files/publications/ietm_report_galway_satellite.pdf.

does attempt to do, this thesis considers these shifting disciplinary contexts as it looks in Chapter 3 at the project's methodologies and research practices.

Chapter 3 - (Un) translating performance memories:

After-shows methodologies and research practices

After-shows involved four intersecting research phases:

1) 16 oral history interviews, held between 2019 and 2021 with performers and former performers about (some of) their performance memories.
2) Performance research sessions with a shifting group (the full group never worked in the same space at the same time) composed of nine artists trained in different forms (circus, music, dance, theater) working off/with/in relation to excerpts of the performance memories interview series. These working sessions were held in short spurts — the lengths largely dictated by logistical, scheduling, and funding realities — in 2020 (in a prototype session, conducted online due to the pandemic) and in 2022 (at the Université du Québec à Montréal's Cœur des sciences, thanks to a residency and support from the interuniversity network Hexagram, *Réseau de recherche-création en arts, cultures et technologies*).
3) A public event I called an "open research session" inviting audience members to attend a showing of the research by the performers, and to participate in game-based thematic discussions. This was held on July 27, 2022 (after multiple pandemic-related reschedulings), the final day of the Hexagram residency at the Agora du Cœur des sciences (UQAM).
4) Interviews with eleven spectators of the July 27th event, inquiring about their memories of the evening, and held four to ten months later so as to examine ways temporal distances might shift interpretation and memory (interviews conducted between November 2022 and May 2023).

This chapter describes and reflects on methods[198] and processes explored during these phases, beginning with practices and underlying currents that marked the whole of the project, before noting processes and events specific to each of the four stages.

"To recount the itinerary of a piece of research when it has already reached a conclusion (even if, by definition, a provisional conclusion) always brings a risk with it: a teleological one," writes historian Carlo Ginzburg. "Retrospectively, the uncertainties and errors vanish, or, rather, they become transformed into the steps which lead directly to the goal: the historian knows from the start what he wants, he searches for it, and finally finds it. But things do not happen like this in actual research. Life in any laboratory […] is much more confusing and untidy."[199] I hope in this account to acknowledge the project's many uncertainties, errors, and detours.

Starting points

I began the project interested in working towards what Laura King calls a "participatory microhistory," an approach that insists on "researching *with* not *on* people," and a model "which understands public history as a process rather than merely another form of output."[200] This spirit aligns with oral historian Michael Frisch's much-cited notion of "shared authority," which admirably and importantly promotes history-writing as collaborative process composed of

[198] In "Against Method," artist and Concordia-based philosopher Erin Manning expresses concern that a "method stops potential on its way, cutting into the process before it has a chance to fully engage with the complex relational fields the process itself calls forth."
I am using the word "methods" here to describe the research modes and practices I experimented with in this project. The word is not meant here to pretend or attempt to offer a definitive, complete, fixed, prescriptive set of steps, but rather to describe modes of experimentation and ways of going about the process.
See: Erin Manning, "Against Method," in *The Minor Gesture* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2016), p.58.
Manning centers much her argument off her reading of Alfred North Whitehead's *The Function of Reason.* See: Alfred North Whitehead, *The Function of Reason* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1929).
[199] Carlo Ginzburg, *Threads and Traces: True, False, Fictive*, trans. Anne C. Tedeschi and John Tedeschi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), p.219.
[200] Jessica Hammett, Ellie Harrison, and Laura King, "Art, Collaboration and Multi-Sensory Approaches in Public Microhistory: Journey with Absent Friends," *History Workshop Journal* 89 (2020): p. 251.

multiple perspectives.[201] That said, the complexity and fluidity of questions of authority and authorship in polyphonic projects such as this one later emerged more pressingly than I anticipated, as described in Chapter 4, in a subsection on voice.

Similarly, I attempted to apply Alessandro Portelli's suggestion of "lending an ear, rather than giving a voice,"[202] to all research phases: to the interview processes, as well as the re-telling, re-creating, and re-performing processes,[203] aiming for a reinterpreting approach that respected the untranslatability within the project's original voices and original histories. But, as also discussed in Chapter 4, while I knew in advance that the project was not an attempt to "give voices" to people who already had ones, I under-anticipated the weight of the question of what other voices actually emerged through the project.

Finally, I wanted to work with Rancière's hopeful notion of a kind of performance that might allow for "spectators who are active interpreters, who render their own translation."[204] Just as for Bakhtin, language "lies on the borderline between oneself and the other," so that the "word in language is half someone else's,"[205] in Rancière's idea of the "best way" of viewing/making performances, spectators "appropriate the story for themselves, and […] ultimately make their own story out of it."[206] An "emancipated community," he writes, "is in fact a community of

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[201] Michael H. Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2011).

[202] Alessandro Portelli, Fourth Annual HEX Conference (Tampere University, Finland: 2021) https://events.tuni.fi/historyofexperience2021/panels/theme-3-oral-history/.

[203] This attention to listening as a way of approaching and experiencing performing was further nourished through a project I took part in on the side during my MA with Andréane Leclerc/Nadère Arts Vivants' *La forêt* (part one of choreographic installation *À l'est de Nod),* co-devised with dramaturge Myriam Stéphanie Perraton-Lambert. This sensibility is evoked in their *cahier dramaturgique*: « Il semblerait qu'en mettant de l'avant l'oreille, plutôt que l'œil, le spectacle tremble », they write (loosely translated as "It would seem that by focusing listening, rather than watching, the show trembles").
Andréane Leclerc and Myriam Stéphanie Perraton-Lambert, *À l'est de Nod : Cahier dramaturgique* (unpublished document at the time of writing this thesis), Montréal, 2022.

[204] Jacques Rancière, "The Emancipated Spectator," *Artforum International*, vol. 45, no. 7. (March 2007), p. 280.

[205] Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, trans. Vern W. McGee (Austin: University of Texas, 1986), p. 272.

[206] Jacques Rancière, "The Emancipated Spectator," *Artforum International*, vol. 45, no. 7. (March 2007), p. 280.

storytellers and translators." [207]

An eclectic, heuristic approach

The whole of this research could be characterized by an eclectic approach, leaning on combination of methods and theoretical frameworks, with a "trial and error"-type heuristic methodology,[208] not knowing, for example, how an artistic gesture or direction would "work" or resonate before trying it. This way of working connects to Desmond Bell's conceptualizing of "artistic research [that] seeks to uncover and not to pose a hypothesis,"[209] and lends itself in oral history to attempting to cultivate a position of "receptivity to learn rather than to prove preexisting ideas that are brought into the interview, "[210] a practice open to readily "shedding agendas," observed by Kathryn Anderson and Dana C. Jack as conducive to the complexity of the "collaborative' or 'co-constructive' nature of oral history."[211] (To be clear, these are objectives; I am not suggesting that I did not make mistakes along the way or that I seamlessly shed my own agendas left and right. But more on mistakes later.)

Research-creation as an umbrella

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[207] Jacques Rancière, "The Emancipated Spectator," *Artforum International*, vol. 45, no. 7. (March 2007), p. 280.

[208] "In a sense, arts based research is a heuristic through which we deepen and make more complex our understanding of some aspect of the world," write Tom Barone and Elliot W. Eisner, later naming "heuristic power" as a "hallmark of arts based research."
See: Tom Barone and Elliot W. Eisner, *Arts Based Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2012), p. 3 and 26.

[209] This framing (one of many) of research-creation is from Louis Patrick Leroux's paraphrasing of concepts laid forth by Desmond Bell:
Louis Patrick Leroux, "Conservation, Dissemination of the Research-Creation Materials & Maintaining the Creative Impulse in an Academic Setting." Concordia University. Lecture presented at the PAG Seminar, May 2022.
Also see:
Desmond Bell, *Research in the Creative and Media Arts: Challenging Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2019).

[210] Kathryn Anderson and Dana C. Jack, "Learning to Listen: Interview techniques and analyses," reprinted in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (Routledge, 2015), p.180, previously published in *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, eds. Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai (Routledge, 1991).

[211] Kathryn Anderson and Dana C. Jack, "Learning to Listen: Interview techniques and analyses," reprinted in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (Routledge, 2015), p.180, previously published in *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, eds. Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai (Routledge, 1991).

Parts of this research process were realized under the umbrella of "research-creation," seeking to pursue what Erin Manning suggests that "research-creation *does*" (italics are mine) as (among other aspects) "generat[ing] new forms of experience"; as "situat[ing] what often seem like disparate practices, giving them a conduit for collective expression"; as "generat[ing] forms of knowledge that are extralinguistic"; and as (a tall order!) "propos[ing] concrete assemblages for rethinking the very question of what is at stake in pedagogy, in practice, and in collective experimentation." [212]

Concretely, that meant, in this case, applying translation theories and concepts to conduct and view oral history informed performance research/creation exercises — described in more detail later in this chapter — and co-creating/facilitating a performance event that both formally exposed and gathered research "data."

In other words, *After-shows* emerged out of encounters between specific disciplines (both academic and artistic) and collaborators. "An assemblage of memory cannot be accessed through text-oriented methodologies that still seem to predominate the humanities (with its focus on the witness and testimony), but requires innovative, creative procedures […] that are capable of revealing its structure and dynamics," writes Katarzyna Niziołek.[213] A traditional text-oriented methodology might also fall short in working with somatic memory, as dance ethnographer Deidre Sklar observes: "Words are asked to participate in, rather than objectify, somatic

[212]Erin Manning, "Against Method," in *The Minor Gesture* (Durham Carolina del Norte: Duke University Press, 2016), p.54.

[213] Niziołek connects assemblage theory, as per Deleuze and Guattari, to view collective memory "as dynamic and heterogeneous arrangements of a variety of elements, material and immaterial, natural and artificial, human and non-human, that are dependent on the connections between them rather than their intrinsic qualities"
Katarzyna Niziołek, "Assemblage of Memory: On the Structure, Process and Creativity in Collective Memory," *Creativity Studies* 14, no. 1 (June 23, 2021): 271.

memory."[214] The research-creation framework of *After-shows* facilitated an investigation which included, but was not restricted to "text-oriented methodologies."

A research-creation approach also allowed me to begin with a set of questions, interests, and intended research exercises and then to adapt methods in response to emerging questions and findings. For example, I started out in the performance research phase (stage two) with a host of translation-inspired exercises: When re-performing the memories of others, what translative aspects would the participating performers latch onto? Would they attend most closely to rhythm, form, speaking style, or a specific meaning gleaned from the memory that was recounted (if so, which one, and from what angle)? Would they attempt to temporarily "become" the speakers behind the memories they were working with, or would they emphasize the spaces between those experiences and their own? I entered the process thinking about Henri Meschonnic's exquisite essay, *Traduire ce que les mots ne disent pas, mais ce qu'ils font* ("translation consists in translating not what words say, but what they do," reads the English abstract).[215] It was through the exercises with the artists and through the process of interviewing and then "making sense" of the eclectic and incomplete collection of memories that had amassed in phase one that I was able to pinpoint untranslatability within re-representations of performance memories as what was emerging as the project's overarching question.

The back-and-forth nature of this research process — springing between reading, writing, conversing through one-on-one interviews, co-conducting performance research exercises with the participating artists, coordinating the public event, and facilitating short encounters between my own thoughts about translation and performance memories and

[214] Deidre Sklar, "'All the Dances Have a Meaning to That Apparition': Felt Knowledge and the Danzantes of Tortugas, New Mexico," *Dance Research Journal* 31, no. 2 (1999): pp. 14-33, 28

[215] Henri Meschonnic, "Traduire ce que les mots ne disent pas, mais ce qu'ils font," *Meta* 40, no. 3 (1995): p. 514-517, https://www.erudit.org/en/journals/meta/1995-v40-n3-meta182/003640ar/

those of the participants — blurred the lines between theory and practice (which are contested already: "Every performance enacts a theory, and every theory performs in the public sphere," writes Diana Taylor,[216] echoed by scholar Anita Gonzalez[217]), and blurred the sequencing of the processing of information and the development of work.

The structure of this project also accommodated different timings to engage with literature. For example, I encountered writings by Barbara Cassin and Emily Apter on untranslatability in 2020, two years before the 2022 studio research sessions. Between exercises in the studio, I discussed Apter's call for acknowledging gaps and voids in translation with the performers, who responded with enthusiasm (both verbally and in the way they approached subsequent exercises). But I only came across Erín Moure's writing on *intranslation* and her and Chus Pato's *Secession/Insecession* one momentous and frenetic morning in June 2024 as I was attempting to finish this written thesis. The performance research sessions wouldn't have been the same without the readings prior to them from Cassin and Apter; my reading of Moure and Pato would not have been the without having pursued the performance research sessions before coming to them.

Scholar Robin Nelson expresses concern that the term "practice-led" (used by some US, UK, or Australian universities to refer to research-creation type frameworks) "may bear a

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[216] Diana Taylor*, The Archive and the Repertoire*, (Duke University Press Books, 2003), p. 63.

[217] As notes Anita Gonzalez, "[p]erformance theory can be delivered through a hand gesture or sketch, embedded in a lecture, or disseminated within the pauses of a sound score," leading Rebecca Schneider to comment that "for Gonzalez, theory and practice are not necessarily distinct."
See:
Anita Gonzalez, "Postmodern Dance Theory and Anti-Theory: African-American Dance Theory II" in *Dance Theory: Source Readings from Two Millennia of Western Dance*, ed. Tilden Russell (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020) p.233.
As cited by Rebecca Schneider. See:
Rebecca Schneider and Lucia Ruprecht, "In Our Hands: An Ethics of Gestural Response-Ability: Rebecca Schneider in Conversation with Lucia Ruprecht," *Performance Philosophy* 3, no. 1 (June 25, 2017): 108.

residual sense that knowledge follows after, is secondary to, the practice."[218] It's difficult to imagine knowledge neatly appearing strictly before, during, or after artistic practice, rather than through a mix of encounters, contexts, and activities.

Other scholars have categorized strands or approaches of arts-based research: Christopher Frayling's classifications of "research into art and design, research through art and design, and research for art and design"[219]; Lois Frankel's and Martin Racine's dividing design research as "research for, through and about design"[220]; and Owen B. Chapman's and Kim Sawchuk's "four modes within the set of 'research-creation,'": research-for-creation, research-from-creation, creative presentations of research, and creation-as-research.[221] But I wonder if many research-creation processes are like this one: in constant states of flux, switching rapidly and frequently between approaches.

Knowledge coming *through* artistic activity and creative research is one of the tenets held by many advocates of research-creation. As someone who began an MA after already working in the arts (during which collaborators and teachers were constantly referring to what we did while generating performances and movements as "research") and who grew up in a family of several generations of working artists, I found this concept felt too obvious to be of interest. Perhaps a better question might be, as Erin Manning asks, the

[218] Robin Nelson, ed., Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 1o.
[219] Christopher Frayling, "Research in Art and Design," *Royal College of Art Research Papers* 1, no. 1 (1993): p. 5.
[220] Lois Frankel and Martin Racine,"The Complex Field of Research: for Design, through Design, and about Design" in *Design and Complexity - International Conference of the Design Research Society,* July 2010, Montréal, Canada. https://dl.designresearchsociety.org/drs-conference-papers/drs2010/researchpapers/43
[221] Owen B. Chapman and Kim Sawchuk, "Research-Creation: Intervention, Analysis and 'Family Resemblances,'" *Canadian Journal of Communication* 37, no. 1 (2012): pp. 5-26.

"question of *how* art itself activates and constitutes new forms of knowledge" [222] (italics are mine).

A "game" of methods of research in and through the arts

A character in Jean Eustache's *La Maman et la putain* mutters that "films teach you how to live,"[223] the comment seemingly flippant and coming out of nowhere, and a view echoed in an interview, decades later, with Jeanne Moreau, who'd acted in the film: "A feature film, it's an allegory […] it's truer than the truth."[224] It doesn't matter (in this case) that a fictional character's lines, drawn out of context, don't constitute any kind of absolute truth. Implied in these statements is the sense that participating in artistic expressions — including the non-didactic, fictional films Moreau and Eustache were referring to (the kinds they worked on) — both as a spectator or as a collaborator formally engaged in making the work, lead to types of knowledge.

But while specific types of knowledge coming through artistic processes seems indisputable, a part of me struggled with the implications of creating artistically inclined work within the academy, for example the demand to explicitly name the kinds of knowledge that might emerge.

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[222] Erin Manning, "Against Method," in *The Minor Gesture* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2016), 53.

[223]The comment comes after a scene that ends a winded monologue closing with fear of death. The protagonist jumps on a mattress and tucks in the sheets, muttering: "J'ai vu ça dans un film. Les films, ça sert à ça, apprendre à vivre, apprendre à faire un lit."
Jean Eustache, *La Maman et la Putain* (1973; France; Elite Films, Ciné Qua Non, Les Films du Losange, Simar Films, V.M. Productions).
For a counteropinion, see James Quandt's *Jean Eustache's Vehement Realism*:
"If, as Alexandre suggests, 'films teach you how to live,' *La Maman et la putain* does much the opposite," writes Quandt, going on to describe some of the many negative qualities of the protagonist. But while Quandt's essay is excellent, surely he would agree that the understanding of something through film (or other art) lies elsewhere than in admiring or imitating its characters.
See: James Quandt, "Jean Eustache's Vehement Realism," *The New York Review of Books,* August 30, 2023, https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2023/09/21/jean-eustaches-vehement-realism/?lp_txn_id=1553784

[224] Jeanne Moreau follows this statement by citing Jean Cocteau: "'this beautiful lie that tells the truth,'" then exclaiming: "That's creation."
"Jeanne Moreau on the Representation of Women On-Screen." The Criterion Collection. Interview recorded in 2006, published on YouTube Aug 3, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zYbUCtBV4wc

Recent books and talks for general audiences recognizing that "the arts in many forms are a gateway to […] a higher level of knowing and understanding" and that "our brains and bodies are wired for art"[225] left me frustrated and cynically lamenting the lack of nuance in the shifts between the reductive dogmas of the "suffering artist" vs. "art heals all."

Artist-scholar Susana Castro Gil asks if the "knowledgefication of artistic practice" within performing arts in university settings (in this case, she refers specifically to the Brazilian university context where she works) is in the interest of educational administrators and policy-makers, or of artist-researchers — and their actual research. [226] Throughout this research process, I sometimes oscillated between an acknowledgement of immense privilege – the incredible fortune to be spending time (co) investigating these questions, in this way; the sense of debt to artist-researchers of previous generations and their supporters who (not without major effort) defended and carved out a platform to pursue these types of projects within the academy in Québec – and a series of nagging suspicions: isn't all artistic creation a form of research, or, at least, doesn't it always *involve* research? How problematic is creating work under an academic gaze?

Does analyzing artistic impulses lose time (and distract from the frightening urgency of creative desire), or sharpen and support reflection? Does creating within the academy enhance inquiry or stifle impulse? Does it strip creations of the concrete risks and realities they must negotiate when working within their industries (an issue raised by Louis Patrick Leroux[227]) or does it allow them

[225] "Susan Magsamen & Ivy Ross - Your Brain on Art," published on YouTube March 4, 2024, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CELlPQyGHok

[226] Susana Castro Gil, "What about Knowledgefied Discourse in Artistic Research?," *Performance Research* 26, no. 4 (May 19, 2021), p. 37.

[227] "Practice-based research, without a frame, without an objective beyond its own accomplishment, is nothing but highly (indirectly) subsidized theatre practice in a comfortable setting where very little is really at stake. What really could be at stake?" worries Leroux, later stressing: "There needs to be a fundamental interest in process and in reclaiming ownership over artistic discourse, process, and its impact."

to work in ways not encouraged (or financed) in current arts markets? If artistic practice always involves research, and presumably is always working in relation to surrounding theories and currents, what does a formal research setting offer?

How does the university context influence the process of making creative choices amid the tension, evoked by Gaston Bachelard, between method and the unconscious? [228] Jeroen Boomgaard argues, convincingly, that the "contradistinction" that "method is the hallmark of true science, while its absence or avoidance, or indeed its subversion, is the hallmark of true art," is "overly simple", pointing out that "[r]esearch in art is in turn not as a-methodical as is sometimes suggested."[229]

Boomgaard is less persuasive in his criticism of the "stock remark" that a "work of art 'provides no answers but poses questions'" arguing that this "formulation does little justice to art, as it reduces art's implicit meaning to an explicit intention."[230] Can't art works and processes generate *different* questions that the ones that initially drove them? Along these lines, structuring this paper sometimes felt like a puzzle: How to work around categories like "results" and "conclusion" in the standard empirical essay without feeling a kind of betrayal to artistic process? How to describe rather than explain? ("If you have a need to explain, it means you

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Louis Patrick Leroux, "Theatre Production, Experiential Learning, and Research–Creation in the Academy: An Anti-Manifesto of Sorts," *Canadian Theatre Review* 150, no. 1 (March 2012), p. 97.

[228] Bachelard opens *La poetique de la reverie* with an epigraph from poet Jules Laforgue:
"Method, method, what do you want of me? Don't you know I have eaten the fruit of the unconscious?"
Gaston Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie: Selections from the Works of Gaston Bachelard*, trans. Colette Gaudin (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971).
Also see: Jules Laforgue, *Oeuvres completes, vol. III* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1919), p. 24.

[229] "Since the advent of conceptual art in the 1960s, more or less every work of art has been the product of rules that the artist personally formulates in order to subsequently carry them through to their ultimate consequence. In that sense every artistic production follows a rigid method, and even a decision such as 'returning to landscape painting' inevitably falls into this category," writes Boomgaard.
Jeroen Boomgaard, "The Chimera of Method," in *See It Again, Say It Again: The Artist as Researcher,* ed. Janneke Wesseling (Amsterdam: Antennae Valiz, 2011), p.58.

[230] Jeroen Boomgaard, "The Chimera of Method," in *See It Again, Say It Again: The Artist as Researcher,* ed. Janneke Wesseling (Amsterdam: Antennae Valiz, 2011), p.70.

haven't adequately described," asserts Bruno Latour. "Once you have described it, the explanation becomes superficial."[231]) If we consider that knowledge comes during and through creative practice, shouldn't the "results" revealed in a research-creation paper be wrapped within rather than after discussions on practice and methodology?

But despite these reservations, *After-shows* depended on a research-centered context in order to come to form, with close access, for example, to oral history and translation research, with awareness of current discussion around interview practices and ethics, among other needs. The questions both driving and emerging from *After-shows* were reliant on spaces situated between and across translation, oral history, performance historiography, memory, dramaturgy, and performance creation research. While I felt (and feel) concerned about some of the paradoxes and risks of creating within the academy, I never actually experienced any sense of creative restriction when I was working in the studio on this project beyond the usual wishes for more time, more funds, more focus — the same boring hopes that everyone probably shares, in and out of the academy and in and out of the arts.

"The method of research in and through the arts is […] a game," writes Boomgaard, "in which different systems can be played off against each other." [232] Boomgaard's remark is not so different than the way artistic practice is sometimes perceived: "Artistic activity is a game," writes relational aesthetics theorist Nicolas Bourriaud, "whose forms, patterns and functions

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[231] Emanuele Coccia. *An Interview with Bruno Latour.* Transl. Stephen Muecke. *Asymptote Journal*. https://www.asymptotejournal.com/interview/an-interview-with-bruno-latour/
See also Deborah Jowitt:
"Descriptive writing—a certain kind of it—is the best way I know to assert the interdependence of content and form, of narration and movement's 'secret truths.'"
Deborah Jowitt , "Beyond Description: Writing Beneath the Surface," republished in *Moving History / Dancing Cultures : A Dance History Reader*, ed. Ann Dils and Ann Cooper Albright (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Pres, 2001), p. 7.

[232] Jeroen Boomgaard, "The Chimera of Method," in *See It Again, Say It Again: The Artist as Researcher,* ed. Janneke Wesseling (Amsterdam: Antennae Valiz, 2011), p.71.

develop and evolve according to periods and social contexts; it is not an immutable essence."[233] A research-creation framework allowed me to explicitly pursue *After-shows* as a game, or experiment, that I hoped would set up a playing field to treat other people's memories of performances as living, sensitive matter, and to see how else they could (can) be re-experienced, to see what else could (can) made with them, and to note what questions these processes raised.

Ethical Considerations

If, as Susan Sontag claims, "remembering is an ethical act,"[234] these ethical stakes are heightened in attempting to remember, research, and re-present the pasts of others. How to interpret or

[233] Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods (Dijon: Les Presses du Réel, 2002), p. 4.

[234] "Remembering *is* an ethical act, has ethical value in and of itself. Memory is, achingly, the only relation we can have with the dead. So the belief that remembering is an ethical act is deep in our natures as humans, who know we are going to die, and who mourn those who in the normal course of things die before us—grandparents, parents, teachers, and older friends. Heartlessness and amnesia seem to go together. But history gives contradictory signals about the value of remembering in the much longer span of a collective history."
Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York, NY: Picador/Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), p.90.

translate someone else's memory when "there is no innocent translation," as writes poet and translator Erín Moure? ("The body that translates, that reads, is a sited body," observes Moure. "Folded and creased, stapled, sewn and décousu: it is both disenfranchised and enabled by its temporal and cultural location. No body escapes this. We are culturally and ideologically marked, and we read and translate the texts of others through these markings, altering the very texts that we read and translate to reflect our own intentionality."[235])

"If you hear somebody play something, and you want to use that, well, you don't have to use exactly what he did," jazz great Dizzy Gillespie told interviewer Ralph Gleason. "If you know what he's doing, if you can see the way it is, you don't have to do it the same way he does it, you're using it just the same, but you're doing this to it," he said, making curves with his hand."[236] Gillespie's musical solution of modifying what is someone else's so as not to appropriate it is a good one. But when you are handling someone's *history,* how do the stakes of these creative liberties change?

Ethical issues in the "contested dramaturgical process of adapting or translating the lives of others for the stage"[237] are demonstrated by Stuart Young through a citation from the verbatim theater piece *Taking Care of Baby* by Dennis Kelly, in which a speaker pronounces: "If I understand it right it sounds like you are making an entertainment of the greatest tragedy of my life."[238] A life-and-death, worst-case ethical scenario in terms of re-creating with other people's

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[235] Erín Moure, "Transnational Literacies," Jacket2, October 6, 2012, https://jacket2.org/commentary/transnational-literacies.
As cited by: Cecilia Rossi, "At the Intersection of the Writing of Translations and Memory: Bridging Communities Affected by Past Conflict," in *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Memory*, ed. Anneleen Spiessens and Sharon Deane-Cox (London, England: Routledge, 2022), p.93.
[236] "Dizzy Gillespie Quintet," *Jazz Casual,* (San Francisco, CA: National Educational Television, 1961).
[237] Stuart Young, "The Ethics of the Representation of the Real People and Their Stories in Verbatim Theatre," Ethical Exchanges in Translation, Adaptation and Dramaturgy: 2017, p.21.
[238] Dennis Kelly, *Taking Care of Baby* (London: Oberon Books, 2008), p.28.

words and lives can be found in the making of *La Mama et la putain,* cited earlier, whose script occasionally drew off dialogue from secretly recorded conversations with the director's former girlfriend, who reportedly committed suicide upon seeing an early screening of the film.[239] That case is so extreme it almost feels sensationalistic to mention it, but recent controversies involving the performing of others' histories (there are too many examples to name) demonstrate the scale of some of the issues at stake. Perhaps more subtle, but still fragile and charged, are issues of a performance memory or a choreography being "taken" or reperformed. Postmodern choreographer Yvonne Rainer describes mixed responses upon observing versions of her dance Trio A reperformed and filmed:

> For the first decade of Trio A's existence, I was teaching it to anyone who wanted to learn it – skilled, unskilled, trained, untrained, professional, amateur – and gave tacit permission to anyone who wanted to teach it to do so. […] Well, I finally met a Trio A I didn't like. It was fourth of fifth generation, and I couldn't believe my eyes. It was all but unrecognizable […] There is no cinematic record of the original performance of Trio A. The 16mm […] documentation of it was made three years after I had stopped publicly performing and twelve years after the original performance of the dance. The difference between the mid-'60s and late-'70s performances is immense. One performance lives only in my memory, muscles, and photos, and the other - quite different – confronts me on the screen. …. When I hear rumors of people learning Trio A from the video, I know they have achieved only a faint approximation of the dance, with little understanding of its subtleties.[240]

The stakes of *After-shows*, which worked with a collection of fragments of performance memories and did not attempt to reconstruct a specific piece, and which involved explicit permission from everyone whose memories were being collected and worked with, were much

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As cited by:
Stuart Young, "The Ethics of the Representation of the Real People and Their Stories in Verbatim Theatre," Ethical Exchanges in Translation, Adaptation and Dramaturgy: 2017, p.21.

[239] James Quandt, "Jean Eustache's Vehement Realism," *The New York Review of Books,* August 30, 2023, https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2023/09/21/jean-eustaches-vehement-realism/?lp_txn_id=1553784

[240] Yvonne Rainer, "Labanotation," in *Sensorium: Embodied Experience, Technology, and Contemporary Art*, ed. Caroline A. Jones (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), p. 165.

different than the cases above, but the project still involved the ethical dilemma of how to work with other people's lives, words, performances, and recounted memories.

I wanted to be sure the project was led with the explicit understanding that the emerging re-presentations were *linked to* but *were not actually* the original experiences themselves. This might seem obvious, and is not an original thought (memory aside, it leads back to Artaud's insistence that "Art is not the imitation of life"[241]) but was helpful and important to articulate. Interviewees in phase one were informed, verbally and in writing, that what they discussed could read and "re-used" by other artists in phase two and re-presented (albeit in mutated form) to audiences and readers. Participants were offered the option to remain anonymous. Only one interviewee chose this in her consent form, but then changed her mind after the interview (presumably after feeling more conformable with the project and with what she had said) and decided to sign a new form, allowing her name to be used.

Interviewees were also offered the option to retract (by a specified date) information they had shared from the project. This happened once, when an interviewee recounted a memory that involved a family secret. That portion of the interview was removed from the project files upon discussion with the interviewee after the interview.

Another interviewee recounted a memory in her interview that involved the death of a close and beloved friend, and took a few weeks after the interview to reflect on whether she felt we should keep or remove those stories from the project. She then confirmed that she agreed for those memories to remain on the project record, and that she was willing to let other artists read and work with them. However, after reflection on my end, in a departure from the initial project

[241] Antonin Artaud, *Le Théâtre et son double*, as cited by Derrida:
Jacques Derrida, "The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

framework I imagined, I asked that interviewee to join the second phase of the project, as a performer. This led to questions of self-translation, described in Chapter 4.

Intriguingly, many participants seemed to disregard these formal protocols. “God, this form is so… legalistic!” cried one participant (my aunt). Another participant, upon coming across a page in which to sign whether a) she accepted that the interview be recorded or b) that she preferred it not be recorded, signed all the check marks and then laughingly admitted, when asked, that she hadn’t read the form. Another participant told me, “Sure, I’ll sign it if it helps you, but these forms don’t mean anything to me.” I briefly repeated key points (that they could skip questions if they like, that they could later request to retract information they’d shared, that other people would be seeing and working with what they said) at the start of each interview.

More important to participants seemed to be an implicit trust. When I asked one participant if she had any requests as to how to memories she shared be used or who in the group of performers might work with her words, she simply said, “I trust you.” Still, going through the process of articulating the ethical considerations of the project was helpful for me in terms of clarifying my positions and protocols.

During the performance research sessions, I discussed ethical issues with participating performers. At one point, I asked the participating performers in phase two whether they considered what we were doing to be a form of appropriation. The responses were remarkably varied. One performer said that yes, of course, this was a form of appropriation, that was simply part of the process of taking something and “making it yours” as a performer. Another performer, a formally trained actress as well as circus performer, said that all acting and performing, for her, involve appropriation, which is not negative. “Wait a minute,” said another performer. “No, appropriation is not a good thing.” When asked if they thought it was OK that

they were taking on elements of stories belonging to other people, they responded that they thought it was OK because those interviewees had granted explicit permission.

The participating performers also asked, on the first day in the studio, not to know the names or identities of the people who had shared memories in phase 1, because they felt overcome with the sense of responsibility towards those artists. One artist, who was deeply concerned that he was respecting the original speakers' memories, asked, during the group discussion during the public event on July 27, which was attended by three of the artists interviewed in phase 1, whether they had felt their memories had been respected. His question proved to be an important moment for one phase 1 interviewee, who commented on it months later and reported feeling surprised and moved by his concern:

> J'ai beaucoup apprécié discussion avec les artistes […] J'avais pas pensé qu'il y aura une conscience de leur part de dire, *C'est le souvenir de quelqu'un, donc un état émotive* […] j'ai eu l'impression que pour beaucoup d'entre eux c'était comme, *On entre chez quelqu'un, on est invité et on doit faire quelque chose mais on veut rien casser*. Et j'ai trouvé ça, j'ai trouvé ça très beau et très délicat de leur part d'avoir ce respect-là.[242]

Geneviève's remarks reflect Sirkku Aaltonen's likening of both translators and theater practitioners to "tenants" who temporality step into someone's living space and bring parts of themselves to it, drawing on a metaphor from Michel de Certeau.[243]

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[242] Loosely translated: "I really enjoyed talking to the artists [...] I hadn't thought that there would be an awareness on their part to say, *This is someone's memory, so it's an emotional state* [...] I had the impression that for many of them it was like, *We're entering someone's home, we're invited and we have to do something but we don't want to break anything*. And I found that, I found that very beautiful and very sensitive of them to have that respect." Geneviève Bessette, In discussion with the researcher. December 12, 2022.

[243] Aaltonen draws on a metaphor put forth by Michel de Certeau in which he describes the ways in which readers put themselves into their interpretations of texts, resembling apartment tenants making an already lived in space their own.
See: Sirkku Aaltonen, *Time-Sharing on Stage: Drama Translation in Theatre and Society* (Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters, 2000), p.9.
See also:
Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, [1984] 2011).

One interviewee in phase one recounted a performing memory in which her physical and racial identities are inseparable from the meaning that moment held for her: "I'm, you know, this Black woman in this grey dress, and my Black feet, you know, just show up, and it's this beautiful moment, and my feet felt the light and they felt they were on stage."[244] What aspects of this lived, remembered moment would other performers, with other bodies and other racial identities be translating, and what were the stakes of what would be lost in translation? I worked in phase two with a group of exceptionally sensitive performers of differing artistic, cultural, generational, linguistic, and racial backgrounds. But it would be dangerously simplistic to hope that even if some qualities might be shared between certain performers and certain interviewees, that major questions didn't remain in terms of working with histories belonging to people whose backgrounds and lives were, of course, entirely their own and could never be fully understood by anyone else in the same way that they were understood by the person experiencing them (the same of which could be said, of course, about the backgrounds and lives of the participating phase two project performers).

When I asked the interviewee, who is also a friend, who she might see working with excerpts of her interview, explaining I was working with a group of performers, she responded that the question of who might work with what fragment be left to chance. I followed this suggestion and often started research sessions by inviting the participating performers to select an excerpt from a pile of turned down papers. This not only was a time-efficient strategy to jump-start creative choices, but also meant all participating artists were working and reworking with a multitude of "random" memory fragments, rather than assigning who was the "best fit" to work which one person's memory or another.

[244] Renee Benson, Interview with the researcher. March 13, 2021.

Throughout the process, I was curious how acknowledging untranslatability could inform ethical positioning in terms of working with other people's memories of performances. "Ce qu'il faut savoir comme traductrice, c'est ce qu'on ne sait pas," notes translator Linda Gaboriau.[245] Re-applied to working with others' memories, could recognizing what you do not know (you do not know the "full story" of this person, even if you know them well; you do not know what it is like to be this person or what it was truly like to experience their story first-hand, even if you listen with great empathy and attention; you do not know the full circumstances surrounding their story, even if you are familiar with the event discussed; you do not know what the speaker chose to withhold; and so on) support a practical, artistic, and ethical stance?

"No 'we' should be taken for granted when the subject is looking at other people's pain," writes Susan Sontag,[246] along the lines of Cassin's stance that "l'universel, c'est toujours l'universel de quelqu'un."[247] It seems we can apply Sontag's concern when looking not just at other people's pain, but at almost any aspect of their lives: If we cannot pretend to fully understand them, what are the other ways to look at other people's histories? When does an interest in other people's pasts verge on voyeurism? What about when it is problematic to look at or re-present fragments of other people's lives? What to do about viewers or readers who mistakenly conflate attending an exhibit or reading a book or looking at a photograph of an event with actually experiencing it? Could recognizing the gaps between someone's own memory and another person's understanding, translation, interpretation, or representation of it inform a manner of attempting to "touch" or relate with another person's past while respecting the space between that original

[245] "What you need to know as a translator is what you don't know."
Jean-François Nadeau, "Linda Gaboriau ou les fleurs de la traduction," Le Devoir, May 14, 2024, https://www.ledevoir.com/lire/812821/linda-gaboriau-ou-fleurs-traduction.
[246] Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York, NY: Picador/Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), p.8.
[247] Barbara Cassin, *Eloge de la Traduction : Compliquer l'universel* (Paris: Pluriel, 2022), p. 35.

experience, belonging to that person, and its re-representations? Could considering untranslatability also provide an approach for a presentation honor and reflect what is missing in it, namely, the "real" original experience, as well as the uncountable other, unspoken memories in the room?

Participants' unspoken memories

When I began collecting fragments of memories of performances of performers and former performers who worked, or who had worked, in circus, music, theater, dance, and other conventions of live performance, I reached out mainly to people I knew: friends, former performing colleagues, former circus teachers, an aunt, even an actor I'd met at a funeral a few years before. One spectator at the July 27th presentation later asked me how I chose the project participants, and then offered the insight that *I* had memories predating the project involving most of the participating interviewees and performers.[248]

These pre-existing relationships form part of the mainly unspoken "stories behind the stories"[249] of this project (unspoken in large part because that they are simply too numerous and lengthy to fully recount, and because they were not the focus of the project) that shaped what oral historian Alessandro Portelli calls "the personal encounter that we call an interview,"[250] an encounter Portelli sees as both a "tool for research," an "exchange of gazes," and an "opening of a narrative space." [251] (This is not the same, but is strikingly similar to the way that translation theorist Antoine Berman describes "the essence of translation": as "an opening, a dialogue, a cross-

[248] "Je trouve super intéressant que tu as choisi des gens que tu connais, avec qui toi tu as des souvenirs." Paloma Leyton, Interview with the researcher. November 17, 2022.
[249] Henry Greenspan, "The Unsaid, the Incommunicable, the Unbearable, and the Irretrievable," *The Oral History Review* 41, no. 2 (January 2014): p. 232.
[250] Alessandro Portelli, "Living Voices: The Oral History Interview as Dialogue and Experience," 239.
[251] "As an exchange of gazes and a cocreated narrative between subjects—the interviewer and the interviewee—who are both observer and observed and speak to each other across the line of their significant otherness" Alessandro Portelli, "Living Voices: The Oral History Interview as Dialogue and Experience," 240.

breeding, a decentering."[252]) The dynamic between the interviewer and the interviewee is one the "contingencies" described by Henry Greenspan, that "impacts what is and isn't relayed" and that can "motivate revelation or reticence."[253]

Similarly, I had previous memories and personal associations with almost all of the performer participants. These relationship histories would not have been apparent to spectators, and were not, of course, the subject of project, but they nonetheless influenced the research dynamic and the question of what to translate and what to leave out. "The translator is always privy to a surplus of meaning that can never be fully included in the translation," writes artist/ filmmaker/scholar John Di Stefano, later noting: "The act of translation itself implies imperfection and incompleteness."[254]

A sense of incompletion drove, haunted, and resulted from this research process. The "random" and subjective nature of who was and wasn't interviewed, for example, was in some ways inevitable (it is impossible to interview *everyone*) but also problematic: missing voices are of course an ethical as well as an artistic issue.

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[252] Antoine Berman, *The Experience of the Foreign: Culture and Translation in Romantic Germany*, trans. S. Heyvaert (Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press, [1984] 1992).
As cited in:
Anthony Pym, "Uncertainty," in *Exploring Translation Theories* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2023), p. 108.

[253] Henry Greenspan, "The Unsaid, the Incommunicable, the Unbearable, and the Irretrievable," *The Oral History Review* 41, no. 2 (January 2014): p. 229.

[254] Di Stefano refers heavily here to Derrida:
"Jacques Derrida has argued that translation always produces both a surplus of meaning and a debt. By virtue of knowing two idioms, the translator is always privy to a surplus of meaning that can never be fully included in the translation. Thus, for the translator, there is a perpetual debt to both the original and the translation. The act of translation itself implies imperfection and incompleteness. The perpetual state of translation among spaces of belonging engenders a perpetual disappearance. In translating and negotiating this surplus and debt-this residue of interstitial position and process-the displaced person disappears. Disappearance is a notion that an absence can be a unique and expanded form of presence. Disappearance thus retains an excess of meaning and experience. […] It is within the failure of a single hegemonic textual strategy and in the face of these limitations, this incompleteness, this betweenness, that interstitial cultural practices emerge."[254]
John Di Stefano, "Moving Images of Home," *Art Journal* 61, no. 4 (2002): p. 51.

As I was conducting my interviews, it often struck me that nearly anyone could be asked about performance memories and would have something valuable to say. How to justify interviewing some people and not others? I had initially planned to interview three performers, but the list kept increasing as I kept finding people I wanted to speak with (and, in 2020, as the lockdowns wore on). The desire and urgency to collect more performance memories were countered only by the sheer time and labor of transcription, and by the practical matters of preparing for the research sessions with the participating performers.

I wondered if the histories or memories that *were* recounted and documented within the confines of the interview process were completely random: stories that happened to be revealed amid billions of others. One interviewee reinforced this notion of certain told stories among countless untold others:

"With over 25 years of performing experience, I was thinking about how to choose what memories to tell," she recounted in the group discussion at the Coeur des sciences following the July 2022 presentation (she generously participated in an interview in 2020, attended the 2022 event, and took part in the post-event spectator memory interview series). "I mean, we all agree, if we go out later tonight and have a beer, stories will just spill out."[255]

Her reflections connect to those of psychologist, oral historian, and playwright Henry Greenspan: "The great part of what happens to us in life is never articulated to anyone," he writes. "That is not usually because experience is painful, shameful, or difficult to describe. It is simply because we do a lot more living than speaking."[256] Henry Greenspan and oral historian Alessandro

[255] Geneviève Bessette. In discussion with the audience and artists after the project's public "research-sharing" event. July 27, 2022. Translation from the French is mine.
[256] Henry Greenspan, "The Unsaid, the Incommunicable, the Unbearable, and the Irretrievable," *The Oral History Review* 41, no. 2 (January 2014): 229.

Portelli have developed remarkable practices of conducting oral history interviews with the same people over the course of many years, but if we are referring to a single conversation with someone, how can we reflect that many parts of their lives may not be articulated in the interview?

Hemingway famously claimed that it is fine to leave material out of a piece of so long as the person writing it acknowledges why: "If a writer of prose knows enough of what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of movement of an iceberg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water. A writer who omits things because he does not know them only makes hollow places in his writing."[257] But when dealing with memories – our own or our impressions of others' – both the person recounting and the person listening may well, for different reasons, not fully know what isn't there.

As such, the more I interviewed people and collected histories, the more I wanted to find a re-performance or retelling format that would acknowledge and play with the project's gaps: to be clear I wasn't attempting to summarize *all* performance memories or the essence of a particular person (what they might have shared another day might have been different), with the memories that did amass appearing increasingly eclectic, their meanings seeming increasingly indeterminate.

I also wanted to find a way to acknowledge the impossibility of fully capturing the complexity of the people interviewed and the lives they have led through a single interview. While many oral historians have produced extraordinary work using the title "life story interview," I avoided the

[257] Ernest Hemingway, *Death in the Afternoon* (Scribner, 1932).

term in this project.[258] While historians like Portelli and Greenspan have developed longitudinal practices to consider the breadth and complexity of their interviewees' experiences and perspectives, I knew the interview period would be limited working within an MA time structure, and wanted the project – the interview approach, the work with the artists in the studio, the public event, the approach to post-spectator interviews – to reflect and to highlight the fragmented and incomplete nature of conversation, of memory, and of what we know of someone.

In interest of transparency, I have included a sentence or two in the table of interviews and project 2 steps (See Appendices B and C), briefly noting phase 1 and 2 participants' performing-related backgrounds. But the describing all of the memories carried within those relationships or a full description of these people and their performing (and other) lives would evidently overwhelm and distract from this research analysis. So, too, would fully contextualizing the lives of all of those who were interviewed – an exercise that would also be impossible because of the many layers of these people and their lives that I don't know. The impossibility of mentioning every backstory is perhaps very obvious, but it contributed to a sense of unspoken histories and incomplete information that haunted the research process and drove its thesis questions.

Audiences (the July 27th audience members were considered participants in this study) are always a phenomenon of unknowability ("who *are* these people?" I've often wondered while performing and looking into the crowd), even when, as in this case, they were seated in a configuration which left them highly visible; a number of them volunteered to be formally interviewed after the event; and many of them, given the nature of a university project, were

[258] I would like to repeat for clarify my immense respect for many oral histories realized under this umbrella term. I don't mean in any way to disparage their valuable work; I only wish to contextualize my desire to focus on fragmentation in this project.

colleagues and friends. I hoped to co-generate a type of performance structure and approach which acknowledged the unspoken knowledge of and memories of audience members — including, in this case, their own memories of performances. I hoped to avoid a didactic approach intended to "teach" audience members something about performance memories, and instead, to cultivate an environment during which their own unspoken histories might be respected and felt. I hoped that inviting audience members to be seated in places in which they too, would be seen — a staging in which each spectator's view of what was happening would be filled with scenes of other spectators' presences — might facilitate a reminder of other, unspoken performance histories around us/them. I hoped that by raising the curtains of the large windows of the Agora du Coeur des sciences, by leaving the backdrop, so to speak, open to scenes of passers-by, to visibility of the outside world, that I might invite an acknowledgement that what was happening inside the walls of the building was not separate from the lives and actions outside of them.

Audiences are already repositories of previous memories, write theorists Herbert Blau and Marvin Carlson. Religious scholar Glenn S. Holland, referring to Carlson, summarizes: "past performances define the parameters for further performances and each performance is 'haunted' by similar performances members of its audience have experienced in the past."[259]

How to facilitate a performance event that respects, acknowledges, and works with these unspoken past memories of the audience, while also acknowledging the intimacy, the specificity of those memories – the unknowability of them to others? How to include or highlight their silent presence in a staging format?

[259] Glenn S. Holland, "Paul and Performance," in *Paul in the Greco-Roman World Volume II*, J.P. Sampley, ed., (Bloomsbury, 2003) p. 245-246.

(Un)translating absence

This research-creation process was premised on the recognition that translation, memory, and historical representation all deal with the absence of the "original." In addition, there were also the unspoken memories of participating interviewees, performers, audience members. Finally, there were elements that could not be included in literal ways.

For example, I interviewed one artist in phase 1, who I have known for over 15 years, who described a memory in which his mother had come to see him perform. While he gave his explicit verbal and written consent to use any material he shared, the meaning of that particular memory of his was, for me, informed by stories he had told me about his childhood on other occasions, outside the framework of the interview. Those memories were also painful and traumatic, and it seemed dishonest and sensationalistic to describe to others the deeply personal context that was not shared in the formal interview. The performers and readers working with that excerpt would simply have to work with the incomplete account that was recorded, I decided. But I had to find a way to convey that unspoken elements were also present. How to translate and represent the unspoken?

Other memories we were working with also dealt with memories involving other people who have since died. Still others referred to specific streets, countries, and venues that would have been impossible to recreate.

I did not come across composer and theater-maker Heiner Goebbels' *Aesthetics of Absence* until about a year and a half after structuring and presenting the *After-shows* event, but found it articulated parts of what I was trying to do. Among what reads as a kind of laundry list of aesthetic approaches he associates with absence, Goebbels notes:

-"the disappearance of the actor/performer from the centre of attention (or even from the stage altogether) as a division of presence among all elements involved";

-"a division of the spectator's attention to a 'collective protagonist' with performers who often hide their individual significance, for example by turning their backs towards the audience";

-"the creation of spaces in-between, spaces of discovery, spaces in which emotion, imagination and reflection can actually take place";

-"an empty centre: both literally, as an empty stage, i.e. the absence of a central visual focus, and as an absence of what we call a clear 'theme' or 'message' of a play." [260]

Sifting through information and its "remainders"

Yvon Bonenfant writes of an "extra-excessive" kind of "plethora" of information that is often generated in arts-based or practice-as-research processes, more so than other qualitative research[261]: an overload of project-related material that could be embraced, as suggests Bonenfant, or as writes Louis Patrick Leroux, could risk becoming "an unmanageable miasma of disparate impressions."[262] The organization of this information is further complicated when, in what Lynn Fells calls "performative inquiry," researcher- practitioners' "data are embodied, our data breathe, dance with presence."[263]

Oral history research faces similar "excessive data" concerns. In an influential critique of oral history practices written in 1972 (one that sparked many heated responses from oral historians,

[260] Heiner Goebbels, *Aesthetics of Absence: Texts on Theatre*, ed. Jane Collins and Nicholas Till, trans. Christina M. Lagao and David Rosener (Routledge, 2015), p. 4.
[261] Yvon Bonenfant, "PAR produces plethora, extended voices are plethoric and why plethora matters," in *Performance as Research. Knowledge, methods, impact*, ed. Annette Arlander, Bruce Barton, Melanie Dreyer-Lude, Ben Spatz, London: Routledge, 2018, p. 224-248.
[262] Louis Patrick Leroux, "A la recherche de la recherche-création," in *Pour des recherches diaboliques : Théorie et création inter-artistique en laboratoire,* ed. Muriel Plana. (Paris: Éditeurs Hermann, « Théorie et pratique ». Forthcoming 2024). Translation from the French is mine.
[263] Lynn Fels, "Collecting Data Through Performative Inquiry: A Tug on the Sleeve," *Youth Theatre Journal* 26, no. 1 (2012), p. 50.

defending the potential of their practices), historian Barbara Tuchman expresses concern over the "collecting of trivia and giving what should have been forgotten new life by recording it and passing it to others."[264] Oral historian Ronald Grele acknowledges the practical and theoretical challenges presented by the "enormous amount of data" accumulated through oral history practices, writing in 1978 at time "when written sources are being increasingly created and made available to scholars"[265] — a phenomenon of overabundant available data that has only increased exponentially with the explosion of digital access and storage.

This excess of material is undoubtedly exacerbated by the current attention ecology[266] in what Catalan researcher-artist Esther Belvis Pons recognizes as an "overwhelming mediatized world" in which we often have experience of passively and rapidly being taken alongside an excess of stories and information "as if we were sitting in the back seat of the drunk driver's car."[267]

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[264] See: Barbara Tuchman, "Distinguishing the Significant from the Insignificant," in *Radcliffe Quarterly* 56 (October 1972): 4.
As cited and contextualized by:
Nicholas Mariner, "Oral History: From Fact Finding to History Shaping," *Historia* 14 (2005): 59–60.

[265] "Libraries are bulging with used and unused collections, presidential archives are jammed with interviews, and many local historical agencies are generating oral testimonies each day. In the meantime, historians in the academy are encouraging more and more of their students and fellow faculty members to collect even more oral histories. As a result, there now seems to be no possible way to count these piles of tapes and transcripts, to catalog them, and to monitor their use. Moreover, there seems to be no possible way to evaluate this material according to the usual standards of the profession. One of the ironies of the growth of oral history is that it has taken place during a period of time when written sources are being increasingly created and made available to scholars, and it in turn is aiding in the creation of even more paper."
Ron Grele. "Can Anyone over Thirty Be Trusted: A Friendly Critique of Oral History." *The Oral History Review* 6 (1978): 37.

[266] Yves Citton, *The Ecology of Attention*, trans. Barnaby Norman (Cambridge: Polity, 2021).

[267] "Despite the amount of information that we consume and manage, we seem unable to take the reins […] of our own history. Yet, narratives are the only way we have to explain our world and get the information to make decisions and intervene in it, writes Belvis Pons.
Belvis Pons draws her metaphor of the drunken driver here off of a 2018 speech by McKenzie Wark entitled "The Drunken Driver: Thoughts on a waning civilisation."
See:
Esther Belvis Pons, "Introduction: On Disappearance," *Performance Research* 24, no. 7 (October 3, 2019): 1–5, https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2019.1717855
See also: "DEBATE / The Drunken Driver: Thoughts on a Waning Civilisation, Lecture by McKenzie Wark," Vimeo, published online February 21, 2018, El Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona, https://vimeo.com/256743098

The researcher isn't supposed to be sitting passively in the back seat, of course, but even if, for the sake of metaphor, we are in a driver's seat, we still can't control oncoming traffic or climate conditions: we might be at the mercy of external factors along our trajectory more than we might like to admit. Part of the experience of researching (and creating) seems to be whether, and how, to listen to the ideas, texts, other research, or voices (both of others and in our head) telling us to try changing course and taking other roads.

Just as "[t]ranslation is a 'violent', decision-oriented, culturally determined discursive activity,"[268] as per scholar Gillian Lane-Mercier, so too is the sifting through information generated through oral history and arts-based research reliant on "violent" decisions about what information to retain and to remove, and about what directions and positions to take in what feels like a labyrinth of possibilities.

One of the challenges in writing this thesis has been the assembling, reordering, and often removing of material. For about a year, the working draft of this thesis stood at over 500 frenetic pages, structured in a way that would have been deeply chaotic and uninteresting for any reader, alongside another few hundred pages of interview transcripts, over 50 hours of recordings, and another few hundred pages of notes. While I had an opportunity to work with an experienced and helpful video editor, I was terrified to open the files and left them barely touched in a far-off folder for over a year and a half.

During the work in the studio, I also grappled with "what to do" with all the material generated during the improvisations and how to select which ones to suggest the participating performers

[268] "Translation is a 'violent', decision-oriented, culturally determined discursive activity that compels the translator to take a position with respect to the source text and author, the source culture, the target culture and the target reader."
Gillian Lane-Mercier, "Translating the Untranslatable: The Translator's Aesthetic, Ideological and Political Responsibility," *Target: International Journal of Translation Studies* 9, no. 1 (1997), p. 56.

repeat versions of. The idea of the public event, which was based on improvisation, was not to attempt to repeat a "best-of" out of the previously resulting improvisations from the studio (although despite myself, I was somewhat sad that some of my favorite improvisations from the process were never repeated and were never successfully captured on camera), but to further the research-creation process in the presence of and with audience members. That facilitation implied choices and relied on instructions concerning what to further and what, at least temporarily, to remove, resulting in inevitable leftover or omitted information, similar to the "remainder" (*la restance*) that Derrida links to the untranslatable. Throughout multiple writings, "Derrida seeks out the 'remainder,' the potential significations that are omitted in the process of translation," summarizes Anthony Pym.[269] In *What Is a 'Relevant' Translation?,* Derrida suggests that it is only in non-existent situations in which the translator has unlimited time, knowledge, and resources that "there is no reason for him to encounter the untranslatable or a remainder in his work,"[270] although, even then, I'm doubtful that there wouldn't be anything that's not left out.

Frequent interruption

If this project was faced with "what to do" in acknowledging gaps in translation and re-presentation and in removed or absent information, it was equally punctuated by gaps in sheer scheduling and logistics. If logistics led to fragmentation as a concrete factor to work with — i.e. anticipated and then canceled or interrupted working blocks, working with the team of participating performers in groups of two or three at a time for availability and funding reasons

[269] Anthony Pym, "Uncertainty," in *Exploring Translation Theories* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2023), 106.
[270] Jacques Derrida, "What Is a 'Relevant' Translation?," trans. Lawrence Venuti*, Critical Inquiry* 27, no. 2 (Winter 2001): 176.

— the resulting sense of discontinuity also made its way into the performance event structure: interruption was both a logistical reality and a potential dramaturgical approach (or result).

"A proper account of transmedial memory," write Lucy Bond, Stef Craps, and Pieter Vermeulen, "must attend" to the "regressions, hesitations, tensions, and other hiccups" that mark our lives.[271] Theater historian Michal Kobialka describes "the events of 2020" (something much more substantial, of course, than a "hiccup" or a "hesitation") as "a central metaphor for the *interruption* and the possibility of putting a halt to that which is."[272] Kobialka also considers interruption as a dramaturgy, writing of how "interruption as a refractory art reveals how negation and deviation question the very topology of representation,"[273] sharing characteristics with what Piotr Woycicki and Lucy Gough view as a "diffractive dramaturgy" (drawing on Karen Barad's theory on "'diffraction' as a creative methodology").[274] An "aesthetics of interruption" is analyzed by Mieke Bal and Jeannette Christensen, who note both that "constant interruption is necessary if the social world is to continue to be 'in becoming,'" referring to Deleuze, and that interruption can lead to dynamic spaces for (re)interpreting artistic meaning (they also acknowledge interruption's potential for shock or trauma — depending on the context and cause of an interruption — as well as for "liberation, contact, encounter").[275]

The table of the research processes of *Aftershows* (see Appendix C) illustrates some of the many suspended work sessions in this project: studio reservations halted by interdepartmental

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[271] Lucy Bond, Stef Craps, and Pieter Vermeulen, *Memory Unbound: Tracing the Dynamics of Memory Studies* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017), p. 15.
[272] Michal Kobialka, "On Interruption: Working through the Past and the Arts," *Performance Research* 26, no. 5 (July 4, 2021): p.70.
[273] Michal Kobialka, "On Interruption: Working through the Past and the Arts," *Performance Research* 26, no. 5 (July 4, 2021): p.65.
[274] Piotr Woycicki and Lucy Gough, "Diffractive Dramaturgies in Our Lady of Shadows," *Body, Space & Technology*, February 14, 2024.
See also: Karen Barad, "Diffracting Diffraction: Cutting Together-Apart." *Parallax* 20. No.3 (2014): 168–87.
[275] Mieke Bal and Jeannette Christensen, "An Aesthetics of Interruption: Stagnation and Acceleration," *ASAP/Journal* 4, no. 1 (2019): 85–112.

bureaucracy; a long-awaited research period postponed and then moved online during the start of the pandemic; performance research sessions rearranged in response to participants' shifting schedules; the public event at the end of the residency at the Cœur des sciences rescheduled three times amid province-wide lockdowns in January 2022 and cases of COVID in the team in April. The rearranged research showing date in July 2022 resulted after a chain of over 60 group emails sorting out space and team availability, only to have one of the participating performers leave the project upon conflicting contracts a day before that last work period began, adding to a cycle of rotating participating performers.

None of these scheduling changes, logistical challenges, and participating artist adjustments will be very surprising or unusual to anyone who has coordinated collaborative work with freelancers in the performing arts, none are particularly dramatic in the face of the more pressing emergencies unfolding simultaneously during the pandemic, and none would be of much note if the project's logistics and interruptions hadn't spilled into the dramaturgy of the project and hadn't shaped the content of the research.

One example is in the studio scheduling with the participating artists in phase two: To manage conflicting schedules and to spread out funds, I often worked with two or three artists at a time, resulting in the "same" material being reworked differently: the same memory fragments from phase 1 interviews being reinterpreted and reperformed differently within different sets of artists in the morning and the afternoon, and the same discussion points being responded to differently, brought together only in the last day of the residency (even then, we were missing two performers, one who lived abroad and was only present during the 2020 online research phase and another who was no longer available).

Working in such a disjointed fashion was in many ways reflective of the fragmentary nature of the memories we were working with, and conducive to the way I hoped to re-represent them, leading the performers and I to co-construct a "map" in which they wandered in and out of remembered histories and improvisations, often without formally "finishing" what they began. As note performance scholars Carlos Gutiérrez and Valentín Benavides, interruption and digression are employed as deeply effective narrative tactics in cases like *The Odyssey*,[276] a point reiterated by writer and translator Daniel Mendelsohn ("*The Odyssey* […] revels in digressions, wanderings, circularity" [277]). Works interested in memory also follow in the gargantuan (and impossible) footsteps of Proust, after which a re-representation of memories without nonlinear and digressing narratives seems almost unthinkable. Without, by any means, comparing this short project to such major, monumental works, *After-shows* looked humbly to preexisting works and research that recognize the stop-and-start, unpredictable, and meandering nature of memory narratives and retrieval.[278]

On a pragmatic level, the "interruption" of the pandemic increased many interviewees' availability for the performance memory interviews in phase one of the project, and, in some cases, increased their willingness and enthusiasm as participants ("It was really nice to talk about something that's not the fucking virus," said one interviewee, at the end of an interview in mid-March 2020[279]). The widespread cancelation of performing contracts and other events of the

[276] Carlos Gutiérrez and Valentín Benavides, "'Let Demodocus Rest His Ringing Lyre Now!' A Benjaminian Refrain over the Eighth Book of The Odyssey," *Performance Research* 26, no. 5 (July 4, 2021): 19–22, https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2021.2021738.
[277] Daniel Mendelsohn interviewed by John Freeman, "Daniel Mendelsohn Makes a Powerful Case for the Art of Digression," Literary Hub, September 9, 2020, https://lithub.com/daniel-mendelsohn-makes-a-powerful-case-for-the-art-of-digression/
[278] Thanujeni Pathman, Christine Coughlin, and Simona Ghetti, "Space and Time in Episodic Memory: Effects of Linearity and Directionality on Memory for Spatial Location and Temporal Order in Children and Adults," *Plos One* 13, no. 11 (2018).
[279] Gypsy Snider, in discussion with the researcher. March 17, 2020.

summer of 2020 meant that certain participating performers in the prototype stage of phase two also had greater availability (highlighting a contrast with the 2022 residency, when performance contracts were picking up again and it was almost impossible to find a date when everyone was free). Meanwhile, the adjusted online format led one participant to drop out, writing: « Il y a le phénomène du virtuel qui me chagrine un peu… Je sais que beaucoup de gens se tournent vers ce nouveau mode de recherche pour continuer à pouvoir créer et chercher, mais j'y arrive pas, j'ai un blocage avec ce média d'art vivant qui éclos... ».[280]

On a dramaturgical level, the practice of having multiple artists repeat interpretations of phase one's memory fragments linked to Cassin's articulation of untranslatability as involving an ongoing cycle of re-translation. Or, as writes Theo Hermans "And if there can always be different translations of the same original […] then surely they reflect different interpretations." Even if, writes Hermans, hermeneutic philosopher Schleiermacher seems to want "to cling to the belief that the hermeneuticist can reach the best possible or the fullest possible interpretation" this interpretation "is never quite final, because if it were the hermeneutic task would have reached an end-point."[281]

[280]"There's the virtual phenomenon which makes me a bit sad… I know a lot of people are turning to this new mode of research to continue to be able to create and research, but I can't do it, I have a block with this medium of live art that's emerging."
Email to the researcher, May 23, 2020, name withheld.
[281] Theo Hermans, "Untranslatability, Entanglement and Understanding," in *Untranslatability*, Duncan Large et al., ed. (Routledge, 2018), p. 37.

Figure 2 and 3

After-shows research showing, July 27th, 2022, photo by Antonia Gueorguieva

Research practice summary

1. Performance memory interviews

16 performers and former performers took part in interviews about memories of performances during different phases of this research project between 2019 and 2021. The interviews lasted between 25 minutes and three hours — aiming to respect the rhythm and dynamic of the conversation, and to allow interviewees space and choice in terms of how much they wanted share — and averaged between an hour to an hour and a half.

Interviews were conducted in English and French, depending on the interviewee's preference. In two cases, I asked a friend to be present as an informal Russian translator in case those interviewees wanted to express themselves in their first language.

The interviews began in person but switched to online formats in response to what were then (in March 2020) new pandemic-related lockdown measures. The pandemic situation also influenced my unplanned decision to expand the number of interviewees. I, like the interviewees, was suddenly stuck at home with halted artistic projects, and in the spring and summer of 2020, I threw myself into the project of interviewing performers and transcribing those interviews. That particular spring and summer, I had written a proposal which included three interviews and instead conducted and transcribed nine.

Other interview phases were held online in early 2021 and in person later that year.

Interview parameters

The parameters and objectives of the interviews were outlined verbally and in a written consent form sent to participants before the interview in both English and French. The purpose of the interview was formally described to interviewees as follows:

A. PURPOSE

After-shows collects and re-represents memories of live performances.

The project gathers fragments of memories of specific moments within once-live performances — through interviews with former performers, technicians, audience members, and others[282]— and gives them other, new lives by inviting others to verbally and physically repeat, interpret, watch, and listen to them.

The project has multiple objectives:

1) It looks at what happens when memories of performances are shifted from a personal to a public sphere, from one language to another, from one time and place to another, from one form to another, from one voice to others, from one person's words to another person's body, from one person's body to another person's words.
2) It collects and documents personal histories relating to once-live performances.
3) It tests new methods of generating and staging physical performance material.

As an interview-participant, you will be asked to recount a memory of at least one performance. The interview will be recorded unless you request otherwise. Your words may be transcribed and translated by the researcher. The content may be interpreted by performers and re-presented to audience members in an event following the interview.

Information gathered will used and analyzed material for a master's thesis.[283]

Two interviewees in phase 2 also participated in the performance research in phase 2. All interviewees were invited to attend the July 27th research showing; three interviewees attended the showing and also participated in the group discussion after. Two of those interviewees also participated in post-event spectator interviews.

Interview questions and structures

The project's embracing of fragmentation and its interest in the interiority that may have been felt by performers and how to historicize such seemingly invisible aspects of their experiences

[282] When I first imagined the project, I overly ambitiously intended to interview "former performers, technicians, audience members, and others" in this research phase. It became quickly apparent that that approach would have been interesting but too broad in scope for this MA. In turn, I limited interviews in this phase to performers and former performers.

[283] Excerpt from phase 1 consent form.

led to question styles asking interviewees to describe feelings they remembered during specific performance memories.

Follow-up questions were alternatingly focused on returning to the actions remembered in the selected performing moment (ex: "can you walk me though, moment by moment, the actions you remember performing"), sensory-based (ex: "how do you remember the temperature of the theater feeling?"), thematic (picking up on a topic evoked by the interviewee), and focused on contextual facts (inquiring about the name, place, and date of a performance discussed, for example). I hoped to facilitate episodic memory retrieval through a range of question types. [284] I attempted to allow interviewees to "exercise authority to shape the history by redirecting the 'conversational narrative,'" [285] when they chose to, as suggests Lenore Layman, although many interviewees frequently seemed to want to "play along" with the exercise, and followed their responses with questions like, "Did that make sense? Did I answer your question?" (The answer was almost always yes).

As the project progressed, I turned increasingly towards game-based question structures.

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[284] Neuroscientist and memory expert Charan Ranganath refers to episodic memory as "the ability to remember a past event."
See: Charan Ranganath, "Binding Items and Contexts," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 19, no. 3 (June 2010): 131–37.
Bradford C Dickerson and Howard Eichenbaum describe episodic memory as follows:
"Episodic memory involves the ability to learn, store, and retrieve information about unique personal experiences that occur in daily life."
See: Bradford C Dickerson and Howard Eichenbaum, "The Episodic Memory System: Neurocircuitry and Disorders," *Neuropsychopharmacology* 35, no. 1 (September 23, 2009): 86–104, https://doi.org/10.1038/npp.2009.126.
Ranganath's research points to the complexity of understanding episodic memory. See:
Charan Ranganath, "What Is Episodic Memory and How Do We Use It?," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 26, no. 12 (December 2022): 1059–61, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2022.09.023.
I did not lead the interviews pretending to have the neuroscientific training or expertise to fully understand episodic memory, which continues to be actively studied, but I attempted to experiment with different question styles to encourage different pathways of memory retrieval.

[285] Lenore Layman, "Reticence in Oral History Interviews," in *The Oral History Reader*, by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (New York: Routledge, 2016): 236.

I also wanted quick entry points that would lend themselves to playful and unexpected forms of memory retrieval, and that might sidestep the complications and implications of attempting to capture the full histories of the interviewee's lives. "Some researchers have reported that simply to ask, 'Tell me the story of your life', produced results which were generally disappointing," write oral historians Paul Thompson and Joanna Bornat.[286]

I also conducted the project wary of "the mindless celebration of story and storytelling"[287] that Alexander Freund observes in the commodification of storytelling in neoliberal contexts: narratives which focus on the rise of the individual with no regard for the surrounding sociopolitical contexts. Freund also laments the "nostalgia, hero-worship, nationalism, mythmaking, and self-help mantras such as the belief in positive thinking, self-sufficiency, and self-empowerment" [288] that the frenzy for story has fostered, particularly in North America.The project did not ask interviewees to the recount the most glorious or painful or triumphant moments of their careers. They instead described internal phenomena or seemingly banal types of events — my aunt rehearsing alone in an apartment in Connecticut and observing the way she breathed, my friend Neil laughing internally while dancing onstage, my friend Renee making a dance mistake in a New Jersey auditorium in the early 1990's. While I admire all of the interviewees, the project did not seek to heroize their successes or to present their stories as inspiration.

[286] Paul Thompson and Joanna Bornat, "The Interview," *The Voice of the Past*, Fourth Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017): p. 225.
[287] Alexander Freund, "Under Storytelling's Spell? Oral History in a Neoliberal Age," *The Oral History Review* 42, no. 1 (January 2015), p. 132.
[288] Alexander Freund, "Under Storytelling's Spell? Oral History in a Neoliberal Age," *The Oral History Review* 42, no. 1 (January 2015), p. 97.

The questions were aimed to make the interviewees feel comfortable and to facilitate their retrieval of episodic memory. The types of questions and interview formats could be grouped into four phases:

1) A prototype interview and performance-game project in 2019. This first interview was structured around one question: I asked the interviewee, former circus performer Irina Bozyan, to recall, in as much detail as possible, a single circus performance of her choice.
2) In the nine interviews conducted in the first spring and summer of the pandemic in 2020, I began with open-ended questions to lead the artists interviewed to describe what they remembered thinking, feeling, doing at particular past moments within shows. Questions included:

I'm interested in hearing about a memory you have of moment during performance you were part of in the past. So the first exercise is recounting it in detail – even mundane details – what that comes to mind when you think of that specific moment.

Can you talk me through, action by action, what you remember doing at that moment?

Is there anything you can say about the other people around you then (technicians, other performers, audience members, etc.)?

Can you describe physically the theater (or circus tent, or other venue) you were in?

What do you remember the temperature feeling like?

What do you remember about the feel of the space?

Can you repeat the name of that show?

What year did this happen in? (many interviewees couldn't remember the exact year)

Is there anything else you want to say about that moment or that show? (this question usually led to rich responses)

How was the experience of retelling it for you?

3) In three interviews were conducted in 2021 during a research phase I called "Body of Work," I experimented with an approach in which I asked three performers to recount memories of past performances using questions about the body as entry points to access and discuss different memories, or different angles of memories. The idea to use the body as an entry point to trigger memories in the interviews was another test: How might centering questions on memories of the body affect the interview process? What non-physical stories might emerge through remembering physical sensations? How might performers' memories of their own bodies in past performances – in specific, ephemeral, and past events – in relation to their recognition of their own bodies at the time of the interview influence their sense of temporality? What other themes might arise through an interview process structured around memory, the body, and performance? Could a thematic interview process be a way of responding to my resistance to a life story interview format?

   I also began to develop more game-based questions. Here is an example:

   So we're going to start with a game. The game comes in a few different parts. So you're going to think a memory of a performance you took part in. I suggest the first performance that comes to mind, but you can go with whatever. [Then a brief pause while the interviewee confirms they've chosen one.] *The next part is to think of a body part you remember being aware of during that performance. And when you've picked your body part and memory, let me know.* […] *The next part is to recount in as much detail as possible what you remember was going on in that specific body part during that performance moment. So, what it was doing step by step, how it felt, how different*

aspects of the performing space made it feel, um, anything you remember about that body part during that performance.

This introductory question was followed by contextual follow-up questions. Then we reversed the order from part one, this time first imagining a body part and then remembering a show. The interviewees' responses and the interview dynamic informed following questions (in some cases we repeated variations of the first question to explore other performance memories; other responses led to multiple contextual and thematic follow-up questions. I knew all the three interview participants of this phase quite well, and they were all very forthcoming; this led to expansive responses).

4) The last two interviews, held near the end of 2021, were able to take place in person rather than online. This meant that physical presence, space-sharing (the interviews took place in a café), and body language influenced the dynamic. Silences were easier to hold (although, as oral historian and dance scholar Jeff Friedman points out, "there really are no silences" in a live conversation when we consider the language and communication of the body[289]). By then, I was informed by the previous interview processes, including mistakes I had made in them, and was able to more confidently propose new directions on the spot with more sensory-based, game-based, and thematically riskier follow-up questions. Upon transcribing, I also noticed, probably unsurprisingly, a more natural and relaxed quality in the speakers during these live interviews than during the ones held online.

I noticed that previous interviews were less successful when my questions were too open-

[289] Jeff Friedman, "The Eros of Oral History," Columbia University, published December 19, 2013, YouTube video, 2:25, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vZniu5SVtwA.

ended. While the interviews started similarly as in phase two, follow-up questions were sometimes more specific than in other phases:

Do you remember how it sounded? What comes to mind when you remember the sounds and the noises of the moment you just described?

Do you remember like any particular smells or scents from that particular moment?

Other, new questions, were added on the spot, and assumed greater thematic risks than I'd felt comfortable taking in previous interviews:

I'm wondering if you can recall in detail one of your earliest performing memories? (interviewees deeply connected to this question)

I'm wondering if… If I say the word tenderness, *if there's a memory that comes to mind, of performing: if there's a performing memory that comes to mind thinking about this idea of* tenderness. (This question idea came on the spot. I would have been probably shy to ask this question when I started interviewing, and still find it looks naïve typed in this paper, but it led to one of the most powerful and poignant interview testimonies of the project, a memory about going out dancing with a now-deceased, beloved friend.)

When you think about the feeling of beauty, is there a performing memory that comes to mind? (Similarly, I would not have felt comfortable asking this in earlier interviews, and hadn't anticipated asking it, but it led to strong responses.)

I'm wondering if there's another moment that comes to mind when you were onstage and you felt something shift inside you?

I'm wondering if there's a performing memory that comes to mind that makes you laugh? (This seemingly banal question led to a story involving chairs that was one of the stories

the performers in phase two and the audience members interviewed in phase four who watched the re-performance most latched onto and repeated.)

Putting memories of non-verbal or multimodal performance forms into words involves a shift, or a "conundrum," notes historian Richard Cándida Smith, who has conducted extensive oral history interviews with artists: "[T]here is a conundrum that every interpreter of oral sources in the arts faces sooner or later. Visual and performing artists work in expressive forms and media that resist language. Interviews involve a translation from one level of experience to another […] The need to throw immediate sensual experiences off into words underscores the ambiguous if necessary relation of word, gesture, and object in the consolidation of experience and memory."[290] Arts theorist Adrien Heathfield expresses this difficultly when he writes of a struggle to describe a performance event: "Last night I came upon an event that made me feel the most present, the most connected, the most alive that I have ever felt. I want to tell you the life of this event, but I cannot. Because the I that speaks, that would tell you, was not there," he writes, reflecting the temporal and contextual shifts between the "I" at and after an occurrence. His further comments reflect the challenges of representing, or translating, experiences into words. "Were I ever to speak it, I would shatter and dissolve before you […] And yet the words keep coming, keep coming to approximate that life lived […] I want to spell it out like others try to, to re-present it. But all I can do is cast words in thin air."[291] Similarly, neuroaesthetics scholar G. Gabrielle Starr writes that "[a]esthetic experience is hard to define in part because we don't have words for some of its most powerful expressions."[292] Meanwhile, dance ethnographer Deidre

[290] Richard Cándida Smith, "Introduction: Performing the Archive," in *Art and The Performance of Memory: Sounds and Gestures of Recollection* (London: Routledge, 2002), p.2.
[291] Adrien Heathfield, "Writing of the Event," in *A Performance Cosmology: Testimony from the Future, Evidence of the Past*, ed. Judie Christie, Richard Gough, and Daniel Watt (London: Routledge, 2006), 182.
[292] G. Gabrielle Starr, *Just in Time: Temporality, Aesthetic Experience, and Cognitive Neuroscience* (MIT Press, 2023), xvii.

Sklar, who has integrated sociological and neurolingual theories in her analysis of embodied cultural memory and dance, reminds us that the "'representational system,' the words used to describe experience or information, is conscious, while the 'accessing system' people use to retrieve it, is not."[293] Sklar concludes: "To translate somatic knowledge into words demands a revised relationship with language." [294]

If broad questions of translation and translatability were at play in this exercise, the "haunting of untranslatability" [295] was always close. Recognizing, rather than masking, the inevitable differences between the original experiences of the interviewees and their retellings by others was at the heart of this project.

Lost (and found) in transcription

I transcribed the 27 project interviews in full (the 16 performance memory interviews in phase one and the 11 post-event spectator memory interviews in phase four). If the majority of the interviews were a heightened and charged few hours, the process of developing their transcriptions was insightful and informative, but nonetheless long and drawn out. "The speed of a conversation vs. the speed of documenting a conversation," reads a fragmented note to myself, written while developing a transcription.

Choreographer and oral historian Jeff Freidman writes that "complex messages of orality resist print documentation," [296] just as historian Linda Shopes considers that "turning an interview into a publication is, at best, an act of translation." In transferring a verbal conversation to written

[293] Deidre Sklar, "Qualities of Memory: Two Dances of the Tortugas Fiesta, New Mexico," in *Dancing from Past to Present: Nation, Culture, Identities*, ed. Theresa Buckland (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 116-117.
[294] Deidre Sklar, "'All the Dances Have a Meaning to That Apparition': Felt Knowledge and the Danzantes of Tortugas, New Mexico," *Dance Research Journal* 31, no. 2 (1999): pp. 14-33, 28
[295] Theo Hermans, "Untranslatability, Entanglement and Understanding," in *Untranslatability*, Duncan Large et al., ed. (Routledge, 2018), p. 34.
[296]Jeff Friedman, "Muscle Memory: Performing Embodied Knowledge," in *Art and The Performance of Memory: Sounds and Gestures of Recollection*, ed. Richard Cándida Smith (London: Routledge, 2002), p.177.

form, writes Shopes, "We lose not only the nuances of voice – the meanings conveyed by tone, cadence, velocity, and volume and the significance of nonverbal utterances like sighs, laughter, and groans; but also the social relationship constituting an oral exchange, the interactive negotiation between speaker and listener, the rapport that may juice the conversation, and the mental process that occurs when two people encounter each other."[297]

Transcribing the interviews raised some questions similar to translation: How (and whether) to preserve grammatical mistakes, pauses, unfinished sentences?

One interviewee used frequent onomatopoeias in her speaking style:

> So just going up the ladder, I remember my heart beating […] And for some reason, I wanted to climb up the ladder as quick as I can, like, *huh huh huh!* And I remember that feeling of like *ahhh* and it was like *huhahuhahu,* you know, like going out of breath.
> […]
> I also remember even the trapeze had a sound like the wind on my body. Even the catchers you know you had the [*claps*], like, *ahh*! […] I remember the sound when they caught. In my ears, it seems like it's like a bit silent, and then you can hear their exhale when they get it! I can visualize Patrice Wojciechowski. His feet were extremely pointed like these beautiful ballet feet. It was like, *ahhhhhh*! The breath! And the points! I was … mesmerized. I was really like *waahhhhhhhh*![298]

Another interviewee frequently punctuated her speak with *like*:

> Like I knew we were different. We didn't have animals. My mom made the costumes, and she would like make hippie versions of traditional circus costumes. Like, we did have sparkles and stuff, but we didn't have the like, fishnets and the rhinestones and the heavy makeup.[299]

In the studio, in phase two of the project, as other artists were working with these excerpts and reinterpreting them, one artist, specifically referencing the "likes" and "ums" and onomatopoeias, reported that he felt that the speaking styles gave him a better sense of the voice

[297] Linda Shopes, "Editing Oral History for Publication," in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (Routledge, 2015), p.471.
[298] Jinny Jacinto. Interview with the researcher, April 10, 2020.
[299] Gypsy Snider. Interview with the researcher, March 17, 2020.

and the personality of the person behind the memory he was reading. Another artist described how, when faced with what aspects of a memory to translate or reinterpret, she focused on the "spirit" she sensed of the person speaking, reporting that the documented speech patterns helped give her related clues.

One interviewee, who was not speaking in his first language, requested that I correct any syntax errors when transcribing or sharing his responses. In the case of all interviews except his, I tried to preserve the way interviewees spoke as accurately as possible, attempting to indicate pauses, laughter, interruptions, and so on. No software was able to catch these sounds, and the autocorrect on my version of Word repeatedly tried to edit many verbatim speech patterns and turn non-word sounds into words (I signed up for five transcription software services, none of which were useful and all of which far took more time to correct than it ended up taking to re-transcribe).

Oral history "transcripts are generally replete with false starts, verbal crutches, non sequiturs, incomplete sentences, poorly transitioned leaps from topic to topic, and other forms of expression that are perfectly acceptable – and intelligible – in informal speech but generally not in writing and publication," writes Linda Shopes.[300] Shopes "urge[s] reproducing in written form all that is said in the interview, including false starts, repetitions, incorrect grammar, awkward or nonsensical word order, malapropisms, local idioms, profanity, incomplete sentences, and other variants of speech, as well as non-words such as *um, hmm,* or *whew.*"[301] In this way, the transcription might reflect the speaking style of the speaker and might leave hints about the dynamic of the interview.

[300] Linda Shopes, "Editing Oral History for Publication," in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (Routledge, 2015), p.472.
[301] Linda Shopes, "Editing Oral History for Publication," in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (Routledge, 2015), p.472.

Similar concerns are of issue for translation theorists: "Perhaps translation should entangle itself in the snares of the idiomatic and the idiolectic," writes Brian O'Keeffe (referring to Jacques Lezra's arguments in *Untranslating Machine*s), as a way to "resist […] hegemonic forces that erase differences of all sorts, including the difference of particular idioms."[302]

It is the "weights and heterodoxies, leakages" with which people speak that lead Erín Moure to reflect on translation as experiment: "Words and syntactic structures in a given tongue are always already imbued with weights and heterodoxies, leakages. In other words, perhaps: experiment is always translation, and translation is always experiment." [303]

Historians Kathryn Anderson and Dana C. Jack describe their "dismay and disappointment" when coming across "interviews housed in archives and historical societies" and finding "most of them lacked detailed discussions of the web of feelings, attitudes, and values that give meaning to activities and events [...] Some of us found discrepancies between our memories of interviews and the transcripts because the meaning we remembered hearing had been expressed through intense vocal quality and body language, not through words alone."[304]

I had not anticipated the transcription process would be emotionally charged. If the interviewing process was one of the most joyous parts of this project (my notebook is full of quick post-interview entries like: "Interview with x. Wonderful feeling!"), the transcription process brought up another set of emotions (the same notebook contains entries like: "Transcribing x's interview

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[302] Brian O'Keeffe, "Untranslating Machines: A Genealogy for the Ends of Global Thought by Jacques Lezra (review)," *The Comparatist*, Volume 44, October 2020, pp. 332-353 (Review), University of North Carolina Press, p. 333.

[303] Erín Moure, "Elisa Sampedrín and the Paradox of Translation, or The Intranslatable," (Leslie Scalapino Memorial Lecture in Innovative Poetics. Lecture at Naropa University, Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics, Boulder, CO, July 2021, text available via chapbook from Zat-So Productions [Montréal]: https://erinmoure.mystrikingly.com/), p. 23

[304] Kathryn Anderson and Dana C. Jack, "Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses," reprinted in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (Routledge, 2015), p.180, previously published in Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History, eds. Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai (Routledge, 1991).

and feeling down all evening"). Later, the series of notes to myself moves to frustration at my own errors as an interviewer — so acutely apparent when transcribing or documenting a recording and listening to it over and over — with reactions like, "I can't stand the sound of my own laughter!" The notes also contain references to people and events mentioned by the interviewees — parts of their lives that I'd felt compelled to research after our talks. There is a link, for example, to the obituary of a mentor who had been described by interviewee Renee Benson in detail: a high school theater teacher named Vincent Borelli,[305] the mentor Renee had mentioned, who I found myself grieving, despite only having met him vicariously, through Renee — a memorable moment in the research process that, for obvious reasons, was omitted in what was shared with the public.

2. Performance research and (re-)creation experiments

Performance research sessions, involving a group of nine artists working off/with/in relation to excerpts of the performance memories interview series, could be broken down as follows:
-A test in 2019, working with one interviewee and creating a performative participatory game with her memory (this experiment influenced the formal After-shows research sessions)
-The first formal *After-shows* performance research sessions, held online in August 2020, with three participating performers. Working with available funds and artist availability, we conducted the research sessions throughout four days: three two-hour sessions and one-hour session, before presenting the work to a small online audience, followed by an hour-long discussion. This followed a pattern that continued throughout the project of very long preparation periods on my end coupled with extremely short working periods with participating performers.

[305] Kevin Cieri, "My Friend Vinnie," Long Branch-Eatontown, NJ Patch, July 16, 2012, https://patch.com/new-jersey/longbranch/bp--my-friend-vinnie

-In 2022, through a residency at the Cœur des sciences at the Université du Québec à Montréal through the interuniversity network Hexagram. The stop and start nature of the scheduling can be understood through a short table:

2022 Schedule breakdown: Coeur des sciences - salle d'expérimentation : January 17-20: Anna alone in space, planning January 21: performance research with Gisle Henriet, Sabine Jean, Nadine Louis, Catherine Tardif Coeur des sciences - Agora: January 24: performance research with Hoor Malas, Juulie Rousseau, Gisle Henriet, Nadine Louis January 25: Bloc 1 : Catherine Tardif, Hoor Malas, Juulie Rousseau, Gisle Henriet Bloc 2 : Sabine Jean, Juulie Rousseau, Nadine Louis January 26 : Bloc 1 : Catherine Tardif, Hoor Malas, Juulie Rousseau, Gisle Henriet Bloc 2: Sabine Jean, Juulie Rousseau, Nadine Louis January 27 : Catherine Tardif, Sabine Jean, Hoor Malas, Juulie Rousseau, Gisle Henriet, Nadine Louis. Also January 27: Performance research with three invited audience members. (End of residency public event postponed to April due to COVID) April 8: research with Gisle Henriet, Sabine Jean, Nadine Louis, Hoor Malas, Momo, Juulie Rousseau, Neil Sochasky April 9 and 10: research session and public event canceled due to COVID within team. Event rescheduled to July. July 25: performance research with Sabine Jean, Nadine Louis, Hoor Malas, Mohamed Magri, Neil Sochasky, Catherine Tardif July 26: performance research with Gisle Henriet, Sabine Jean, Nadine Louis, Hoor Malas, Mohamed Magri, Neil Sochasky, Catherine Tardif July 27: review with Gisle Henriet, Sabine Jean, Nadine Louis, Hoor Malas, Mohamed Magri, Neil Sochasky, Catherine Tardif, followed by public event

A full table of all research sessions is in Appendix C.

Participants

Participating artists worked under the title of “research participants.” Their participation guidelines were outlined in advance and approved by Concordia’s ethics committee. They were

compensated hourly as per standard local rates for professional rehearsals. (I was able to offer this by dividing the flat fees I had through event grants into the number of artists and working hours.)

I chose to work with multiple performers because I wanted to emphasize and experiment with polyvocality, simultaneous actions, multiple interpretations, and the decentering of one specific performer/scene.

After some debate and a brief consideration of posting an open call, I choose to work with professional performers because they brought their own performing memories to the project and because they had similar levels of commitment to and experience with their art forms as the artists interviewed in phase 1, whose memories they were reinterpreting. The performer's body, writes Herbert Blau is a "haunted referent: the resistless remembrance of the surpassing body, the body that is past, bringing its laden knowledge to performance."[306] Working with artists for whom such "haunting" included many, unspoken past performances was an important element in the research. I also wanted to work with performers comfortable with ambiguity and improvisation.

Reperforming experiments: Exercise samples

The series of performance research sessions drew on translation-based questions to explore ways of reinterpreting and re-performing memories of performances. Proposing a polyphonic approach in which multiple artists interpreted and reinterpreted fragments of histories seemed one way to acknowledge the impossibility of truly representing all aspects of someone's story, grappling with the inherent untranslatables and working with Barbara Cassin's recognition that "every

[306] Herbert Blau, "Rhetorics of the Body: Do You Smell a Fault?" in *Cultural Artifacts and the Production of Meaning: The Page, the Image, and the Body*, ed. Margaret J. M. Ezell & Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994) p.224.

translation – as any translator knows – engages you with more than one possibility"[307] (echoing philosopher Willard Van Orman Quine's principle of the indeterminacy of translation[308]).

Exercise examples:

1.
-Performer A reads an excerpt of an unknown performer's memory
-Performer A paraphrases the memory (in language of choice and style of choice, ex: recounting in the first or third person) to performer B
-Performer B "performs" performer A's account to group
-Performers C and D reperform what they remember seeing performer B perform

2.
-Performer A reads an excerpt of unknown performer's memory (printed excerpt of interview)
-Performer A directs or tells performer B how to perform that memory (or an aspect of it)
-Performer B performs the memory to the group
-The group (except performers A and B) repeat what they remember seeing performer B perform

The sessions also involved frequent, often recorded discussions with the performers. Questions included:

-whether they considered what we were doing translation

-what they were choosing to transmit (the feeling of the memory, the feeling they grasped of the person behind it, the actions described, the scenes involving the speaker, the scenes involving other people, the rhythm, etc.). Some participating artists reported attempting to work with the "essence" of the memories; others spoke about the personality or "spirit" they sensed of the speaker; others — in light of the fact that improvisations were done in immediate response to information, or often involved memories of other improvisations from the previous days — responded, honestly, that they were working with the aspects that they remembered.

[307] Barbara Cassin, "The Energy of the Untranslatables: Translation as a Paradigm for the Human Sciences," trans. Michael Syrotinski, *Paragraph* 38, no. 2 (2015), 155.
[308] As Anthony Pym paraphrases: "In a […] formulation of [his] indeterminacy principle (1969), Quine claims that different translators will produce different translations."
Pym notes that Quine's theory struck some as obvious (Noam Chomsky, Pym reports, called the theory "true and uninteresting").
See: Anthony Pym, "Uncertainty," in *Exploring Translation Theories* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2023), p. 89-90.
See also: W. V. Quine, *Ontological Relativity, and Other Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969).

-had they chosen to retell the exercise in the first, second, or third person? Did they use the present or past tense in their retelling?

-the ethics of appropriating someone else's memory

-how notions of absence and incompletion were felt within the process

-their view of the position of the audience in this project

Reperforming structure

I applied fragmentation, assemblage,[309] and polyphonic interpretation both as concepts and as structuring (or, arguably, antistructuring) tools. "If we see memory as an assemblage, we see it as creative, pluralistic (polyphonic), and inclusive," writes Katarzyna Niziołek.[310]

The project's questioning of repetition and repeatability gave way to a structure based on improvisation, in which the performers drew not only on the fragments of memories they improvised with, but also on recently formed memories of the previous research sessions' improvisations.

<u>Sequencing/structuring outline:</u>

[309] Assemblage is defined by anthropologists George E. Marcus and Erkan Saka as "a sort of antistructural concept that permits the researcher to speak of emergence, heterogeneity, the decentred and the ephemeral in nonetheless ordered social life."
George E. Marcus and Erkan Saka, "Assemblage," Theory, Culture &Amp; Society 23, no. 2-3 (2006): p. 101.
Marcus and Saka point to the influence of Deleuze and Guattari who, in an often-cited passage, describe assemblage extraordinarily broadly: "We will call an assemblage every constellation of singularities and traits deducted from the flow—selected, organized, stratified—in such a way as to converge (consistency) artificially and naturally; an assemblage, in this sense, is a veritable invention."
Viewed from these positions, assemblage is as much a way to look at cultural or social phenomenon as it is a technique or option of artistic structuring, which Marcus and Saka compare to collage.
Gilles Deleuze and Guattari Félix, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 406.
Both assemblage as a concept and assemblage as an artistic structuring tool felt appropriate to the *After-shows* creative situation, namely because as a group we did not have a singular message or style.

[310] Katarzyna Niziołek, "Assemblage of Memory: On the Structure, Process and Creativity in Collective Memory," *Creativity Studies* 14, no. 1 (June 23, 2021): 305.

Before presenting on July 27th, the seven participating performers wrote names to the scenes or histories or memories they had worked with in previous days on post-its. Then we placed the post-its to form seven simultaneous performer charts or maps, placed in a game-based series of steps: placing a post-it in their own map, placing a post it on another artist's map. In this way, artists were placed into frequent negotiations when scenes were reperformed that had initially been performed in duo or in a group: they could perform these alone, perform these with the other performers doing something else, or potentially repeat the group scene if the other performer(s) changed course and joined in.

The seven maps filled the door to the Agora's equipment closet, and were still hanging there when I went to collect our materials several days after the presentation and the end of the residency:

Figure 3

Performer maps, still on tech closet door when I went to take down equipment the day after the event. Photo: July 28, 2024, taken from my phone.

Spatial organization

The Chaufferie space served as a point of entry into the research for spectators, with the performers divided between the spaces, inviting, I hoped, a meandering movement among spectators connected to the digressions of the recounted memories and their reinterpretations — although, as I learned during the spectator memory interviews in research phase four, audience members reported dramatically different experiences of this spatial orientation choice (described in Chapter 5).

The Agora hall was divided into three loose circles of chairs, a set-up (I hoped) to highlight gaps within scenes and to offer simultaneous narratives, like a three-ring circus: a coexistence of shifting, incomplete histories, seen entirely differently (or not at all) depending on the angle. "When we entered, there was this sensation that many things were happening at once," observed spectator Paloma Leyton.[311] A similar feeling was noted by spectator Diego Lopez: "When we went to the second room, the images began to multiply. You had to constantly choose what to see, what to follow, where to put your attention. Maybe you would see a different performance depending on the place where you choose to be."[312] This three-ring disarray of simultaneous and incomplete histories, seen entirely differently (or not at all) depending on the angle is how I often felt about my material.

I hoped the reinterpreted moments might form stream of fragmented, simultaneous scenes, like a three-ring circus with multiple, syncopated stories that brighten and fade at irregular beats.

[311] Paloma Leyton. Interview with the researcher. November 17, 2022. Translated from the French.
[312] Diego Lopez. Interview with the researcher. December 2, 2022.

Figure 4

After-shows research showing, July 27th, 2022, photo by Antonia Gueorguieva

3. Public event

A research-sharing event was held July 27, 2022 at the Coeur des sciences (at the Université du Québec à Montréal) following the residency with Hexagram.

Focusing on putting together "an event rather than an object" [313] (albeit an event that led to the object of this paper) allowed me:

- To envelop this phase of the project in a container of time.

[313] Gay McAuley, *Space in Performance: Making Meaning in the Theatre* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2000).
As cited in: Dorita Hannah, *Event-Space: Theatre Architecture and the Historical Avant-Garde* (London: Routledge, 2018).

- To include the presence and responses of spectators in the research process. Audience members were considered participants, and those who took part the recorded online discussion in 2020 and in the post-July 2022 event interviews (described in the next section) signed formal consent forms.

- To bring further into play and into light the heightened shifting of meanings generated through a gathering of people and a time-contained activity ("Being an event rather than an object, performance is radically unstable in the meanings it generates and in the activities it engages," writes Gay McAuley,[314] echoed by Erika Fischer-Lichte: "Given that performances arise out of the encounter of different groups of people who negotiate and regulate their relationship in different ways, performances cannot transmit given meanings. Instead, they themselves bring forth the meanings that come into being over their course. […] While the organizers or directors may have intended for it to be so, the actual performance emerges out of the encounter between performers and spectators, with unforeseen reactions and responses constantly changing the planned course."[315])

I called the event an "open research-creation session" or "soirée de recherche-création avec public" instead of "presentation" in part to clearly convey to audience members and to participating artists that they were taking part in a group experiment or an exchange, rather than a polished performance. The prototype online event was named an "Open research session and discussion" or "Session de recherche et d'échange."

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[314] Gay McAuley, *Space in Performance: Making Meaning in the Theatre* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2000).
As cited in: Dorita Hannah, *Event-Space: Theatre Architecture and the Historical Avant-Garde* (London: Routledge, 2018).

[315] Erika Fischer-Lichte, "Interweaving Cultures in Performance: Different States of Being In-Between." *New Theatre Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (2009), pp. 391-392

This process was marked by sharing artistic research very early in the process, compared to most professional contexts. The performers and I had only worked together for four days online in 2020; 4 days in January 2022 (with participating performers present on different days), 1 day in April 2022 (before the COVID hit 2 members of the team, including me), and 3 days (including the day of the presentation) in July 2022.

Presenting publicly so early in a performance creation process is unusual, and put the participating performers and myself in a vulnerable position of presenting early work. To address the delicate issue of opening up the research process to spectators after very few working sessions, I called all of the participating performers individually and described my dilemma: sensing the time container of an "event" and the input and presence of audience members were important for the research; aware that the performers were in a vulnerable position being observed by an audience after little studio time. While one performer expressed concern that "everyone would get all stressed," he and the other performers accepted the opening the process to an audience.

Event structure and discussion

The event was constructed around a structured improvisation with the performers followed by a game-based discussion with audience members and participating artists.

The exercises in the game-based discussion were designed around retelling others' immediate memory of the event:

1) In groups of two, participants recounted to one person one thing they remembered during the evening, and then reserved roles.
2) In a circle, participants described the memory recounted by the other person.

Structuring the discussion in a game format was important so as to spend the time together with the audience members and performers on furthering the research rather than on defending or explaining a work — a work whose shortcomings I felt well aware of and that didn't feel done yet, even in light of the "never being doneness" associated with "energy of the untranslatables"[316] or with the "poetics and politics of un/translatability."[317]

Figures 5 and 6

After-shows research showing, July 27th, 2022, photos by Antonia Gueorguieva

[316] Barbara Cassin, "The Energy of the Untranslatables: Translation as a Paradigm for the Human Sciences," trans. Michael Syrotinsk9, *Paragraph* 38, no. 2 (July 2015): 145–58.
[317]Carol L. Yang, "The Poetics and Politics of Un/Translatability in Timberlake Wertenbaker's New Anatomies," in *Ethical Exchanges in Translation, Adaptation and Dramaturgy*, ed. Stuart Young, Andrea Pelegri Kristić, and Emer O'Toole (Leiden: The Netherlands: Brill, 2017).

4. Post-event spectator memory interviews

Eleven spectators participated in interviews about their recollections of the July 27th evening. The interviews were conducted between four and ten months after the July event so as to give temporal distance. Interviewees signed up to participate via a sign-up sheet passed around during the July 27th discussion at the end of the evening.

"Scholars, historians, and other thoughtful cultural critics face the continuing problem of how to capture and archive spectators' responses to performance," writes theater theorist Jill Dolan.[318] While they were focused on general reception, rather than memory, of audience members, I found strong interviewing examples through *Memoryscape Audio Walks* creator Toby Butler's thoughtful research on listeners' responses ("what happens to listeners") to two memoryscape projects, conducted through questionnaires and postwalk interviews,[319] and through cultural anthropology and public history scholar Cathy Stanton's research on art goers' responses to a 2003 exhibit at Mass Moca.[320] Both Butler and Stanton revealed gaps between artist and institutional intent and spectator perception. I drew inspiration from their focus on cultural reception via interviewing attendees, but focused my interviews on the memory of the performance as an event – with emphasis on the way audience members remembered space, their arrival, their departure, the other people there – rather than on their perceptions of the quality or meaning of the work (memory and meaning are of course connected, but the interviews attempted to inquire about meanings they might ascribe to their experience at the event —

[318] Jill Dolan, *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 9.
[319] Toby Butler, "The Historical Hearing Aid: Located Oral History from the Listener's Perspective," *Place, Writing, and Voice in Oral History*, 2011, p. 194.
[320] Cathy Stanton, "Outside the Frame: Assessing Partnerships between Arts and Historical Organizations," *The Public Historian* 27, no. 1 (2005): 30.

remarks about what their opinion or take on the project made their way into some of their answers, but were not the focus of this research stage).

Interviews took place online and in person, in French and in English. One interviewee completed a written questionnaire in lieu of an oral interview, as per his request. The parameters and objectives of the interviews were described beforehand to interviewees verbally and in writing, via a consent form. Interviewees had the choice to remain anonymous, to stop the interview at any time, to skip or come back to questions as they liked, or to request that all or part of their responses be retracted from the project. All interviewees agreed to have the interviews recorded, to allow the full records to be kept, and to have their names used publicly.
The interviews were considerably shorter than the more open-ended performance memory interviews in phase one of the project, as here, they were contained to a specific event.

To be clear, this type of research also carried an incompleteness: one can presume the spectators had memories they choose not to share, perhaps out of courtesy (not wanting to offend me, perhaps, by sharing memories connected to feelings of disliking parts of the presentation, for example), out of a sense of personal privacy (intimate thoughts, feelings, or events connected to the evening that they preferred not to share), or details that were simply forgotten or were omitted for lack of time and other factors. Not all spectators stayed for the discussion, during which the post-event interview process was explained, and not all those who did signed up for an interview.

Post-event spectator interview questions

The questions were designed to encourage interviewees to describe their memory of the evening.

While opinions of the project inevitably made their way into the conversation, and I did not prevent these comments, I kept all follow-up questions focused on memory of their experience event.

Questions included:

When you remember the evening of July 27th, what images come to your mind?

Are there any specific movements or actions by any of the performers that you remember from that evening?

What do you remember hearing (this could mean noises, music, silences, other people chatting in the audience, etc.)?

What do you remember about the space? How do you remember feeling in the space?

What other physical sensations you remember feeling during the evening?

What do you remember about the light in the space (or around it) that evening?

Are there any colors you remember as being predominant that evening?

What do you remember about the other audience members that evening?

Are there any specific scenes or stories you remember from the presentation?

What do you remember about arriving to the space that evening?

What do you remember about leaving the space that evening?

Is there anything else you remember feeling or thinking during the evening that you would be comfortable sharing?

Is there anything else you'd like to say about your recollections of that evening?

Even during the event itself, the audience space might already be viewed a repository of memories. Theater theorist Marvin Carlson argues that all cultural reception "is deeply involved with memory, because it is memory that supplies the codes and strategies that shape reception,

and, as cultural and social memories change, so do the parameters within which reception operates."[321] For Herbert Blau as well, the audience is "a memory space, the redoubled extension of remembrance on the stage, which is, however, the repetition of a memory that is always failing."[322]

Collecting and documenting audience members' recounted memories of the event (to which they indeed already brought other memories), four to ten months after it happened, resulted in a collaged reconstruction of the event — almost, but not quite, a translation.

The research processes gave way to multiple questions and findings, but the following chapter focuses on the most prevailing themes that emerged: reconstructions of performance memories; experiments in repetition; and questions of voice.

[321] Marvin A. Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011), p. 5.
[322] Herbert Blau, *The Audience* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 296.

Chapter 4 - "Souvenir du souvenir du souvenir":

Emerging points of discussion

You can never live the same party twice & that makes me want to cry.
-Tayi Tibble
From the poem, "Creation Story"[323]

"Tsé, c'est comme le souvenir du souvenir du souvenir," summarised one spectator, reflecting on *After-shows* four months after attending the research showing. "Là, on est dans des souvenirs, des gens qui interprétaient des souvenirs, des spectateurs qui voient des gens qui interprétaient le souvenir de quelqu'un d'autre."[324] This chapter discusses some of the questions and themes raised through this research-creation project's attempt to create, create from, and research *a memory of a memory of a memory*, namely: ways in which notions of untranslatability interplayed throughout this research-creation with a) reconstructions of performance memories; b) experiments in repetition; and c) questions of voice.

Reconstructed performance memories

The post-event interviews with spectators invoke Derrida's notion that the translation becomes the new original[325] in the sense that, unaware of the starting materials, the spectators engaged with what was presented to them. While three attendees were performers who had also been

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[323] Tayi Tibble, "Creation Story," published in *The New Yorker*, July 10, 2023: 38-39.

[324] "Y'know, it's like a memory of a memory of a memory. Here, we're looking at memories, people interpreting memories, spectators seeing people interpreting someone else's memory."
Françoise Boudreault, Interview with the researcher. November 29, 2022.
Françoise unwittingly invoked a variation of the title of Maria Stepanova's wonderful *In Memory of Memory.* See: Maria Stepanova, *In Memory of Memory*. Translated by Sasha Dugdale. (New York: New Directions, 2021.)

[325] Jacques Derrida, "Des Tours de Babel," trans. Joseph F. Graham, in *Difference in Translation*, ed. Joseph F. Graham (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 165-207.
Also see: Susan Bassnett, "When Is a Translation Not a Translation? ," in *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation*, ed. Lefevere André and Susan Bassnett (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1998), p. 32.
Bassnett writes: "[…] Derrida suggests that effectively the translation *becomes* the original [..]. This view is entirely credible if we think of the terms in which most readers approach a translated text."

interviewed in phase 1 of the project (performance memory interviews) and were aware of some of the principles of the project, most spectators simply showed up for an evening, and described perceptions that were strikingly different from the source material.

One spectator, interviewed five months after the event in July, connected the content of the presentation to the cityscape of Montréal, which seemed especially present on his mind due to his recent move to the city:

> I don't remember if before the play I read the explanation about your exploration. I think I didn't read it. But when I was seeing these performers doing multiple things, I was thinking about this city, Montréal. Well, this city, it's new for me, it's giving me many experiences, new information. That was my big image, a city with multiple characters, with multiple experiences, sensations… people living there, with particular feelings.[326]

Another spectator who attended a private work-in-progress showing in January 2022 (lockdown measures prevented us from a large, public audience during that residency phase) constructed, from what she saw, a character-driven story (something that never factored consciously in the research with the performers or in the structuring of the work), and gave a detailed description during the post-improvisation discussion of the "journey" of each of the "characters."[327] The participating performers and I were as delighted by her animated account as we were stunned by it.

Certain interviewees remembered actions and specific details that hadn't taken place: One person spoke about microphones (there were none), another about seeing me with a paper and pen (I wasn't holding either), another remembered "many performers wearing masks" (only one of the seven performers wore one). Neuroscientist Lisa Genova emphasizes that most people forget

[326] Diego López, Interview with the researcher. December 2, 2022.
[327] Danielle Garrison, In discussion with the researcher and collaborating performers, January 27, 2022.

most of what they experience.[328] Episodic memory is "biased and distorted,"[329] shaded by emotion and our sense of what is meaningful. "A healthy brain quickly forgets most of what passes into conscious awareness," summarizes David Kortava.[330]

Memory expert and neuroscientist Charan Ranganath echoes Genova in confirming that inflecting meaning is part of the human memory process — "we infuse meaning into what we remember," he writes.[331] As such, accounts of spectators' memories provide remarkable dramaturgical information as to the potential meanings spectators ascribe to a work, across spans of time.

Considering expressions of meaning-driven memories of performance spectators invites consideration of transmissions of meaning in performance as a whole. That full topic exceeds the scope of this thesis, but this project did change my initial views. I went into this research-creation interested in the triangular model Amelia Jones describes as "a general *reciprocity* among maker, work, and interpreter"[332] (italics are the initial author's), which she links to Merleau-Ponty's "The Intertwining, The Chiasm."[333] This model links to Charles Sanders Peirce's classic semiotic triad: "an action, an influence, which is, or involves, a cooperation of

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[328] Lisa Genova, *Remember: The Science of Memory and the Art of Forgetting* (New York, NY: Penguin Random House, 2021).
[329] Davis Shenk. *After Words: Interview with Lisa Genova*. C-Span, March 22, 2021. https://www.c-span.org/video/?509756-1/after-words-lisa-genova.
[330] David Kortava, review of *Remember: The Science of Memory and the Art of Forgetting*, by Lisa Genova, *New Yorker*, (March 30, 2021), https://www.newyorker.com/recommends/read/a-neuroscientists-poignant-study-of-how-we-forget-most-things-in-life.
[331] Charan Ranganath, "A Leading Memory Researcher Explains How to Make Precious Moments Last," interview with Charan Ranganath and David Marchese. *The New York Times*, February 4, 2024, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/02/04/magazine/charan-ranganath-interview.html?searchResultPosition=2.
[332] Amelia Jones, "The Now and the Has Been: Paradoxes of Live Art in History," in *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History*, ed. Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield (Bristol: Intellect Books Ltd, 2014), 13.
[333] Amelia Jones, "The Now and the Has Been: Paradoxes of Live Art in History," in *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History*, ed. Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield (Bristol: Intellect Books Ltd, 2014), 20.
See also: Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, ed. Claude Lefort, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1968).

three subjects, such as a sign, its object and its interpretant, this tri-relative influence not being in any way resolvable into pairs."[334]

I also entered the project suspicious of art theorist Janneke Wessling's description of a seemingly two-way "exchange between a spectator and an art work" that constitutes "the experiences of an art work,"[335] similar to my mistrust of the metaphor of two-way traffic David Johnson employs to describe translation. ("Translation, and especially translation for the theatre, is a process that […] engineers two-way movement – a traffic between the narratives, concepts and structures of life embodied in foreign texts, and the affective and cognitive environment of the spectator," writes Johnson.[336]) I was certain a triangular model was more representative of the formation of meaning through performance than "two-way movement."

But the perceived meanings suggested by spectators in the post-presentation memory interviews suggest less of a triangular and more of a rhizomatic model,[337] and I find a web-like, multilane roundabout, or a city of winding, intersecting roads more accurate metaphors for the way information and potential meanings seemed to move, interact, and (re-)form in this project. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the meanings ascribed to the July 27th event, as reported through the spectator memory interviews, seem entangled with endless internal and external factors: previous memories of the building and the neighborhood it took place in, previous memories with the

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[334] Charles Sanders Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Pierce* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard Unversity Press, 1931).
As cited by: Anthony Pym, "Uncertainty," in *Exploring Translation Theories* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2023), p. 105.

[335] Janneke Wesseling, *The Perfect Spectator: The Experience of the Art Work and Reception Aesthetics* (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2017), p. 7.

[336] David Johnson, "Metaphor and Metonymy: The Translator-Practitioner's Visibility," in *Staging and Performing Translation: Text and Theatre Practice*, ed. Roger W. Baines, Manuela Perteghella, and Cristina Marinetti (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 18.

[337] "The rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even nonsign states."
Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), p. 7.

people they attended with or saw there, previous associations with the performers, the way spectators were feeling that day, the temperature outside, the way the musician and the photographer looked (mentioned by several interviewees), the "choreography" of the cameraman who was documenting the evening and moving throughout the space (recounted by one spectator as the one of the strongest images that remained with him). One spectator reported that the evening was one of her first dates with her partner, and that she spent much of the evening wondering about his experience. For that matter, the people they were attending the performance with factored frequently into spectators' recollections of the event:

> J'étais avec Maxime. Ok, bon, une sortie avec Maxime, c'est quand même… c'est rare pour moi, puis j'aime ben ça, je l'aime beaucoup, c'est quelqu'un qui vient de la même région que moi, tout ça, bon.[338]

> J'étais venue à deux, tsé, avec Françoise, donc c'était comme ma spectatrice partenaire tsé, si on veut.[339]

> Maxime, je l'aime beaucoup, c'est quelqu'un avec qui on s'ennuie pas. Elle est brillante, elle est allumée, elle a plein d'appétit pour plein d'affaires, puis c'est ça, on a beaucoup de points communs, d'intérêts communs. C'est sur que bon, l'avant puis l'après de ce show-là pour moi sont reliés à Maxime évidemment. [340]

Spectators frequently recalled the way they felt upon arriving:

> Je me rappelle que j'étais hyper fatigué cette soirée-là, c'est pour ça en fait qu'on est arrivé en retard.[341]

> We had biked there, and I was coming from something else and was kind of hasty arriving, which kind of set the tone for how I felt.[342]

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[338] "I was with Maxime. Okay, well, an outing with Maxime is, well... it's a rare thing for me, and I like her, I like her a lot, she's from the same region as me and all that."
Françoise Boudreault, Interview with the researcher. November 29, 2022.
[339] "Françoise and I came together, so she was like my spectator partner, you know."
Maxime D.-Pomerleau, Interview with the researcher. December 5, 2022
[340] Loose translation: "Maxime, I like her a lot, she's someone you never get bored with. She's brilliant, she's bright, she's got an appetite for lots of things, and you know, we have a lot in common, a lot of common interests. Of course, for me, the before and after of this show are obviously linked to Maxime."
Françoise Boudreault, Interview with the researcher. November 29, 2022.
[341] "I remember I was really tired that evening. That's why we arrived late."
Paloma Leyton, Interview with the researcher. November 17, 2022.
[342] Naila Kuhlmann, Interview with the researcher. May 14, 2023.

In other cases, spectators remembered having drawn on repeating images to form conclusions of about the work:

> Je me rappelle de certaines histoires, avec la robe rouge qui revenait constamment… […] La robe rouge, elle est restée… Je pense que c'était le grand fil, la trame en fait. [343]

In reality, the story of the red dress was one of many, although the spectator's sense that the participating performers had particularly latched onto that story was true. The initial memory had been recounted very viscerally and with great warmth, which may have helped performers connect to it. The interviewee had also described powerful shifts she had felt during that recounted experience. Its reinterpretations were also remembered by other spectators:

> I remember the dress. And the dress… it was the story the performer was relaying about a woman who was going to perform in a specific dress, and having that dress. And I remember being quite interested in how a story was being told through a different body.[344]

Previous memories with the participating performers featured in several interviewed spectators accounts. Their comments suggest that these previous associations influenced what they were thinking about while watching the showing:

> J'étais comme, *ah, c'est Sabine* ! *Trop cool* ![345]

> Gisle, bon, que je le trouve excellent en tout, OK, je veux dire, qu'est-ce que tu veux, il est comme ça. Mais je me disais, il est *hot* de faire ça ! Parce que c'est quand même pas un projet comme d'autres affaires qu'il fait là. Tsé, c'est pas du *cirque cirque* ! Tsé, c'est une expérience, c'est une forme de représentation qui est pas habituelle, qui est pas coutumière, tout ça. Je l'ai trouvé ben bon de faire ça, et il était pas juste *willing* comme vous dites en anglais, il était pas juste *willing* de le faire, il le faisait bien, OK. Donc je pensais à ça.[346]

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[343] "I remember certain stories, like the one with the red dress that kept coming back [...] The red dress, it stayed... I think it was the common thread, the through-line in fact."
Geneviève Bessette, Interview with the researcher. December 12, 2022.

[344] Naila Kuhlmann, Interview with the researcher. May 14, 2023.

[345] "I was like, *oh, it's Sabine! Cool*!"
Paloma Leyton, Interview with the researcher. November 17, 2022.

[346] Loosely translated as: "Gisle, well, that I find him excellent in everything, OK, I mean, say what you will, he's just like that. But I was thinking, he's cool to be doing this! Because this isn't like the other projects he dies. You know, it's not a, like, *circus -circus*! You know, it's experimental, it's a form of presentation that's not typical, that's not customary, all that. He wasn't just willing to do it, he did it well, OK. So, I was thinking about that."

The spectator interviews also reinforce Brazilian translation theorist Rosemary Arrojo's insistence that meaning is context bound.[347] One spectator, who is also a circus artist, had toured extensively with one of the participating performers, and had tried to pinpoint if the one memories she had verbally recounted during the piece took place when they were on tour. The audience member only realized later that his friend and former colleague had been interpreting another artist's memory:

> Je me rappelle qu'après, je parlais avec Nadine et qu'elle m'a raconté que c'était pas son souvenir, cet histoire d'un mec qu'elle était amoureuse, je sais pas, en Italie ou un truc comme ça, et comment elle l'a racontait, j'ai vraiment cru, et pour moi, tout le long du truc j'étais en train de me dire, *mais putain, c'était qui ce mec-là, c'était quoi cet histoire-là, je crois pas me rappeler* et tout, et j'ai vachement aimé en fait, parce que j'avais vraiment cru et puis, oui, avoir un point d'interrogation, je trouvais ça beau.[348]

For context, here is a brief excerpt of the "original" memory, as recounted during a performance memory interview in 2020:

> On faisait 40 spectacles en trois semaines. C'était le Golden Circus, à Rome. On était dans la périphérie, en face d'un dépotoir, ça sentait la marde ! À côté d'un Lidl.
>
> J'ai 17 ans. On était en 2000 ou 2001. C'est un rythme… à la fin, j'étais morte. Je savais pas cuisinier vraiment donc je mangeais principalement de chocolat. Je buvais de café beaucoup. Il y avait de petits paninis au coin, c'est tout ce que je me souviens que je mangeais. Et puis, j'étais très en amour avec un des cosaques. Donc je buvais beaucoup avec eux. Du vin cheap de Lidl ! […]
>
> C'était un chapiteau de 2500 personnes […] Et là, pour une raison X, la contorsion, ça marche beaucoup. Pour les shows de 10 h le matin, ils avaient fait une version courte. [*rires*]. J'étais deuxième numéro de spectacle. […]
>
> AV: Est-ce que tu peux raconter les actions que tu faisais dans le numéro ?

Françoise Boudreault, Interview with the researcher. November 29, 2022.

[347] Rosemary Arrojo and Andrew Chesterman, "Shared Ground in Translation Studies," *Target: International Journal of Translation Studies* 12, no. 1 (September 12, 2000): 151–60.

[348] "I remember that afterwards, I was talking with Nadine and she told me that it wasn't her memory, this story about a guy she was in love with, I don't know, in Italy or something. The way she'd recounted it, I'd really believed it, and for me, all the way through, I was thinking, *who the hell was that guy, what was that story about, I don't think I remember that,* and so on, and I really liked that, because I really believed it, and then, yeah, having it put into question, I thought that was beautiful."
Stéphane Gentilini, Interview with the researcher. November 18, 2022.

AL : Ah, oui. Je me souviens tu ? À l'école de cirque, j'avais au carré en corde et là j'avais une table, genre deux mètres. Et là, je marchais devant le public et là je courais sur la table ! Et là le carré, c'était tout un désir de se sortir d'une boîte. Je décide de fuir quelque chose, mais on m'attrape. On me retient, j'essaye de toutes les façons de m'en sortir jusqu'à la fin quand je me relève, et je prends la corde et je la mets dans la poche et je m'en aller. C'est mon histoire de chorégraphie.

AV: Est-ce que tu te souviens comment était le public ?

AL : Oui ! Ils s'en câlissaient de tout ! Ça sent le pop-corn, ça pleure, ça crie, ça joue, ça s'en va partout. Ça, c'était parce qu'il avait 2500 personnes. C'était dimanche matin, sur les 40 spectacles qu'on a faits il y avait peut-être trois fois où il y avait 2500 personnes. Sinon dans ce chapiteau de 2500 personnes on a joué, je crois, des fois pour 12 personnes. Avec cet immense orchestre et ces 20 ballets russes et ces 15 cosaques et ces 8 hommes forts de Mongolie.[349]

The artist that the spectator remembered reinterpreting Andréane's memory, Nadine — who has decades of circus experience and has likely (though we never talked about it) experienced some similar situations, who is also a trained and talented actress, and who responded with deep sensitivity and respect to the memories we were working with in the studio — had, in fact, delivered a relatively faithful rendering of the memory, completely (to my mind) unsuggestive of

[349] Loose translation:
"AL: We did 40 shows in three weeks. It was the Golden Circus, in Rome. We were on the outskirts of town, opposite a garbage dump, and it smelled like shit! Next to a Lidl.
I was 17. It was 2000 or 2001. It was a rhythm... by the end, I was dead. I didn't really know how to cook, so I mainly ate chocolate. I drank a lot of coffee. There were little paninis in the corner, that's all I remember eating. And I was very much in love with one of the Cossacks. So I drank a lot with them. Cheap wine from Lidl! [...]
It was a 2,500-person tent [...] And there, for some reason, contortion really worked there. For the 10 a.m. shows, they had made a short version. [laughs]. I was the second act in the show. [...]
AV: Can you talk me through what you were doing in the act?
AL: Ah, yes. Do I remember? At circus school, I had a rope square and a table, like two meters high. And then I'd walk in front of the audience and then I'd run across the table! And then the square, it was all about a desire to get out of a box. I decided to run away from something, but I was caught. I was held back, trying every way I can to get out until the end, when I get up again, and I take the rope and put it in my pocket and walk away. That's my choreography story.
AV: Do you remember what the audience was like?
AL: Yes! They didn't give a damn ! There was the smell of popcorn, people shouting, screaming, playing, running all over the place. That was because there were 2,500 people. It was Sunday morning, and out of the 40 shows we did, there were maybe three times when there were 2,500 people. Otherwise, in this 2500-person big top, we played, I think, for 12 people. With this huge orchestra and these 20 Russian ballets and these 15 Cossacks and these 8 Mongolian strongmen."
Andréane Leclerc, Interview with the researcher. March 10, 2020.

the tour that the interviewed spectator had previously experienced with her and that he had remembered when watching her.

Faithful is a charged term in translation and interpretation of course, carrying the tension of Derrida's notion of "the unbearable paradox of fidelity."[350] In this project, I felt it was more faithful, or more respectful, to acknowledge being in a different setting rather than to try to recreate the environment of being in a circus tent on the outskirts of Rome twenty years ago. Of course, focusing on the setting — recreating the Lidl logo in the background, the feel of the tent, and other details — could have led to other, powerful interpretations. As Anthony Pym summarizes, discussing theories on translation and indeterminacy: "A text can be rendered in many different ways, and from the perspective of indeterminacy there can be no absolute rule for deciding between those various translations."[351]

But while I knew in advance that I would not be able to reproduce many elements and meanings of the original memories, and while this was not my objective or intention — which was, rather, to create something else, *related to* (even dependant on) but *not the same as* the initial memories as were they recounted — I had mixed feelings about the form and meaning(s) of the event or showing of the research in July 2022.

[350] Jacques Derrida, *The Work of Mourning,* trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (University of Chicago Press, 2001).
[351] Anthony Pym, "Uncertainty," in *Exploring Translation Theories* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2023), p. 101.

(Un) repeating occurrences: Rehearsals, re-presentations, and *répétitions*

Figure 7

Upper left: Photo by Terry Lorant, featuring Sandy Counts, Billy Kessler, Wendy Parkman, Larry Pisoni, Gypsy Snider, all of Pickle Family Circus, circa late 1970's. Photo courtesy of Gypsy Snider. All other images: After-shows research project, hosted by Agora du Coeur des sciences – UQAM, Montreal, July 2022. Lower right-hand photo is by Antonia Gueorguieva, the two others are by Anna Vigeland.

Performers and other professionals who tour and present versions of the same show every night are well aware that every evening's performance is different. The impossibility of identical replication in any act is noted by Deleuze: "In every way, material or bare repetition, so-called repetition of the same, is like a skin which unravels, the external husk of a kernel of difference and more complicated internal repetitions. Difference lies between two repetitions."[352] Writing about thirty years before Deleuze, Gertrude Stein makes related comments: "Is there repetition or

[352] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994 (1968), 76.

is there insistence," she asks. "I am inclined to believe there is no such thing as repetition. And really how can there be."[353] Deleuze and Stein are not very far here from Heraclitus's claim that no one steps in the same river twice.

Theater reviewer Jesse Green recently wrote of attending the same play nine years apart and having "hated it" in 2014 and "loved it" in 2023. Attempting to "sort out why my response was so different," he concluded that despite some minor production changes, "the story remained what it was," and that "the real alteration was not in [the play] but in me"[354] — and, we could add, was due to significant temporal and contextual shifts. Green's review brings to mind Borges' "Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*," whose short story presents a fake review of a "translation" which is word-for-word identical to the original but is deemed by the fictitious reviewer as superior.[355]

The short film *Betty Tells Her Story* by Liane Brandon[356] opens with an interviewee recounting a memory. Then there is short cut, before reopening to her telling the same story again, differently. I was reminded of the potential beauty and information offered within variations when reading Mónica de la Torre's *Repetition Nineteen*, composed of 25 "unreliable translations" she made of a poem she'd written about 25 years before, and in Raymond Queneau's retelling of the same

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[353] I came across this statement of Stein's when reading the excellent thesis on reperformance by Harry J. Weil. See: Harry J. Weil, "Reperformance: Re-Creating and Reinterpreting Performance Art's History." PhD dissertation, Stony Brook University, 2013.
The original statement is from Stein's "Portraits and Repetition," published in *Lectures in America*:
Gertrude Stein, "Portraits and Repetition," in *Lectures in America*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1935.

[354] In his 2014 review of Branden Jacobs-Jenkins's "Appropriate," Green deemed the play "a mess, undercooked and overexplained, with enough pregnant symbols (dark lake, shrieking cicadas, two graveyards) for an Ibsen festival." In his 2023 rave of the same work, he wrote that "Branden Jacobs-Jenkins's 2014 play about the legacies of hatred feels like a *new work entirely*" (italics are mine).
Jesse Green, "For a Times Critic on Deadline, a Dramatic Reversal," New York Times, December, 27, 2023. https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/27/insider/for-a-times-critic-on-deadline-a-dramatic-reversal.html/.

[355] Jorge Luis Borges, *Ficciones* (Buenos Aires: Sur, 1944).

[356] Liane Brandon, *Betty Tells Her Story* (1972: Distributed by New Day Films, available via streaming on the Criterion Channel) https://www.lianebrandon.com/Betty-Tells-Her-Story

account 99 times in *Exercises in Style*.[357] All these works seem to say, among other things, that attempting repetition generates difference (as per Deleuze), story, possibility, art.

Translation theorist María Carmen África Vidal Claramonte proposes viewing both repetition and translation "as processes in constant motion and change," observing that "repeating, like translating, is not reproduction, but rather the production, modification, and creation of something new."[358] In a slight variation, translator and essayist Kate Briggs writes of "different motivations for doing or making something again" and considers a distinction between "doing something again in the name of newness and doing something new in the name of againness," concluding that she "would place translation in the second category."[359]

But for all the theories I agreed and agree with about the paradoxes of repetition, for all the reiterative works I love, for as much as I based almost all of the exercises in this project in this studio around repetition-like games, and for all my supposed awareness of no presentation or iteration ever being the same, the public showing on July 27th left me feeling unreasonably sad about what was untranslatable and unrepeatable from the day before, and in spite of myself, I found myself wishing the feeling of the work in the studio the day before could be repeated. The improvisations and work in the studio on July 26th had felt alive in a way that was not the same

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[357] Special thanks to the Bread Loaf Translator's Conference, where, in 2023, a workshop I took with Matvei Yankelevich included readings of and in some cases generative exercises based off *Exercises in Style, Repetition Nineteen* and *Pierre Menard*. See:
Jorge Luis Borges, *Ficciones* (Buenos Aires: Sur, 1944).
Raymond Queneau, *Exercises in Style*, trans. Barbara Wright (London: Gaberbocchus, 1958).
Mónica de la Torre, *Repetition Nineteen* (New York: Nightboat Books, 2020).

[358] María Carmen África Vidal, *Translation and Repetition: Rewriting (Un)original Literature* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2024), p. 8.

[359] This reflection grew, writes Briggs, upon a hearing a second-hand account of *Living With the Tudors,* a film made by artists Karen Guthrie and Nina Pope after spending time with historical re-enactors.
Kate Briggs, *This Little Art* (London, United Kingdom: Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2021), p. 230.
See also:
Karen Guthrie Nina Pope, *Living With the Tudors (*2007, United Kingdom funded by Channel 4 Documentary Film Foundation) https://vimeo.com/ondemand/livingwiththetudorsdoc

on the 27th, and even though I knew it was impossible and pointless, I found myself wishing we could have repeated what had happened the night before.

Circus and other performing professionals have a superstition that a good dress rehearsal is bad luck, leading to a poor opening night. Conversely, a bad dress rehearsal is supposed to bring the tension and heightened attention and good fortune of a happy premiere. In other words, I knew full well that the energy of the previous evening couldn't be repeated, but still felt deeply disappointed it couldn't be.

Enchantingly, rehearsals are "repetitions" in languages like French (*répétitions*) and many Slavic languages, such as Bulgarian (*репетиция,* or, phonetically in the Roman alphabet *repetitsiya*), among others. The English *rehearse* can be traced to the Old French *rehercier* (*to harrow* or *to plough again*), and can be found to refer to *reciting* by around 1300 and to *reiterating or repeating* by the mid 1500s.[360] Today, *rehearsal* might be "characterised as embodied and embedded repetition," writes Shakespearean scholar Rob Conkie, who notes, critically, the "variation" this practice offers. [361] Differing practitioners and theorists seem to view performance vs. rehearsal on their own terms — I once took a performance composition workshop with artist Cláudia Dias[362] who insisted they be regarded as the same thing. "Every event of performance is a rehearsal of another event, every rehearsal an event," writes Adrian Heathfield.[363] But I'd still fruitlessly hoped that the July 27th "rehearsal of another event" might have reflected the event of working in the studio on July 26th.

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[360] See: Andy Hollandbeck, "In a Word: Hearse and Rehearse," *The Saturday Evening Post*, July 11, 2022, https://www.saturdayeveningpost.com/2022/04/in-a-word-hearse-and-rehearse/
See also: Gay McAuley, "The Emerging Field of Rehearsal Studies," *About Performance*, no. 6 (2006): 7–13.
[361] Rob Conkie, "Rehearsal: The Pleasures of the Flesh," *Shakespeare Bulletin* 30, no. 4 (December 2012): 411–29. Cited text is from Conkie's abstract: https://muse.jhu.edu/article/495097
[362] "Claudia Dias: Dal 30 Maggio al 12 Giugno," Inteatro, May 27, 2011, http://www.inteatro.it/ifa11-dias/.
See also: "Cláudia Dias," ALKANTARA, https://alkantara.pt/en/artists/claudia-dias/
[363] Adrian Heathfield, "Dramaturgy Without a Dramaturg," *The Theatre Times*, August 15, 2016, https://thetheatretimes.com/dramaturgy-without-a-dramaturg/.

A part of me reluctantly wondered if this was related to ego – I considered the work in the studio alone with the performers better than the work presented before a small group of spectators – but another simply felt disappointed that we were not able to share something I felt was more representative of what we'd actually done.

Another part of me took note, concretely, of the parts I felt were "missing": in other days in the studio, the performers had spoken more frequently in their first languages, resulting in a medley of Swedish and Arabic among the expected English and French. While the project had always insisted on simultaneous actions and the decentering of a specific scene or performer, stressing and playing on varying angles or scenes being seen from each vantage point in the audience, I never expected performers would quietly repeat words to one or two audience members for extended periods of time, as suddenly happened in the improvisation that evening. I found myself missing the more open way fragments of histories had been related the day before. When one spectator commented, in an interview ten months later, that he remembered observing what felt like "inside jokes" when performers occasionally talked amongst themselves, rather than to the audience ("I remember one of them always seemed to be sharing an inside joke with the other performers"[364]), I silently agreed, and knew if I could return to the studio with the group, I would offer a variation on the "rules of engagement" or simply speak with the performers, to see how to get back outside of this, which had never happened before. (This response on my part was quite different from when I heard other opinions, including mixed ones, from spectators that related to actions or choices in the showing that I felt more confident about. For example, I was pleased to receive different responses to having simultaneous actions on stage, described in Chapter 5).

[364] Cai Glover, Written exchange with the researcher, May 23, 2023.

For sure, the performers were deeply invested, and the evening gave way to beautiful moments and scenes that had never happened before. Towards the end of the event, an improvised spoken and acrobatic sequence suddenly took form, during which one of the circus artists recounted a memory (an excerpt of which is at the start of this thesis) of another artist as a young girl, performing on stage with her step dad and knowing her "real dad" was in the audience, a memory that brought up a rush of conflicting emotions of both frustration and pride. The artist reinterpreting that memory suddenly reached for his son, and then his other son, who were in the audience (and who have grown up doing circus with their father) and spoke in the first person about being lifted by "my dad" while he himself lifted his sons. It was one of the scenes that was most frequently and vividly recalled by interviewed spectators, months later. This moment was both completely unexpected and a variation on what had happened every day in the studio during the project research: that same memory fragment has been repeated, in numerous variations, by almost every artist in the group.

Figures 8 and 9

After-shows research showing, July 27th, 2022, photo by Antonia Gueorguieva

But while I felt happily surprised by many parts of the evening and astonished by the commitment and sensitivity of all of the participating performers, and while the audience members were generous and present, as a whole I found myself wishing the charge or energy of the night before could have been repeatable, in spite of the project's central premise of a moment not being able to be replicated.

I wondered if the sorrow I felt after the event that night, less alive than the rehearsal the day before, less charged than a research sessions months before, was:

a) Inevitable. Some run-throughs and work days are simply more alive than others. (But I knew this already.)
b) Simply a product of circumstance: I had been preparing for these studio sessions for over two years, mainly alone (conducting and transcribing interviews, researching, planning logistics) and, for practical reasons outlined earlier in this paper, had had less than two weeks with participating artists, even with all the work periods put together.
c) The product of a drop in adrenaline at the end of the residency, as opposed to the sense of anticipation on the day right before.
d) Suggestive that while variations of repetition are ripe with possibility, and are inevitable, they can also spark sorrow over what is unrepeatable.
e) Potentially linked to mistakes I had made in my communications with the collaborating artists. In all my questioning over the voices whose variations we were working with — those of the interviewed performers, the absent imagined ones, those of the performers, those of the audience members (through their presence, through their interpretation) — in what ways had I been unclear when I was attempting to say something (ex: discussing an idea with a performer) myself? While I knew I was not interested in "speaking my own

voice" in this type of project, and was more interested in researching among many voices of others, allowing a new mix of voices, I hoped, to emerge, what was my place with that mix of voices?

(Un) translating voice

"How does the artistic framing of oral history create an invaluable public platform for the voices behind the stories?" asks Pascale Neuschäfer, at the time a documentary filmmaker at Centre for Popular Memory at the University of Cape Town.[365] But whose voices do such projects really hold? What voices actually emerge? Is voice — or is the memory of voice(s) — untranslatable? "By recounting the forgotten voice, one does not make it heard as is – vain hope, illusion," writes Lyotard, paraphrasing a parable about a forgotten prayer. Instead, "narrating its loss" is a way "to honor its unpresented present."[366] *After-shows* did not deal with "forgotten voices": the artists interviewed in phase one already *had* (and still have) voices, of course, but it did attempt to honor an "unpresented present" (a tough task, of course!) and to "narrate the loss" or at least to work in recognition of the loss of the past moments those voices were referring to and to the loss of the presence of the original voices at the time of their re-presentations. Even if the original voices that told the memories in phase one continue to live and speak, the voices as uttered in those contexts are indeed gone: both from the contexts of the interview and from the contexts of the memories referred to in the interviews — which were already reconstructed and reimagined

[365] Pascale Neuschäfer, "The Divergence between Artistic and Academic Dissemination of Oral History: Beyond the Archive – From the Spoken Word through Performance to Moving Images," *South African Historical Journal* 60, no. 2 (2008): p. 195.

[366] **"**A Hasidic story," writes Lyotard, "says that if you forget a prayer's exact form, what is asks, the circumstance in which is it should be said, you can at least evoke the series of things forgotten, invoke the pardon, and 'that's enough.' By recounting the forgotten voice, one does not make it heard as is – vain hope, illusion – : one safeguards the covenant. Narrating its loss is still to honor its unpresented presence."
Jean-François Lyotard, "The Lost Voice" in *Soundproof Room: Malraux's Anti-Aesthetics,* translated by Robert Harvey, reprinted in *The Lyotard Reader and Guide*, ed. Keith Chrome and James Williams (Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 148-149. Reprinted from *Soundproof Room: Malraux's Anti-Aesthetics,* Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2001 [*Chambre sourde: L'Antiesthétique de Malraux*. Paris: Galilée, 1998].

when those stories were recounted. Attempting to retell what those voices had said required an acknowledgment of the present absence of those voices and the impossibility of making them heard as they were.

But in my focusing on "lending an ear, rather than giving a voice"[367] had I overlooked the weight of the question of the authorial choices, tones, registers, and sheer matter (the matter of the other performers' bodies reperforming approximations of those memories; the matter of a physical, material event bringing people together in the name of re-presenting those memories; the matter of all the transcriptions and project files that amassed, and so on) in re-presenting them, even if those re-presentations were predicated on a decision not to attempt literal reinterpretation?

A recent article in the Atlantic implied that "inconsistent voice within a single translation" is undesirable (the piece, which was otherwise excellent, explored the limits of machine translation of literature).[368] But can't a sensitive translation or creation carry multiple voices? Why is consistency of voice of any interest or value?

"It is the job of the writer, and of the translator, to contain many voices inside herself," writes Alice Whitmore. "Inside themselves. To embody those voices and carry them somewhere."[369]

These questions quickly lend themselves to Bakhtin's theories of polyphony and heteroglossia,[370] which Jess McCormack has contextualized in her analysis of choreography based on verbatim

[367]Alessandro Portelli, Fourth Annual HEX Conference, "The History of Experience and Agency: A Critical Intervention" (Tampere University, Finland: 2021) https://events.tuni.fi/historyofexperience/history-of-experience-2021/.

[368] See: Jeremy Klemin, "The Last Frontier of Machine Translation: Don't Ask a Bot to Translate a Book," The Atlantic, January 8, 2024, https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2024/01/literary-translation-artificial-intelligence/677038

[369] Alice Whitmore, "Tell Me About a Complicated Woman: Alice Whitmore on Translation," Sydney Review of Books, January 29, 2021, https://sydneyreviewofbooks.com/essay/tell-me-about-a-complicated-woman/.

[370] Mikhail Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel" in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981).

interviews, in which she praises the call for a "coexistence of different types of speech, voices or languages within a single piece of work."[371]

Translation, by extension, seems to carry a coexistence of voices by default. This contact with someone else's voice and someone else's language is part of what Gayatri Spivak describes as one of the "seductions of translating." Acts of translating, writes Spivak, offer a way "to get around the confines of one's 'identity,'" a way "to work at someone else's title, as one works with a language that belongs to many others."[372] Jhumpa Lahiri speaks of related freedoms, paraphrasing Cicero, who, she recounts, wrote that "it is the language of the other that can restore to us something that is missing."[373] Discussing her learning, writing in, and then self-translating out of Italian, Lahiri recounts: " I was searching for something I felt I didn't have and it was Italian that gave it to me, and even though it is the other […] it was a part of me that was missing […] and the whole project of translation, you know, that's what's behind, that's what's driving translation."[374]

Lahiri's urgent drive towards another language (and maybe another voice?) aligns with novelist Francesca Marciano's protagonist in *The Other Language*[375] as with Julia Kristeva, who, in *L'amour de l'autre langue*, concludes: « Parler une autre langue, ausculter les différences et les

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[371] Jess McCormack, *Choreography and Verbatim Theatre: Dancing Words* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 17-18.

[372] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "The Politics of Translation," reprinted in *The Translation Studies Reader,* Lawrence Venuti, ed., (Hoboken: Routledge, 2000), p. 400.
As cited in:
Kate Briggs, *This Little Art* (London, United Kingdom: Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2021), p. 257.

[373] "Jhumpa Lahiri Talks about Midlife Crisis, Italian Language, Nostalgia with Paul Holdengraber at NYPL," published on YouTube, October 1, 2019,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aux700EHluM&list=RDLVcw13bN9sUJ8&index=13
Cited conversation can be found at 11min40.

[374] "Jhumpa Lahiri Talks about Midlife Crisis, Italian Language, Nostalgia with Paul Holdengraber at NYPL," published on YouTube, October 1, 2019,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aux700EHluM&list=RDLVcw13bN9sUJ8&index=13
Cited conversation can be found at 12min08.

[375] Francesca Marciano, *The Other Language: Stories* (New York: Vintage Books, 2015).

affinités entre les langues – les traduire, est tout simplement la condition minimale et première pour être en vie ».[376]

The demand in translation to visit or, arguably, to temporarily inhabit zones and voices of someone else, somewhere else, might explain why in French, performers are often called *interprètes*, the same term that is used for interpreters in the sense of live, oral translators (other languages, like Italian, also use the verb *interpretare* not only to speak of interpreting, but also as a general term for acting or performing). When, in my twenties, I first heard performing described with these terms in French and Italian, I was enchanted by the porous lines their uses suggest between performing, acting, translating, interpreting, and (re)creating. (French's use of *jeu* [*game*] for acting, like the English *playing* [*jouer*] a part/role and its variations of performing a *play* or being a *playwright* open up ludic possibilities that could be the subject of another paper.) These parallels bleed into English, despite not using the same linguistic root. "Translation is like acting," writes Emily Wilson, describing translating Homer. "You need hard work and the blessings of a goddess, to speak wholeheartedly, sincerely, in many other selves, to become people who are not you, who are not always you, who are you."[377]

When I was beginning my MA, I also worked for a circus advocacy and service organization, En Piste (Canada's national circus alliance) and the question of professional titles and member category names (and their translations) came up on a regular basis. I suggested changing the membership category *artiste* to *interprète* (I had already changed it to *performer* in English) in part because *artiste* seemed too charged of a term (I try to avoid the word at all costs) and,

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[376] Loosely translated as: "Speaking another language, examining differences and affinities between languages - translating them, is quite simply the minimum and primary condition for being alive."
Julia Kristeva, " L'amour de l'autre langue" (talk given at the Sommet du livre à la Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, October 13, 2014), http://www.kristeva.fr/la-traduction-langue-de-l-europe.html

[377] Emily Wilson, "Thread by @EmilyRCWilson: 'One of the Most Powerful Features (Tropes? Modalities?) Of Homeric Verse Is the Juxtaposition of One POV with Another. Maybe the Most Famous [...],'" Twitter. June 19, 2019, https://threadreaderapp.com/thread/1138463673276674048.html

further, because it could easily apply to other categories like *concepteur,* which included choreographers, directors, and stage designers. I was told that some people in the community felt that *interprète* wasn't an accurate term for "creative-type" circus performers, because, those community members (who, to be clear, don't represent the opinions of everyone in the field, or of the organization) felt that "merely interpreting" was not the same as creating. This view strikes me as outdated,[378] but still reflects commonly held beliefs.

But if I knew in advance that in this project, interpreting was being viewed and approached as a deeply creative act (not to mention that "creating" involves lots of repeating versions of what others have already done and said, even if done so unconsciously), and if I knew that co-making the project with the participating interviewees and performers meant diving into a web of languages, voices, histories, bodies, memories, art forms, cultures, sensibilities, all belonging to others, why did the question or voice and authorship rise with such pressing weight?

Is speaking of authorship old-fashioned? "Artists no longer have the status of authors because of others, because of history, because the time we are living in speaks inside us; we are at best chroniclers of our time and moreover it's the viewer that makes the artwork," claims the artist Orlan, convincingly.[379] Film critic Richard Brody writes that "there's no critical term more bedevilled than 'auteur'" (he argues that filmmakers like François Truffaut applied the label to refer to "policy" and to "a practice, a vision, a historical arc in which the cinema is inscribed" rather than to describe "an artistic hero or even the experience of recognizing a director's personality in a work").[380]

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[378] See, for example: Manon Levac, "L'interprète créateur," *Jeu*, No. 119 (2), (2006): 45–50, https://www.erudit.org/fr/revues/jeu/2006-n119-jeu1112542/24437ac.pdf.

[379] Orlan, "We Are Formatted Memories," in *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History*, ed. Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2012), pp. 268-272.

[380] "Taken as a whole, Truffaut's writings from *Arts Spectacles* suggest that the word defines not a kind of filmmaker or an artistic hero or even the experience of recognizing a director's personality in a work. Rather, it's crucially joined to its 'policy': it signifies a practice, a vision, a historical arc in which the cinema is inscribed"

There has been a semi-recent movement in the contemporary circus field in Québec to promote a "cirque d'auteur." The term has been employed by friends, colleagues, and artists I admire, and it evokes a cinematic movement I long fell in love with, but today, the expression strikes me as problematic.

But if the author has long been dead[381] and if all translations, interpretations, re-recounted oral histories, and performances complicate voice, and if I thought I knew all this in advance, why did the question of voice and authorship emerge as a challenge for me in this project? Partly, maybe, because the ethical implications of Michael Frisch's question of "who is the author of an oral history?"[382] are not old-fashioned at all.

After-shows existed through and because of the memories interview participants shared, through and because of the work and presence of the participating performers, through and because of the presence and words of the spectators. While on one hand, it is true that I spent several years on the project, preparing, researching, reassembling, and coordinating elements, whereas other participants spent the time of an interview or the time of a few hour-long research sessions, it is also true that the memories and artistic practices those participants brought to those short encounters sprung from decades of their lives.

It's been suggested to me that claiming authorship is a way to assume artistic responsibility. But in collaborative processes like interviewing or co-creating or performing, who is responsible? If

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Richard Brody, "The Truffaut Essays That Clear up Misguided Notions of Auteurism," The New Yorker, June 8, 2019, https://www.newyorker.com/culture/the-front-row/the-truffaut-essays-that-clear-up-misguided-notions-of-auteurism

See also: François Truffaut, *Chroniques d'Arts-Spectacles (1954-1958)*, ed. Bernard Bastide (Paris: Gallimard, 2019).

Also see: Edouard Waintrop, "Balade Cinephilique : 'Contre l'auteurisme'," *Libération*, August 5, 1998, https://www.liberation.fr/cahier-special/1998/08/05/balade-cinephilique-contre-l-auteurisme_244974/.

[381] Roland Barthes, " The Death of the Author," trans. Richard Howard, *Aspen, no. 5–6* (1967).

[382] Michael Frisch, "Commentary - Sharing Authority: Oral History and the Collaborative Process," *The Oral History Review* 30, no. 1 (January 1, 2003), p. 113.

spectators are "translating" their own meaning, as per Rancière,[383] who is responsible for that meaning? If interviewees grant their stories to a project, certainly they participate greatly to its authorship, but how can they be held responsible for the final "result" of the project, which relies on presentation or editing choices, much or at least some of which, presumably, they are not part of? The participating artists in *After-shows* helped create work and an event that would not have been the same without them, but who is responsible for an improvisational choice they made, within the confines of a project they chose to be part of but whose structure they did not expressly choose? What voices do the mutated versions of memories performed in *After-shows* carry and who is responsible for what they say?

One artist who had been interviewed about her performance memories for the project in 2020 (phase 1), attended the July 2022 research showing (phase 3), and participated in a post-event spectator memory interview five months later (phase 4), described her experience at the showing of looking for and not finding the stories she'd recounted in her initial interview:

> I didn't really remember the stories I'd recounted! I was sort of ready for anything. But at first, I thought there would be different stories in an order, but then I realized, no, I didn't feel it was that kind of storytelling. Sure, sometimes I watched and wondered about the stories behind what they were doing. Sometimes I watched certain things and I thought, *who could have possibility told that story?!* I recognized a few things and thought, *oh, maybe that came from something I said!* But then I thought, *or maybe not!* Because it had become something else. And as soon as I accepted that, I said to myself, *OK, this is not something where we recount story number one and then story number two.* […] I thought it was really interesting to understand later that the stories weren't just told one time, but were retold, so it wasn't my story anymore, it was maybe an idea, or a phrase, or whatever… it was a point of departure.[384]

"Our jokey motto was, 'the sources talk back!'" historian Susan Tracy told me, recalling an informal group of oral history practitioners she was part of in the 1970s.[385] Whose voices are

[383]Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2008).
[384] Nicolette Hazewinkel, Interview with the researcher. December 12, 2022. Translated from the French.
[385] Susan Tracy, Interview with the researcher, November 16, 2018.

speaking after the sources "talk back" but then when the historian makes the final edits before publication? Whose voices are speaking when artists perform versions of other artists' memories? And what was my role in all this?

Because so much of the studio sessions involved year-long research and preparation, lengthy logistical scheduling and venue arrangements, and involved setting up the playing field, so to speak, for the participating artists to dive into the material with the limited time we had, and because the content of the project was so overflowing with interviewees' histories and participating performers' histories and arts forms, I sometimes wondered if I was acting more like a coordinator or a facilitator than an "artist-researcher."

I found it helpful in this project (and others) to consider the etymology of *dramaturgy*, which, Magda Romanska summarizes, can be broken down to the Greek *tourgos* — from *έργο*, which, Romanska writes, could be translated as *working together* or *arranging /composing* — and *drama*, which could be traced to *action* or *δραν*.[386] "Originally, *dramatourgos* simply meant someone who was able to arrange various dramatic actions in a meaningful and comprehensive order," writes Romanska.[387] This definition is strikingly close to Balanchine's famous maxim, "I don't create anything, I just assemble"[388] (reportedly borrowed from the composer Mikhail Glinka[389]), a statement from someone who nonetheless insisted on being called a "choreographer" (the first time the term "choreographer" was used in a Broadway program, in

[386] Magda Romanska, *The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy,* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 1.
[387] Magda Romanska, *The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy,* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 1.
[388] "Indianapolis City Ballet Q&A with Darci Kistler," Interviewed by Jolinda Menendez, Vimeo, Posted March 11, 2012, Running Time 33:00, https://vimeo.com/38320392. The quote appears at about 9min50.
[389] Dance critic Arlene Croce writes: "One of the most celebrated Balanchinisms, 'God creates, man assembles," is an adaptation of a saying attributed to Glinka, "Nations create music, composers only arrange it,' and it is a question whether Balanchine or Stravinsky said it first."
See: Arlene Croce, "Balanchine Said," *The New Yorker*, January 26, 2009, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2009/01/26/balanchine-said.

1936, was reportedly at Balanchine's request, used in that case to describe his role on the production, *On Your Toes*[390]).

This view of a creative practice as an exercise in (re-)assembling or re-presenting elements, is of course, familiar to every translator. Translation, as reiterates Kate Briggs, disrupts the cliché of the blank page:

> Who was it that said the blank page is never blank, but always written over with quotations from existing works? […] Because: come here, says the writing-to-be-translated. This is its invitation: come here, turn away from your blank page, your self-expression, your efforts at unprecedented monographic creation. Come here, sit down and attend for a while to this, to someone else's work, and let's see *what that* does.[391]

That said, Briggs is quick to acknowledge that "the activities" of creating "new" prose and translating "are not simply the same," [392] pointing to fellow writer-translator Lydia Davis reflecting on "sitting down to a story of my own" versus translating:

> [I]t is true that the work to be done is already there in front of me when I sit down to translate; and that there is not the same risk involved as there is in creating a work of my own; and yes, I do feel different sitting down to a translation – whether from the French, or from the Dutch, or from Bob, Son of Battle – than I do sitting down to a story of my own. [393]

Adrian Heathfield suggests that viewing a dramaturg as "not an originary source or a final repository of meaning for a work, but rather an agent in a process of communal meaning-making" and dramaturgy, in part, as "a form of responsiveness, of speaking of and with the event that leaves its traces there and elsewhere" successfully diverts dramaturgs from problematic claims to authorship and power: "Wherever dramaturgy is conceived as a practice of thought in

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[390] Camille Hardy, "Bringing Bourrées to Broadway: George Balanchine's Career in the Commercial Theater," *World Literature Today* 80, no. 2 (2006): 17.
[391] Kate Briggs, *This Little Art* (London, United Kingdom: Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2021), p. 256-257.
[392] Kate Briggs, *This Little Art* (London, United Kingdom: Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2021), p. 257.
[393] Lydia Davis, "A Conversation with Dan Gunn," Music & Literature, November 26, 2016, https://www.musicandliterature.org/features/2014/12/4/a-conversation-with-dan-gunn.
As cited by:
Kate Briggs, *This Little Art* (London, United Kingdom: Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2021), p. 257.

advance of the event, it will be collapsed into a form of authorship and covert power; the dramaturg will become another name for 'author,' 'director,' or 'choreographer,'" he writes, proposing instead that dramaturgy without the claimed authorship of a formal dramaturg "becomes the movement of relations through a constellation of questions, approaches, and responses to the matter at hand."[394]

But in attempting to play a part in facilitating that "movement of relations" and that "event that leaves its traces there and elsewhere," how much, and in what ways (through choices, through suggestions, through discussions, through silences, for example) should the person who is formally initiating the research-creation speak up?

How common is confusion over one's own voice among researchers, especially those working with the voices and histories of others? In her MA thesis, *In-Between: An Autoethnographic Inquiry into the Notion of Home amongst Palestinians living in the Diaspora,* an oral history and research-creation project involving artist-researcher Lucine Serhan's own histories as well as those of others, Serhan describes some of the complications in her decision to include "other voices in the telling of my story" and writes: "As I consulted and conversed with the participants helping them to find their voices, I struggled a lot with finding mine."[395]

At one point in the performance memory interview process (research phase 1), I interviewed, recorded, and transcribed myself responding to the same questions I was asking my interviewees, thinking I might weave these responses in with the others in the resulting piece. I wanted to be sure I wasn't asking others to say something that I was avoiding saying myself. As I began

[394] Adrian Heathfield, "Dramaturgy Without a Dramaturg," *The Theatre Times*, August 15, 2016, https://thetheatretimes.com/dramaturgy-without-a-dramaturg/.

[395] Lucine Serhan, "In-Between: An Autoethnographic Inquiry into the Notion of Home amongst Palestinians living in the Diaspora," MA thesis, (Concordia University, 2022), p. 20 and 31. https://spectrum.library.concordia.ca/id/eprint/990903/

recording myself, I imagined that self-recording might be an exciting future creative tool. Instead, the process and result offered little knowledge or insight. The lack of the restraint that is present in most real-life interactions did not offer the freedom I imagined to access new layers of memories, but instead led to recollections that were closer to rants than sensitive visits to the past. Perhaps what was missing in this exercise were the multiple spaces of interpretation and distance offered in a conversation or interview between two (or more) people. The self-interview involved no real encounter or exchange, and was out of place in this project. I removed the interview.

The questions raised when dancers Hoor Malas and Neil Sochasky both took part in the performance memory interviews in 2021 and also participated in the in-studio performance research in 2022 were much richer and much more multi-layered than my thankfully-erased self-interview. The memories recounted by Hoor and Neil took on highly specific meanings when they were reperformed by other members of the group, a layer which once again would have been untranslatable, a remainder, and unknowable to audience members.

Both Hoor and Neil knew, of course, the terms of the project, and had agreed to let the memories they discussed be reinterpreted by other performers. When Neil joined the project (he replaced another performer in April 2022, and then I decided it made sense for him the stay with the group in July), he told me he didn't recognize his memories in any of the performing exercises. Actually, two of his performance memories had been worked with and reperformed by other performers, but by the time he watched them, they had gone through so many layers of mutations and interpretations, that I can understand why they wouldn't be recognizable.

Meanwhile, Hoor was quick to notice one of her recounted memories being re-performed by many other performers. That memory stemmed from a solo Hoor had described in her interview

in which she had recreated the walk and the movement of the spine of a woman she had observed, a woman she would see every day, outside the rehearsal studio during the creation of that piece, along what Hoor described as one of her favorite streets in Damascus:

> HM This is 2019. Damascus. […] a performance called *Hanging*. I was playing an old lady. And the back, the spine… it really stands out for me for that work. And I remember - because most of the performance, I'm like this [*bends her back*], I'm curved.
>
> […]
>
> And… because we had a very old lady in the neighborhood that… she used to always walk. And I used to like just watch her. Just see how she steps, how she shifts her weight.
>
> […]
>
> AV And the lady that you observed… She was living in the neighborhood you were living in.
>
> HM Yeah, it's where the studio was. Like it was a very small studio that we had. And it's one of… it's a really nice street in Damascus, it's older, and the buildings are French built. When the French were there. So it was very, like, these beautiful architecture…buildings… really old…And it had trees on both sides of the road… And the trees are always like this, they're always leaning, but inward. So it's always a beautiful scene just for me to walk through. And it's a very, like a very local neighborhood. […] like the vibe of, yeah, yeah, people talking, you know, it's not a quiet neighborhood, it's very, like, lively.
>
> And that old lady, I don't know where she lives, but I assume she lives closeby, she goes to the supermarket, gets her stuff and walks. And she always wears like these long skirts and she… like her step does not start with a heel. It starts like, the whole foot is up down, up down. Yeah, I loved watching her [laughs].
>
> AV What is the name of the street?
>
> HM It's called Ein el Kerish.[396] It's like… there's other names that they give for streets, like names of people, but I don't know, I know the local one. What we call it! [laughs]
>
> AV And did you ever get to know the woman's name or talk to her?
>
> HM No. I never had the courage to kind of just approach her and say, *hi, I've been observing you for a month*! And especially that character. It took me two months of working every single day to finally imagine how she would dance. […]. How she would move, how she would kind of celebrate, or dance. It was an interesting frustration [*laughs*].
>
> […]

[396] In a follow-up email, Hoor confirmed that it was on Baghdad Street in the Ein el Kerish neighborhood

> I've always enjoyed her birthday dance. Like for me, that was always like the moment when I don't think and I'm just like, *Oh yes. She's dancing!* [laughs] Yeah.[397]

Throughout the phase 2 performance research exercises, when the participating artists were working with fragments of memories recounted in the phase 1 interviews, I often watched different performers' spines bend like the lady Hoor so intently watched on Baghdad Street in Damascus — at one point, a contortionist, Nadine, rolled forward her spine, crouched down, and walked across the space's two rooms — a woman who had no idea that she had informed the subject of Hoor's dance solo, and even less of an idea that versions of that were coming to form by a bunch of performers in a university studio in Montréal.

The reperformed moments and the voices and movements that emerge from that memory belong in large part to Hoor, of course (who told me at first it was strange to watch the solo she had worked on for so long suddenly improvised upon in a matter of seconds by other artists, but that she got used to it); as well as to the other participating performers; to the spectators watching it (for whom the entire unspoken back story or remainder was entirely unknowable); to me (more in the role here of a coordinator); and also to that woman, who will never know how much we thought about her (or about our interpretation of her) and the way her spine moved on her daily walk.

If I could "keep (not) translating" this project, I would return first to the voices and movements and histories that extend from Hoor's memory of her own solo which stem from her memory of that woman on that street.

[397] Hoor Malas, Interview with the researcher, December 7, 2021.

Chapter 5 - After and outside *After-show*s:

Provisional conclusion and considerations for further research

At the end of each of the post-event spectator interviews, I asked: *Do you have anything else you'd like to add, or any questions you'd like to ask?* More than half of the respondents wanted to know about future extensions or developments of the research, and asked, "What's next?!" The formal timeframe for this project is finished and I have filed final reports with the ethics committee and with the project's funders.[398] But the project, whose theoretical paradigms stressed provisionality — leaning on theories such as Theo Hermans' "notion of the untranslatable […] as the impossibility of exhausting the store of possible alternative renderings and of reaching a definitive translation"[399] — led to many questions that remain open, and also suggested new angles of research that remain waiting to be more fully explored.

That questions lingered was unsurprising: I did not anticipate that untranslatability within representations of performance memories was a concept that could be fully addressed in a single project, and I did not conduct the research-creation processes with the expectation of "resolving" the matter; rather, I hoped that entering into this research-creation process might reveal layers of information about the ways performance events are remembered; about ways the memories they give way to might be researched, collected, interpreted, and re-represented; and about ways translative elements, in this case untranslatability, might "work" as a dramaturgical angle and

[398] This project benefitted from support from: Hexagram-UQAM (residency and material support), the Observatoire des médiations culturelles (OMEC), the Concordia GSA Extracurricular Engagement Program, and the Concordia Office of the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science's Funding of Special Projects and Events.

[399] Theo Hermans, *The Conference of the Tongues*, (Manchester: St. Jerome, 2007), p. 121.
As cited in:
Theo Hermans, "Untranslatability, Entanglement and Understanding," in *Untranslatability*, Duncan Large et al., ed. (Routledge, 2018), p. 37.

research lens in approaching re-representations and interpretations of other people's memories of shows.

Closing thoughts on those research processes are summarized at the end of this chapter, but before jumping to them, I would like to address some of the research themes and questions which emerged but could not be fully addressed within the scope of this project and which merit further research, namely: a) intersections of dramaturgy and memories of performance spaces and b) memory and translation of sound in performance.

I would also like to point to some areas connected to this research process which *began* to be explored but which call for further research and suggest further potential research applications. These areas are: a) investigations into the nature, reverberations, and implications of memories of audience members; b) collaborative engagement with histories of circus and other performance genres and c) collaborative, interdisciplinary approaches to research performance memories.

This chapter begins by discussing a) intersections of dramaturgy and memories of performance spaces, and b) memory and translation of sound in performance. The section then considers potential further research implications involving a) spectator memory research, b) intersections between public history and circus (and other performance) history, and c) interdisciplinary approaches to research performance memories, before turning to the impossible task of conclusion.

Considerations for Further Research 1: Two areas of research underexplored in *After-shows*:

While *After-shows* led questions connected to multiple new areas (new in the sense of unanticipated and outside my research plans), some of the most frequently encountered new

issues relate to a) intersections of dramaturgy and memories of performance spaces and b) memories of sound in performance.

A. (Un) translating memories of performance spaces

The findings of *After-shows* support connections between memories of performances and dramaturgies of performance spaces. The post-event spectator memory interviews point to Cathy Turner's research on dramaturgy and/of architecture[400] and to architect Bernard Tschumi's notion of the "'event-space' of architecture"[401] and its overlap with a performance venue and event. Similarly, they speak to cultural geographer Doreen Massey's assertion that "places […] are always constructed out of articulations of social relations."[402]

Drawing on the notion, discussed in Chapter Three, of audiences as "repositories of memories," as per theater theorists Herbert Blau[403] and Marvin Carlson,[404] multiple spectators interviewed in the post-event memory interview series reported that previous memories of the building and area that the July 27th event took place in influenced their memory and experience of *that* event:

> I have a lot of great memories associated with that space. […] The building… I had worked in it, and actually the first time I saw you was in that building, so it brought up my own memories of having led a presentation of a performance there a few months before. [405]

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[400] Cathy Turner, *Dramaturgy and Architecture: Theatre, Utopia and the Built Environment* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

[401] As writes Dorita Hannah, "Event-space is a term attributed to contemporary architect Bernard Tschumi, whose mantra has long been 'there is no space without event.'"
See: Dorita Hannah, "Event-space A performance model for spatial design," in *The Interior Architecture Theory Reader,* ed. Gregory Marinic (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2018).
See also:
"I always felt that architecture was as much about spaces as about the events that take place in those spaces"
Bernard Tschumi, "Space, Event, Movement: Bernard Tschumi, Paris 1995, Interviewed by Monica Pidgeon," *Pidgeon Digital,* accessed June 1, 2024, https://www.pidgeondigital.com/talks/space-event-movement/chapters/
See also:
Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994).

[402] Doreen Massey, "Places and Their Pasts," *History Workshop Journal* 39, no. 1 (1995): 183.

[403] Herbert Blau, *The Audience* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).

[404] Marvin A. Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011).

[405] Naila Kuhlmann, Interview with the researcher. May 14, 2023.

> Tsé, au niveau de l'emplacement physique, de là où la présentation était donnée, peu de temps avant j'avais vu un autre spectacle pas loin, donc ça m'a un peu fait penser à ce soir, je me sentais un peu de la même façon, même si les deux spectacles étaient très différents.
> […] ça m'a aussi fait penser à vraiment une autre époque quand j'étais jeune, il y avait le Festival de films de Montréal qui était juste un peu plus devant, pis mon premier spectacle de musique, c'était tout proche aussi, c'était dans une salle qui existe plus.[406]

One spectator's memory and experience of the event was shaped in part by previous negative memories associated with the building:

> C'est pas un lieu que j'aime. C'est pas une salle que je trouve accueillante. Toutes les activités, tous les *partys* là-bas… quand je vois ça, je suis comme, *oh non, encore ce lieu !*[407]

The size and physical aspects of the space also filtered into spectator's memories of the evening. Some even remembered specific colors, like dark green (which did not feature in any staging elements — presumably, this dark sense of green was either the result of creative remembering or of the atmospheric feel of the evening and space, for that spectator):

> I remember that the space felt big. It felt expansive and high ceilinged. Dark green, for some reason, stands out in my memory.[408]

> Je me souviens que j'étais face à la fenêtre, la grande grande vitrée, donc un peu au milieu de cet espace immense tu sais, qui est très très long.[409]

> Je trouve cette salle trop vaste, je trouve qu'on se perd dedans.[410]

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[406] Loosely translated as: "You know, in terms of the physical location, where the presentation was given, not long before I'd seen another show not far away, so it reminded me a little of that night, I kind of felt the same way, even if the two shows were very different. [...] It also reminded me of a really different time, when I was young, when the Montréal Film Festival was just a little further ahead. My first concert was nearby too, in a venue that no longer exists." Odile Laforest, Interview with the researcher. December 9, 2022.
[407] Maxime D.-Pomerleau, Interview with the researcher. December 5, 2022.
[408] Cai Glover, Written exchange with the researcher. May 23, 2023.
[409] "I remember that I was facing the window, the big, big glass one, in the middle of that immense space, you know, which is very, very long." Gaëlle Scali, Interview with the researcher. November 24, 2022.
[410] "I find this room too vast, I think we get lost in it."
Maxime D.-Pomerleau, Interview with the researcher. December 5, 2022.

> C'était un peu intimidant comme salle, je pense aux très très grands rideaux noirs… Normalement on est plus habitué à un théâtre où c'est plus encadré et là on était dedans, donc c'est encore une plus grande immersion.[411]

> I feel like the space was kind of dark, like somber. But I don't know if that's true. It's a pretty bare space, so I think that just like gave me a feeling of like coolness and somber, but I know, like, it was July… it was quite hot, so I think I felt comfortable in that space.[412]

Spectators also spent much more time than I'd anticipated describing their arrival to the building. Event goers who had not previously been to the space reported that the experience of finding the building and even the door shaped their memory of the evening. Several people offered lengthy accounts of finding the correct entrance to the building (the following account is an excerpt of a much longer description of finding the door!):

> Trouver le lieu, bon, je connaissais un petit peu, mais je m'attendais pas à faire le tour de l'édifice. Je me rappelle d'avoir fait le tour finalement et de dire, *mais où est la porte d'entrée* […] Quand j'arriverais, ça venait tout juste de débuter. [413]

The fact that the piece involved the spatial-dramaturgical pathway of starting in one room and moving to another provoked mixed responses. One spectator found this experience frustrating. That spectator, who uses a wheelchair, had stepped out of her wheelchair in the first room, and was annoyed to have to get back in right away to go to the next room.[414]

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[411] "It was a bit intimidating as a venue, I'm thinking of those very, very large black curtains. Normally we're more used to a theater where it's the stage area is set off, but here we were inside, so it was even more immersive." Geneviève Bessette, Interview with the researcher. December 12, 2022

[412] Naila Kuhlmann, Interview with the researcher. May 14, 2023.

[413] "Finding the space, well, I knew it a little, but I didn't expect to have to go around the building. I remember finally going around and saying, but *where's the entrance*? [...] When I entered, it had just started." Geneviève Bessette, Interview with the researcher. December 12, 2022

[414] The objective of these interviews was to inquire about ways that performance events might be remembered, not to garner suggestions, but upon discussion with that spectator, who is also a friend, she offered that having clear indications ahead of time would have improved her experience. Also, to be clear, the documentation of her recollections here is not intended to serve as any sort of assumption as to what another person in a wheelchair might have enjoyed or not. Drawing those conclusions would require a much different study or approach and a much wider set of collaborators and experts, outside of the scope of this project.

She reported having spent the time in the second room wondering if audience members would have to get up again:

> Je me souviens, dans la première pièce j'étais comme *oh, je vais m'asseoir sur le bord de fenêtre c'est le fun !* Parce que je suis descendue de mon fauteuil. Et je me suis assise sur un bord de fenêtre pour finalement faire *ah ok, on s'en va dans l'autre pièce*. Tsé, pis là je remontais dans mon fauteuil après, je pense, j'ai décidé là de faire, *ah mais là, je vais rester dans mon fauteuil* […] Alors que je sais qu'il y en a qui vont choisir de se promener, mais moi, c'est ça, c'est une gestion que j'ai pas envie de faire.
> Je me souviens dans la grande salle, moi je me suis dit, *je vais pas changer de position pour continuer à voir la performance d'un autre point de vue*. Moi j'ai fait*, hey, non*. *Je m'installe ici et j'assume*. C'est du gossage de me promener de me réinstaller.[415]

Other spectators described contrasting responses to the simple staging choice of starting in one room and moving to another:

> Je me rappelle d'un accueil dans une première salle, où là, il y avait quelques interprètes, et après on est rentré dans cette grande salle où là il y avait des chaises de partout. […] On avait comme la permission de se déplacer d'aller d'un endroit à un autre, d'aller écouter un secret plus un autre.[416]

> D'abord quand on arrive, il y a tout le côté antichambre. C'est un peu comme les préliminaires [*rires*]. Tsé, tu arrives quelque part, *ah ok, c'est commencé, c'est pas commencé ?* Bon, on voit qu'il y a des gens, on voit les autres spectateurs. On porte attention aux autres spectateurs. Après ça, c'est ça, quand on change de salle : *Ah, OK, donc il y a deux lieux* ! *Ça, c'est intéressant !* Une fois qu'on était dans la deuxième salle, par exemple, j'ai plutôt focusé sur les interprètes.[417]

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[415] "I remember that in the first room I was like *oh, I'm going to sit on the windowsill. this is fun!* Because I got out of my wheelchair. And I sat down on a windowsill and then I was like *oh ok, we're going into another room.* And then I got back into my wheelchair and afterwards, I think, I decided, *um, I'm going to stay in my wheelchair* [...] And even though I know that some people will choose to move around, for me, it's that, it's a kind of management I don't want to do. I remember in the big space, I said to myself, *I'm not going to change positiosn to continue seeing the performance from another point of view.* I was like, *um, no.* I'm going to stay here and that's my decision. It takes a lot of work, it's annoying to change places."
Maxime D.-Pomerleau, Interview with the researcher. December 5, 2022.

[416] "I remember being welcomed in the first room, where there were a few performers, and then we went into this big room where there were chairs everywhere. [...] It was as if we had permission to move from one place to another, to listen to one secret and then another."
Stéphane Gentilini, Interview with the researcher. November 18, 2022.

[417] "First of all, when you arrive, there's the whole antechamber thing. It's almost like foreplay [*laughs*]. You know, you arrive somewhere, *ah ok, has it started, has it not started*? Well, you see that there are people there, you see the other spectators. You pay attention to the other spectators. After that, when you change rooms: *Ah, OK, so there are two places! Now that's interesting!* Once we were in the second room, I focused more on the performers."
Françoise Boudreault, Interview with the researcher. November 29, 2022.

> Dans le hall d'entrée, je savais pas trop ce qu'on attendait de moi, c'est juste que j'étais pas embarquée encore. Parce que j'ai trouvé ça un peu *weird*. J'avais pas trop compris. Dès qu'on est rentré dans la deuxième salle, quand on était dans la salle puis toutes les chaises étaient en rond en forme du cercle…dès qu'on est rentré dans la salle, j'étais complètement, directement embarquée.[418]

> Je me rappelle que j'ai vraiment aimé le fait qu'il y avait comme une première entrée, où on était dans cette salle qui était ajancant à la salle où il y a eu la plus longue partie du spectacle. J'aimais le fait qu'on se déplaçait.[419]

> You can sit wherever you want, and I found this special because in a way it makes you feel like you are also part of the play. Well, also, this moment generates many questions, like: where are we going? [*laughs*] Where are we going with this?! Do I have to stay here? At some point do I have to go to another place? And it happens! At some point, we moved to another room! [420]

No spectator reported viewing the seating structure in the second room like a three-ring circus, as I'd imagined. They consistently reported remembering a circle. But while the "three-ring circus" in the "three-ring disarray of simultaneous and incomplete histories, seen entirely differently (or not at all) depending on the angle" (described in Chapter Three) that I hoped to facilitate/co-create went unnoticed, spectators frequently recalled the ways that the seating placement influenced their experience of "simultaneous histories" and of the decentering of specific scenes and performers. Unsurprisingly, this was met with mixed responses (as this was a desired choice on my end, I felt satisfied to learn that it was strongly experienced, even if some spectators did not enjoy it. Receiving these contrasting points of view actually reinforced my choice; a contrast with spectators' comments on other elements that echoed my own sense of errors I felt I'd made, for example the "inside joke" comment described in Chapter 4):

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[418] "I didn't really know what was expected of me in the entrance hall. I just wasn't on board yet. Because I found it a bit weird. I didn't really understand. As soon as we entered the second room, when we were in the room where all the chairs were in a circle...as soon as we entered that room, I was completely, directly on board." Nicolette Hazewinkel, Interview with the researcher. December 12, 2022.

[419] "I remember I really liked the fact that there was like a first entrance, where we were in this room that was ajancant to the room where there was the longest part of the show. I liked the fact that we moved around." Odile Laforest, Interview with the researcher. December 9, 2022.

[420] Diego López, Interview with the researcher. December 2, 2022.

> I remember seeing the layout of how the audience was going to be seated, and being sort of surprised by it. I remember wanting to watch everything, but because of the way that I was positioned, having to choose what to watch.[421]

> I remember the audience seated all around in a circle. Starting in a smaller room, white, and moving into a bigger, darker space. Performers in motion in front of us kind of slipping in and out of a contextualized expression. [422]

> When we went to the second room, the images began to multiply. It was like you must constantly choose what to see, what to follow, where to put your attention. Maybe you would see a different performance depending on the place where you choose to be. [423]

> Mon regard ne peut pas être sur tout le monde en même temps, ça fait que j'ai de la difficulté à avoir une vue de l'ensemble sur ce qui se passe.[424]

> C'est une forme que je trouve le fun, parce que tu as beaucoup de liberté comme spectateur. On dirige pas ton regarde. Là, c'est toi qui décides de diriger. Là, il y a des choses qui t'interpellent, puis c'est ça, tu es libre d'une certaine façon. [425]

The choice to place the chairs in ways that meant that spectators were always in view was also commented on often:

> Il y a des moments quand mon regard allait plus vers des personnes assises, des spectateurs, donc je regardais comme… je regardais des autres regardaient. [426]

> I remember seeing a lot of people reacting how I thought I would react. I remember seeing the other audience members constantly during the show. [427]

> J'ai aimé la disposition, de pouvoir voir la réaction des gens.[428]

> I remember feeling very visible in the space.[429]

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[421] Naila Kuhlmann, Interview with the researcher. May 14, 2023.
[422] Cai Glover, Written exchange with the researcher. May 23, 2023.
[423] Diego López, Interview with the researcher. December 2, 2022.
[424] "I can't watch everyone at the same time, which makes it hard for me to get an overview of what's going on." Maxime D.-Pomerleau, Interview with the researcher. December 5, 2022.
[425] "I really enjoy this kind of format, because you have a lot of freedom as a spectator. Your gaze isn't being direced. You're the one who decides to direct where to look. If there are things that call out to you, and that's it, you're free in a way." Françoise Boudreault, Interview with the researcher. November 29, 2022.
[426] "There were times when my gaze went more towards the other people sitting down, spectators, so I was looking like… I was watching other people watching." Maxime D.-Pomerleau, Interview with the researcher. December 5, 2022.
[427] Cai Glover, Written exchange with the researcher. May 23, 2023.
[428] "I liked the layout, being able to see people's reactions." Odile Laforest, Interview with the researcher. December 9, 2022.
[429] Cai Glover, Written exchange with the researcher. May 23, 2023.

Vivid memories of performance venues from performers' perspectives also featured strongly in the initial performance memory interviews in phase one of the project. Performers described memories that carried personal associations with specific buildings, among them the old Forum in Montréal, also a beloved hockey landmark,[430] where one performer remembered watching his late father (actor Jacques Zouvi) perform as a ringmaster with the Shriner Circus in the 1960s:

> Bon, premier moment : assis au bord de la bande du Forum, à regarder mon père. Si on était au hockey, j'aurais été collé sur la bande. J'étais à la première rangée.
> Alors à l'époque, dans les années 60, c'était plein tout le temps. Il y avait beaucoup de représentations. C'était plein, plein, plein. Il y avait du monde qui faisait tout le tour au complet comme au hockey. Ça faisait tout le tour. Les matinées et les soirées. Ils en faisaient deux par jour, trois pistes, et il y avait des numéros, et dans les années '60, ils interchangeaient d'une piste à l'autre.[431]

One interviewee recalled a now-closed dance space with joyful nostalgia:

> À l'époque, ça s'appelait Le Building Danse. C'était sur Mont-Royal. C'était une place géniale.[432]

A deep emotion was similarly expressed by a performer remembering touring with Cirque du Soleil in the mid 1980s, and, between shows, being led to the mast at the top of the big top by the show's wire walking duo (a moment difficult to imagine with union and safety regulationstoday) and looking out onto the skyline of Montréal:

> Un autre moment extraordinaire, s'est de voir en plein Montréal. Antoine et Agathe, ils m'ont amené sur la toile de chapiteau à monter vers l'extérieur à m'asseoir sur le mat. Moment

[430] "Hockey; Blinking Back the Tears, Montreal Closes Its Forum," The New York Times, March 12, 1996, https://www.nytimes.com/1996/03/12/sports/hockey-blinking-back-the-tears-montreal-closes-its-forum.html
[431] "OK, so, first moment: sitting on the edge of the Forum, along the side boards, watching my dad. If it was a hockey game, I'd have been glued to the side boards. I was in the front row. Back then, in the '60s, it was full all the time. There were lots of shows. It was full, full, full. People would be sitting all the way around, just like at hockey games. The audience went all the way around. Mornings and evenings. They'd do two shows a day, with three rings, and there'd be acts, and in the '60s, they'd switch from one ring to another." Alain Zouvi, Interview with the researcher. March 9, 2020.
[432] "Back then, it was called Le Building Danse. It was on Mont-Royal Avenue. It was a great place." Peter James, Interview with the researcher. December 1, 2021

> inoubliable. C'est sûr, tu t'assois, tu as 19 ans, il fait beau soleil, tu es assis dans un vide, tu réalises tout un rêve quand même, j'ai réalisé mon rêve, et assis là, je n'oublierai jamais ça.[433]

Unsurprisingly, personal attachments to performing venues deeply influenced performers' memories of performing there:

> C'était pas juste un chapiteau c'était notre chapiteau ! […] Un chapiteau gris avec du rouge et du jaune… et collé en arrière les camions-remorques […] on avait pas de backstage, quand le rideau s'ouvrait c'était à l'extérieur…[434]

Other times, interviewees recounted memories in which the venue formed an exception to what had been their routine:

> We were touring in Alaska. And normally Pickle Family Circus performed outside. Like instead of a big top tent, we just had sidewalls and then we set up bleachers, and the ring in the middle. So people entered kind of like a circular area, and they would go through a tent, like a long tubular tent.
> But the performance that I actually remember, we were in a gymnasium. And we would do the same set-up in a gymnasium. So we would still have the sidewalls all around. And then you would set up the bleachers. Well, first we set up the bleachers, then we'd put the sidewall, which was like also sewn by my mom or something.[435]

Interviewees in phase one also recalled spatial aspects like the proximity and layout of audience seating influencing their performing memories. In several cases, the remembered spatial organization of specific performance venues heightened the sensory-based memories of the performers:

> In the opera house in Damascus, there are three stages, the big one, a medium-sized and a small one which is a multidisciplinary space. This is the one that we were in. And it looks more like a studio theater rather than a stage. So the first row for the audience is on the same floor as me. […]
> I remember the audience. There were a lot of colors in their clothes. My friend was wearing a red sweater. And there was a lot of jeans and a lot of colors so it was like really colorful from the audience, what I was seeing.

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[433] "Another extraordinary moment was seeing the full Montréal. Antoine and Agathe took me up to the top of the big top to sit on the mast. An unforgettable moment. There you are, you're sitting there, you're 19 years old, it's a sunny day, you're sitting in there in the expanse, you're realizing a whole dream. Well, I realized my dream, and sitting there, I'll never forget that." Nathalie Sabourin, Interview with the researcher. April 20, 2020.
[434] "It wasn't just a big top, it was our big top! [...] A gray tent with red and yellow... and stuck behind it were the trailer trucks [...] we had no backstage, when the curtains opened, they opened to the outside."
Nicolette Hazewinkel, Interview with the researcher. March 16, 2020
[435] Gypsy Snider, Interview with the researcher. March 17, 2020.

Because like the people are very close, I can also smell them. I can smell their perfumes or their deodorants or their like human smells and… yeah… this is also nice because I'm very close to them. I just remember smelling a lot of deodorants. Like some Nivea deodorant, like I know that [*makes sniffing sound in lieu of a word*] that I recognized. Um, I can't remember what it all was specifically… it was mostly male deodorant, because there were a lot more guys on the floor than girls.[436]

The Winchester Street Theatre is a converted church and it has sort of a domed ceiling. And looking up into what in modern dance we call a high lift while doing these arm gestures, um, I was thinking about some very specific things. […] looking up towards the ceiling was happening at the same moment as I was reaching my left arm towards the upstage.
[…]
So there was this stretching of the flesh across my rib cage over my heart, at the same time that my sternum was reaching up towards the ceiling with my gaze. So I was looking up. My chest was expanding. My right arm was compressing the side of my chest opposite my heart. So there's this opening of the front of the body up, and, and on the left. And a sense of, um, the freedom created of opening one side, and the consoling or the reassurance of covering these organs from the right. So in a way I was being protected from the audience on the right, joined by my fellow dancers upstage left of me, opened to the great doming sky of the church. [437]

C'était ma plus belle expérience. […] C'était un spectacle que j'ai fait en Allemagne au Palazzo Colombino. Dans un petit Spiegeltent.
La plupart des spectacles que j'ai faits c'était toujours de très, très grandes scènes avec beaucoup de public. Je parle de par exemple 2500 personnes avec le Cirque (du Soleil) en moyenne à des salles plus grandes 700/800 place dans d'autres théâtres. Et dans cette tente-là, c'était 250.
Alors c'est un mélange extrêmement intimiste […] Je m'en rappelle le premier enchaînement, j'étais en mode performance, mais plus en apprivoisement de l'espace.
[…] Je découvrais l'espace, et c'est aussi que ce n'était pas très haut […]. J'avais, peut-être trois mètres de corde et c'est tout.
Dans un contexte comme ça je pouvais toucher les gens, je pouvais marcher à travers les gens, tous les voir, c'était vraiment de l'ordre de créer un lien véritablement avec le public.
Je dirais que tout a été ajusté. [438]

[436] Hoor Malas, Interview with the researcher, December 7, 2021.
[437] Neil Sochasky, Interview with the researcher. May 31, 2021.
[438] "It was the most beautiful experience I've had. [...] It was a show I did in Germany at the Palazzo Colombino. In a small Spiegeltent. Most of the shows I've done have always been on very, very large stages with lots of people. I'm talking about, for example, 2500 people with Cirque (du Soleil) on average, to larger venues, and other theaters with 700/800. And in this tent, there were 250. So it's extremely intimate. […] I remember the first sequence, I was in performance mode, but I was getting a feel for the space. [...] I was discovering the space, and it wasn't very high [...]. I had maybe three meters of rope and that was it. In a context like that I could touch people, I could walk in between people, look at all of them. It was really about creating a real bond with the audience. I'd say everything was shifted." Geneviève Bessette, Interview with the researcher. December 12, 2022

This thesis does not attempt to compare or analyze *space* vs. *place* (a performance venue seems to be both), and is not focused on the collective and personal histories linked to specific cities (another area whose scope exceeds this project). Of course, the performance memory interviews evoked these: one performer's description of returning to perform in Témiscamingue, Québec, the area where he'd grown up, decades after leaving; many performers' described memories of performing in specific cities and countries. Meanwhile, one interviewee reported not remembering the city or town of a memory she had described from her childhood, perhaps because of the nature of childhood memory retrieval, or simply of childhood (sometimes kids are thinking about other things!), or perhaps because she grew up touring regularly, and might have spent more time in the venue (in this case, a fair) than in the surrounding town (many adult colleagues and friends of mine who tour extensively don't always know what town they are in, especially if they are switching cities very frequently).

> It was a fair. But I have no remembrance what city or town it was in. [*laughs*.] There are so many.[439]

Philosopher Forrest Clingerman writes that "[n]arratives of place are meaningful only when grounded on living presentness of the past, which individual and collective memory offers."[440] The themes and questions on intersections of memory, narrative, dramaturgy, and performance spaces that this project encountered exceed the scope of what could be covered in this thesis. While much has already been written and researched in terms of the roles of place and site in performance and in terms of memory in/of/and architecture, the practice of interviewing performers, spectators, and others present about memories of specific performance venues seems

[439] Lijana Wallenda, Interview with the researcher. March 9, 2020.
[440] Forrest Clingerman, "Memory, Imagination, and the Hermeneutics of Place," in *Interpreting Nature*, ed. Brian Treanor, Martin Drenthen, and David Utsler (Fordham University Press, 2013), p. 258.

to reveal specific dramaturgies of place and could offer information of interest to strands of cultural history, dramaturgy, audience research, and memory studies, among other fields. Extending on the research on circus buildings in Europe and collective memory conducted by Marija Divac, Milena Krklje, and Sara Milošević,[441] this type of research could also be of interest to further studies relating to circus histories and historiography. These rich areas of research merit further attention.

[441] Marija Divac, Milena Krklješ, and Sara Milošević, "Circus Is a Performance but It Is Also a Building—Memory of Circus Buildings in Europe," *City, Territory and Architecture* 9, no. 1 (April 19, 2022).

B. (Un) translating memories of sound

Figure 10

After-shows research showing, July 27th, 2022, photo by Antonia Gueorguieva

This research-creation project led to unanticipated themes and questions relating to memory and translation of sound in performance. I had not expected to focus on this aspect as even though sound and music have always played huge roles in my practice (as with the practices of many others), I am not specialized in these areas (I am not a musician, sound professional, or music/sound scholar).

The performance memory interviews in phase one revealed contrasting relationships between memory, performing, and sound. One performer could not remember any sounds from the performance memories he recounted and then told me that the state of being he attempts to reach in performance is one in which he barely hears sound:

> Tu sais, quand je suis sur scène, de toute facon, quand je suis sur scène j'entends presque plus rien. J'entends… j'entends, mais je m'en fous. En fait, le plus important, c'est — [*sound of coffee grinding in the background suddenly interrupts the interview*] C'est bon, c'est bon, c'est bon ! C'est un fond sonore ! [*laughs*] Non, c'est vraiment… Quand je suis sur scène, je m'en câlisse. […] Pourtant, je sais que j'écoute ! […] Mais c'est juste une hyper conscience qui fait que... Je m'appuie pas sur le son. J'essaie en tout cas de pas m'appuyer sur le son.[442]

His experience is clearly not universal. Other interviewed performers described a much different type of attention to sound and silence:

> It's very quiet in that performance. I can hear everything. I can hear people move, shift. But there are certain moments when it's very silent. And it's like - it's really scary 'cause it's very, very silent. Like I know if I do [*inhales*] they will hear it. This is how silent it is.[443]

> Trying to catch another person, that was crazy. Just to reach for the hands. […] And just a feeling, getting caught. It was such a relief […] It was like, *ahhhhhhhh*! And you know, the swing goes faster with the weight, so that feeling also, oh my God! And also the sounds. I remember they would call, *hup*! To know when to go. Because it was really fresh for me, so I was really guided a lot. I remember, it's almost like my ears became satellites. Trying to listen to all the cues.[444]

Sometimes it appeared that specific music was remembered especially when it was had a strong dramaturgical or personal association, or when it involved a very familiar piece or song:

> Je sais qu'au moment donné, elle chantait. Elle chantait ceci: *I don't want to set the world on fire, I just want to start a flame in your heart.* Elle chantait ça. La toune au complet là. [445]

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[442] "You know, when I'm on stage, in any case… when I'm on stage, I hardly hear anything. I hear... I hear, but I don't care. In fact, the most important thing is—"
[*sound of coffee grinding in the background suddenly interrupts the interview*]
"That's right, that's right, that's right! A soundtrack in the background! [*laughs*] No, really, it's... When I'm on stage, I don't give a damn [about sound]. But I know I'm listening! [...] But it's just a hyper-awareness that makes me... I don't rely on sound. In any case, I try not to rely on sound."
Peter James, Interview with the researcher. December 1, 2021.

[443] Hoor Malas, Interview with the researcher, December 7, 2021.

[444] Jinny Jacinto. Interview with the researcher, April 10, 2020.

[445] "I know that at one point she was singing. She was singing this*: I don't want to set the world on fire, I just want to start a flame in your heart.* She sang that. The whole song."
Peter James, Interview with the researcher. December 1, 2021.

Unsurprisingly, the singer I interviewed in phase 1 vividly remembered the music she was performing in every memory she recounted. She also remembered how it felt in her body to sing, the sounds of her fellow performers, sound checks before shows, the acoustics of the performance spaces in the memories discussed, and the feeling of *making* sound, speaking about things like, "the weight of the sound that I made," or describing the types of sounds she'd produced:

> There have been times when I've just opened up and made sound, and it's been clearly not my sound, it's just been sound that I was supposed to make.
>
> There was one song from the gospel group that I worked with for about five years… so we would always use one of our songs as our sound check song. And um, I don't remember the name of the song, but there was a time when you know, in that song, we have to find our smallest part of our voices as well as our largest parts of our voices. There was, um, one time in the sound check, I remember this vividly because my voice just opened up and all of a sudden I was singing an octave higher… but it was so open, it was like… I was just like surprised, my eyes were surprised, and then I remember looking at my boss, and I was like, *I wonder who was singing that?!* [laughs][446]

For many performers, memories of music in performance were entangled with their memory of their musician colleagues' personalities and talent:

> There was a small part with trumpet. And the player is fantastic. He's one of the best in Syria, basically. So he was really improving on that part, which… it was perfect, I thought, like*, this is great, yes!* [*laughs*] And, so this is the trumpet.
> And the cello was an electrical cello. And I loved the sound of electoral cello, it was the first time I heard something like this, like electrical cello, like… wow!!! […] And, um, the bass guitar, and a keyboard, I think, yeah… Um, and it's very rhythmic. It's very accented. A staccato kind of music with a trumpet going in and out of it, it was just really…I really liked the music, they're brilliant musicians. [447]

In the post-event spectator interviews, memories of the presence of the musician far outnumbered memories of the actual music. Very few spectators could remember the music, despite many saying they'd liked it:

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[446] Renee Benson, Interview with the researcher, March 13, 2021.
[447] Hoor Malas, Interview with the researcher, December 7, 2021.

> Je me souviens pas de tout de la musique. Je me souviens du musicien qui était à côté de moi. Je me souviens qu'il y a eu de la musique. Oui, le musicien était comme multi-instrumentaliste, et il y avait quand même des trucs cools, mais je me souviens plus des voix, je me souviens plus des moments où les gens parlaient seuls je dirais.[448]
>
> Alors, je me rappelle d'un multi-instrumentiste… sympathique, souriant… mais quelles étaient les musiques exactement ? [*rires*] C'est plus clair pour moi ! Mais je me rappelle qu'il avait l'air très complice avec eux et avec nous… qu'il était très complice, oui, mais je me souviens plus exactement ce qui était la musique. [449]
>
> Regarde, peut-être que la personne qui faisait le son je pourrais dire à peu près elle était où dans la salle. C'est kinesthésique là. Mais écoute, tu me demanderais quelle musique qu'il y avait, je me rappelle pas. C'est ça. Moi, je me rappelle surtout des voix. [450]
>
> I remember the musician playing with a lot of… now I don't remember what he was playing with! But um, lots of different sounds. And surprising and unexpected sounds. I think I remember the sounds less. Well, I remember listening to the stories, and I remember hearing sometimes a language that I didn't know, or not even being sure if it was a language I didn't know or made up sounds. [451]

The most vivid sound-based description came from a spectator who is a musician herself:

> C'est marrant, je sais pas comment décrire ça, le son, avec des mots, mais… je pense que c'était doux, même s'il y avait des différents moments et tout, et… une circulation… un son qui circule… qu'est-ce que je pourrais dire… c'était quand même très hétérogène aussi, je trouvais que ça incluait quelque chose de l'ordre de… d'une communauté un peu joyeuse avec plein de [*rires*]… c'est comme si c'était des sons qui appartenaient de plein de directions et qui étaient regroupées et qui formaient un ensemble à la fois hétérogène, mais quelque chose de plutôt doux … ce n'était pas très fort le son non plus. On étendait quand même assez distinctement tout le monde, tout ce qui déroulait, autant les paroles que les pieds, autant les gens qui marchent que les sons… oui, je dirais quelque chose un peu comme ça.[452]

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[448] "I don't remember the music at all. I remember the musician next to me. I remember there was music. Yes, the musician was like a multi-instrumentalist, and there was still some cool stuff, but I remember the voices better. I'd say I remember more the times when people were talking to themselves."
Maxime D.-Pomerleau, Interview with the researcher. December 5, 2022

[449] "So, I remember a multi-instrumentalist, friendly, smiling. But what exactly was the music? [*laughs*] That's not clear anymore to me! But I do remember that he seemed very engaged with them and with us... He was very engaged, yes, but I can't remember exactly what the music was."
Stéphane Gentilini, Interview with the researcher. November 18, 2022.

[450] "Look, the person who was making the sound, maybe I could say was where they were in the room. It's kinesthetic. But listen, if you ask me what music was playing, I don't remember. That's just it. What I mainly remember are voices." Françoise Boudreault, Interview with the researcher. November 29, 2022.

[451] Naila Kuhlmann, Interview with the researcher. May 14, 2023.

[452] "It's funny, I don't know how to describe the sound in words, but... I think it was soft, even if there were different moments and everything, and... a circulation... a sound that circulates... what can I say... it was also very heterogeneous, I thought it included something along the lines of... it's as if it were sounds that came from many directions and were grouped together to form an ensemble that was at once heterogeneous, but something rather

One spectator remembered wondering how the sounds in the room were being experienced by her partner who is hard of hearing:

> I do remember a lot of the stories and being very aware of hearing… because my partner who I was with is hard of hearing, so I was wondering what I could hear in the room and what he could hear in the room and how where they [the performers] were placed would affect what I could hear. [453]

During the phase two research-creation sessions in the studio, we worked with two different musicians (the first had a scheduling conflict in July, and was replaced by the musician that the interviewed spectators remember in the accounts above). During those research sessions, the musicians had to translate or transpose memories involving many other art forms (circus, dance, pieces that might be categorized strictly as performance or live art, theater), selecting, like the other participating artists, which aspects to focus on (meaning, atmosphere, rhythm, described actions, the feel of the speaker, the feel or actions of other people mentioned, etc.). While from my position as a non-musician, this exercise involved many of the same questions as were at play when any other artists were participating, a researcher who *is* a musician would be able to examine other angles. Further research involving memory and translation of sound (for the purpose of this argument, I am including *music* in the term *sound*) in performance might reveal musical and scientific information I did not have the expertise to examine. Further research investigating memories of sound in performance might also inquire about such memories among people with hearing differences, a subject this project encountered but which could not be properly explored or addressed.

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soft… The sound wasn't very loud either. We could hear everyone quite clearly, everything that was going on, the words as well as the feet, the people walking as well as the sounds... yes, I'd say something like that."
Gaëlle Scali, Interview with the researcher. November 24, 2022.

[453] Naila Kuhlmann, Interview with the researcher. May 14, 2023.

Considerations for Further Research 2: Three areas to further explore

Three areas stood out in particular in this research process as having *started* to be explored, but which will benefit from further research and research applications: a) investigations into the nature, reverberations, and implications of memories of audience members; b) collaborative engagement with histories of circus and other performance genres and c) collaborative, interdisciplinary approaches to research performance memories.

A. Further investigations into the nature, reverberations, and implications memories of audience members

"Aesthetic response […] is not just when the artwork is present to the senses, but before and afterward too," writes neuroaesthetics scholar G. Gabrielle Starr.[454] While this project did not focus on the *before*, its research with the *afterward* suggests that question of how a performance is remembered can offer relevant information for performing venues, historians, cultural workers, and artists.

"Nobody remembers the audience," lament cultural scholars Matthew Reason, Lynne Conner, Katya Johanson, and Ben Walmsley. "Their names aren't written down in anthologies; they don't appear in the roll of credits […] They are rarely noted by critics, while producers, performers, marketers and even researchers are all inclined to make assumptions about them rather than work to understand them."[455] What might the overlooked memories of these largely unremembered audience members be able to tell us about the histories of the performances they attended as well as the public and personal circumstances that surrounded, preceded, and

[454] G. Gabrielle Starr, *Just in Time: Temporality, Aesthetic Experience, and Cognitive Neuroscience* (MIT Press, 2023), xl.
[455] Matthew Reason, Lynne Conner, Katya Johanson and Ben Walmsley, "The Paradox of Audiences" in *Routledge Companion to Audiences and the Performing Arts*, (Routledge, 2022), 3.

succeeded those shows? What else might searching for these spectators' memories reveal, not just about the performances in question but about temporality and the nature of remembering, and about the underlying thoughts and events intertwined with those spectators' attendance? Montréal performing venues sometimes set up boxes or QR codes in their lobbies via which a spectator, upon leaving a performance, can leave a comment or can vote for audience appreciation-types of awards. How much richer and more informative might the data be for cultural organizations and artists if they had clues towards the long-term echoing of their works, about ways in which the performances they present might resonate and be remembered (or forgotten) by those who were there watching them? What might we learn about performance reception through this rethinking of practices? How might cultural landscapes and offerings shift if — rather than making decisions, policies, and art itself in response to information such as the knee-jerk reactions of the public — cultural programmers, cultural policy-makers, and artists could look to the fluctuating meanings their audiences ascribe to memories of a particular performance event, remembered across spans of time?

The responses in the post-event spectator interview series suggest that a longitudinal approach to interviewing audience members could offer relevant information to both cultural organizations and artists. "I would participate in a questionnaire like this about any of the shows I see," reported one spectator, who is also a choreographer and dancer. "I love this practice of thinking about what I still think about. Even sitting here and recalling the show brought back images I otherwise would never have returned to. Why is that?"[456]

The interviews also revealed information about spectators' feelings and decisions in terms what are sometimes considered "wraparound" activities like the post-showing discussion:

[456] Cai Glover, Written exchange with the researcher. May 23, 2023.

> I remember being shy about the talkback, and we decided to leave because, in part I was just not ready to vocalize what I felt […] then you know just, these like social factors um between us [*her and the person she attended with*], so then I think we were ready to leave, but then we discussed it for a long time after.[457]

Another participant told me she almost didn't join the discussion because she was worried she didn't have anything "intelligent or creative" to say:

> Une partie de moi est souvent comme nerveuse quand il faut participer à des discussions comme ça, parce que j'ai l'impression que j'ai pas nécessairement des choses intelligentes ou créatives à dire.[458]

Seemingly banal factors like going to the bathroom after an event seemed to influence the wavering between whether to go or stay:

> Je dois quand même avouer qu'il y a une petite partie de moi qui s'est dit, *ah, je vais rentrer tout de suite, je vais pas rester pour la discussion,* parce que j'étais comme… mais pas nerveuse, mais j'étais comme, ah, *j'ai rien d'intéressant à dire*, puis aussi juste, je sais pas, je suis allée à la toilette pis j'étais comme, *oh je vais rentrer,* pis ensuite j'étais comme, *non, je vais rester un peu plus longtemps*, pis là, j'étais vraiment contente de rester.[459]

To my surprise (I didn't ask any direct questions about the discussion component of the event), many spectators spent a large portion of the post-event memory interview describing the post-showing discussion, often melding it into their recollection of the project and evening as a whole. One person described the "final image" of that discussion as if it were a scene in a performance:

> Je me rappelle l'image finale quand on a tous terminé. On était tous en cercle à discuter… et notre photographe avec son micro au centre. [460]

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[457] Naila Kuhlmann, Interview with the researcher. May 14, 2023.

[458] "A part of me is often kind of nervous when I have to take part in discussions like that, because I don't feel I necessarily have anything intelligent or creative to say."
Odile Laforest, Interview with the researcher. December 9, 2022.

[459] " I have to admit that there was a little part of me that was like, *ah, I'm going to go home right now*, *I'm not going to stay for the discussion,* because I was like... but not nervous, but I was like, *ah, I don't have anything interesting to say,* and then also just, I don't know, I went to the bathroom and I was like, *oh I'm going to go home*, and then I was like, *no, I'm going to stay a little longer*, and then I was really happy to have stayed."
Odile Laforest, Interview with the researcher. December 9, 2022.

[460] "I remember the final image when we'd all finished. We were all in a circle talking... with our photographer with his microphone in the center."
Gaëlle Scali, Interview with the researcher. November 24, 2022.

While of course those who don't enjoy talkbacks probably didn't stay and didn't sign up to be interviewed, many of those who were interviewed described the discussion as an important component of their experience of the event:

> J'ai beaucoup aimé entendre, je trouvais que ça amenait une autre construction. Ça a ajouté une couche additionnelle à ce qu'on venait de voir et d'assister.[461]

Interviewees also described the ways the experience had continued upon leaving:

> Je suis allée avec une amie, et quand on est sortie, on a beaucoup parlé de ça pendant le chemin qu'on a fait ensemble. Donc elle a partagé ses impressions, moi j'ai partagé mes impressions.[462]

> Après, on a marché vers le métro avec des gens que je connaissais pas beaucoup, c'était intéressant. On a parlé de ce qu'on avait vu.[463]

> I remember we walked home a good part of the way because we wanted to keep talking. So we were talking and walking along our bikes… and that it brought about a lot of good discussion around these questions of what… of how we expect to go see a performance, what is a more improvisational or more of an experimental format and what that brings out versus something more… traditional [laughs], in terms of a performance. [464]

> Le retour à la maison à vélo m'a ramené à plein de retours à vélo d'autres spectacles antérieurs.
> Il y a quelque chose que j'aime beaucoup dans ces moments-là, souvent je rentre toute seule, donc d'être seule… parce que quand on vit des expériences de scène, on est entourée de plein de monde, donc là, c'est le fun d'être vraiment seule à un certain moment dans l'expérience, en fait même si le spectacle est terminé, l'expérience continue à être vécue, tsé. [465]

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[461] "I really liked hearing about it, I thought it added another layer to what we'd just seen and witnessed. It added another layer to what we'd just seen and witnessed."
Geneviève Bessette, Interview with the researcher. December 12, 2022.

[462] "I went with a friend, and when we left, we talked about it a lot on the way together. So she shared her impressions, I shared my impressions " Paloma Leyton, Interview with the researcher. November 17, 2022.

[463] "Afterwards, we walked to the metro with people I didn't know very well, which was interesting. We talked about what we'd seen." Nicolette Hazewinkel, Interview with the researcher. December 12, 2022.

[464] Naila Kuhlmann, Interview with the researcher. May 14, 2023.

[465] "The bike ride home brought me back to many other bike rides from previous shows. There's something I really love about those moments. Often I go home alone, so to be alone... because when you're at performing experiences, you're surrounded by lots of people, so it's fun to be really alone at a certain point in the experience. In fact, even if the show is over, the experience continues to be lived, you know."
Odile Laforest, Interview with the researcher. December 9, 2022.

One particularly frank spectator admitted he had not enjoyed the performance, but reported he continued to think about it:

> I didn't, on the whole, enjoy the performance but I thought about it a lot more than a lot of shows that I do enjoy. [466]

While I did not seek opinions or concrete feedback on my work in this project, learning what some of the audience members remembered helped me better assess what the work might have been "doing" (or not doing!). I'm hesitant to suggest this tool as a blanket strategy for all creative processes, as doing so raises questions about the timing and nature of feedback during creative processes (areas again which are beyond the scope of this project), but further research and exploration would be interesting to follow.

The experiment of interviewing spectators several months after a performance event persuaded me to pursue and further this type of research in future endeavors. Others interested in reception theories, audience research, dramaturgy, aesthetics, memory studies, performance historiography, performance-making processes, and cultural engagement (*médiation culturelle*) policies and practices might find variations and developments of this research relevant to their fields. In addition, further research and further applications of that research might inform groups working in cultural creation, programming, and policy in taking a long view in terms of the impacts and reverberations of their creative and administrative decisions.

B. Intersections of public history, artistic collaboration, and circus historiography

Historian Marius Kwint writes of being told during his circus history research that "for the most part, circus people are not very interested" in history, later going so far as to suggest that "most circuses fail to engage in a conscious dialogue with their own past and so risk becoming slaves to

[466] Cai Glover, Written exchange with the researcher. May 23, 2023.

a dwindling repertoire of hackneyed traditions."[467] The enthusiasm among *After-shows* participants suggests otherwise. One participating artist in this project, a seasoned circus performer, told me he me thought "everyone should do a workshop like this." While it is unrealistic to expect that everyone would share his level of interest, the ways that participating artists spoke and worked in the project suggest that there is a palpable desire in many circus and other performers to engage with other artists' memories and pasts.

There seems to be increasing interest in what Emily Sahakian describes as "what performance can teach us about history and what history can teach us about performance."[468] Further collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches connecting artistic process, circus and other performance history, and public history could yield more sensitive results than the ones Kwint warns of.

C. Collaborative, interdisciplinary approaches to research performance memories

This project drew on oral history and research-creation methodologies to research performance memories, applying theories and considering literature mainly from translation studies, memory studies, performance studies, and historiography. Collaborative research involving specialists across disciplines might help assure that performance memory scholarship benefits from, or at least stays aware of, growing knowledge in areas like the neuroscience of memory and epigenetic memory, and shifting practices in cultural fields

Research combining translation studies and memory studies is already well established, advanced by scholars such as Siobhan Brownlie,[469] Sharon Deane-Cox and Anneleen

[467] Marius Kwint, "Circus," in *The Cambridge Companion to Theatre History*, ed. David Wiles and Christine Dymkowski (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 210.
[468] "Emily Sahakian," UGA Today, March 8, 2021, https://news.uga.edu/emily-sahakian/.
[469] Siobhan Brownlie, *Mapping Memory In Translation* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

Spiessens,[470] Susan Bassnett,[471] and Claudia Jünke and Désirée Schyns,[472] among others. Drawing on this growing scholarship, further angles could be examined to research and better understand performance memories.

Further collaborative research processes involving specialists in memory and neuroscience, in cultural and collective history and historiography, in dramaturgy and aesthetics, and in translation, will support the production of important knowledge into the ways we remember and forget performance events of the past.

[470] Sharon Deane-Cox and Anneleen Spiessens, *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Memory*, (Routledge, 2022).
[471] Susan Bassnett, "Translation as Re-Membering," in *Cultural Memory: Essays on European Literature and History*, Edric Caldicott and Anne Fuchs, eds. (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2003): 293–309.
[472] Claudia Jünke and Désirée Schyns, eds. *Translating Memories of Violent Pasts: Memory Studies and Translation Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2023).

Provisional conclusion

Around the time I was attempting to finish this thesis, I read a translation of Clarice Lispector's *The Apprenticeship, or The Book of Pleasures.* The short novel opens with a comma and ends with a colon, the first line starting and the closing line finishing midsentence. A part of me wishes I could copy her and do the same with this paper. It might be a cliché to end a thesis by repeating that conclusion is illusory and impossible, but in the case of a thesis that explored, in part, incompletion and provisionality, "wrapping up" feels like a particular kind of betrayal. That said, this paper has described a research-creation process that involved: 1) collecting other artists' performance memories through oral history interviews; 2) co-conducting a series of performance research experiments in which a group of performers reinterpreted or recreated off of excerpts of those interviews (i.e. a group of artists performing the memories of other artists); 3) re-presenting the reperformed memory fragments in a performance event, open to the public; and 4) interviewing spectators of that event about their memories of that evening, held four to eleven months after to examine ways temporal distances might shift interpretation and memory. These processes provided means to examine and engage with what remains after a live performance, focusing on personal histories and memories that may be associated with them. They also offered concrete "playing fields" to attempt to work and create with the "presence of absence" that translation, memory, and historical representation all carry in light of the absence of the "original": what Ricœur calls "the aporia that is constituted by the present representation of an absent thing marked with the seal of anteriority, of temporal distance."[473]

[473] Paul Ricœur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 494.

These research-creation processes lent themselves to translation theories as their reinterpreted meanings and forms shifted across different temporalities, contexts, bodies, artistic genres, and personal sensibilities. Untranslatability emerged as the clearest research lens and dramaturgical angle in this process, viewed through theorists such as Barbara Cassin, who points to untranslatables as "signs of an open-ended, virtually infinite, ongoing work-in-progress,"[474] and who, writes Emily Apter, "tether[s] the untranslatable to the instability of meaning and sense-making."[475]

While this position on untranslatability has drawn criticism among some translation theorists, and while its application to subjects like interpretations of performance memories might displease others, I hoped that considering the "*intranslatable* […] a condition of joy, not a failure," as writes Erín Moure[476] might foster a generative, sensitive form of creative inquiry in this project.

Looking at untranslatability as an "intransigent nub of meaning that triggers endless translating in response to its resistant singularity" as per Emily Apter[477] shed light onto the processes of attempting to reinterpret and re-represent past performance moments and the memories of others: both attempting to respect and acknowledge what is gone and/or someone else's — untouchable, unknowable —and continuing to examine, imagine, and create with aspects of it, as it increasingly becomes something else.

Considering the untranslatability of memories of once-live performances might seem abstract but is an invitation to further research and consider their representations — the recognition of

[474] Barbara Cassin, André Habib, and Marc-Alexandre Reinhardt, "The Untranslatable: A New Theoretical Fulcrum? an Exchange with Barbara Cassin," *SubStance* 44, no. 2 (2015): pp. 7.
[475] Emily Apter, preface of "Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon," in *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, ed. Barbara Cassin (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), vii.
[476] Erín Moure, "En Passant : Une Passeuse de Ce Qui Ne Passe Pas Partout…," *Hopscotch Translation*, February 12, 2023, https://hopscotchtranslation.com/2023/01/22/moure-en-passant/
[477] Emily S. Apter, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (London: Verso, 2013), 378.

difference and absence serving as a potential motor rather than a brake — and has potential applications and implications in performance historiography, audience research, cultural programming and policy, memory studies, dramaturgical approaches, and performance-making processes.

This polyvocal project gave way to questions about the actual nature, divisions, and creations of voices in collaborative performance creations working with other people's memories. Even though this project was predicated on the idea that repeating something will not lead to that "same" something (that same phrase, that same moment in time, that same performance, that same voice) but will give way to something else, something related, this project led to unexpected emotion and frustration in the face of what couldn't be repeated, suggesting variations of repetition generate possibility and also potential sadness over what is unrepeatable. The project also gave way to reconstructed performance memories and pointed to areas of research that merit further attention, including: intersections of dramaturgy and memories of performance spaces; memory and translation of sound in performance; spectator memory research and research applications; intersections between public history, artistic engagement, and circus (and other performance) history; and further interdisciplinary approaches to research performance memories.

In a notebook entry during the heat of this research process, I wrote that I felt I was "inhaling others' lives and others' words." Revisiting one of Michelet's archival accounts — when, during a period working in the Archives nationales in Paris amid "papers and parchments" that "desired no better than to be restored to the light of the day," Michelet reports: "[A]s I breathed in their

dust, I saw them rise up"[478] — historian Carolyn Steedman writes that "it is the historian's act of inhalation that gives life."[479] But what about when the historian, or the artist, or the researcher exhales?

This is not a rare occurrence but something, if we are lucky enough to be alive, that happens thousands of times every day. The routine phenomenon of inhaling and exhaling reminds me in many ways of translating, in which you are both a performer and a spectator, reader and writer, breathing in voices and words and fragments of lives, and breathing out others.

"Are they not papers, but lives of men," Michelet writes about the "papers and parchments" whose dust he breathes in (for the purpose of this analysis, we can easily replace "men" with "other people"), later writing that as they were inhaled and then rose, that they gave way to a "galvanic dance, which they performed around me," a dance that he attempted to "reproduce in this work."[480] This research-creation project has questioned the replicability that might be presumed in the notion of reproduction, but it still looks to the image of other people's past lives and words becoming dust that becomes a dance that becomes a written text as something to "never cease to (not)" attempt.

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[478] This is the same citation Steedman drew from, but is not the same selection of passages or translation that she used.
See: Jules Michelet, *The History of France*, trans. G H Smith (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1883).
Steedman cites and appears to translate from the original :
Jules Michelet, "Préface de l'Histoire de France" (1869).
See: Carolyn Steedman, "Something She Called a Fever: Michelet, Derrida, and Dust," *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 4 (October 2001), 1171.

[479] Steedman, "Something She Called a Fever: Michelet, Derrida, and Dust," 1171.

[480] Jules Michelet, *The History of France*, trans. G H Smith (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1883).

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Appendices

Appendix A: Table of research phases

2020 and 2021 (prototype interview test in 2019): 16 performance memory interviews

2020: After-shows performance research, pandemic phase: research-creation on Zoom with three performers

2022: After-shows performance research, in-studio phase: residency at UQAM Coeur des sciences with eight performers

July 2022 (rescheduled many times): Public research-showing event

November 2022-May 2023: 11 post-event audience memory interviews

Appendix B: Table of performance memory interviews

The table below briefly outlines the 16 performance memory interviews of this project in chronological order, noting interview participants, dates, locations, languages, contexts, background information, and content.

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT(S)	**INTERVIEW DATE, LOCATION, LANGUAGE, AND CONTEXT**	**INTERVIEWEE BACKGROUND (as relates to live performance histories)**	**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PERFORMANCE MEMORIES DISCUSSED IN INTERVIEW**
Irina Bozyan Also present: Irina's close friend and colleague Elena Fomina who acted as a translator, as well as Elena's granddaughter. I was accompanied by a Russian-speaking friend who later helped with the transcription.	March 4, 2019 at the National Circus School of Montréal Library Conversation in French and Russian (questions in French and responses in Russian). Context: This prototype interview was conducted in the framework of Luis Sotelo Castro's Oral History Performance course with the Concordia Theatre department.	Former performer born into a family of circus artists (she recounted during the interview that her father was the founder of a Kyrgyz circus troupe and that her grandfather was a clown). At the time of finishing this thesis, she is a teacher at the National Circus School of Montréal, where I met her as a student in 2004.	This prototype interview was structured around the exercise of recounting single moment during a remembered performance, in detail. Irina responded with a memory of falling and then getting back up while performing with Circus Europa in Saratov, Russia in 1997. She recounted this as a comic episode (she wasn't hurt; she got up and, to applause, finished the show) and laughed as she recollected the event. The memory led her to speak about her trainer, the leader of an all-female Cossack equestrian acrobatics troupe, and also led to recollections of her father and other family members. It was punctuated by occasional reflections on what she felt circus at meant at the time of her remembered performance ("celebration").

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT(S)	INTERVIEW DATE, LOCATION, LANGUAGE, AND CONTEXT	INTERVIEWEE BACKGROUND (as relates to live performance histories)	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PERFORMANCE MEMORIES DISCUSSED IN INTERVIEW
Kadri Hanson	February 24, 2020 at Concordia Library (Montréal) Interview held in English. Context: first formal round of *After-shows* interviews.	Circus performer based in Tallinn, Estonia.	Kadri shared a memory of an aerial performance in her hometown of Tallinn. While sensorily vivid and interesting, I ended up not using this interview in the project because the memory recounted was too recent. The interview helped me understand that a longer temporal shift between the memory and the reinterpretation was important for the project.
Alain Zouvi	March 9, 2020 at Concordia (Montréal) Interview held in French. Context: first formal round of *After-shows* interviews.	Actor and theater director, born in Montréal in 1959, the son of actors. (External link: https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alain_Zouvi)	Alain generously shared many memories. He recalled: -sitting in the old Forum in Montréal (also a beloved hockey landmark) watching his late father, actor Jacques Zouvi, perform as a ringmaster during a Shriner Circus performance in the 1960s -performing alongside his father in the summer in Trois-Rivières, Québec with the Shriner Circus in the early 1970s - falling in love with a young acrobat from a traditional circus family during the contract in Trois-Rivières and performing with her in a joint role in her parents' tight wire act. -performing as a teenager on Queen Mary Street in Montréal in the early 1970s (we met at a café not very far shortly before the interview) Alain described the feeling of the Forum during his father's circus performances in especially vivid detail.

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT(S)	INTERVIEW DATE, LOCATION, LANGUAGE, AND CONTEXT	INTERVIEWEE BACKGROUND (as relates to live performance histories)	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PERFORMANCE MEMORIES DISCUSSED IN INTERVIEW
Andréane Leclerc	March 10, 2020 in Montréal. Interview held in French. Context: first formal round of *After-shows* interviews.	Born in Gatineau, Québec in 1984, Andréane started training as a contortionist as a young age at the National Circus School and began touring as a teenager. She eventually grew interested in more conceptual work and formed her own company. External link: https://nadereartsvivants.com/en/team/	In this two-hour interview, Andréane recalled memories working with traditional circuses early in her career. She recounted several memories from her tour with the Swiss traditional troupe Circus Nock[481] in 2003, during which she grew to question the romanticism with which she had previously viewed traditional circus. She described several events from a contract with the Golden Circus in the outskirts of Rome when she was 17.
Lijana Wallenda	March 11, 2020 First online interview of the project. Interview held through Messenger video (Lijana from Las Vegas / Anna from Montréal), conducted in English. Context: first formal round of *After-shows* interviews.	Seventh generation circus performer and fourth-generation high-wire walker.	The memories Lijana shared were humorous: a comic mishap during a performance at a US fairground with her family circa 1992 and a performance of her mother's with the Shrine Circus when Lijana was very young. The conversation digressed at the end about a more recent performance at Times Square, and other recent events. Lijana reported finding it hard to pick a memory: "You know, it was my whole life. So it's like, a memory of that? You know, it's hard. It's almost harder when it's your whole life."

[481] "The Nocks are Switzerland's oldest circus family, whose heritage could be traced back to the 18th century; like the Knies, the Nocks (and the Bühlmanns) were originally itinerant rope-dancers, who performed on village squares and fairgrounds, their ropes strung between church spires or above the open-air stage of their traveling 'arenas.'" Dominique Jando, "The Nock Family," Circopedia, accessed July 8, 2023, http://www.circopedia.org/Isabella_Nock#The_Nock_Family

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT(S)	INTERVIEW DATE, LOCATION, LANGUAGE, AND CONTEXT	INTERVIEWEE BACKGROUND (as relates to live performance histories)	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PERFORMANCE MEMORIES DISCUSSED IN INTERVIEW
Geneviève Bessette	March 16, 2020. Live interview moved online due to early COVID closures. Interview held on Skype in French. Context: first formal round of *After-shows* interviews.	Geneviève is considered one of the first artists to develop and then perform on the aerial hoop in the early 1990s, now a popular circus discipline. External link: Geneviève Bessette: la femme au cerceau : https://www.lapresse.ca/arts/spectacles-et-theatre/cirque/201410/08/01-4807526-genevieve-bessette-la-femme-au-cerceau.php	Geneviève reported during the interview that she wanted to recount positive memories. She spoke about her "most beautiful performance experience" at the Palazzo Colombino cabaret in Freiburg, Germany in 2009. She described it in immense sensorial detail. This led other recollections, for example memories from the mid 1990s performing with Cirque du Soleil.
Gypsy Snider	March 16, 2020. This interview was rescheduled three times during the early part of the pandemic crisis. It was held on Skype, in English, with both of us speaking from Montréal. Context: first formal round of *After-shows* interviews.	Grew up performing with the Pickle Family Circus (founded in the 1970s by her mother and step-father), later co-founded The 7 Fingers in Montréal. External link: (scroll down for bio): https://7fingers.com/the7fingers	In this two-hour interview, Gypsy recalled an early memory performing an acrobatic three-high on tour in Alaska with the Pickle Family Circus, a show during which both her birth father and stepfather were present. The conversation led to extended reflections on circus today and many interesting digressions.
Nicolette Hazewinkel	March 16, 2020 The interview was held on Skype (both speakers in Montréal) in French. Context: first formal round of *After-shows* interviews.	Born in Holland, heavily involved in Québec circus since the 1980s External link: https://eclatsderire.ca/fr/la-compagnie/biographies	Nicolette described several memories linked to performing one summer in 2006 in the Laurentians with Cirque Akya, which she'd co-founded with her husband, the clown Chocolat (Rodrigue Tremblay).

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT(S)	**INTERVIEW DATE, LOCATION, LANGUAGE, AND CONTEXT**	**INTERVIEWEE BACKGROUND (as relates to live performance histories)**	**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PERFORMANCE MEMORIES DISCUSSED IN INTERVIEW**
Denis Degtyarev I was joined by a Russian-speaking friend, in case Denis wanted to speak in his first language, but he spoke mainly in English.	April 3, 2020 Held on Skype (Denis from Irkutsk, Russia / Anna and Peter [informal translator] from Montréal). Conversation mainly in English with a few Russian interjections for clarification. Context: first formal round of *After-shows* interviews.	Born into a circus family in Russia, grew up performing in group flying trapeze act, developed a solo act in his late 20s. Denis was still an active performer (albeit dealing with pandemic-related contract cancelations) at the time of the interview.	Denis recounted early memories performing and training at age 12 with a group trapeze act in Kazan, Russia. These were both visceral (the feeling of doing certain tricks, like a triple somersault) and social (recollections of other flying trapeze troupe members). He recounted when he decided to "change [his] life" and develop a solo act in his 20s. He recalled performing aerial pole in China with the Chimelong International Circus where he met his wife. He recounted the birth of their child during that contract. He also described more recent memories performing his solo act in Switzerland and Montréal.
Jinny Jessica Jacinto	April 10, 2020 Held on Skype (both speakers in Montréal), mainly in English with some French. Context: first formal round of *After-shows* interviews.	Circus performer since early childhood. External link: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jinny_Jacinto	Jinny described: -early touring memories with her performing partners in the contortion quartet she performed in with Cirque du Soleil's Nouvelle Experience in the early 1990s -her first solo contract in Germany -returning to Cirque du Soleil as a soloist in her 30's and observing a group of child performers in another act. Her descriptions were highly sensorial and visceral, for example, recalling and recreating the sounds she remembered hearing while training flying trapeze.

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT(S)	INTERVIEW DATE, LOCATION, LANGUAGE, AND CONTEXT	INTERVIEWEE BACKGROUND (as relates to live performance histories)	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PERFORMANCE MEMORIES DISCUSSED IN INTERVIEW
Nathalie Sabourin	April 20, 2020 Held on Zoom in French (both speakers in Montréal) Context: first formal round of *After-shows* interviews.	Nathalie Sabourin was part of Cirque du Soleil's early shows, and also performed in festivals and troupes. External link: fan site describing her role in La Cirque Réinventé (1987) and sharing an image of her role in group acts (described at length in her interview) in 1985: https://www.richasi.com/Cirque/Reinvent/87-act07.htm	Nathalie Sabourin mainly recounted, with great detail and tenderness, memories of performing for the Cirque du Soleil house troupe in the mid-1980s, shortly after its inception.
Kate McGregor Stewart	March 1, 2021 Held on Zoom (Kate from Los Angeles, Anna from Montréal) in English Context: part of the "Body of Work" interview phase of the project, during which I experimented with drawing on questions about the body as entry points towards describing memories. Note: Kate is my material aunt.	Kate was born in Buffalo, New York in 1944 and began her professional acting career in the 1970s. She has lived in Los Angeles since the mid 1980s, where she also maintained an active teaching practice. In performance – external link: https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/b4238231-5696-56ba-e040-e00a18066127 In performance – another archival photo: https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/1a835c40-4287-0137-3254-294f4de7d370 More archival photos: https://www.christopherdurang.com/titanic More archival photos: https://www.simplystreep.com/gallery/displayimage.php?album=2442&pid=167275#top_display_media External link: https://latw.org/artist-public-profile/kate-mcgregor-stewart.	Among the memories Kate described are: -standing onstage as part of the chorus in a Brecht play the 1970s when she was in drama school, and experiencing a change in the way she perceived her body while performing -rehearsing in her living room in New Haven, CT in the early 1970s and experiencing a new realization about her way of acting -performing a Shaw play in a summer stock tour in New England in 1971, directed by her then-husband, Yannis Simonides -feeling her stomach clench backstage before her first Broadway show

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT(S)	INTERVIEW DATE, LOCATION, LANGUAGE, AND CONTEXT	INTERVIEWEE BACKGROUND (as relates to live performance histories)	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PERFORMANCE MEMORIES DISCUSSED IN INTERVIEW
Renee Benson	March 13, 2021 Held on Zoom (Renee from New Orleans, Anna from Montréal) in English Context: part of the "Body of Work" interview phase of the project, during which I experimented with drawing on questions about the body as an entry point towards describing memories.	Renee Benson is a singer, songwriter, poet, composer, teaching artist, and arts facilitator based in New Orleans. She was born in 1978 in Shrewsbury, New Jersey. External link: https://www.reneebensonmusic.com/about	Renee spoke of: -a performing memory at Long Branch High School in New Jersey when she was 17, involving fondly remembered acting teacher Vincent Borelli (since deceased). The memory also involved a red dress she wore in the production (interpretations of this memory were frequently re-enacted by performers in improvisations that were vividly recalled by audience members in the After-shows project) - falling off stage in a dance competition in her teens -performing in a Utopian Floes with Caravan Stage, 2007, while on tour in Austria -a performing mishap while touring with a Gospel production, also in Austria - sensations on her legs and feet when performing her experimental music and performance piece Requiem for a Stranger in New Orleans

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT(S)	INTERVIEW DATE, LOCATION, LANGUAGE, AND CONTEXT	INTERVIEWEE BACKGROUND (as relates to live performance histories)	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PERFORMANCE MEMORIES DISCUSSED IN INTERVIEW
Neil Sochasky	May 31, 2021 Held on Zoom (from Montréal) in English Context: part of the "Body of Work" interview phase of the project, during which I experimented with drawing on questions about the body as an entry point towards describing memories. Note: Neil and Hoor (see two entries below) formed an exception, and participated in both the interview and the in-studio performance research processes.	Born in 1980 in St. Stephen, New Brunswick, Neil Sochasky represented Canada as an elite baton twirler before discovering dance. Currently based in Montréal, he has been performing and presenting his own choreography as a dance artist internationally for the past twenty years. He also works as a dance dramaturg.	Neil took the "body of work" themed questions to heart and responded in extreme detail about body-invoked memories (he has also worked as an anatomy teacher and massage therapist to dancers and has an unusually large body-related vocabulary). Among the memories he recounted with minute visceral detail are: -laughing in the middle of a dance performance with the School of Toronto Dance Theatre circa 2002/2003 -performing in a durational duet during Tino Sehgal's Kiss Project at the Art Gallery of Ontario in the summer of 2006[482] -a sensation of fatigue during a show at the Barbican in London -performing with Toronto Dance Theatre circa 2005 in the work Persephone's Lunch by choreographer Christopher House -performing in *La chambre blanche* with the O Vertigo dance company in Montréal.

[482] It's worth mentioning that Sehgal generally prohibits documentation of his performances and has been reported wanting to leave "no footprint" behind the live moment of his work. Nonetheless, I hope this interview and its uses still respect Sehgal's wishes in that they are not a documentations of one of his works but rather a recounting of the feelings one performer (Neil) remembered feeling in his body at a specific moment during one performance.
See: Louisa Buck, "Without a Trace: Interview with Tino Sehgal," The Art Newspaper - International art news and events, September 28, 2021, https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2006/03/01/without-a-trace-interview-with-tino-sehgal

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT(S)	INTERVIEW DATE, LOCATION, LANGUAGE, AND CONTEXT	INTERVIEWEE BACKGROUND (as relates to live performance histories)	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PERFORMANCE MEMORIES DISCUSSED IN INTERVIEW
Peter James	November 24, 2021 in person in Montréal (Bistro Sofia), in French Context: last round of formal After-shows interviews	Montréal-based experimental performer, artistically active since the early 1980s External link: https://www.ledevoir.com/culture/danse/509790/quatre-jours-d-impro-totale-pour-peter-james	In this wide-ranging interview, Peter described: - his earliest performance memory (or the earliest one he recalled on the day of the interview), at the OFF du Festival du Mime International de Montréal in the early 1980s; -many memories performing and rehearsing dance and performance pieces between the 1980s and early 2000s in Montréal, including especially fond memories performing with artist Carole Courtois' *Vacuum* (2002) and in a piece in the 1980s by Danièle Trépanier -returning to perform in the region of Témiscamingue, Québec, where he grew up, and having his mother in the audience; -a memory during which he felt slightly embarrassed of the piece he was part of -many other memories and commentaries
Hoor Malas	December 7, 2021, in Montréal (Bistro Sofia), in English Context: last round of formal After-shows interviews Note: Exceptionally, Hoor participated both in the interview (phase 1) and the in-studio performance research (phase 2) processes of this project, leading to questions of self-translation.	Contemporary dancer and dance maker from Damascus, based in Montréal since 2021. External link: https://hoormalas.com/bio/	In the interview, Hoor described dancing in her home city of Damascus in periods ranging from 2008 to 2020. The performances memories linked to themes of laughter, friendship, death, mourning, self-critique, and the context (and, in several cases, the beauty) of Damascus.

Appendix C: Table of performance research sessions and participants

Performance research timetable

DESCRIPTION	DATES	PARTICIPANTS	LOCATION/CONTEXT	NOTES
"After-shows project warmup": pre-thesis testing of (re-)creating off of a performance memory. This phase led to an interactive, performative game I called "Fall and Rise, Saratov, 1997." The game involved revisiting specific moments from a past performance, as recounted in an interview by former circus performer Irina Bozyan.	March 2019	Audience participants were "Oral History Performance" classmates (mainly Concordia Theatre department students)	Concordia (Montréal), in the framework of the course "Oral History Performance" with Luis Carlos Sotelo	This pre-thesis phase informed subsequent research steps
Planned and then halted *After-shows* in-studio research sessions	Late 2019, Early 2020		Studio visits and imagined project editions at Concordia's Lachine Canal studio and VPS Studio. Unrealized due to bureaucratic obstacles (Lachine Canal studio) and COVID closures (VPS Studio)	I am noting these suspended project phases because the stop-and-start nature of these steps influenced the research process and result, leading to a sense of discontinuity in the project (although I wonder if *every* endeavor isn't marked by interruptions, and if continuity isn't a fantasy), which ended up shaping the dramaturgy of the project.

DESCRIPTION	DATES	PARTICIPANTS	LOCATION/CONTEXT	NOTES
After-shows performance research: pandemic phase (research-creation on Zoom with three performers) First testing of After-shows processes. The performers worked with excerpts of 9 interviews. Like most other performer-based research phase in this project, this process involved extensive solo preparation combined with very short, charged sessions with the performers. A small "open research session" was held online with 9 audience members on August 13, followed by a discussion.	August 2020 Schedule breakdown: August 7: 2 hours August 11: 2 hours August 12: 2 hours August 13: 1 hour with performers, 1 hour with spectators and open discussion	Gisle Henriet, Nadine Louis, Joseph Pinzon	Held on Zoom (Anna, Gisle, and Nadine from Montréal, Joseph from Los Angeles).	

After-shows performance research: in-studio research phases	2022 Schedule breakdown: January 17-20: Anna alone in space, planning January 21: performance research with Gisle Henriet, Sabine Jean, Nadine Louis, Catherine Tardif January 24: performance research with Hoor Malas, Juulie Rousseau, Gisle Henriet, Nadine Louis January 25: Bloc 1 : Catherine Tardif, Hoor Malas, Juulie Rousseau, Gisle Henriet Bloc 2 : Sabine Jean, Juulie Rousseau, Nadine Louis January 26 : Bloc 1 : Catherine Tardif, Hoor Malas, Juulie Rousseau, Gisle Henriet Bloc 2: Sabine Jean, Juulie Rousseau, Nadine Louis January 27 : Catherine Tardif, Sabine Jean, Hoor Malas, Juulie Rousseau, Gisle Henriet, Nadine Louis. Also January 27: Performance	At varying intervals: Gisle Henriet, Sabine Jean, Nadine Louis, Hoor Malas, Mohamed Magri, Juulie Rousseau, Neil Sochasky, Catherine Tardif	Residency at the Cœur des sciences, UQAM (l'Université du Québec à Montréal) through the interuniversity network Hexagram	

	research with three invited audience members. (End of residency public event postponed to April due to COVID) April 8: research with Gisle Henriet, Sabine Jean, Nadine Louis, Hoor Malas, Momo, Juulie Rousseau, Neil Sochasky April 9 and 10: research session and public event canceled due to COVID within team. Event rescheduled to July after over 60 emails with creative team and residency host over the next two months. July 25: performance research with Sabine Jean, Nadine Louis, Hoor Malas, Mohamed Magri, Neil Sochasky, Catherine Tardif July 26: performance research with Gisle Henriet, Sabine Jean, Nadine Louis, Hoor Malas, Mohamed Magri, Neil Sochasky, Catherine Tardif July 27: review with Gisle Henriet, Sabine			

DESCRIPTION	DATES	PARTICIPANTS	LOCATION/CONTEXT	NOTES
	Jean, Nadine Louis, Hoor Malas, Mohamed Magri, Neil Sochasky, Catherine Tardif, followed by public event			

Table of performance research participants

Participant	Primary art form	Years of professional artistic practice (as per the CV participants submitted to project funder)	Dates of project participation	Notes
Gisle Henriet	Circus	Since 2007	All performance research phases (July 2020, January, April, July 2022)	
Sabine Jean	Circus	Since 2006	All live in-studio phases (January, April, July 2022)	
Nadine Louis	Circus and theater	Began touring as a child in 1989	All performance research phases (July 2020, January, April, July 2022)	One of Nadine's childhood performing partners was interviewed in project phase 1. At least two of the memories that interviewee recounted took place performing with Nadine.
Mohamed Magri (Momo)	Multi-instrumentalist and composer	undisclosed	July 2022 (joined project last minute when musician Juulie Rousseau withdrew)	
Hoor Malas	Dance	Since 2006	All live in-studio phases (January, April, July 2022)	Hoor was also interviewed in phase 1.
Joseph Pinzon	Circus (also trained in theater, music, and dance)	Since 2005	July 2020 (participated in online, pandemic phase. Unable to participate in later in-studio phases because he lives in the US)	
Juulie Rousseau	Singer, multi-instrumentalist, and composer	undisclosed	January 2022 and April 2022 (had to withdraw in July 2022 due to scheduling conflict)	
Neil Sochasky	Dance	Since 2007	April and July 2022	Neil was also interviewed in project phase 1.
Catherine Tardif	Dance	Since early 1980s	Jan and July 2022	

Appendix D: Sample of research exercises with performers

Exercise examples:

1.
-Performer A reads an excerpt of an unknown performer's memory. (Participating performers asked not to know the names or identities of the people who'd told the memories they were working with. Interviewed artist Renee Benson suggested the idea of leaving who worked with which memory to chance.)
-Performer A paraphrases the memory (in language of choice and style of choice, ex: recounting in the first or third person, choosing what aspects to transmit) to performer B
-Performer B "performs" performer A's account to group
-Performers C and D reperform what they remember seeing performer B perform

2.
-Performer A reads an excerpt of an unknown performer's memory
-Performer A directs or tells performer B how to perform that memory (or an aspect of it)
-Performers B performs the memory to the group
-The group (except performers A and B) repeat what they remember seeing performer B perform

Sequencing/structuring example:

-On the day of the public event, the seven participating performers wrote names to the scenes or histories or memories they had worked with in previous days on post-its. Then we put the post-it's in the middle of the floor. Then we put the name of each performer on post-its in a line on the tech closet door. Then we played a game: artists picked post-its and put specific numbers under their names and specific numbers under other artists' names. Each artist then had a map or path of memories/scenes to reperform, simultaneously, with options to pause at will. Artists were placed into frequent negotiations when scenes had to be reperformed that had initially been performed in duo or in a group: they could perform these alone, perform these with the other performers doing something else, or potentially repeat the group scene if the other performer(s) changed course and joined in.

Appendix E: Public event publicity

Photo du Pickle Family Circus, prise par Terry Lorant. Sur la photo : Sandy Counts, Billy Kessler, Wendy Parkman, Larry Pisoni, Gypsy Snider. Photo offerte gracieusement par Gypsy Snider

ANNA VIGELAND - AFTER-SHOWS : SOIRÉE DE RECHERCHE-CRÉATION AVEC PUBLIC

27.07.2022

8-9 pm | Agora du Cœur des sciences, UQAM

Comment se souvenir d'un spectacle auquel on n'a jamais assisté ? *After-shows* d'**Anna Vigeland [membre étudiante, Université Concordia]** recueille et re-présente des fragments de souvenirs de spectacles d'art jadis vivant. Le projet rassemble des histoires personnelles liées aux représentations publiques — par le biais d'entretiens avec d'anciens artistes et spectateurs — et leur donne de nouvelles vies en invitant d'autres personnes à les répéter, à les interpréter, à les regarder et à les écouter. L'étape la plus récente du projet a été une courte résidence à l'Agora du Cœur des sciences via Hexagram-UQAM, s'appuyant sur la collaboration de sept artistes de scène. Vous êtes convié.e.s à venir au dernier jour de la résidence pour assister cette recherche-création, et à rester (si souhaité) pour une brève discussion.

ANNA VIGELAND - AFTER-SHOWS : OPEN RESEARCH-CREATION SESSION

How might we remember a show we never went to? *After-shows* by **Anna Vigeland [student member, Concordia University]** collects and re-presents fragments of memories of no-longer-live shows. The project gathers personal histories connected to public shows—through interviews with performers, former performers, and spectators—and gives them other, new lives by inviting others to repeat, interpret, watch, perform, and listen to them. The most recent stage of the project has been a short residency at the Agora du Coeur des sciences via Hexagram-UQAM, drawing on the live collaboration of seven magnificent performers. Join us on the last day of the residency to discover this still-developing research-creation and stay (if you'd like) for a short discussion afterwards.

Figure 11
(https://mailchi.mp/hexagram/hexagram-hexagram-a-20-ans-hexagram-is-11533029?e=0e07027da6)

Appendix F: Table of post-event spectator memory interviews

Interviewee	Interview date	Notes
Paloma Leyton	November 17, 2022	
Stéphane Gentilini	November 18, 2022	
Gaëlle Scali	November 24, 2022	
Françoise Boudreault	November 29, 2022	
Diego Lopez	December 2, 2022	
Maxime D-Pomerleau	December 5, 2022	
Odile Laforest	December 9, 2022	
Geneviève Bessette	December 12, 2022	Geneviève also participated in a performance memory interview in phase one of the project.
Nicolette Hazewinkel	December 12, 2022	Nicolette also participated in a performance memory interview in phase one of the project.
Naila Kuhlmann	May 14, 2023	
Cai Glover	May 23, 2023	Cai completed a written questionnaire in lieu of a live interview, as per his request.

Appendix G: Ethics Certificates

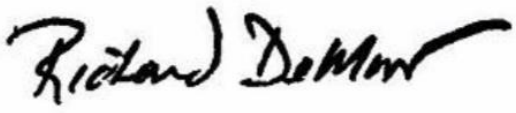
Ethics Certificate, Phase 1:

CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY
FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Name of Applicant:	Anna Vigeland
Department:	Individualized Program
Agency:	N/A
Title of Project:	After-shows
Certification Number:	30012387

Valid From: January 14, 2020 To: January 13, 2021

The members of the University Human Research Ethics Committee have examined the application for a grant to support the above-named project, and consider the experimental procedures, as outlined by the applicant, to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.



Dr. Richard DeMont, Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee

Ethics Certificate, Phase 2:

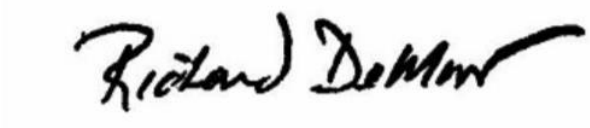
UNIVERSITÉ Concordia UNIVERSITY

CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Name of Applicant:	Anna Vigeland
Department:	Faculty of Arts and Science\Études françaises
Agency:	N/A
Title of Project:	After-shows
Certification Number:	30012387

Valid From: May 01, 2020 To: April 30, 2021

The members of the University Human Research Ethics Committee have examined the application for a grant to support the above-named project, and consider the experimental procedures, as outlined by the applicant, to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.



Dr. Richard DeMont, Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee

Ethics Certificate, Phase 3:

CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Name of Applicant:	Anna Vigeland
Department:	Individualized program
Agency:	N/A
Title of Project:	After-shows
Certification Number:	30012387

Valid From: April 30, 2021 To: April 29, 2022

The members of the University Human Research Ethics Committee have examined the application for a grant to support the above-named project, and consider the experimental procedures, as outlined by the applicant, to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Richard DeMont

Dr. Richard DeMont, Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee

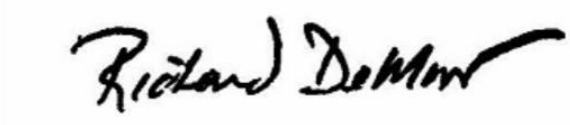
Ethics Certificate, Phase 4:

CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY
FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Name of Applicant:	Anna Vigeland
Department:	N/A\Individualized program
Agency:	N/A
Title of Project:	After-shows
Certification Number:	30012387

Valid From: April 05, 2022 To: April 04, 2023

The members of the University Human Research Ethics Committee have examined the application for a grant to support the above-named project, and consider the experimental procedures, as outlined by the applicant, to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.



Dr. Richard DeMont, Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee

Ethics Certificate, Phase 5:

CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY
FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Name of Applicant:	Anna Vigeland
Department:	N/A\Individualized program
Agency:	N/A
Title of Project:	After-shows
Certification Number:	30012387

Valid From: May 03, 2023 To: May 02, 2024

The members of the University Human Research Ethics Committee have examined the application for a grant to support the above-named project, and consider the experimental procedures, as outlined by the applicant, to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Dr. David Waddington, Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee