PERFORMING HOME: AFFECTIVE INTERVALS IN 20TH- AND 21ST- CENTURY FRENCH THEATRE AND SLAM POETRY

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In my dissertation, I argue for an understanding of text as performance in contemporary French theatre and slam poetry by drawing attention to sound, writing, and the parallels between stage and page. While much of scholarly discourse in performance studies is allergic to textual study, I analyze text *as* a performance, and performance as text, by underscoring how textual sound creates affective memory. Organized into a section on theatre and a section on poetry, my dissertation includes a series of case studies that function as individual models of what I call textual performance. My analysis bridges the intervals between Performance studies and Affect studies, specifically using the concepts of *ritournelle* and *chez soi* from Deleuze and Guattari's "De la ritournelle." The concept of *home* is what connects the theatre texts to the slam poetry. Through home's spatial counterpart—the domestic in the theatre chapters and the city in the slam chapters—both genres repurpose citations to create familiar repeated refrains that anchor audience and performer in space.

The first and second chapters establish a model for reading a performative text through an analysis of the emphasis on sound and cruelty in the play *Roberto Zucco* (1990) by Bernard-Marie Koltès. The third chapter analyzes the writing process highlighted within the spoken

dialogue of the four characters of *Le Dieu du carnage* (2007) by Yasmina Reza. In the fourth chapter, using the lens of Apollinaire's "Zone" I analyze Grand Corps Malade's first album *Midi 20* (2007), arguing that much of the orality of slam poetry has origins in urban textual poetry and drafted musical structures. The fifth chapter investigates the interval between the particular and the universal idea of community in work by women slam artists such as RiM (Amélie Picq Grumbach) and Cat Mat, one of the founders of *Slam ô féminin*, an association that takes writing workshops and slam sessions to groups of marginalized women in Paris and around France.

PREFACE

As I come to an end of the dissertation writing process, and look back at my six years as a graduate student at the University of Pittsburgh, I would first like to acknowledge the original intervals between my life and my work. I would like to thank my mother for teaching me that affect is at the core of everyday life and for upholding the value of staying committed to a goal. Thank you to my father who taught me the significance and the connections between language, music, and hard work. Thank you to my sister, Sara, who has jumped on night buses at a moment's notice to lend a hand and make me laugh as I manage family life and scholarly pursuits. My thesis of *home* developed at a time in my life when I was putting down roots in a new city and reconstructing the physical and affective foundations that were to be my support system as I started my research. I owe an enormous amount of gratitude to my life partner, Guillaume, who, knowing I wanted to go back to school, moved us from Paris to Pittsburgh to start a new life. He has been the foundation, pillar, and keystone that has allowed me to pursue my passion in literature and teaching while restoring our old house and building a family.

I would like to thank the Department of French and Italian for the welcoming and open atmosphere that has allowed me to thrive as both a student and a teacher. I am incredibly grateful for my committee and for their continuing support as professors and mentors over the years as I tackled a number of scholarly, pedagogical, and personal challenges. There are a few moments that stand out as being foundational to my growth in this field. Thank you, Giuseppina, for my first poetry class in which you assigned "De la ritournelle"—a text I found mind-bogglingly opaque but sat and read several times in a row knowing that it contained the keys to the connection between my passions of literature and music. Thank you also for your support through my pregnancy and birth of my daughter and for helping me to juggle my studies and duties as a mother. Thank you, David, for your professional guidance in regards to publishing and for your advice to always start with the broad strokes before tackling the detail. Thank you, Chloé, for your keen eye at the moment I tackle that detail and for teaching me the significance of rigorous analysis, development, and editing. Thank you, Neil, for guiding me through the development of my approach to Performance studies, *space*, and *place* and helping me to position my thoughts within the existing scholarly frameworks. Thank you, Jen, for acting as my external committee member and for the particularly interesting introduction to media studies. And finally, I would like to thank my dissertation advisor, Todd, who has spent many hours reading my work and encouraging me to find my own voice through which to pair theory and close reading. Since my first Introduction to Literary Theory class, you have showed me how to unpack, develop, and articulate the seeds of an idea into a thought that would elicit enthusiastic head nods in the most intellectual of crowds. Thank you to all of you. You are my stacked deck. I could not have written this dissertation without you.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Performance, home, interval, affect, and refrain. These buzz words seem trendy, subjective, and reliant on live moments and interactions. However, when combined to speak about textual poetics, these buzz words provide a solid framework through which to read text that is written to be performed. In this dissertation, I engage with the interdisciplinary aspects of Performance studies, Affect theory, and musical analysis in order to define what I call textual performativity. I base my foundation of the refrain on the harmonic creation of the interior circle of the *territoire*—the *chez soi* as defined by Deleuze and Guattari in "De la ritournelle" from *Mille Plateaux* (1980). As a demonstration of how the connection between the terms that make up my thesis can lead to a methodology that serves as a paradigm for reading textual performativity, I begin here with a short analysis of the dueling banjo scene from John Boorman's 1972 thriller *Deliverance*. The scene begins as four Atlanta businessmen friends are getting ready to embark on their canoe camping adventure down the Cahulawassee River. They are fueling their cars at a roadside gas station in a cluster of houses in the middle of the Georgia wilderness. One of the men (Drew) begins playing his guitar while waiting. A young in-bred looking boy on a raised open porch stands holding a banjo and watching him from the shadows. Curious to establish a musical connection and engage with the boy's very separate home, Drew begins playing the simplistic melodies of the composition known as "Dueling Banjos."[1] What

[1] "Dueling Banjos" is a 1955 instrumental composition by Arthur "Guitar Boogie" Smith. In it are riffs from well-known melodies such as "Yankee Doodle." It originally aired on the *Andy Griffith Show* in 1963 and was a recognizable cultural composition in the 1960s and 70s. As it

begins as a wordless conversation of melodies played and repeated, takes on a pedagogical nature as the boy learns, or pretends to learn, the song's structure from Drew.

Here, one sees the first invitation into an intertextual world that contains both diegetic and extratextual openings. The boy and Drew build up a musically pedagogical pattern based on citation and refrain that connects them in a duet, while bringing in outside spectators (the other actors in the scene and the film's spectators). On two separate levels, the melody becomes enhanced because of the recognizable "Yankee Doodle" refrain, eliciting smiles from the uneducated rural locals and arrogant city dwellers in the scene as well as producing a point of reference for the all-American film spectator familiar with the tune. Initially, the guitar and banjo dialogue begins as a peripheral melody passed and mimicked between two instruments. However, as the scene progresses and more of the melody is revealed, the possibility to create a harmonic counterpoint is created. Once Drew has presented the whole song, he begins to play it in sequence, moving towards the porch above him, engaging with the boy by eliminating the physical distance between them. Here, the movement of the actor mirrors the melodic movement and the increasing possibility for harmonic counterpoint between the two musicians creates the artistic expression that frames the scene.

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was used without the composer's permission in *Deliverance* the composer filed a successful lawsuit, enhancing the scene's and the composition's notoriety. (Wikipedia/duelingbanjos)

As Deleuze and Guattari write: “Il y a territoire dès que des composantes de milieux cessent d’être directionnelles pour devenir dimensionnelles, quand elles cessent d’être fonctionnelles pour devenir expressives. Il y a territoire dès qu’il y a expressivité du rythme” (387). Proving that the *territoire* is the first “lieu de passage,” the shared musically pedagogical moment between the boy and Drew forms a combined *agencement* that maintains their separate signatures while combining to form a collective style. The boy responds to Drew’s advance toward the porch by increasing the tempo and playing a virtuosic accompaniment to the original melody. As the tempo increases, the boy’s smile widens. He is taking pleasure in the ephemeral moment and seems proud at showing how his talent surpasses Drew’s, overturning the teacher/student roles Drew assumed at the beginning of the scene. The surrounding spectators are surprised to learn the boy is a banjo virtuoso, having only heard him play fragments of the simple melody after Drew. The four city men had originally assumed from the boy’s appearance that he was too in-bred and uneducated to produce music like Drew. Bobby even states, “Talk about genetic deficiencies! Isn’t that pitiful?” To which a local man (perhaps the boy’s father) responds ominously from behind them, “Who’s picking the banjo, here?”

As expectations are overturned by the duet, the raised porch becomes a stage and every actor in the scene directs his or her attention to the boy’s performance. An old man begins dancing and a woman leans out the window to watch. Bobby begins clapping and the local man whistles the refrain along with the guitar. Eventually Drew cannot keep up with the boy’s speed and stops playing, stating, “I’m lost.” This statement foreshadows the foreboding quality of the rest of the film in that it indicates a spatial, temporal, and cultural loss of bearings. The boy has successfully taken over the dialogue, showcasing his natural talent and mastery of the musical duet.

It is here, at the climax of the duet, that a *home* is created by the performance. However, the home exists on several levels. It does not belong to the two performers, but to the film as a whole, the scene having unveiled the building blocks for a metatextual entrance into the film's vibratory *ritournelle*. Where the familiar "Yankee Doodle" refrain created an opening into a musical moment within the scene, the scene itself becomes the extra-diegetic coded *ritournelle* that resonates at several times throughout the film as a familiar point of reference and a reminder of the uncanny anxiety that permeates the film. As the moment draws to a close, so does the opening into the dialogue and the moment that created the diegetic home is lost. The music stops and Drew goes to shake hands with the boy, visibly impressed and emotional about the moment he has just taken part in. As he reaches his hand out, Drew asks, "Want to play another?" The boy refuses to shake Drew's hand, instead turning his head to the side, lost once again in his own world.

This scene serves as an example of the point of convergence between Performance studies and Affect theory that mirrors how I place the two approaches in dialogue throughout the analysis of my corpus. Over the past thirty years, Performance studies as a field has taken over a more interdisciplinary role in academia, acting as a bridge between disciplines such as Theatre and Literary studies, Anthropology, Sociology, Gender and Queer studies to name a few. The origins of Performance studies date to J. L. Austin's speech act theory and the notion of the *performative* utterance outlined in his *How To Do Things With Words* (1962). Austin stipulates that words are not purely reflective, meaning that they do not simply reflect a world, but that linguistic acts have the power to create a world. Victor Turner associates the beginning of Performance studies to the French *parfournir*, "to furnish forth," "'To complete' or 'carry out

thoroughly'" (3).[2] Since the adoption of Austin's terms, Performance studies has taken several contrasting (even geographical) forms.[3] Because each discipline has a different definition of performance, the poles between practice and scholarship have divided the field between the manual and the intellectual and the contradictions have opened up a whole new dialogue. Scholars such as William B. Worthen, Shannon Jackson, and Dwight Conquergood have raised questions about the use of performance's relationship to the stage/audience theatrical binary because of its questionable artifice and reproducibility. Performance studies has branched out of Theatre departments to include studies of ritual, carnivals, and street performance, and the field as a whole has generally maintained that the privileged role of the text (script) must be debunked. In this move from stage to real life, the text is often dismissed as an unfinished artifact, unable to contribute to our understanding of the ephemeral quality of performance in everyday life. However, I argue that in certain cases, the text can provide a key to how the patterns that originate from textual poetics unveil what live performance cannot. My analysis demonstrates a lexicon that is able, in certain instances, to analyze text *as* performance, by rethinking the notions of representation, translation, and recreation.

Affect theory both survives and suffers from its constant fluctuations and evolutions. As an academic field, its resistance to definition provides a richness in application, and provides a lexicon to address subjectivity that is remarkably productive. Affect theory originates from

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[2] From Diana Taylor's *Archive and Repertoire* in her outlining of the field of Performance studies.

[3] The two poles of Performance studies are the Eastern and Western poles out of NYU (championed by Richard Schechner and Victor Turner) and Northwestern University (Dwight Conquergood). Where the Eastern school of Performance studies called for an abolition of theatre departments and a push away from the study of Euro-centric drama and toward rituals and festivals, the Western school took their origins from classical traditions and oral poetry, using the analysis of the role of performance to enlighten cultural texts and to find the resistance and rebellion to the canon.

Silvan Tomkins' multi-volume book *Affect Imagery Consciousness* in which he uses the term *affect* to refer to a "biological portion of emotion or hard-wired preprogrammed, genetically transmitted mechanisms that exist in each of us" (19). Tomkins identifies nine affects—from positive, to neutral, to negative as well as their expected biological expressions (i.e. enjoyment—smiling, anger—frown). Though Affect theory is not employed widely in psychology, scholars such as Eve Sedgwick and Lauren Berlant have applied it to psychoanalytic theory in a way that translates to literary analysis, popular culture, and notions of belonging and identity. In 1995 Sedgwick coauthored "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Silvan Tomkins" with Adam Frank, an essay in which she lays out how affect can be placed into dialogue with existing structures of applied theory by removing the *physical* binary transitive relations between "subject to object, self to other, and active to passive" (1) and can instead bring to light the nuances of applied theory itself. In his chapter "Autonomy of Affect," Brian Massumi has qualified the notion of intensity as an emotional state of suspense and static (220) and causes us to rework what we think about the body. He writes about the importance of the *potential* that affect as a theory provides: "Something that happens too quickly to have happened, actually is *virtual*. The body is as immediately virtual as it is actual … The virtual is a lived paradox where what are normally opposites coexist, coalesce, and connect; where what cannot be experienced cannot but be felt—albeit reduced and contained" (224). Speaking about the virtual causes all analysis to be organized to focus on potential, on resonances, and on circuits of indefinable subjective measurements. The idea of potential as a "constant becoming" was also expanded upon by Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Siegworth. The latter recognizes the origins of the developing field of Affect theory in Spinoza. In his *Ethics* (1677), Spinoza writes that

emotion is a constant and perpetual "becoming" of bodies. Siegworth calls it the "yet-ness" of our bodily capacity and encounters (3).

Affective potential is not completely synonymous with emotion (that exists in the present and fades with time) since it can be accessed, recreated, and made fresh via memories of past events. It is for this reason that my definition of affect is connected to emotion through the potential, resonance, and virtuality of *memory*. What is most striking about affect in literary analysis, is the notion of the in-between, the indefinable, and the transfer between the physical and the mysterious subjective cognitive centers. The concept of correspondence in the in-between and the dialogic is central to my methodology.

I employ a methodology that places Performance studies and Affect theory in dialogue in order to redefine performativity in these texts as a self-referential play between textuality and orality. Using my background in music, I link the musical lexicon to the literary by terming the correspondence of the in-between, the *interval*. The interval links two sounds through memory and resonance and each sound is contingent on the other to become an interval. The interval serves as a way of talking about the building blocks of citation, intertextuality, and dialogue while linking dialogic discourse to memory and emotion. My definition of performance is contingent on the creation of emotion and an analysis of what this new resonant affect creates in texts. Textual performance is plural, dialogic, and suspended, created by a constant becoming or visible potential, and is most effective in the present. Performance initially elicits a temporary and perishable emotion from the present. However, because of its performative qualities, moments in the text can reproduce emotions through citation and narration, recreating a diegetic textual performance from the rescored language.

Through the interval, my dissertation focuses on decentering the binary between text and performance by analyzing the role of affect's potential in the creation of performative writing, sound, space, and speech. I put my textual corpus into productive tension with select existing theoretical apparatuses of Performance theory as they relate to literary textual analysis. I am not assuming that all text is performative, but rather that certain texts contain affective performative elements that are essential to the creation of their art.

Where narrative contains horizontal trajectories (plot, evolution of time), I place the textual performance into dialogue with the harmonies, sonorities, and vibrations that are as powerful "vertically" as they are "horizontally."[4] These texts contain three main characteristics: an emphasis on performing everyday life, subjectivities, roles, and affects; the creation of an ephemeral and liminal space that contains the "performer" and the "audience" in a suspended moment or event; and an unveiling of the use of writing as performative tool. I argue that the interface between affect and performance can also create the resonance not of a stage or theatre, but of a more enduring dwelling: a *home*.

One goal of my methodology is to redefine "home." A similar notion was theorized by Jill Dolan in *Utopia in Performance, Finding Hope at the Theatre*. Dolan calls Utopian performance "a suspended emotional moment of the now" (8). My notion of home is similar in that it suspends an affective relationship into an interval that creates a temporary community. However, my notion of performative home is not only related to hope or desire for a possibility, but rather links the performer and audience to a familiar and intimate space because of the

[4] My definitions of verticality and horizontality are based on musical notation. In a musical score, the melody is read from left to right, like words on a page. The harmony is read vertically and is based on the intervals of each note (think of four different voices or instruments heard simultaneously). However, harmony can also be contained in a melody, split between moving notes and heard in the resonant sonority of the interval.

presence of conflict, cruelty, or violence. How does performing everyday life elicit the creation of an affect that can be characterized as *home*? In what ways can the home be seen as a component of a cultural (especially emotional) community? What are the tools that cause the singular, intimate home to become an open, inclusive community? What is the role of the family in this poetically created home? How are the culturally normative relationships tested by this performative relationship? Does the notion of home productively contradict cultural ideologies considered stable and assumed?

Most importantly, the case studies analyzed in my chapters respond to the question: what does *chez soi* in these texts mean? What does it mean for translation and recreation that there is no single word for *home* in French? Home contains a spectrum of unstable associations with the unconscious recognized by Freud in his *unheimlich* or uncanny. "What is home?" is initially a sentimental question, but one that has political and cultural ramifications. It contains multiple official and personal connotations and counter-memories. It is both a feeling and a space. However, is it possible to consider *home* an *affect*? And if so, what does this affect accomplish?

As I modeled in my example from *Deliverance*, these affective approaches to performance stem from Deleuze and Guattari's writings on art. What Deleuze and Guattari called the interior circle of their *territoire* in *Mille Plateaux*, or "house" in the chapter "Percept, Affect, et Concept" of their book *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* have shaped my evolving interpretation of home. Deleuze and Guattari write: "Harmonies are affects. Consonance and dissonance, harmonies of tone or color, are affects of music or painting … The artist creates blocs of percepts and affects, but the only law of creation is that the compound must stand up on its own" (164). The artist, according to Deleuze and Guattari, makes use of a bloc of sensations that contains three main elements: flesh, house, and cosmos. Flesh and house overlap to contrast with the

cosmos in that they are two autonomous frames. The house element is what makes the flesh hold fast. “Flesh,” they write, “is only the thermometer of a becoming” (179). But house “takes part in an entire becoming. It is the “nonorganic life of things” (180). It is also a step in the process from survival to art. Art begins with the construction of a house and when stylized becomes a collection of colors, postures, and refrains that make up a total work of art. With their examples of the *scenopoetes dentirostris,* a bird of the Australian rain forests, they show a possible relationship between stage and home. In their example, the bird:

> cuts leaves, makes them fall to the ground, and turns them over so that the paler, internal side contrasts with the earth. In this way it constructs a *stage* for itself like a ready-made … it sings a complex song made up from its own notes and, at intervals, those of other birds that it imitates: it is a complete artist. (180, my emphasis)

Does Deleuze and Guattari’s “house,” then, have a clear or oblique relationship to the stage in other contexts? How is it possible to see the connection between the bird and his complex song in a work of art? Is the construction of the home necessary in order to access the stage or does the goal of performing on stage drive the construction of the home? Does the specific collection of melodic intervals have a role in the creation of its territory? Though it is contrasted with an aesthetic cosmos and necessarily constructed dialogically, the home is a personal, intimate, and affective space. Home is a place (house, dwelling, village, community), charged with feeling, sensation, or affect—a familiarity gained through a collection of relationships and everyday repetitions.

Because it is an affective, melodic, and distinctive constellation, the building blocks of the home provide insight into how text can be read as performance on a micro level. For Deleuze

and Guattari, the harmonic creation of the *chez soi* becomes both a function and a signature that shapes a person's external and internal relationships. "De la ritournelle" begins with a child alone in the dark, humming a tune to ward off the chaos, to fix a stable point in his wanderings, and to create a *chez soi*. This ritual is called the *ritournelle* and has three parts. First, the affective trigger (fear, anxiety) that causes the need to combat the chaos with a comforting tune. Second, the repetition of the movement, rhythm, and sonority that will construct a *chez soi* by tracing a circle (spatially and melodically) in order to build a "mur de sons" out of the "briques sonores" (382). Third, and most important for my argument—the desire to invite someone into the *chez soi* by opening the circle in a place different from the original opening. It is the act of correspondence between the creation of the *chez soi* and the invitation and reopening that places affect and performance in dialogue. The tune the child hums becomes his *ritournelle*, a vibratory, polyphonic, and coded melody that *acts* in order to territorialize the surroundings. Again, when the survival tactic of warding off the chaos is able to create a "sonorous product," the territory created passes from a home to a work of art. What holds this work of art together is an "amenagement d'intervalles, repartition d'inegalités," and a "superposition de rythmes" (385). It is through the invitation to share the *chez soi* that a reader/spectator is produced and the *ritournelle* becomes coded to transmit a message to another person. What starts as a signature becomes a style that is both constructed and improvisatory.

The "Dueling Banjos" scene demonstrates how a musical lexicon provides an additional angle to Deleuze and Guattari's writings about the *ritournelle* and shows how literary analysis can engage with sound and performativity on a textual level. The musical dialogue in the scene produces three examples that frame my thesis. First, the wordless conversation is a score built by memory, citation, refrain, pedagogy, and intertextuality. Second, the move from melody to

harmony creates an affective opening between the characters that generates a temporary home between the two musicians and the surrounding spectators. Third, the engagement between the two characters both evokes and dispels an affective conflict that resonates throughout the film. Though the performance itself and the engagement between the two actors is ephemeral, the melody, and emotion created by it resonates throughout the film with an uncanny and foreboding quality.

The performed *home* in the scene thus lays out the building blocks of the impending conflict in order to temporarily dispel the anxiety produced by the tension between the rural and city dwellers while also establishing how the moment will become a resonant affect that structures the thriller's narrative. The musical duet happens at the threshold between home and stage, and the musical language that permits the wordless conversation between Drew and the boy is built entirely on cited intervals that are rescored to create a dueling melody and harmony. Consequently, the intervals that make up the melody become metatextual to incorporate the interval in the resonating citation. The interval, then, becomes a multi-dimensional term that shows the horizontal and vertical stacking of intertextuality, citation, and refrain that redefines the work as a whole. Though the correspondence created by the musical dialogue is irreproducible and ephemeral, what is created by it becomes an essential element of the film's refrain.

What this scene most clearly portrays is an example of the multilayered interval that unveils the workings of the artistic product as a whole. Deleuze and Guattari term this the "entre-deux":

> *Entre* la nuit et le jour, entre ce qui est construit et ce qui pousse naturellement, entre les mutations de l'inorganique à l'organique, de la plante à l'animal à

> l'espèce humaine, sans que cette série soit une progression. C'est dans cet entre-deux que le chaos devient rythme, non pas nécessairement, mais a une chance de le devenir. Le chaos n'est pas le contraire du rythme, c'est plutôt le milieu de tous les milieux. (385)

It is this *entre-deux*, this interval, this correspondence, which make up *performance*. Just as Deleuze and Guattari's *territoire* is not a *milieu*, but an act, the creation of the *chez soi* is a unique combination of spatial, temporal, melodic, harmonic, and affective acts that function as a code recreated at every use, yet maintains the familiarity of the original *ritournelle*.

In each of the texts I have chosen to analyze, what creates the home and what is created by it becomes a way of negotiating between ephemerality and permanence in print and oral language precisely because it is a way of breaking down the translation process inherent in performative text. In order to analyze the textuality and sonority of my corpus as a connected unit, I approach the performative text as a score to which each of the ensemble of microtextual elements contributes.

The score as analogy of the relationship between text and performance originates from William Worthen's writings on poetry and performance. In searching for a working metaphor of the relationship between text and performance in *Drama: Between Poetry and Performance*, Worthen outlines four possibilities. He first identifies the score—as in the dialogue written in a notational system that functions as an authoritative original that the actors make use of through interpretation. Second, he problematizes the blueprint, which acknowledges the incompleteness of writing in relation to the final performance. However, the blueprint implies a structure, not a process, and so becomes an ineffective metaphor. In order to address the process and structure of the text/performance relationship, Worthen's third and fourth metaphors are the text as

information and software. He uses this analogy to engage with the idea of the transmission of the text's information through tools and technologies. However, these analogies bring to light the difficulty in identifying how writing actually functions in and as performance. Different from Worthen's definition of the performative text as incomplete score, I approach the definition of score as a text able to speak as a complete unit—containing the anticipation and execution of its performance on the page. In this way, reading is itself a mode of performance that demands an engagement that makes use of the intervals, intertextuality, and sound's potential.

The home that I define in each chapter challenges chaos by establishing a harmony within the fluctuating patterns of the everyday. Home is, in my dissertation, the interval overlap between life and art, the object for which the poetic voice searches and the result of the dialogue between a poet and his or her creation. It is a recurring concept that gets projected from physical spaces into affective spaces, and it provides for a dialogue between the real world, art, and community. In the texts that I have chosen, home is a performed affect that exists in the written text as a quality that lends itself to the particular performance harmony. Because home is a unique and personal production, theorizing how it is performed eliminates the gulf-like hierarchy between dusty old texts and constantly renewing performances. It becomes the shared element created both in the text and on stage, the interval between life and art that speaks differently at each reading.

My corpus allows me to conduct close readings of select case studies and is divided into two genres: theatre and slam poetry. These two genres are connected through the element of construction—a written text precedes the performed outcome—and through a visible relationship between author and audience. The texts I have selected engage with their own construction in a way that demands an analysis that has not been specifically addressed by Performance studies

scholars to this point. The issue of the text's role in relation to liveness and the irreproducible quality of performance becomes problematic in Performance studies because of the question of memory. Live performance and behavioral practices have been touted as a contrasting and more effective way of recreating and reinscribing cultural memory. Peggy Phelan delimits the life of performance to the present, eliminating the importance of text's role in performance, stating, "Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representation… Performance's being, like the ontology of subjectivity proposed here, becomes itself through disappearance" (147). Scholars such as Rebecca Schneider and Diana Taylor claim that embodiment through sensorial and temporal rituals are ways of combating the idea that memory cannot be contained on a page. Rituals such as Japanese tea ceremonies and performances such as civil war reenactments become ways of bridging ancient and modern that use noise, gesture, and spatial embodiment to revive rather than to preserve. Taylor distinguishes between performative and textual memory in *Archive and Repertoire*, writing:

> Archival memory exists as documents, maps, literary texts, letters, archaeological remains … Repertoire on the other hand, enacts embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing—in short all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge. (20)

For these scholars, performative text is therefore stuck in the binary between reinvigorating and preserving, living and haunting memory. The corpus I have chosen decenters this binary by focusing on the text's role within a performance. In the texts I have chosen to analyze, text, writing, and print are more than a pre-performance, but have roles within the works themselves. Text is not a static artifact, but a living, contributing element of the performance.

Though the plays and poems analyzed in this dissertation are very different, they each provide answers to the questions raised by the role of text in performance. Bernard-Marie Koltès's *Roberto Zucco* is created from a tissage of textual sources—newspaper clippings, citations and allusions to mythical, Biblical, and popular culture sources—which in turn helps contribute to the process of creating a metatextual hero from the tissage. In Yasmina Reza's *Le Dieu du carnage*, a written document becomes as engaging a presence as the characters themselves, acting as an acoustic element that contributes to the onstage orality. Writing contains an essential sonic quality that bridges sonority, materiality, and urban space in the poetry of Grand Corps Malade and RiM. As an ensemble these case studies form the basis for the genre of performative text itself. Though I have focused on theatre and poetry, analysis of texts such as novels, films, and short stories could provide additional insight into how a performative text is constructed and maintained.

I have organized the chapters diachronically starting with Bernard-Marie Koltès's 1990 play *Roberto Zucco* as an example of the performative text's paradigm. However, I do not mean to imply that the performative text originated in 1990; on the contrary, the analysis of *Roberto Zucco* points to how historical connections, citations, allusions, and intertexts are inherent to the performative text itself. My analysis of the play shows how it is a paradigmatic text in that it functions as a theme that calls for variations by raising certain questions that are answered by the subsequent texts of my corpus. First, how does the performative text address its own boundaries? Second, what is the importance of looking at performance through the lens of the nuances of the interval in the potential and anticipatory? Third, what can writing accomplish at a performative level that orality cannot? And finally, how does performative text contribute to an affective community?

The first two chapters on *Roberto Zucco* establish two approaches for reading a performative text through an analysis of the emphasis of the creation of the polyphonic hero through restructured narratives, sound, and cruelty. I split my analysis into two chapters in order to treat the two kinds of intertextuality separately. In the first chapter, intertextuality comes from external allusions and citations that contribute to the creation of a polyphonic hero. In the second chapter, I focus on the self-referential intertextuality of the diegetic text itself. The first chapter demonstrates the playwright's distrust of theatre as a poetic medium and feeling of imprisonment in writing for the stage. The play centers on the movements of its main character, Roberto Zucco, an escaped convict and serial killer who tries in vain to escape his own narrative through committing poetic acts of violence and cruelty. Cruelty becomes a process that is a necessary part of creating a hero from a criminal and Koltès highlights how the process overlaps with the process of writing for the theatre. *Roberto Zucco* is a play made up of many citations and allusions to Greek mythology, the Bible, the French literary canon, popular culture, *fait divers*, and theoretical texts such as Antonin Artaud's *Theatre of Cruelty*. In piecing these sources together, it is the seams and scars of the ensemble that are highlighted, pointing to how the hero—both the title of the work and main character—becomes a symbol of the metatext. Turning stage performance on its head, each act of cruelty is unveiled through narration, which charges the retelling of the action with the same performative force as the hollow theatrical stage act. Because murder and other irrevocable acts cannot be truthfully performed on stage, a narration provided by a witness serves as equally performative as the stage act. In overturning the power of the act by replacing it with a narrated version, style becomes more important than content. Consequently, both the character Roberto Zucco and the play become metatextual myth through a focus on the stylistic construction of meta-language, meaning, and narrative.

In my second chapter, which also treats *Roberto Zucco*, I focus not on the extratextual construction of the text, but on the interval between speech, sound, and writing that uses cruelty to both engage with and dispel diegetic anxiety. This chapter most clearly sets up how a performative text can function as a complete score by looking at the use of citation, dialogue, and *sound affects*. While I take Roberto Zucco as the play's hero in the first chapter, my analysis of sound in the second chapter transposes the polyphonic hero Zucco through the figure of La Gamine (the young girl he has raped), who shows how the complexity of performative narrative can effectively replace irrevocable actions onstage. As a hero, Zucco's relationship to his own construction is unveiled through the affective and sonorous production of memory. As he wanders the city committing crimes, Zucco continually repeats his name, drawing attention to the ephemerality of speech as he searches for a way to preserve the memory of his name in a way that mimics print. La Gamine's counterpoint to Zucco's fading memory is to reestablish the connection between speech and print by drawing attention to how the oral mechanics and vocal muscularity can transcribe the production of speech. Thus, the notion of home in *Roberto Zucco* mirrors the analysis of the "Dueling Banjos" scene in *Deliverance* in that it comes back to a ritualizing and reappropriating of reused clippings, phrases, and diegetic elements with an affective charge that provides a harmonic counterpoint and infusion of style. The refrain of overlapping citations produces both a diegetic and extratextual home that provides Zucco, La Gamine, and the reader/spectator a lens from which to view the boundaries of the prison-like stage.

The third chapter analyzes the writing process highlighted within the spoken dialogue of the four characters of *Le Dieu du carnage* (2007) by Yasmina Reza. Reza emphasizes writing in order to both charge the written word with a perlocutionary quality and demonstrate how the

spoken word can mimic writing by causing a lasting resonance, seen in the very opening discussion of the word “armé” (10). In the chapter, I argue against Amanda Giguere’s thesis that the play hinges on the rupture, breach, and failure of communication. I propose instead that the point of convergence between the written and spoken word proves that communication is indeed successful throughout the play, and I identify the successful mechanism as the *draft*. I define the draft in *Le Dieu du carnage* in three distinct but overlapping ways, all with a focus on the process or document of writing within the play. First, the draft is an unfinished document that shows various stages of the writing process, by overlapping omissions, rewrites, and substitutions. Second, the draft is a body of words conscripted and stylized to be used as weapons in verbal combat. Finally, the draft is a transaction, a communicative proof of signature or bill of exchange. Starting with the opening scene, throughout the play the characters read aloud, dictate journalistic drafts, manipulate and rewrite each other’s speech so that in *Carnage*, the spoken word is uniquely built to highlight its successful counterpart in writing. Each of the four characters use the draft differently, and their signature styles contribute to a way of reading how Reza deals with conflict both in *Carnage* and in her other plays. The focus on the link between diegetic and theatrical writing shows that Reza’s engagement with textual agency is at the heart of her style of theatrical writing, and is taking the *théâtre de la parole* in a new direction in contemporary French theatre.

Carnage engages with the notion of the home on a more concrete level due to the domestic setting and thematic family tropes. The violence in Reza’s play constructs and enlarges the “family” by unveiling the oral hypocrisies and cultural assumptions about couples, families, and children. The more the couples sit and talk, the more they become like familiar members of an intimate community, stripping each other of the masks and disguises of the public sphere. The

entire play takes place inside a small Parisian apartment with only minor reference to an outside, institutionalized space: the school. Like in *Roberto Zucco*, the characters use language to escape each other and the stage, while simultaneously constructing a home-space into which other characters are invited or excluded depending on their engagement with each others' signature styles.

In the fourth chapter I use the lens of Apollinaire's "Zone" to analyze Grand Corps Malade's first album *Midi 20* (2007), arguing that much of the orality of slam poetry has origins in urban textual poetry and drafted musical structures. For my poetic analysis, I begin with Mallarmé's writings on poetry and his call to arms to the French poets to rethink the classical structures, rhythms, and syntaxes in order to create a new language, one that would reflect the individual mystery of each poetic creation. His essays on poetry are filled with a musical vocabulary that resonates into the 20th and 21st centuries and that recalls the foundation of what has become Affect theory. By making use of the creation of emotion by the "sound" of poetry, I rethink Performance studies from an angle that answers questions theatrical writing cannot. For Mallarmé, poetry must contain all the mystery hidden in the folds of the everyday, but also bring it to light. The poetic texts I have chosen draw attention to the resonant sonority of the spoken word that is in a way preserved on the page. Though this is a theoretical springboard, my analysis provides an operative lens through which to read how performance poetry can be put in dialogue with literary analysis. Grand Corps Malade's first album demonstrates the link between performative writing and community building through a focus on identity, authenticity, pedagogy, and optimism. Where much of what has been written on slam poetry takes a cultural studies approach, the final two chapters of my dissertation focus on the formalist elements of the written poetry created by the slam artists and on the engagement with an anticipatory

performativity that recreates a home-space through an inclusive writing community. Home in this chapter is seen most clearly in how spatiality and temporality coalesce in the notion of *dwelling* as a dual and opposing act—of regret or inclusive living.

The fifth and final chapter of the dissertation looks at how cruelty, shock, suffering, and hardship provide responsive models of playfulness and community through which one can read performative writing more effectively. Where the previous chapter focused on works by a single slam performer and his first album, this chapter looks at how the slam collective is mirrored through print (anthology) and community (the slam association). In this chapter, I analyze the collective aspect of slam poetry from the point of view of contributions made by women through the associations *Slam ô féminin* and 129H Productions. I focus on the lesser-known slam artists who have pushed the boundaries of what slam poetry achieves within a community by widening the audience, such as RiM (Amélie Picq Grumbach), a member of the slam association 129H, who has begun a family friendly slam show called *One Maman Show*, and Catherine Mathon (Cat Mat), one of the founders of *Slam ô féminin*, an association that takes writing workshops and slam sessions to groups of marginalized women in Paris and around France. Split into two sections, this chapter focuses on the productivity of the marginal, in terms of both genre and gender. The marginal takes on a multi-directional format in my analysis because several marginal points of view make up the collective culture of slam. First, as a genre, slam is still a marginally published genre, relying ultimately on live moments, anthologies, and recorded albums for transmission. Secondly, successful slam performers highlight their authentic marginal identities as poetic authority on stage. Third, slam's rise in popularity is due in part to the programs of social outreach to marginalized urban communities such as the homeless, the mentally ill, drug addicts, juvenile delinquents, abused women, and the hospitalized. My first

section focuses on the reappropriation and redefinition of the marginality inherent in the *fait divers* by *Slam ô féminin* from poetic structure to poetic process through which to address women's victimization. This section focuses on the writing workshops and *Slam ô féminin*'s recently published anthology by L'Harmattan through the lens of the condensed narrative in the *fait divers*'s sound bite as potential response and refuge to cruelty, violence, depression, and loneliness. Because of the way the poems in the anthology are in dialogue with each other, the intertextuality produces a polyphony that is habitually found in this form of poetry, and unveils the patterns of play between textuality and orality that mirror the stylized home of the theatre sections. For *Slam ô féminin*, marginality begets *marginalia*: a writing style that encourages writing as a constant, ubiquitous, everyday process. Napkins, notebooks, metro tickets, and margins of newspapers should be scribbled with ideas, rhymes, and responses to other written sources, because writing, and then sharing, is what combats the psychological and social struggles of the urban woman according to *Slam ô féminin*. In this section the home is a refuge created through the ritual of marginalia and reignited through live performance.

The second section analyzes a different reaction to women's marginality through humor, play, and artifice in the poetry and work of RiM (Amélie Picq Grumbach), the sole female member of 129H Productions (one of the first slam collectives) and founder of *One Maman Show*, a *soirée slam*, album, and CD targeting young children. RiM widens the use of the traditional home as domestic and maternal sphere to create a center for new slam audiences—children and their parents. For RiM, slam is a uniquely oral medium and though she has been published, her writing style reflects her mission as artist, to make a performer out of an audience, through an infusion of energy, intonation, and oral interactivity. I interviewed RiM about her poetic, musical, and performance projects and have incorporated her own analysis about slam

poetry as an effective structure for newly forming marginal identities into this chapter. As an artist acutely aware of her own process and aesthetic message, RiM claims that textuality does not have a place in her poetry. However, through an analysis of two of her published poems, I argue that her message of the *ludique* highlights a point of convergence between textuality and orality that essentializes slam as a hybrid genre by drawing attention to how it recreates *home*.

In each chapter, my methodological framework focuses on how performance and affect are coterminous, how performance charges a space with an emotional memory that suspends the chaos of the urban everyday. I argue that the performance space becomes a sort of home by challenging the domestic/public cultural boundary. Because of the way Performance studies is able to challenge the hierarchy of a cultural canon, the methodology and case study approach of my dissertation contributes to an evolving and contemporary vision of French studies. In the way that the "Yankee Doodle" melody refrain in "Dueling Banjos" points to an attempt at sketching cultural and national boundaries through music in *Deliverance*, the notion of *home* in these texts problematizes the moments of invitation into the home. Far from being static and assumed, the home echoes live performance in its ability to modify the points of opening in the *territoire*. While the general trend in the field is to enlarge and expand the boundaries of the "Nation" and problematize what it means to be "French" in a postcolonial and the global macrocosm, my dissertation focuses on the fluctuating *micro* boundaries of emotions and affective memory. In doing so, I emphasize the creation of temporary and fluctuating affective and dialogic communities that redefine national, cultural, and geographic boundaries.

The home has often been considered an intimate, domestic, and personal space that contrasts with public or institutionalized urban spaces. The home is where different ethnic, religious, and cultural communities can recreate a resistance to an integration that has become

more forced and polemical in French urban geographies. In focusing on the in-betweenness within the discourse—the harmonies, dissonances, sonorities, and resonances within the macro, the micro, the public, the intimate, the general, and the specific—the texts that I study unveil the particularities of reading text as performance by exposing the agency of French performative writing. There is therefore a political corollary within my research. Aesthetic and affective communities in the French language texts I analyze make reference to important extra-diegetic communities and relationships whose constant fluctuation redefines assumed power structures.

As I will demonstrate at length in the dissertation, each of the performative text's homes engage with affective, cultural, and theoretical structures in different ways. Koltès's metatextual and mythical weaving in *Roberto Zucco* examines the deconstructive forces of belonging, becoming, and imprisonment within a static community. Urban performance poetry such as Slam contains extremely powerful linguistic resistance paradigms for poets whose origins and street language do not have a place in the traditional French cultural and literary canon yet find inspiration in those very sources. From the standpoint of Gender and Women's Studies, the chapters on Reza and the slam associations provide ways of reading about positions of conflict and productivity in the marginal. An analysis of space is essential in textual performativity. Reza's plays are comedic but address serious issues, mute frustrations, and unspoken disappointments that cross gender and cultural boundaries. She is most famous for her play *Art* (1995), however my choice to analyze *Le Dieu du carnage* stems from her ingenious bringing to life of the domestic space of the Parisian apartment in which I see potential corollaries in performance poetry venues. Though the domestic space has often been associated with the feminine, women's presence on performance poetry stages has not only displaced the female

domestic, it has created an affective and intimate performance space that resembles a positive home.

Through my analysis of the different agencies of domestic paradigms in *Le Dieu du carnage* and in performance associations and slam workshops, I rethink the negative connotations of feminine domesticity seen in Rachel Bowlby's chapter entitled "Domestication" in *Feminism Beside Itself* (1995). Bowlby recognizes that when the term "domestication" is coupled with theory, it means the end of its dynamism. She uses the example of how when certain theorists such as Derrida become "household" names, their theories lose their "radical edge and become tamed, co-opted and institutionalized" (73). Bowlby retraces the origins of the term domestic to the French *domestiquer* or "the subjugation of a tribe to a colonizing power," bringing a primitive or foreign set of values "into line with the 'domestic' civilization and power" (75). I maintain that the *home* created by the affective resonance and intervals of performance poetry challenges the etymology of the French word *domestiquer* and recreates an alternate meaning and use for the paradoxically domestic/public space. Though the origins for the domestic come from French, the word *home* does not. As I wrote earlier, the difference between the English and French in the construction of my idea of home is essential since it demands a creative agency that is recreated by the translation.

Put together, the terms that make up the affective lexicon of my thesis—interval, home, and refrain—provide ways of defining and negotiating the performativity that arises in the play between textuality and orality. Through an analysis of how moments of conflict in contemporary French theatre and slam poetry can be productive community builders, the texts' self-referentiality highlights style over content, overturning the assumed stasis of the text and instead charging it with an agency that rivals live performance. The ways boundaries are extended

through textual sonority in this type of analysis can be extended to speak about the performative boundaries in everyday life—the masks, tensions, and conflicts that structure everyday encounters with people, spaces, and language. In this way, the text provides valuable and necessary information that cannot be overlooked by Performance studies as a whole.

II. CHAPTER 1: THE HERO'S VIOLENT POETIC INTERVAL: *LA TÂCHE DE SANG* IN BERNARD-MARIE KOLTÈS'S *ROBERTO ZUCCO*

"J'ai toujours un peu détesté le théâtre, parce que le théâtre, c'est le contraire de la vie; mais j'y reviens toujours et je l'aime parce que c'est le seul endroit où l'on dit que ce n'est pas la vie" (134). These words were made famous by one of France's premier playwrights of the 1980s, Bernard-Marie Koltès. Because *Roberto Zucco* (1990) is the last play written before Koltès's death, it is often analyzed as being a condensed model of his theories on dramatic writing. Koltès's oeuvre is frequently considered a "théâtre de révolte" (Mounsef 8) and though he is most famous for his earlier works such as *Combat de nègres et de chiens* (1983-89), *Dans la solitude des champs de coton* (1986), and *La Nuit juste avant les forets* (1988), *Roberto Zucco*'s highlighted overlap with *la vie*, as well as its interwoven play with genres attests to Koltès's feeling of exile and imprisonment as a poet writing for the stage. In these next two chapters, I analyze *Roberto Zucco* at its seams and transpositions between text and performance—from poetic citation to the scoring of potential sound—to highlight the hero, the theatrical space, and Koltès's composition of the text. Here, the page becomes the stage and the performance becomes a metatext of mythical proportions. The definition of "performative" originates from J.L. Austin's 1962 *How To Do Things with Words,* in which he writes that linguistic acts do not simply reflect a world, but that speech has the power to create a world. The etymology of performance comes from the Greek "to furnish forth," "to carry forward," "to bring into being" (13).

Recently, performance studies scholars such as José Muñoz and Peggy Phelan have detached the idea of the performative utterance from its connection with the stage and dramatic writing and employ it to conceptualize everyday relationships with affective, cultural, racial, and gendered communities. In this move from stage to life, the text is often dismissed as an unfinished artifact, unable to contribute to our understanding of the ephemeral quality of performance in everyday life. My analysis of *Roberto Zucco* gives primacy to the text as creator of performativity to the same degree as its live rendition. Emphasizing the trajectory from text to performance to myth to monument, Koltès weaves citations into the movements and actions of the hero, Roberto Zucco, whose violence, transposed by poetic intervals, takes on an essential regenerative quality. Through an awareness of his evolution to hero, Zucco's *tache de sang* becomes a *tâche de sang*, an essential violent duty to accomplish in order to escape both the text and the stage and elevate him to myth and write him into a metatext that determines immortality. The performative process of becoming a hero in *Roberto Zucco* is inextricably linked to bridging the materiality of the text to the actor's corporality on stage.

II. A. THE PROCESS OF CRUELTY AND THE CREATION OF THE CRIMINAL HERO

Roberto Zucco is a play that functions as a textual unit by drawing attention to the materiality of its makeup of pieced-together citations. Made up of excerpts, clippings, and citations, the circular structure of the narrative points to the textual object as material tool. Peter Stallybrass recognizes the importance of the form of the book as a codex as different from a scroll because of the ability to return to different moments in the narrative at will. He writes, "it is the book form—the combination of the ability to scroll with the capacity for random access, enabling you to leap from place to place that has provided the model for which these other

technologies now seek to emulate" (42). Reading *Roberto Zucco* unveils a poetic trajectory that makes use of cruelty and violence to construct a hero strong enough to survive the ephemeral nature of performance and become myth by mimicking the materiality of print. Zucco is not only an embodied figure on stage, but an essential element of the tool used in the reading process.

In *Roberto Zucco*, the performative process mimics print because the narrative is inherently codexical, allowing for the possibility of returning to sought out moments in the text as described by Stallybrass. In Scene XIV "L'Arrestation," two police officers are stationed at the one place they know Zucco has been—the street where he stabbed the police inspector. Unconvinced of their usefulness in apprehending Zucco, they become objects of the landscape, incapable of extracting anything from their reading of the place:

> Deuxième Policier: Un meurtrier revient toujours sur les lieux de son crime.
>
> Premier Policier: Il reviendrait ici? Pourquoi voudrais-tu qu'il revienne? Il n'a rien laissé, pas un bagage, rien. Il n'est pas fou. Nous sommes deux panneaux de stationnement complètement inutiles … Je me sens comme un idiot; je sens qu'il me pousse des racines et des feuilles sur les bras et les jambes. Je sens que je m'enfonce dans le béton. (85)

Though the first policemen remains convinced Zucco will not return, this dialogue emphasizes the anticipatory nature of *Roberto Zucco's* circular narrative. The repetition of the verb "revenir" in the present, conditional, and subjunctive forms highlights the quality of the text that is recreated through the mechanism of the return. Though escape is the central engine that drives the plot, the play also invites a reading of returns to the moment of shock, to the emotional present of the gasp. This highlights the physical object of the book, the only place that contains the linguistic objects that provide the possibility to return to these moments of shock: the printed

page. Through anticipation, it becomes the reader's duty to identify with an element of cruelty inherent in the text as a signpost one can return to, a guiding code of the performative process. The officer duo is a leitmotiv that appears at several times throughout the play. At each time they are stationary objects, debating their usefulness as active participants in the scene. Their presence, however, serves to unveil the signposting process the text makes use of to anticipate the appearance of Zucco.

Koltès provides a way to identify, if not entirely with the criminal, then with the effectiveness of his criminal process. Zucco's acts of cruelty are indications of Koltès's own process of creating a hero from a villain, as essential to the creation of a poetic language that is effectively performative. Throughout the play Zucco is a fugitive subject whose flight serves to complicate the realistic and linear temporality of the stage. Mounsef's analysis of *Roberto Zucco* focuses on the limits of his corporality in the prison-like space of the theatre. She recognizes that the four murders Zucco commits extend the corporal limits of the actor. Moving from intimacy to cold distance—from the strangling of his mother, to the shooting of the Inspecteur—many of the textually performative aspects of *Roberto Zucco* that create emotion take place during moments of violence. The question of a fragmented identity is just as central to the creation of Koltès's hero as it is to the creation of a relationship between audience and actor and reader and text. Founding an affective relationship between villain and reader is more complex than relying on the empathetic bond between reader and victim. However, cruelty, as seen through textual mechanisms, also delivers the possibility of creating the shock effect inherent in the live performance.

Despite the fact that *Roberto Zucco* does not fall into Antonin Artaud's surrealist theatrical genre of the *Theatre of Cruelty*, cruelty as a production of shared affect is central to its

creation of a new performative and poetic language. Antonin Artaud writes that theatre must contain a cruelty if it is to shake the spectator into feeling something organic. It must "give us everything that is in crime, love, war, or madness" (85). For Artaud the "living forces in poetry should supersede real conditions" (85). These moments of orchestrated violence are essential to the creation of an affective pulse within the play, however, unlike Artaud's rejection of the tyranny of the text, Koltès makes use of the relationship between text and performance to craft his meaningful language. Where Artaud's cruelty contains a heightened element of improvisation, Koltès has carefully crafted the nuances and lyricism into the dialogues.

The performative text, then, does not bring about an unveiling of meaning, but an unveiling of the material construction of the performative process through cruelty. For Artaud, the truth was too often searched for in the text, which had become a "tyrant of meaning" (89). He stipulated: "it is essential to put an end to the subjugation of the theatre to the text, and to recover the notion of a kind of unique language half-way between gesture and thought" (89). Artaud supported a theatre that would create a new language that was contained in the interval between thought and gesture. Koltès seeks to accomplish this interval not by disregarding but by making use of the text as a tool. By analyzing the search for truth and meaning, Koltès wrote his text into more than a point of departure for the theatrical staging. As Maria M. Delgado writes: "Poetry is also written through the performer's body, a form of dance if you like that indicates why rap offers such a powerful vocabulary for enacting the work" (26). First and foremost a poet, Koltès had little say in how his plays were staged, and provided very little written stage direction. Instead, he drew attention to the makeup of his dramatic *writing*, and on the affective pulse to show his feelings of confinement in writing for the stage.

In this way Koltès plays with the foundation of poetics or drama outlined in Aristotle's *Poetics*. He combines the different parts of poetic matter: language, rhythm, and melody and even employs the theatrical device of the chorus of Greek tragedy to arouse more emotion from the audience. Aristotle's definition of tragedy is a "representation of a serious, complete action which has magnitude, in embellished speech, with each of its elements used separately in the various parts of the play and represented by people acting and not by narration, accomplishing by means of pity and terror the catharsis of such emotions" (28). For Aristotle performance does not reflect life but essentializes it by presenting a paradigm of its process.

However, in *Roberto Zucco*, many of the actions that contain magnitude take place in a retelling of the original action. In this play, narration becomes action by drawing attention to the performative linguistic tools that define the actors' roles. This text's notion of hero depends on unveiling the criminal process of cruelty through written performative mechanisms. Zucco recognizes the connection between acts of crime and becoming a hero in Scène VI as a way of physically marking what would stay invisible in spoken linguistic acts. Zucco recreates a character for himself for the man he has found lost in the metro tunnels, claiming to be one of the many students at the Sorbonne who think of themselves as heroes. However, what the students lack to become a hero, is the mark that attests to a previous crime or act of cruelty. Zucco states:

> Les couloirs de mon université sont silencieux et traversés par des ombres dont on n'entend même pas les pas. Dès demain je retournerai suivre mon cours de linguistique … J'y serai, invisible parmi les invisibles, silencieux et attentif dans l'épais brouillard de la vie ordinaire. (37)

Zucco's assumed phony role as a student of linguistics and his speech about false heroes and linguistics highlight the invisibility of language. The only way you can recognize a hero, he says,

is by seeing the blood stains on his clothes: “Il n’y a pas de héros dont les habits ne soient trempés de sang, et le sang est la seule chose au monde qui ne puisse pas passer inaperçue” (37). Blood then, is inextricably linked to *ink* because it shows the making visible of the spoken word and connects it to a previous action. Playing with the ephemerality of orality and the permanence of writing, Koltès transcribes the sounds of the scene, and the man’s response to Zucco is a positive one. Instead of focusing on what Zucco says, he mentions the sound of Zucco’s voice. Le monsieur says, “Vous bégayez, très légèrement; j’aime beaucoup cela. Cela me rassure. Aidez-moi, à l’heure où le bruit envahira ce lieu …” (39). Here Zucco’s orality is not entirely effective as a means of communicating an idea, but instead draws attention to *how* it is performed. In focusing on the stuttering style and not the content of what Zucco says, the old man does not recognize him as a threat. Instead he is reassured by Zucco’s presence and the stuttering of the oral mechanism eases his anxiety, causing him the ability to escape the maze of metro tunnels, saved by the hero. Throughout the play, orality is consistently coupled with textual presence and with a reference to escaping the stage. Sitting encased in the silent echo of the metro tunnels, listening only to the sound of Zucco’s voice, the old man wants to leave before the first train rumbles through the station, disturbing the calm of the dialogue duet.

Though Koltès’s application of cruelty to create a unique performative language references Antonin Artaud’s manifesto, the process triggered by cruelty uses the relationship between the text and performance to elicit an ongoing theatrical response that is different from the live performances championed by Artaud. Koltès highlights the duty of the poet to charge the play with a cruelty both on the page and on the stage that can match a real life act of cruelty. Having read a few newspaper clippings about the notorious serial killer, Koltès bases the play on his fascination with the murders, escapes, and plural identity of Roberto Succo, rewriting a

criminal trajectory into that of a myth of a hero longing to escape the confines of the everyday, and a character longing to escape the stage. Koltès was interested in weaving together certain aspects of Succo's story in *Roberto Zucco*. Born in 1962 outside of Venice, Italy, Succo brutally kills his mother and father and is condemned to a ten-year prison sentence in 1981. However, he is diagnosed with schizophrenia, placed in a mental institution and in 1986 (after five years of imprisonment) manages to escape. He makes it to France where he goes on a killing rampage, murdering among others a police officer, and raping a sixteen-year-old girl who becomes his mistress. It is these two crimes that cause the authorities to link his many crimes all over France and it is the girl who gives the police his name, leading to his apprehension in 1988. A few days after Succo's arrest he manages to once again escape from his cell, making it up to the roof of the prison where he puts on an hour-long show for the many journalists watching and filming. He performs for the cameras by talking, throwing tiles, taking his clothes off, hanging from a wire, and then to everyone's gasps, falling. Though he survives the fall, Roberto Succo commits suicide in his cell less than three months later.

Instead of recreating a despicable villain in *Roberto Zucco*, Koltès makes use of the performative aspects of Succo's plural identity. In this way, Zucco becomes a myth, not only because of his status as hero, but because he becomes a symbol for the ubiquitous cruelty of the everyday. The poetic mechanisms contained in *Roberto Zucco* show how its elevation into the realm of myth is essential to building a performative text. Here, I refer to myth as investigated by Roland Barthes in his *Mythologies* (1957). For Barthes, "le mythe est une parole … un système de communication … c'est un message" (181). The source of the message is unique to this text's narrated cruelty. Koltès's discovery of Succo as a muse echoes the Barthesian theory of the *fait divers*. Retheorizing his everyday life by way of a series of documents, Barthes writes in his

avant-propos: “Le matériel de cette réflexion a pu être très varié (un article de presse, une photographie d'hebdomadaire, un film, un spectacle, une exposition), et le sujet très arbitraire: il s'agissait évidemment de mon actualité” (9). Like Barthes, Koltès uses his *actualité* as a starting point for his play. Koltès speaks of his fascination with the case of Roberto Succo, not because of the psychological aspects or the murders, but because of how the media portrayed him as a wanted man. The headlines that told of Roberto Succo’s crimes were interesting to Koltès because he did not fit solely in the realm of sensationalist journalism. Roberto Succo was too enigmatic a figure to be contained in the formalist *fait divers*.

Koltès saw a wanted poster in the metro of a boy with a beautiful face a few months before Zucco’s apprehension. He wrote of his fascination with the photos on the wanted poster mentioned by Pascale Froment, the author of Roberto Succo’s biography[5]: “A wanted poster showed four photos of Roberto Succo. Each photo was of a face so different that you had to look several times to know they were all of the same boy. Koltès was struck by these pictures, by the beauty of the changeable face which they showed.” (57). In his own interview, published as *L’hangar, à l’ouest* (1990) Koltès said:

> En février de cette année, j’ai vu, placardé dans le métro, l’avis de recherche de l’assassin d’un policier. J’étais fasciné par la photo du visage. Quelque temps après, je vois à la télévision le même garçon qui, a peine emprisonné, s’échappait des mains des policiers, montait sur le toit de la prison défiait le monde … Son

[5] Pascale Froment was researching and writing her biography *Roberto Succo* (1991) at the same time Koltès was writing his play. Froment and Koltès met several times to talk about their shared passion of Succo. Froment gave Koltès valuable information that he wove into his play, among which was the recording of a monologue of Succo in prison in which he philosophizes about life and death and quotes *Hamlet*’s famous “To be or not to be” monologue (analyzed in Chapter 2). This monologue is included in scene Eight which is titled “Juste avant de mourir.” Froment’s biography was also used as a source in Cedric Kahn’s 2001 film *Roberto Succo*.

> nom était Roberto Succo: il avait tué ses parents à l'âge de quinze ans (sic), puis redevenu "raisonnable" jusqu'à vingt-cinq ans, brusquement il déraille une nouvelle fois … C'est la première fois que je m'inspire d'un fait divers, mais celui-là n'est pas un fait divers. Succo a une trajectoire d'une pureté incroyable (222).

Instead of seeing a killer, a criminal, or a villain, Koltès recognizes a poetic trajectory in the woven-together structure of the tabloid stories.

Anticipating how Zucco defines a hero in the scene in the Metro with Le Monsieur, the first characters of the play try to distinguish the mark that defines the killer. In Scène I, "L'Évasion," the two prison guards discuss how to distinguish what differentiates a killer from another man. In drawing attention to the *sign* that attests to violence, Koltès shows how it becomes a *signal* to the process of killing, not unlike how Barthes defines the use of the "système de communication" he calls myth. Where Zucco recognized the mark of the hero as the "tache de sang" (37), the guard cannot locate a physical attribute that marks all killers. Therefore, being recognized as hero necessitates a different reading process than being recognized as a killer.

> Deuxième Gardien: Moi qui suis gardien depuis six années, j'ai toujours regardé les meurtriers en cherchant où pouvait se trouver ce qui les différenciait de moi, gardien de prison, incapable de poignarder ni d'étrangler, incapable même d'en avoir l'idée. J'ai réfléchi, j'ai cherché, je les ai même regardé sous la douche, parce qu'on m'a dit que c'était dans le sexe que se logeait l'instinct meurtrier. J'en ai vu plus de six cents, eh bien, aucun point commun entre eux; il y en a des

> gros, il y en a des petits, il y en a des minces, il y en a des tout petits, il y en a des ronds, il y en a des pointus, il y en a des énormes, il n'y a rien à tirer de cela. (11)

In this monologue the prison guard tells of his search for "où se logeait l'instinct meurtrier" (11) by watching the naked prisoners in the shower. By staring at, qualifying, and categorizing 600 of the prisoners according to the shape and size of their penises at one moment, he is simultaneously drawing attention to the future hero's sexual and imminent crimes and charging the text with a repetitive violence that foreshadows the narrative violence later in the play. Gaining momentum through the monologue, the "il y en a des" is repeated seven times, echoing the tedium of his analysis while charging it with a linguistic violence.

What the guard fails to recognize is the singularity of each killer, the narrative that is contained in the text's retelling of past events. Unlike Odysseus's scar in *The Odyssey,* which causes him to be recognized by his housekeeper Euryclea upon returning home, and which triggers the back story that illuminates the reader to everything preceding that moment, the penises contain no trace of what connects them to their crimes. Their past acts have no distinguishable shared mark or message that projects their criminal story. For Koltès, a hero is different from a killer in that it is a plural identity put together through narrative. *Roberto Zucco*'s identification is found in the *tache* of the seams of the multiple textual origins.

Without going completely back to redefining semiology, Barthes uses the relationship between *signifiant* and *signifié* to overlap his own system of myth. The *signe* created from the *signifiant* and *signifié* becomes its own *signifiant* in myth. The myth then becomes a:

> méta-langage, parce qu'il est une seconde langue, *dans laquelle* on parle de la première. Réfléchissant sur un méta-langage, le sémiologue n'a plus à s'interroger sur la composition du langage-objet, il n'a plus à tenir compte du détail du

> schème linguistique: il n'aura à en connaître que le terme total ou signe global, et dans la mesure seulement où ce terme va se prêter au mythe. (188)

For Koltès, finding the sign that identifies a killer is secondary to how one looks for it. Maria M. Delgado writes:

> Koltès doesn't ask why things happen but rather how actions are carried out. It is on this subtle difference that his work hinges and it is this characteristic that renders him such a significant dramatic innovator. For as director Lluís Pasqual, who has staged Roberto Zucco in Catalan, Russian, and Spanish, states: "We've been asking 'why?' for two thousand years. We have answers to the why from Freud, from Marx. It's an old question. What makes Koltès so important is he asks not the 'why?' but the 'how?'" This is manifest in the plays' extended temporal landscapes and ways in which character motivation is never easy to gauge. The attention of the audience is drawn to the way movement, action, and word each becomes strategic elements in the characters' attempts to control one another. And it is in asking how that leads to a humor habitually provoked by something quite unexpected—the parachutist that lands unannounced in *Return to the Desert*; bystanders meddling in a hostage crisis in *Roberto Zucco*. (29)

The *how* of the crime is therefore linked to how the reader discovers it. Narration, then, becomes a legitimate performative tool and the retelling of an action can stand in for the action itself. Because real murder cannot be committed as a performative action on stage, the audience must rely on a representation of the emotion that would be produced if such an action were to occur. Koltès thus highlights theatre's shortfalls by transposing the action an extra step to narration, drawing attention to Zucco's desire to escape the false reality of the stage.

Throughout the play, Zucco's murders exhibit his desire to escape what is presented as the banality both of theatre and of everyday life. Within the play, cruelty is a necessary task to shatter what Antonin Artaud calls "a false reality that lies like a shroud over our perceptions" (86). For Artaud, cruelty is not a desire to cause pain, but rather a violent, physical, austere determination to escape this false reality and cause the audience to feel something organic. Koltès's degradation of the theatre provides him with the tools to challenge the text/performance binary by drawing attention to the mechanics of creating a character that escapes and redefines his identity through murder both on and off the stage. In *Un Hangar à l'ouest,* Koltès wrote:

> Je vois un peu le plateau de théâtre comme un lieu provisoire, que les personnages ne cessent d'envisager de quitter … Étant bien entendu que je ne sais pas du tout si la vraie vie existe quelque part, et si, quittant finalement la scène, les personnages ne se retrouvent pas sur une autre scène, dans un autre théâtre, et ainsi de suite. C'est peut-être cette question, essentielle, qui permet au théâtre de durer. (133-4)

Mirroring the hero's imprisonment, Koltès describes the stage as a prison both the hero and dramatic writer must escape. According to Koltes, the idea of writing escape into the body of the text mirrors a 19th-century poetic tradition. Mounsef writes, "Koltès possédait tous les traits qui forgent des figures mythiques; le théâtre cherchait son Rimbaud il l'a trouvé en Koltès." Koltès was like a baroque *tissage* of dozens of poets: producing a transposition of everything he read, and most visible in the poetics of *Roberto Zucco* is the myth of Rimbaud.

II. B. RIMBAUD

In Koltès's writing, the poet's role is highlighted by the compound construction of the character of Roberto Zucco but also by the unique focus on the role of performative language in citation form. Koltès alludes to and quotes Rimbaud in order to indicate a repurposing of disappearance and a glorification of how language can produce a simultaneous absence as presence as discussed in the following chapter. The Rimbaud allusion is instrumental for the self-referentiality of the theatrical genre, and mirrors Koltès's struggle to write for the stage. Though the play's title and plot mimic the real-life violence and escapes of Roberto Succo, the notorious Italian serial killer, the desired destination of the character reveals an essential element in the creation of a myth. Interestingly, Zucco makes his escape most effectively by embodying not only Succo, but the real-life myth of the 19th-century French poet Arthur Rimbaud, who at age twenty, renounced poetry and moved to Cyprus, then to Africa, never to write again.

Analyzing the poet as mythical figure is revealing in *Roberto Zucco* because of the way the poetic figure is split between characters. Koltès as playwright can be found in each of his characters' relationship with language. Thus Zucco's creation of a false life as a student at the Sorbonne who studies linguistics is counterpointed with La Soeur's performed wisdom. When her younger sister decides to leave the house to look for Zucco, La Soeur contrasts her experience with her sister's:

> La Sœur: De quelle expérience parles-tu? L'expérience du malheur ne sert à rien. Elle est juste bonne à être oubliée le plus vite possible. Seule l'expérience du bonheur sert à quelque chose. Tu te souviendras toujours des belles soirées tranquilles entre tes parents, ton frère et ta sœur; jusqu'à ce que tu sois vieille, tu te souviendras de cela. Tandis que le malheur qui s'est abattu sur nous, tu

> l'oublieras bien vite, mon étourneau, sous le regard de ta sœur, de ton frère et de tes parents. (40)

La Sœur qualifies experience by its usefulness, recreating an imagined scene of calm and support where there was only tension, abuse, and sadness. Choosing to artificially rewrite the way their family-unit interacts, La Soeur ironically draws attention to the way she is constantly performing the role of supportive older sister. As if completing the incomplete poetic voice of her older sister, La Gamine responds with a cruel truth: "Toi, tu es une vierge prolongée, tu ne sais rien de la vie, tu as bien veillé sur toi, tu t'es bien protégée. Moi, je suis vieille, je suis violée, je suis perdue, je prends mes décisions toute seule" (40). The counterpoint between sisters draws attention to the usefulness of language. La Soeur's false affirmations are ineffective next to the viciousness of the truth of her younger sister. However, falsity alludes to theatrical language in a way that highlights Koltès's writing style.

Koltès reappropriates the notion of finding truth in textual performativity by quoting Rimbaud and highlighting his relationship to poetry. In his famous monologue into the broken red telephone in Scène VIII, "Juste avant de mourir," Zucco says, "Je crois qu'il n'y a pas de mots, il n'y rien à dire. Il faut arrêter d'enseigner les mots. Il faut fermer les écoles et agrandir les cimetières" (49). This scene echoes Rimbaud's "Mauvais Sang" in *Une Saison en enfers* in which Rimbaud writes:

> Je suis une bête, un nègre. Mais je puis être sauvé. Vous êtes de faux nègres, vous maniaques, féroces, avares … Le plus malin est de quitter ce continent, où la folie rôde pour pourvoir d'otages ces misérables. J'entre au vrai royaume des enfants de Cham. Connais-je encore la nature? me connais-je? –*Plus de mots*. J'ensevelis les morts dans mon ventre. Cris, tambour, danse, danse, danse, danse! Je ne vois

> même pas l'heure où, les blancs débarquant, je tomberai au néant. Faim, soif, cris, danse, danse, danse, danse! (182)

From "Plus de mots," Koltès writes "Pas de mots" eliminating the linguistic past from the statement, creating a sensation of the eternal absence of the efficacy of words. In *Roberto Zucco*, truth is cruelty, and unless the language actively reproduces the affective reaction of the original action, the words lose all power.

However, for Koltès, it is possible to inscribe language with a poetic cruelty that counteracts the falsity of theatrical dialogue. Alluding to Rimbaud's escape from writing, Koltès uses the notion of Africa as a blank canvas, a *néant* on which to inscribe a new meaning free from the constraints of the stage. In Scène III, Zucco tells La Gamine, the girl he has just raped, about his desire to return to Africa. "Je connais des coins, en Afrique, des montagnes tellement hautes qu'il y neige tout le temps. Personne ne sait qu'il neige en Afrique. Moi, c'est ce que je préfère au monde: la neige en Afrique qui tombe sur des lacs gelés" (25). In Scène VIII "Juste avant mourir" he tells the man who is beating him, "Je veux partir. Il faut partir tout de suite. Il fait trop chaud, dans cette putain de ville. Je veux aller en Afrique, sous la neige. Il faut que je parte parce que je vais mourir" (48). Zucco has poeticized the destination of Africa, embellishing it with snow, recreating it into a safe haven that can counteract the heat of the violence he commits. In this scene we see that Koltès is mirroring Rimbaud's escape to Africa after renouncing poetry and alluding to the mechanism that begins the myth of Rimbaud to trigger the same process for his character Zucco.

Though the violence and debauched actions remind the reader of Roberto Succo, the parallels of Rimbaud's desire to escape into poetry and then away from poetry, mirror Koltès's own contradictory relationship to theatrical and dramatic writing. In the letter to Demeny,

Rimbaud demands that it is the poet's job to make himself seen within his poetry: "Je dis qu'il faut être *voyant*, se faire *voyant* … Une parole qui prononce le monde mais qu'on ne saurait dire" (88). Rimbaud's famous phrase, written in the same letter,"Car je est un autre," is performed throughout the play (88). In Koltès's writing, the poet's role is highlighted by the compound construction of the character of Roberto Zucco. Zucco is both "I" and "the other" and his identity is contingent on the simultaneous alterity. The violence he inflicts on others in the play, he inflicts on himself as well. Koltès writes himself into the poetic language of the play, making himself visible as poet. Since Zucco is both poetic creation and mirror image of the poet himself, his violent actions reflect a poetic duty undertaken by Koltès. The relationship between playwright and hero resembles the relationship between actor and embodied role because of the emphasis on duty in the play between narrative and corporality. In the next section, I demonstrate the how performance techniques unveil the duty of eliciting an affective response inherent in embodying a role on stage.

II. C. POETIC DUTY: *LA TÂCHE DE SANG* AND TRANSPARENCY

Zucco's acts of violence reflect the impossibility of causing an irrevocable act on stage except through shock and emotion. Richard Schechner lays out his theory of *actuals*, or the place where real life and the masks of ritual or performance overlap and the movement between them. The five basic qualities of the *Actual* are process, consequential, irrevocable acts, contest, initiation or change in status, and the use of space in a concrete and organic manner. Though I find Schechner's actuals to be unable to encompass the performative style of *Roberto Zucco*, the notion of process, taken from Aristotle's *Poetics*, is essential to understanding Zucco's movement from killer to hero as I have shown throughout this chapter. However, Koltès also

plays with the notion of the inability to reproduce an irrevocable act onstage as one of the tools of theatrical writing. In this way, the repeated acts of cruelty—from rape to murder—take on the same hollowness contained by performative speech acts, whose affective reactions are transposed through a process of narration or embodiment. It becomes the duty of the hero to unveil the transparent poetic process by infusing his actions and reactions with a permanence that can withstand memory. The hero's fear of disappearing is due to his awareness of the ephemerality of the spoken word and performative act, which causes him to attempt to draw attention to how the poetic and physical performance processes are linked.

Violence is linked to duty from the second scene, "Meurtre de la Mère." Zucco's first stop upon escaping prison is to return home to get his military fatigues. Standing outside the door of his mother's house, he says:

> Zucco: Je suis venu chercher mon treillis.
>
> La Mère: Ton quoi ?
>
> Zucco: Mon treillis: ma chemise kaki et mon pantalon de combat.
>
> La Mère: Cette saloperie d'habit militaire. Qu'est-ce que tu as besoin de cette saloperie d'habit militaire? Tu es fou, Roberto. On aurait dû comprendre cela quand tu étais au berceau et te foutre à la poubelle. (15)

Zucco's desire to wear the outfit that attests to his duty to violence mirrors the actor being fitted into his costume before the show starts. Zucco, like the actor, must arrange the role he will be embodying for the rest of the performance. We are unaware when Zucco last wore his "costume," but his mother's reference to when he threw his father out of the window "comme on jette une cigarette," and the fact that she won't give him his fatigues because, "il est sale, il est

dégueulasse, tu ne peux pas le porter comme cela" (15) allude to the past stain of violence, *la tache* that has permanently marked his clothes.

Josette Féral writes that performance seems to "correspond to a new theatre of cruelty and violence" (289) that centers on the body and its drives, a non-narrative, non-representational form of displacement and disruption. For Féral the foundations of performance are the "manipulation of the body, the manipulation of space and the relationship between the artist and spectators" (289). Féral writes that the actor's subjectivity is taken over by a semiotic and haunting choric *death drive*: a search for what makes the actor a unified subject. Zucco's presence as bridge between the poetic and performative processes shows how he too is haunted by a death drive, however, it is not a desire to find what makes him unified, but instead to discover how he can function as a fragmented subject by unveiling the seams of his makeup.

In the eighth scene entitled "Juste avant mourir," Zucco picks a fight at a bar with Le Balèze. The scene opens with him being thrown through the window and people running out the door to see him tumble to the ground in a "grand fracas de verre brisé" (45).[6] The group of witnesses watching him cannot decide if he's "cinglé" or "saoûl" because he is reciting poetry, specifically "Le colosse de Rhodes" by Victor Hugo from his collection of *epopees La Légende des siècles: Les sept merveilles du monde* (1877). Picking himself up out of the glass Zucco cites:

> C'est ainsi que je fus créé comme un athlète. Aujourd'hui ta colère me complète. Ô mer, et je suis grand sur mon socle divin/De toute ta grandeur rongeant mes pieds en vain. Nu, fort, le front plongé dans un gouffre de brume … Enveloppé de

[6] Many of the scenes of *Roberto Zucco* contain a group of witnesses not unlike Greek tragedy's chorus. The aspect of the stage within the stage is one that will be addressed in the next section.

> bruit et de grêle et d'écume/Et de nuits et de vents qui se heurtent entre eux, Je dresse mes deux bras vers l'éther ténébreux. (45)

Taken from the fifth stanza of the poem Hugo wrote during his exile in Guernesey, this citation comes directly after the line "Et le ciel fait l'airain comme il fait le héros" (260). The poem's emphasis on the crafting of the enormous statue of Lux, or Hélios, the different qualities of metal found in bronze, and the comparison between how "l'ouvrier, fondeur, ou forgeron" or the elements ("grêle, d'écume" "gouffre de brume") shape this colossal monument attest to Koltès's craftsmanship in the creation of his hero, and especially on his elevation from hero to monument as myth.

Zucco continues to "chercher la bagarre" even though he is encouraged by one of the prostitutes watching to not destroy his beautiful face: "C'est fragile, une gueule, bébé. On croit qu'on l'a pour toute la vie et tout d'un coup, elle est bousillée par un grand connard qui n'a rien à perdre, bébé" (46). Instead of listening to this advice, he continues to run after the much bigger man, hitting and insulting him. After having beaten him multiple times, Le Balèze says:

> Le Balèze: Tu sais, je n'aime pas me battre, moi. Mais tu m'as tellement cherché, petit, que l'on ne peut pas encaisser sans rien dire. Pourquoi as-tu tellement cherché la bagarre ? On dirait que tu veux mourir.
>
> Zucco: Je ne veux pas mourir. *Je vais mourir*. (49, my emphasis)

Zucco recognizes that his death drive is obligatory and commanding. He has realized his status as a hero with a fragmented subjectivity, a collage of citations that scar his otherwise angelic face. He ends the scene reciting Dante's eighth chapter of his *La vita nuova* (1293-5): "Morte villana, di pietà nemica,/Di dolor madre antica,/Guidicio incontastabile gravoso/di te blasmar la

lingua s'affatica,"[7] drawing the reader's attention to both Zucco's mother tongue, and the play with genre effected by Koltès. The hero's tongue is weary of speaking. He has nothing left to say that will contain any real meaning. The scene closes when Zucco pees himself and then falls asleep.

Phelan wrote that the one defining characteristic of performance happens at the moment of its disappearance: "the disappearance of the object is fundamental to performance; it rehearses and repeats the disappearance of the subject who longs always to be remembered" (147). However, she recognizes that paradoxically, "performance is the art form which most fully understands the generative possibilities of disappearance. Poised forever at the threshold of the present, performance enacts the productive appeal of the nonreproductive" (27). Zucco's death drive, however, is not a desire to disappear. On the contrary, Koltès establishes that the death of a mythical hero is in fact what will raise him to immortality and thus prevent his inevitable disappearance. In his incoherent speech during the fight, Zucco is asked, "A quoi tu réfléchis, petit?" He responds, "Je songe à l'immoralité du crabe, de la limace et du hanneton" (49). These three animals, for Zucco, cannot be killed because their subjectivity is shared by the species. In choosing the crab, whose habitat is in the water; the slug, which needs extreme dampness to survive; and the June bug, which lives on dry land he is again referencing the placement of the Colosse de Rhodes at the edge of an island, between land and sea. Water, in these examples, is in process.

From fog, turf, rain, and humidity, each element creates functionality for a fragmented identity of water, creating a different level of usefulness for different members of a species. Like

[7] The French translation is found in the notes of the Minuit edition: "Mort brutale, ennemi de la pitié,/mère antique de la douleur/Jugement dure et irrecusable,/… Ma langue se fatiguera à t'accuser."

the poetic and imagined snow in the mountains of Africa, the process of water is more important than its presence. For Zucco, immortality can only be achieved by recognizing the makeup, process and potential of his fragmented subjectivity. This is essential to understanding the final scene of the play. It is in the final scene where liquid is classified as being either blood or sweat. The transparency of the process is necessary for the play's poeticism, and underlines the expertise used in the composition of the written text. Blood, contained by the body, is invisible unless spilled. Though Zucco spends the play spilling blood and leaving a violent *tache de sang* wherever he goes, the blood remains a part of the narrative, a direct reference to the making visible of the poetic duty through print. From the beginning of the play we see that the direction of violence is internalized, and Zucco must become part of the structure he has contributed to build through his violent acts.

In the final scene, Zucco's prison (the stage) must be transformed to incorporate a hero that transcends the physical. Ironically, the only way he can escape is to become liquid, a synthesis of his own and his victims' blood. He becomes "je" and "un autre"—character, hero, and poetic figure—while unveiling the overarching circularity of the play. Escape from the prison by means of transparency is first referenced in Scène I, when the second guard speaks of the impossibility to escape unless through transformation:

> Même un tout petit prisonnier ne pourrait pas s'évader. Même un prisonnier petit comme un rat. S'il passait les grandes grilles, il y en a, après, de plus fines, comme des passoires, et plus fines ensuite, comme un tamis. Il faudrait être liquide pour pouvoir passer à travers. Et une main qui a poignardé, un bras qui a étranglé ne peuvent pas être faits de liquide … (11)

Because of Zucco's success at escaping, we see that his corporality is uncontainable and fluid from the beginning. As an actor, he has not actually commited the crimes his character has. Emphasizing the artificiality of the stage, he is therefore able to escape by secretion, passing the different membranes of the prison's body. Though Zucco commits palpable crimes, Koltès highlights the impossible solidity of his performative body. Koltès draws attention to how Zucco functions in the text as a fluid transparency that is the contrast of a physical stage presence. A figure made from constant gliding back and forth between a textual presence and an actor's interpretation, Zucco as hero is in a constant transition. By definition, a hero cannot disappear, but must instead solidify his memory into a host of readers.

Reconfiguring Phelan's idea of disappearance, Zucco redefines what it means to disappear as a performative mythical hero. Zucco is conscious of the generative possibilities of disappearance, as long as he is able to secure a resonance that will carry over into myth. However, like the person the character is based on, Zucco continuously tries to escape the confines of his life by using violence. In doing so, each murder enhances his notoriety and removes the possibility of stasis as a character, and yet he cannot be confined to the singular definition of killer. He recognizes that it is only his own death that can guarantee his status of myth. In the scene before his final arrest, Zucco is at a train station, repeating his name to himself. The woman he has taken hostage asks:

> La Dame: Pourquoi répétez-vous tout le temps ce nom?
>
> Zucco: Parce que j'ai peur de l'oublier.
>
> La Dame: On n'oublie pas son nom. Ce doit être la dernière chose que l'on oublie.

> Zucco: Non, non; moi je l'oublie. Je le vois écrit dans mon cerveau, et de moins en moins bien écrit, de moins en moins clairement, comme s'il s'effaçait; il faut que je regarde de plus en plus près pour arriver à le lire. J'ai peur de me retrouver sans savoir mon nom. (76)

Zucco is afraid of seeing his name, and therefore his story, fade slowly into disappearance. He is aware that in saying it out loud, he is perhaps causing it to be written more clearly in his brain. Most importantly, he is aware that he needs to secure his name in a collective memory, and that neither writing (which fades and disappears), nor speaking his name can prevent it from disappearing. It is in the unique combination of text and enunciated performance that he can avoid disappearance. Zucco is helpless and passive in regards to his imminent disappearance, just as he is powerless while imprisoned. Instead of accepting the passivity of disappearance, Zucco transforms disappearance into an active performance. He actively employs the intersection between text and performance to embody the transparency of the poetic process.

In his conversation with Le Monsieur in the metro Zucco talks about his goal to embody transparency as a quality that defines him:

> Zucco: Je suis un garçon normal et raisonnable, monsieur. Je ne me suis jamais fait remarquer. M'auriez-vous remarqué si je ne m'étais pas assis à côté de vous? J'ai toujours pensé que la meilleure manière de vivre tranquille était d'être aussi transparent qu'une vitre, comme un caméléon sur la pierre, passer à travers les murs, n'avoir ni couleur ni odeur; que le regard des gens vous traverse et voie les gens derrière vous, comme si vous n'étiez pas là. C'est une rude **tâche** d'être transparent; c'est un métier; c'est un ancien, très ancien rêve d'être invisible. (37, my emphasis)

Zucco's recognition of the active task of transparency is paradoxically linked to detouring the gaze of the other. He works hard to become unremarkable, unnoticeable in order to avoid recognition as a killer and the subsequent imprisonment. For Zucco, transparency is immortality on two separate levels: firstly, it prevents him from being caught and thrown back in prison. However, more importantly, his desire for transparency brings us once again to the intersection between stage and page. The only place where Roberto Zucco can be truly transparent is in the text—before being embodied on stage, or as a mythical figure. As a textual character he is still a figment of the reader's imagination, truly transparent, truly invisible. It is where he can transform his tache de sang into *tâche de transparence poétique*. Transparency is a performative technique Zucco uses to escape, however, it is also the trigger that unveils the poetic mechanism of woven quotes and structured violence that make up the play. In the end his *tâche de sang* is transformed into a textual transparency where he can be constructed as a mythical monument. In this way Zucco can become more than a representation of a fragmented subjectivity. Koltès shows the reader and spectator that it is not the text that mirrors Zucco's prison, it is from the stage that he must escape.

II. D. THE PRISON: THEATRICAL SPACE

From the beginning of the play, Koltès references both the actor's and the audience's relationship with the theatrical space as being confining. In the first and last scenes, the audience is placed at eye level with the rooftops, their view drawn to an off-stage horizon described as: "*Le chemin de ronde d'une prison, au ras des toits. Les toits de la prison, jusqu'à leur sommet. À l'heure où les gardiens, à force de silence et fatigués de fixer l'obscurité, sont parfois victimes d'hallucinations*" (9). Koltès's own relationship with the physical stage was complex. His works

were often criticized for being too literary and too poetic to be successfully staged, highlighting the problems of the translation to the stage. Koltès asked Peter Stein to direct the play before his death and the German director said that he had fallen in love with the play, despite not being attracted to Koltès's earlier work. He produced the first staging in Berlin in 1990 after Koltès's death. He said felt that for the first time, Koltès had "overcome his tendency to write in an excessively literary style, and had created a genuinely dramatic structure" (xliv). Though *Roberto Zucco* is considered one of his more successful dramatic works, it is impossible to understand the work fully if only seeing it staged. The way the violence is orchestrated can only be analyzed thoroughly by taking the relationship to the text into account. One might argue that this is true about any text-performance relationship, however, by looking at the emphasis on controlling the audience and readers' relationship to the boundaries of the stage and referencing the page as a producer of affect in a virtual audience, *Roberto Zucco* becomes a specific kind of performative text that can occupy space.

When Koltès wrote of his "detest" for theatre, he alluded to a claustrophobic artificiality by emphasizing the confines of the theatrical space. Unlike the etymology of "performance," "theatre" comes from the Greek meaning "a place for viewing."[8] William Worthen investigates the creation of agency in dramatic writing. What writing must do, Worthen claims, is *occupy*, *articulate*, and *take* place, "rendering it significant through a calibrated sequence of events" that includes the social conventions outside the text and performance (202). As Worthen repeats throughout his analysis, writing alone cannot determine our relationship to history; it must be

[8] Shannon Jackson writes at length about the distinction between performance and theatre in her book *Professing Performance: Theatre in the Academy from Philology to Performativity*. The etymology in these quotes provides insight into Koltès's own relationship with theatre that contributes to the distinction between theatre and performance.

deployed and made useful by performance. Worthen opens with two elaborately posed questions: "Why would anyone want to *read* a play?" and "Why would anyone want to *see* a play?" Though he convincingly presents an argument for both in the first two pages of the book, these two questions begin an exploration into drama's two lives, highlighting the threshold between dramatic literature and live performance. Framed around a series of questions, *Drama: Between Poetry and Performance* gives a critical account of the evolution of the current scholarship in performance studies and literary criticism that has until now failed to negotiate the dialectical tension between dramatic literature's identity as poetry *and* performance. Instead of focusing on literary studies' constant recourse to the text in analyzing performance, Worthen draws from work by scholars such as Kenneth Burke, Michael Goldman, Diana Taylor, and Shannon Jackson to resituate the interface between drama and performance in academia. Worthen suggests that the new theatre highlights the productive dissonance between text and stage. In this way, dramatic writing lends itself to be used and recreated.

However, for Koltès, performing a text is not a comprehensive way to give agency to a space. Instead, it is imperative to charge the space with a poetic resonance and pulse that creates affect in a multidimensional audience. The live performance of his play is only a fraction of the processional metatext. Koltès makes use of the text's relationship to the staged performance to highlight the artificiality of the theatrical space, while making use of that very artificiality to showcase his writing style. Aware of the resonance the character would contain even after leaving the stage, Koltès wrote:

> J'ai toujours écrit seul, et je ne me suis jamais mêlé de mise en scène … Par contre le travail de la scène … met en lumière un certain nombre de défauts technique du texte … Ce qui est difficile, ce qu'il faut apprendre, ce qu'on met du

> temps à apprendre, et qu'on rate, et qu'on recommence, qu'on ne réussit jamais tout à fait et qui empêche de dormir, ce sont des choses comme: faire rentrer quelqu'un sur un plateau, lui donner une raison de sortir, et voir à quel point cette raison modifie la scène qu'on imaginait d'abord ; maitriser les personnages même quand ils sont hors scène, pour savoir comment on va les retrouver. (135)

Koltès's stage, therefore, is brought to life solely by the presence of his characters. The body's goal is to occupy the space, whether with speech or movement. Jean-Pierre Ryngaert writes that space does not exist without the presence of a character: "… leurs apparitions accompagnent l'arrivée du personage et le surgissement de la parole" (34). Koltès's manipulation of his characters references his feeling that the relationship between an actor and his audience is as contrived (or as real) as the relationship between a reader and the text. Instead of trying to mirror real-life on the stage, he creates a *mise en abyme* of theatre, setting up a stage upon the stage.

The stage becomes a prolongation of the hero's body, enhancing the plurality of the hero's identity with the necessity of creating a multi-dimensional spectator. The spectator in the audience finds himself onstage, contributing in the staged violence by way of the chorus. In Scène X, "L'Ôtage," Zucco's unprovoked violence towards a woman and her son is based on the Gladbeck Hostage Crisis of 1988. However it is set up as a Greek tragedy, with most of the action narrated by witnesses that mirror a chorus. Zucco is standing with his foot on the child hostage's neck, pointing his gun at the boy's head. Two strangers narrate the action from afar:

> Une Femme: Moi, je ne vois que celui-là qui soit en train de préparer un coup.
>
> Un Homme: Le coup est déjà pratiquement fait, d'ailleurs.
>
> Une Femme: Pauvre gosse.
>
> Un Homme: Madame, je vais vous gifler si vous continuez à parler du gosse.

> Une Femme: Vous croyez vraiment que c'est le moment de se disputer? Un peu de dignité. Nous sommes témoins d'un drame. Nous sommes devant la mort. (64)

The presence of the chorus as a reference to the artificiality of theatrical space is seen in several scenes throughout the play. However, instead of enlightening the spectator, the tone of each chorus echoes and participates in the violence of the scene itself. The spectator in the audience is blurred with the spectator on stage, recreating the process of *tissage* used to create the plural hero of Zucco.

The *mise en abyme* and self-referentiality of the theatrical space that brings its spectators into the *tissage* is enhanced by looking at Barthes's writings on the theatrical genre. Timothy Scheie writes about Barthes's first published article, entitled "Pouvoirs de la tragédie antique" (1953) in which Barthes' theories on the presence of collective affect in theatrical transactions predates the emergence of both affect and performance theory, and brings them into dialogue in a productive way. In this first article, Barthes criticizes boulevard drama and its focus on individual emotions, and isolated portrayals of the home and family stuck in stale 19th- century conventions. Scheie synthesizes:

> Barthes already hails the 'âme collective' of ancient Greek audiences as a necessity for tragedy and condemns contemporary drama for corrupting the masses with a 'fausse culture.' 'Pouvoirs de la tragedie antique' crystallizes these thoughts. Barthes extols Greek tragedy for bringing the whole of society together in a collective encounter with a dynamic historical situation. When Oresteia or Antigone provoke tears, Barthes's imagined Greek spectators do not mourn individually out of identification with a single character's suffering, but weep collectively in shared understanding of the circumstances that necessitate the

> tragic acts … Barthes reserves his most enthusiastic praise for the chorus, which gives the collective 'city' a voice on the stage. (29)

Barthes sought from theatre to provide a "collective encounter with a dynamic historical situation" and looked to the chorus to be able to serve as the collective voice, the only way to unmask the division of languages (30). Barthes writes:

> Le chœur est *la parole maitresse* qui explique, qui dénoue l'ambigüité des apparences, et fait entrer le gestuaire des acteurs dans un ordre causal intelligible. On peut dire que c'est le chœur qui donne au spectacle sa dimension tragique, car c'est lui, et lui seul, qui est toute parole humaine, il est le Commentaire par excellence. (29)

Koltès plays with the notion of a collective voice, one that could potentially stand for all of humanity's masks and divisions of language. Koltès overlaps the different forms of audience, from the witnesses and policemen (*les flics*) in Scène X, to the theatre audience, to the reader. As the chorus who is invited to participate in the action of the scene, the reader contributes to the violence with a compound reaction to the ridiculousness of the satirical commentary coupled with the seriousness of Zucco's actions in the scene. The man and woman of Scène X approach Zucco and his hostages, comparing themselves with the police who are standing back:

> Un Homme: Regardez-nous, nous autres hommes du peuple. Nous sommes plus courageux qu'eux.
>
> Une Femme (*à l'enfant*): Pauvre petit. Est-ce que ce méchant pied ne te fait pas mal?
>
> Zucco: Taisez-vous. Je ne veux pas qu'on lui parle. Je ne veux pas qu'il ouvre la bouche. Ferme les yeux, toi. Ne bouge pas. (67)

In limiting the possible interaction between the spectator-chorus and the actor, Zucco is eliminating the possibility to influence the play's action through anything but acts of cruelty. Zucco's acts of violence show his awareness of his imprisonment on stage, and become a way of striving to reproduce irrevocable acts that carry weight and consequence in the world off-stage.

II. E. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Koltès's dislike of the theatre caused his final play to highlight the transparency of his poetic process. Zucco as hero becomes a symbol of the process of breaking away from the imprisoned space of the theatre by becoming a metatextual myth. As we saw explicitly in the first scene, this idea of occupying the space and becoming part of the beast is essential to how Zucco is able to escape the prison of the stage. Becoming transparent, he sweats out through the membranes of the prison, once again highlighting the play between transparency and physical permanence. However, sweat and blood are contrasting examples of the relationship between the poetic and performative processes outlined throughout the play.

Both processes draw not on the finished product, but on the fluidity within the creation. As Barthes writes: "Le mythe ne se définit pas par l'objet de son message, mais par la *façon* dont il le profère" (181, my emphasis). Just as Zucco renounces the need for language, "il n'y a plus de mots," Koltès focuses on the movement from word to myth, or metatextual message. Speaking of Koltès's fascination with the figure of Succo, Froment writes,

> As for the darkness of Succo, the thing which made him unique as a killer, his complete coldness about the crimes he had committed, the terrible madness which sometimes possessed him, the incarnation of absolute evil which he represented—

> I don't think Koltès was interested in these things. Fundamentally it didn't really matter to him that he was a killer. (57)

Koltès instead used the figure of Zucco to negotiate the interval between the printed and oral stories. The *tâche de sang* must contain the resonance of the story: a link between blood and ink. It is in the last scene that we see most clearly the poetic process elevated to the status of metatextual myth that breaks down the boundaries of the theatrical space by inviting the audience into the act. Zucco is addressing his audience: the Voix, and drawing attention to a storm on the surface of the sun. He says:

> Zucco: Regardez le soleil. (*Un silence complet s'établit dans la cour*.) Vous ne voyez rien? Vous ne voyez pas comme il bouge d'un côté à l'autre?
>
> Une Voix: On ne voit rien.
>
> Une Voix: Le soleil nous fait mal aux yeux. Il nous éblouit.
>
> Zucco: Regardez ce qui sort du soleil. C'est le sexe du soleil; c'est de là que vient le vent.

The reader/audience has now come full circle: we find ourselves back at the same prison, in fact on the same roof as in the first scene. This time Zucco is clearly performing for an unseen audience, as is indicated in the stage directions: "*Le sommet des toits de la prison, à midi. On ne voit personne, pendant toute la scène, sauf Zucco quand il grimpe au sommet du toit. Voix de gardiens et de prisonniers mêlés*" (90).

Here Koltès draws attention to the visual image of Zucco escaping while the sound of voices narrates his movement. Zucco asks his audience to look into the sun, to watch a sun storm's solar eruptions, which is impossible with the naked eye. With a final reference to the artificiality of the theatrical space, Zucco is essentially asking his audience to look into the

spotlight, to focus on the mechanical illumination of the stage. The stacked simultaneity of the Voix help recreate the escape of Zucco, but are unable to identify the mark of hero, nor recognize the artificiality of the prison. The light is too strong for them to be able to look directly into it. Koltès places Zucco above their heads to cause them to realize the provisional quality of the singular performance. Like the spot that temporarily blinds the vision after looking into a bright light, Zucco's image remains, having evolved from *fait divers* to hero.

Koltès's *Roberto Zucco* thus provides a model for how to read the relationship between text and stage through the highlighted construction of his villainous hero, Zucco, while raising other performative technique questions. Embodying the role of hero is differentiated from embodying the role of killer through uniquely textual mechanisms. Where the mark of the killer cannot be located, the mark of the hero is linked to the materiality of violence as seen through the play between *tache* and *tâche*. Just like the *circonflexe* that changes the word *tache* to *tâche*, Zucco's character dressing in uniform to carry out the duty of cruelty mirrors how the actor's role necessitates a performative costume. Therefore, wearing the bloodstain of violence becomes a mark of embodying the role of hero on multiple levels. The *accent circonflexe* shows how the materiality of the text's *tissage* is linked to the repetition of habit, practice, and routine while also alluding to the physical *habit*—the way the text *dresses* its characters. *Roberto Zucco* is an intersection mediated through *tissage* of allusions of all kinds: poetic, theatrical, theoretical, *epopee*, prose, recorded transcripts, and journalistic documents that draw attention to the building blocks of the creation not of a killer, but of a hero. It is by emphasizing *how* a hero is made through the system of the written word that causes *Roberto Zucco* to become a paradigm for textual performativity.

III. CHAPTER 2: POTENTIAL SOUND AS INSTRUMENT OF CRUELTY IN BERNARD-MARIE KOLTÈS'S *ROBERTO ZUCCO*

Bernard-Marie Koltès's *Roberto Zucco* is a play structured around a series of acts of cruelty, both corporal and oral. As Koltès's final finished work before his death, *Roberto Zucco* serves an aesthetic and historical role in the *théâtre de la parole* of the late 20th century. Koltès has served as an example in a break in the style of dialogue plays and demonstrates the turn towards the integration of unidirectional speech such as monologues, soliloquies, or fragmented overlapping utterances. As Jean-Piettre Ryngaert notes, speech in Koltès no longer principally serves to support and advance a logical storyline but instead uses "sampling, dissection, suture, graft, and the hybridization of voices and utterances to deliver fragments of fiction to the spectator" (63). According to Edward Turk, Koltès's work is a perfect example of a theatre of the "speech act," a place that celebrates "not just the musicality but the muscularity of the human voice" (64). In *Roberto Zucco*, acoustics contain more importance than semantics. It is therefore essential to understand the role sound plays in the work, in order to attest to the reach of reading textual sound as an element of textual performance.

In this second chapter on *Roberto Zucco*, my analysis focuses on key moments in the play that use sound as an instrument of cruelty to provide a bridge between the orality of the actor, and a performative reading. The scenes I focus on are moments in the play where anything acoustic—from speech to grunts—is highlighted as being an essential building block of dramatic writing. Unveiling the harmonic structure that makes use of cruelty and violence in *Roberto*

Zucco paradoxically sets up a process that works to eliminate the feeling of anxiety in the reader, not to further the violence and cruelty. In speech, Koltès's sonic structures make use of rhythm and sound poetically. However, it is through an analysis of the translation of sound between the mediums of textuality and orality that one can approach Koltès's work as a whole. By looking at the play as though it is a musical score, sound can only be read through its anticipatory potential, an idea highlighted by Koltès himself.

Just as Roland Barthes used *Sarrazine* to model how to treat a *readerly* text in his *S/Z* (1970) I argue that *Roberto Zucco* serves as a model for performative text because of how it highlights the production of potential sound. Instead of producing a socio-historical reading of *Roberto Zucco*, this chapter complicates and enhances the gulf between text and performance. Often treated as a poetic retelling of the infamous serial killer of the 1980s, Roberto Succo, and as an example of the obsession with crime culture in France, I instead study *Roberto Zucco* as a formal poetic structure in order to uncover the sonic mechanisms that constitute a performative text. Deborah Streifford Reisinger's book, *Crime and Media in Contemporary France* examines how the press manipulates the public's response to violent crime by heightening public anxiety. She uses *Roberto Zucco* as an example of the artist's role in influencing the public. Though the sensationalized violent crime or *fait divers* is often used as a tool for upholding a dominant ideology, Reisinger argues that in giving the criminal a voice, Koltès in effect "activates" the text, eliminating the hierarchy of content to focus on the process and style of dramatic writing (12). In this chapter I uncover the ways in which Koltès activates the performative elements of textual sound, in order to provide a framework for how to read other plays, poems, and even novels in a similar way.

Where Stina Palm and Donia Mounsef recognize the violent rhythmic quality of Koltès's poetics, reading the text as a score points less to the rhythmic and more to the harmonization process of the written words in a way that recalls Deleuze and Guattari's *ritournelle* from *Mille Plateaux*. As I outlined in the introduction, for Deleuze and Guattari, a refrain is an emotional reaction to a chaotic element:

> I. Un enfant dans le noir, saisi par la peur, se rassure en chantonnant. Il marche, s'arrête au gré de sa chanson. Perdu, il s'abrite comme il peut, ou s'oriente tant bien que mal avec sa petite chanson. Celle-ci est comme l'esquisse d'un centre stable et calme, stabilisant et calmant, au sein du chaos. (382)

In *Roberto Zucco*, the way the character adds his/her own voice to the humming counterpoint of the refrain creates a connection between affect, space, and language that enhances how dialogue, monologue, and overlapping speech use a performative textuality to enhance the live orality, as I will demonstrate at several key points in the play.

Through a performative analysis of the construction of the threads of the woven text of *Roberto Zucco*, it is possible to create a lexicon that analyzes text *as* performance, by rethinking the notions of representation, translation, and recreation. Different scholars have addressed the notion of the translation of an existing work into a performance in different ways. Joseph Roach calls it *surrogation*; Worthen claims that the text is recreated rather than translated by performance. *Roberto Zucco*'s translation into performance could be called a recreation, but it is in the process of writing a performative text that the recreation takes place. In the previous chapter, my focus was on the extratextual assemblage of the many citations, and the emphasis on how the recrafting of written texts of all types causes the text to be performative even before actors embody the roles on stage. My focus in this chapter is on diegetic and intratextual

language. The text's creation of *sound affects* highlights how sound can be used as emotional resonance to mimic the lasting quality of written language. In this chapter I trace how a text being read as a score has an oblique relationship to the stage that depends on an element of cruelty in order to be read as textual sound. The interval between the written word and its potential sound becomes the key to analyzing the role of Koltès's dramatic writing and provide the possibility of reading text as performance in other works. As I demonstrated in the first chapter, like a story told orally, the plural portrait of the criminal multiplies Zucco's origins and identities, drawing attention to his makeup. In reconstructing a character from a person, Koltès is not helping the reader track down the criminal Zucco, but rather setting up his escape from notoriety into myth.

Essential to the text's activation is the recreation of the element of the emotional present. The theatre's ephemeral nature must be contained in the composed language structures in order to be read as a performative text. Mounsef discusses how Koltès, among other contemporary playwrights, seeks to find a poeticism that expresses the necessity of language in the nature of stage textuality. Throughout the play, narrative is constructed through a retelling of actions, and each act of cruelty only narrated to the audience after the action itself. The written text and its relationship to a future performance, containing possible translation, casting, rehearsals, and audiences (among other things) is a process that is triggered by a composed poetic violence. Zucco is the hero, however, his own actions are mediated through didascalias and the voices of other characters. The unnamed characters, therefore, hold the power of the performative utterance while Zucco tries to embody the action.

La Gamine serves as a central counterpoint to Zucco's presence as hero because of how her language rescores fragments of action and dialogue and because of how she is the symbol of

a contrived family-unit that reproduces Zucco's broken family. Though the victim of violence, La Gamine's narrative presence is more than a symbol of the suffering victim of rape. Interestingly, the reader/spectator meets La Gamine only after Zucco has raped her, and the rape is not embodied in the text, nor mentioned; it is only through the consequential loss of virginity that it is highlighted. The reader also learns of Zucco's matricide through the simple actions of the didascalia; "*Il s'approche, la caresse, l'embrasse, la serre; elle gémit. Il la lache et elle tombe, étranglée* " (6). The stage directions provide the text with an opening to be filled through the embodiment of the actor in the performance. *Il la "serre"* can be translated as he squeezes her, or hugs her. As if to recall its necessity to raise itself into myth, the didascalia is charged with an incestuous eroticism to help perform the matricide. Without the last word in the stage direction, "étranglée," this could read as a sex scene. Like Oedipus returning "home" after having killed his father at the crossroads, Zucco returns to his mother to perform a textual eroticism before killing her and freeing himself from his archetypal family unit. The description is what gives agency to the embodiment—Zucco kills his mother by giving the action to the future performance, and to the consequence of the narrated murder. Zucco's mother falls to the ground "étranglée," the verb having become an adjective.

It is possible to see that Zucco's murdering his final family member is an important emphasis of the musical transposition of the original family score. Before the play begins, Zucco has killed his father. In the second scene he returns home and kills his mother. Having cut himself off from his origins, he is free to establish an entirely new connection with an unfamiliar family unit by being incorporated into a new refrain. Because of her relationship with Zucco, La Gamine becomes an object and an idea, forever causing the family to reimagine their

relationships with each other. Through sound and scoring, La Gamine becomes the fulcrum of the text's harmonization—a way of insisting on the scoring that creates textual performativity.

La Gamine's role throughout the play shows the complexity of the performative narrative that replaces irrevocable actions onstage. However, the narrative technique is employed at each moment of violence. Here, in one of the first scenes (IV. "La Melancolie de l'inspecteur"), one sees that language is essential and active. The act of murder is already displaced: it is not seen, but heard through the poetic narration of the prostitute witness. This excerpt shows a preliminary example of how Zucco's actions are scored in different voices:

> La Pute: Madame, Madame, des forces diaboliques viennent de traverser le Petit Chicago. Tout le quartier est troublé, les putes ne travaillent plus, les macs restent la bouche ouverte, les clients ont fui, tout s'est arrêté, tout est pétrifié. Madame, vous avez abrité le démon dans votre maison. Ce garçon qui est arrivé récemment, qui n'ouvre pas la bouche, qui ne répond pas aux questions des dames, à se demander s'il a une voix et un sexe; ce garçon, pourtant, au regard si doux; ce beau garçon, décidément, et on en a beaucoup parlé, entre dames, --le voici qui sort derrière l'inspecteur. On l'observe bien, nous, les dames, on rigole, on fait des suppositions. Il marche derrière l'inspecteur qui semble plongé dans un réflexion profonde; il marche derrière lui comme son ombre; et l'ombre rétrécit comme au moment de midi, il est de plus en plus près du dos courbé de l'inspecteur, et brusquement, il sort un long poignard d'une poche de son habit, et le plante dans le dos du pauvre homme. L'inspecteur s'arrête. Il ne se retourne pas. Il balance doucement la tête, comme si la réflexion profonde dans laquelle il était plongé venait de trouver sa solution. Puis tout son corps balance, et il

> s'effondre sur le sol. Ni le meurtrier ni sa victime ne se sont à aucun moment regardés … (31)

The narration recreates a past action, but does not replace the original action. Like a melody repeated by a different symphonic instrument, the voice of the witness transposes, embellishes, and recreates the original action of the murder. The calm of the scene—the inspector walking as if in a daze, Zucco following him silently as a shadow—is not echoed in the rhythm of the orality. Instead, the affective resonance of having witnessed the crime causes the sentences to be strung together, separated only by the semicolon breath mark.

The witness has also drawn attention to the diegetic sound at the moment of the crime itself. In the narration, Zucco is enveloped in a charged silence, demonstrating the transparency he actively embodies throughout the play. His silence is contagious in this scene, ("les macs restent la bouche ouverte … tout est pétrifié") because his crime comes unexpectedly during a moment of calm. The narrated murder is performed textually and recreated into a story. Instead of seeing the murder, the spectators hear of it displaced a degree as though transposed. The action is performed by the words, not by hands of Zucco. This composed retelling of the murder underlines the poetic movements of both victim and murderer, and interweaves their corporal connection. Zucco does not only shadow L'inspecteur but becomes his shadow, moving towards him as though dictated by an overhead noonday sun.

In the narration of the violent murder, the scene takes on a suspended erotic quality with the prostitutes and pimps admiring the beauty of Zucco, mouths hanging open in silence. For Mounsef the theatrical text is located at the conjunction between eroticism and writing because it expands the edges of the actor's corporality. However, more importantly, by artfully transposing the act of violence, Koltès transposes the meaning from the act, to the retelling of the act.

Mounsef argues that Koltès's emphasis on the text's power as a desire producer was part of a larger trend at the end of the 20th century. Playwrights such as Marguerite Duras, Yasmina Reza, and Koltès balked at what Antonin Artaud called for theater to accomplish in his manifesto *Le Théâtre et son double* (1958), which would remove the primacy of the text. Mounsef explains the goal of the playwrights of the 1980s and 1990s to bring back the text's "meaning-making" with a vengeance in order to highlight the regenerative quality dramatic writing automatically contains. She writes:

> Even after it is written and performed, the text continues to be rewritten in performance: an actor pauses or uses an ellipsis, creating a vacuum that funnels scriptural and spectatorial desire toward the speaker; an audience gasps or laughs at unintended moments, rewriting those parts of the text with audible markers of their pleasure or anguish … (85)

Mounsef rightly identifies *Roberto Zucco* as a text that draws attention to its performative qualities. However, what can be learned from analyzing the process that occurs *before* performance instead of after? How are pauses, ellipses, and gasps anticipated and worked into the structure of performative text itself? *Roberto Zucco* is unique because it creates an emotional present for the reader, including him/her as a member of the metatextual audience.

III. A. POTENTIAL SOUND AND THE AFFECTIVE INTERVAL

From the play's first words, potential sound is highlighted as a unique moment of poetic interval between text and performance. Here in the first scene two guards are standing on watch at midnight:

> Premier Gardien: Tu as entendu quelque chose?
>
> Deuxième gardien: Non, rien du tout.
>
> Premier Gardien: Tu n'entends jamais rien.
>
> Deuxième gardien: Tu as entendu quelque chose, toi?
>
> Premier Gardien: Non, mais j'ai l'impression d'entendre quelque chose.
>
> Deuxième gardien: Tu as entendu ou tu n'as pas entendu?
>
> Premier Gardien: Je n'ai pas entendu par les oreilles, mais j'ai eu l'idée d'entendre quelque chose. (9)

From the very first words spoken by the actors, this dialogue draws attention to how the *idea* of hearing (reading spoken words) can supplement *actual* hearing of the performative utterances in dramatic writing, by drawing attention to the hollowness of the spoken word that is not charged with an affective point of departure. As Worthen writes:

> Austin, of course, finds theatrical discourse peculiarly "hollow" –a performative utterance will, for example, be in a peculiar way hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage—insofar as it exemplifies a special class of infelicitous utterance in which the motives of the agent ("persons having certain thoughts or feelings" [15]) are insincere or are not directly embodied in subsequent conduct (an utterance can also be hollow in this sense if "introduced in a poem, or spoken in soliloquy" [22]). Austin excludes such hollow utterance from consideration precisely because it uses language in ways he finds "parasitic upon [language's] normal use—ways which fall under the doctrine of the etiolations of language" … Oddly enough, while Austin's cavalier dismissal of theatrical performatives—hollow to whom? In what sense?—now seems to

> drive literary studies toward performativity and performance, it does so by asserting the peculiar hollowness of dramatic theater. (1095)

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Koltès makes use of the peculiar hollowness of dramatic writing as a backdrop on which to weave in the many textual and oral allusions that make up *Roberto Zucco*.

A speech act gains authority through sincerity, and because theatrical discourse is about attempting to embody an adopted sincerity, language remains stuck in the translation process. Hollow utterances must make use of additional sound tactics in order to infuse a passable sincerity into the action. Koltès employs the sound created by the hero's affected corporality to counteract the hollowness of his cruel speech. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, in the hostage chapter Zucco has his foot on the head of L'Enfant and the witnesses to his cruelty are commenting and trying to talk to the boy while commenting the scene as though they are separate from it, evoking the chorus of Greek tragedy. Zucco tries to keep L'Enfant from moving and speaking but cannot control his own affective reaction to the situation. He is afraid of the child and unable to hide his fear from those he is supposed to be controlling. L'Enfant notices, saying, "Si, vous tremblez, vous tremblez. J'entends que vous tremblez" (61). Here, the sound of Zucco's presence is emphasized through what the child can hear. Unable to see Zucco with his face against the ground, he must rely on listening to the body's uncontrollable affective reactions. Zucco's fear can only be heard in the text, and understood through the child's enunciation of what he has heard. L'Enfant's addition to the scene becomes most important because he unveils Zucco's sincerity heard through the sound of trembling. Because it is impossible to stage the sound of trembling to a theatre audience unless in a very small and intimate space, the public must rely on the child's words to accomplish the actions, once again

displacing the centrality of the action to the translation process of retelling.

Again, the reader and the theatre audience arrive at a similar affect through different mechanisms. Where the spectator has to rely on the child's narration of Zucco's trembling, the reader has been conditioned to anticipate the potential sound. Therefore, the missing sound is not missing for the reader, but links to the *idée d'entendre* of the first scene. Like the guards in the first scene, the reader stares at words printed on a page and mirrors the guards who "fix[ent] l'obscurité" (10). Reading, however, is far from a passive absorption of the text. What the text and performance share in the case of *Roberto Zucco*, is the creation of a resonant emotion. In this way the words *do*, they provide a consequential irrevocable act that bleeds into our everyday life.

Scheie argues that Barthes's "stunning reversals" of opinion and his complex relationship with theatre and performance, "from his early theatre criticism, through his abrupt and enigmatic silence on theatre, to the theoretical 'stagings' of his thought in the 1970s" (5) make up the backbone of Barthes's accounts of the sign, the text, the body, the voice and other essential elements of his non-theatrical oeuvre. When one speaks of potential sound in the text, one is speaking of a sign that is simultaneously absent and present. What Scheie calls the *anxiety of presence* in performance studies is helpful to link the idea of affect with potential sound. Scheie writes that presence is an "aura-like magnetism that draws the spectator's attention and keeps it riveted to the body on stage. Others might describe the vivid sensation that *somebody's there*, live and immediate, threatening and vulnerable, standing before the spectator" (6). The performance is essentially corporal, spatial, and generates an affective space that contains the hero's subjectivity and its relationship with the audience. Though the presence of sound cannot stand in for the corporal presence of the actor on stage, it can contain the same aura-like

magnetism that draws the attention of the missing action, as I demonstrated in how the sonic actions of the hero are recreated through the retelling of witnesses.

Like the uncertainty the guards feel in the presence of Zucco in the first scene, Koltès insists that corporal presence connects with the creation of a lasting emotion in the "univers intérieur" (10). The "Deuxième Gardien," who does not pick up on Zucco's presence on the roof in front of him thinks that his own presence as reader of the space is useless.

> Inutile, complètement; les fusils, les sirènes muettes, nos yeux ouverts qu'à cette heure tout le monde a les yeux fermés. Je trouve inutile d'avoir les yeux ouverts à ne fixer rien, alors qu'à cette heure nos oreilles devraient écouter le bruit de notre univers intérieur et nos yeux contempler nos paysages intérieurs. (10)

The poetic word is hollow unless it positions itself within an affective system that is a singular to each reading and to a singularly imagined space. Like reading, Koltès writes in a stage presence that is non-linear, unlike the real time of theatre. He makes use of the intimate rhythm of reading and thinking—the "univers et paysages interieurs" that use a meaningful silence, like that of words that are read, not uttered.

Just like reading, successful performance is contingent on the creation of emotion and on the analysis of what this new emotion creates in the text that will then resonate in the performance. Textual performance is plural, dialogic, and suspended, created by a constant becoming or visible potential, and is most effective in the present. Performance initially elicits a temporary and perishable emotion from the present. As I outlined in the Introduction, Gregg and Seigworth's idea of "constant becoming" was a response to how Spinoza treated emotions and passions. In his *Ethics* (1677) Spinoza writes that emotion is a constant and perpetual "becoming" of bodies and differentiates between positive (active) and negative (passive)

emotions. Because of its performative qualities, the text overturns the binary between being a passive opposite to the active performance since the way narration is scored is able to reproduce emotions through a resonance, performing continually when read.

Reading is both a stasis and an escape and the play between these two elements is at the heart of Zucco's character. As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, Koltès writes the desire to escape into the poetic makeup of Zucco as hero. In the same scene in which he picks a fight with Le Balèze, a bloody and beaten Zucco takes refuge in a broken telephone booth and recites a monologue based on recordings taken of Roberto Succo just before he died. Yelling into the broken telephone, he says:

> Je veux partir. Il faut partir tout de suite. Il fait trop chaud, dans cette putain de ville. Je veux aller en Afrique, sous la neige. Il faut que je parte parce que je vais mourir … Je crois qu'il n'y a pas de mots, il n'y a rien à dire. Il faut arrêter d'enseigner les mots. Il faut fermer les écoles et agrandir les cimetières. De toute façon, un an, cent ans, c'est pareil; tôt ou tard, on doit tous mourir, tous. Et ça, ça fait chanter les oiseaux, ça fait rire les oiseaux. (49)

Koltès's poetic goal of eliminating the use of language solely as a tool of forced social interaction and insincere dialogue is demonstrated through his use of fragmented one-sided dialogues. However, as I demonstrated in the previous chapter, Koltès weaves allusions into each monologue, dialogue, or retelling of an action that transpose the meaning from the words themselves, to the composition of language. The passage quoted above is based on an original recording of Roberto Succo, and is translated by Martin Crimp in the English edition of the play as:

> To be or not to be…that is the question. I believe that…there are no words, there is nothing to say … So one year, a hundred years, it's all the same … sooner or later we all have to die. All of us. And that … that's what makes the birds sing, the birds. That's what makes the bees sing. That what makes the birds laugh. (58)

However, Koltès rewrites the quote to highlight and omit the Shakespeare quote from the original recording, effectively translating and recreating the original performance. The omission of the citation from Hamlet, and the addition of the desire to escape to Africa further complicates the citation process of the play. As we saw earlier, Africa symbolizes an escape from the duty of poetry, as seen in the escape and disappearance of Arthur Rimbaud.

The desire to escape and expected imminent death of the hero is coupled with the degradation of meaning in the spoken word. "Il n'y a rien à dire" echoes the play's opening dialogue between the two prison guards on watch that emphasizes the power of the mediation between speech acts, modes of doing, and imagination. Though Koltès removes the allusion to Hamlet actually uttered by Roberto Succo, he writes *Hamlet* as work into the seams of the play. In this first scene we are immediately displaced into the primary allusion to Shakespeare's *Hamlet's* first scene, where two prison guards see the ghost of their king and then discuss whether their watch is necessary.

> Horatio: What, has this thing appeared again to-night?
>
> Bernardo: I have seen nothing.
>
> Marcellus: Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy,/And will not let belief take hold of him/Touching this dreaded sight twice seen of us./Therefore I have entreated him along/With us to watch the minutes of this night,/That if again this apparition come,/He may approve our eyes and speak to it. (I, i)

In contrast to Marcellus and Bernardo who see the apparition of the ghost of the King of Denmark, Koltès emphasizes *hearing* the potential sound of a possibly escaping prisoner, which becomes an auditory ghost. As I wrote earlier, the reader is immediately made aware of the distinction between hearing and potentially hearing, or hearing with actual ears, and hearing sound's potential through the text. However, the presence of actual sound, or what we as an audience would hear in a staging of the play, is not clarified in the text. It is not clear whether or not the officers have heard Roberto Zucco escaping, or if it is a trick of the imagination.

Worthen writes, "performing reconstitutes a text; it does not echo, give voice to, or translate the text." Though we cannot as readers hear the actual sound, watching a staging of the play would not take away from the obvious focus given to the performative qualities of the text pre-staging. It is clear that in reconstituting the actions of the real-life Roberto Succo leading to his capture and escapes, Koltès redraws the parameters of his text in a way that references his feeling of imprisonment in theatrical writing while using potential sound to minimize the importance given to the future embodiment and staging.

The idea of potential sound adds a unique element to Austin's theory of locution, illocution, and perlocution.[9] With locution, Austin means that by saying a word, "I invoke the capacity of the sounds uttered both to stand for the idea," (18) and to mark out the relevance of why these sounds were uttered. The illocutionary dimension of the act "denotes the kind of act I was accomplishing or attempting to accomplish in saying these words: warning, threatening, and so on" (18). It is in the perlocutionary dimension that the creation of emotion becomes important: "If illocution denotes the function performed *in* saying something, then perlocution denotes the

[9] The following quotes are taken from James Loxley's *Performativity,* in which he starts by outlining Austin's speech act theory.

effect I produced *by* issuing the utterance" (18). If hearing a statement uttered can produce an affect like fear or guilt, how does the *idea* of an utterance, or the potential sound of a text written to be performed produce a perlocutionary dimension in the reader? Koltès focuses on the performative quality of Zucco's crimes by playing with the element of the production of a resonant affect through potential sound.

The original and most central example of how the text contains emphasis on perlocutionary sound and resonance is the change of the last name Succo (with an S) to Zucco (with a Z). In the original French, this change is not heard orally: the difference stays in the text, not unlike Derrida's famous *différance*. Playing with the notion that the deliberate misspelling cannot be heard, Koltès is subverting the theatrical tradition of privileging speech over writing. However, in *Roberto Zucco*, Koltès shows that *différance* is violent and poetic, not playful. Giving us the key to how his text is most effectively performative, the Z elides the playfulness of the original deferral. Derrida shows that there is already an element of writing in the spoken word and vice versa, and that words and signs can never fully summon forth what they mean but can only be defined through their relationship with additional words. Zucco's Z contains both sound and movement that brings to the foreground the violent performative aspects of the text but does not echo the original S. Instead, the translation of the name becomes a recreation of the sign that stands for the villainous hero. Like the infamous mark of the horseman Zorro, Zucco's last name contains a signature of slicing, a violent reminder of S/Zucco's crimes. This translation/recreation echoes that of the relationship between a textual creation and its staged performance. Visually, on the page, the Z hardens the softer S of the original and the change in meaning in Italian emphasizes the recreation process. More importantly, in Italian, the meaning of the name is enhanced by the change. Succo, (which means juice in Italian) blends with

Zucchero, or "sugar," to make Zucco. By replacing the S with the Z, Koltès is not only transposing and translating Succo's mark, but recreating it by charging it with a new textual sound. Koltès is in fact sweetening an everyday "drink," by condensing and augmenting its flavor.

Through the translation of the sonic sign in S/Zucco, the reader is reminded of the hero's essential link to unveiling the poetic process of the cruelty in performative writing. In Scène IX "Dalila," La Gamine betrays Zucco to the police, a betrayal that alludes to Delilah's betrayal of Samson. Attempting to turn him in, La Gamine, cannot remember Zucco's name. She builds up the moment of enunciation, mirroring the potential of sound with the potential of physical violence. As the police threaten her with violence, she keeps them at bay with the promise to produce the name:

> La Gamine: Je le sais, très bien.
>
> Le Commissaire: Tu te moques de nous, gamine. Est-ce que tu veux des gifles?
>
> La Gamine: Je ne veux pas de gifles. Je le sais, mais je n'arrive pas à le dire.
>
> L'inspecteur: Comment ça, tu n'arrives pas à le dire?
>
> La Gamine: Je l'ai là, au bout de la langue.
>
> Le Commissaire: Au bout de la langue, au bout de la langue. Tu veux des gifles, et des coups de poing, et qu'on te tire les cheveux? On a des salles équipées tout exprès ici, tu sais.
>
> La Gamine: Non, non, je l'ai là, il va venir. (54)

Though La Gamine seems unaffected with the Commissaire and Inspecteur's threats of violence, the repetition of their cruelty and promises to beat the word out of her unless she produces it quickly seems a ridiculous and exaggeratedly one-sided dialogic response. The promise of violence shows that they are aware that the possession of the word is what gives La Gamine total power over the situation.

In stating that the name is "au bout de la langue," La Gamine draws attention to the oral mechanics and vocal muscularity that anticipate the production of speech, while also affirming the absence of the sound of enunciation. This mechanism recalls what the reader must accomplish to perform a textual reading of the play. It is unclear whether La Gamine has forgotten the name, or if she is withholding it, remembering her promise to keep it secret and echoing Zucco's tactic to withhold it from her in Scène III: "La Gamine: Je sais garder les secrets. Dis-moi ton nom. Zucco: Je l'ai oublié" (26). Le Commissaire and L'Inspecteur realize that their words have no power, they are uncharged and hollow utterances, incapable of producing a consequence—neither fear nor urgency are consequences of their hollow threats.

However, an attempt at cruelty is at the heart of each of the men's enunciations, unveiling how Koltès's negotiates the insincerity and hollowness of theatrical discourse by inscribing language with cruelty. As Artaud wrote in his *Theatre of Cruelty:* without "cruelty at the root of every spectacle, the theatre is not possible" (92). Instead of being affected by the threats of the Commissaire and L'Inspecteur, La Gamine focuses on recreating and restaging Scène III in which Zucco told her his name:

> La Gamine: Je sais garder les secrets. Dis-moi ton nom.
>
> Zucco: Je l'ai oublié.
>
> La Gamine: Menteur.

Zucco: Andreas.

La Gamine: Non.

Zucco: Angelo …

La Gamine: Impossible. Je le reconnaîtrai tout de suite.

Zucco: Je ne peux pas le dire.

La Gamine: Même si tu ne peux pas le dire, dis-le-moi quand même. (26)

In the scene of betrayal, La Gamine goes through the same series of false names, just as Zucco did with her. This time taking on the role Zucco played in Scène III, La Gamine is overlapping her own subjectivity with his, repurposing what the possession of the knowledge of his name will bring.

Mirroring Zucco's fear that his name will disappear, La Gamine has potentially forgotten his name, even though when he told her in Scène III, she promised, "Roberto Zucco. Je n'oublierai jamais ce nom" (27). Though he has raped her and taken her virginity, causing her heightened abuse from her family members, she cannot recall the name he has given until she links it to her corporal memory at the present moment, face to face with the men interrogating her. Once again she is at the receiving end of violence. In Scène III, she had just been raped, and in this scene she is being threatened with violence unless she produces the name. She has it "au bout de la langue," and on the edge of her memory, but in order to produce it, she must connect her sense of taste to her verbal memory. She remembers a sensation she associated with his last name, a sensation also felt by the tongue:

La Gamine: Angelo, Angelo, Dolce, ou quelque chose comme cela.

L'inspecteur: Dolce? Comme doux?

La Gamine: Doux, oui. Il m'a dit que son nom ressemblait à un nom étranger qui voulait dire doux, ou sucré. (*Elle pleure*.) Il était tellement doux, si gentil.

L'inspecteur: Il y a beaucoup de mots pour dire sucré, je suppose.

Le Commissaire: Azucarado, zuccherato, sweetened, gezuckert, ocukrzony.

L'inspecteur: Je sais tout cela, commissaire.

La Gamine: Zucco. Zucco. Roberto Zucco.

L'inspecteur: Tu en es sûre ?

La Gamine: Sûre, J'en suis sûre.

Le Commissaire: Zucco. Avec un Z?

La Gamine: Avec un Z, oui. Roberto. Avec un Z. (55)

The fact that she suddenly knows how his name is spelled and that she even associates the first letter of the last name, with his first name, "Roberto. Avec un Z," gives an added importance to the way his name is *written*. Linking the written name with how it feels on her tongue, emphasizes the performative oral charge this name has for her. In uttering his name, La Gamine is essentially causing it to move from potential sound to textual resonance in one utterance. This resonance links it to the page, and to its namesake, the play's title itself.

III. B. READING THE SCORE

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated how the textual makeup of a *tissage* of citations and allusions contributes to the creation of the mythical hero of Zucco. The citations contain a self-referentiality that links back to the writing process and the construction of the poetic voice as containing a materiality that complicates the oral stage performance. The character of Zucco is already inspired by a plurality of sources, and his speech in the play becomes a performance of

rescored textual sources. Because the textual construction draws attention to itself, reading *Roberto Zucco* as a text that does not only anticipate its stage performance, but stands as its own performance makes use of the same original reading apparatus as reading a musical score. The way the text and hero are created by outside sources woven together is mirrored in the internal poetics between characters as well, as seen in the ways in which diegetic sound is treated throughout the play.

In this section, I borrow the textually performative lexicon from Worthen, who problematizes the intersection between poetry and performance by eliminating the previously established hierarchy between text and performance. In his introduction, Worthen compares the textual performance to several different text/performance relationships. He compares the dramatic text to a score, a blueprint, and a kind of informational software. What he tries to highlight with these metaphors is the incompleteness of the dramatic text (until the moment it is performed), the implication of the process of the text/performance binary (as opposed to a set structure), and the interpretation of the text that in fact recreates it into a new text, destabilizing the authoritative original.

As I showed earlier, Koltès's choice to change the last name of his hero from Succo to Zucco shows how the construction of the plurally mythical hero of Zucco has a foundation in sound as well as text. By changing the first letter of the hero's last name, Koltès is also referencing Barthes's seminal work *S/Z* in which he analyzes Balzac's short story, *Sarrasine*. In making the link to *S/Z*, Koltès is drawing attention to how sound and text work together through the process employed by the reader/spectator. As I demonstrated earlier, Barthes's early writings on theatre and performance structures shed light on how he negotiates meaning in textual works throughout his oeuvre. In *S/Z* Barthes tries to find a way to evaluate how a text functions in

relation to its sources and overlaps, but also as an individual object. He ascribes agency to the reader who becomes “un producteur du texte” (10). There are texts that are either “scriptible,” transforming the reader from “consommateur” to “producteur,” or “lisible,” “ce qui peut être lu, mais non écrit” (10). Barthes writes that a “scriptible” text is:

> une galaxie de signifiants, non une structure de signifiés; il n’a pas de commencement; il est réversible; on y accède par plusieurs entrées dont aucune ne peut être à coup sûr déclarée principale; les codes qu’il mobilise se profilent à perte de vue, ils sont indécidables … de ce texte absolument pluriel, les systèmes de sens peuvent s’emparer, mais leur nombre n’est jamais clos, ayant pour mesure l’infini du langage. (12)

Roberto Zucco begins and ends with an escape from prison and draws attention to itself continually as a plural text that creates a plural subject that in turn recreates its static text. Barthes defines a set of five codes that function as a network of open structures within the text. For Barthes a code is:

> une perspective de citations, un mirage de structures; on ne connaît de lui que des départs et des retours; les unités qui en sont issue … sont elles-mêmes, toujours, des sorties du texte, la marque, le jalon d’une digression virtuelle vers le reste d’un catalogue … ou encore: chaque code est l’une des forces qui peuvent s’emparer du texte (dont le texte est le réseau), l’une des Voix dont est tissé le texte. (28)

If we look at how the code can unveil the workings of potential sound and text by showing the perspective of diegetic citations, it is in the understanding of the intervals in the message, from the poetic violence to the potential sound that the code becomes useful as a paradigm of textual

performance. Barthes's code rethought through the medium of violence becomes the interval necessary to read the performative text.

In the last scene the reader visually sees how the message is coded, and is encouraged to read the intervals between the harmonizing voices. Zucco establishes his place as a mythical figure in this last scene, for a chorus/audience of "Voix." In the stage directions the reader learns that the voix are "de gardiens et de prisonniers mêlés" (90). Zucco has escaped from his cell and is climbing on the roof of the prison once again. Alluding to the way a group of journalists talk to a celebrity, microphones out and cameras rolling, the "voix" interview Zucco, emphazing the orality of their language.

> Une Voix: Comment tu fais?
>
> Une Voix: Par où as-tu filé?
>
> Zucco: Par le haut. Il ne faut pas chercher à traverser les murs, parce que, au-delà des murs, il y a d'autres murs, il y a toujours la prison. Il faut s'échapper par les toits, vers le soleil. On ne mettra jamais un mur entre le soleil et la terre. (92)

Zucco's movement is important: he is advancing toward the sun, prompting a vertical trajectory. This movement echoes the myth of Daedalus whose son Icarus sees him making wings out of wax and feathers to escape his imprisonment on the island of Crete. However, it is also an unveiling of the harmonic structure of the play made out of a succession of potential sounds and laid out spatially. Zucco is not simply representing the hero Icarus, who falls to his death when the sun's heat melts the wax on his wings, causing the feathers to come unwoven, nor is he singularly the Italian serial killer Succo. Zucco is plural and multidimensional and it is his harmonic resonance that has already set the tone up to this moment in the play. As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, the chorus of Voix recognize the plurality of Zucco's

status as hero. Their dialogue underlines Zucco's vertical movement. But what is Zucco seeking? Where is he attempting to go? His attempts to escape throughout the play are always tethered to the theatrical space. Drawing his audience's attention off-stage, he causes them to realize the scene's harmonic charge.

The voices of the chorus in the last scene show the point of convergence between the *tissage* of mythical allusions that unveil Zucco's materiality, and the creation of a scored harmony within the character's diegetic citations. The last scene causes the voices to form a harmonic counterpoint that stacks what has been seen in individual lines throughout the play. In a musical score, the melody is read from left to right, like words on a page. The harmony is read vertically and is based on the intervals of each note (think of four different voices or instruments heard simultaneously as we see in this last scene). Like a four-part harmony, each voice carries a message that relies on its dialogic relationship with the other voices in the scene. They say:

> Une Voix: Tu es un héros, Zucco.
>
> Une Voix: C'est Goliath.
>
> Une Voix: C'est Samson.
>
> Une Voix: Qui est Samson?
>
> Une Voix: Un truand marseillais. (93)

The Voix show the intervals in citation and recognize that the character Roberto Zucco is an elaborate tissage of allusions to figures and texts of all types, as is the play *Roberto Zucco*. This calls attention to the discrete nature of citation weaving in performative writing, once again unveiling the poetic mechanisms of the creation of the criminal hero. Koltès highlights the disjointed weaving by stacking myth on top of story, on top of Biblical legend. Goliath, Samson, and word of mouth gossip all come together as a call and response refrain. Each response stands

on its own, and yet also answers the previous voice's statement. "C'est Goliath" is not rebuked by "C'est Samson," but added to and enhanced. Zucco is both Goliath, and Samson, because he is *hero* to the voices: the essence of all heroes, from the two separate Biblical stories to the protagonist of a particularly good piece of gossip or scandalous *fait divers*. The ironic voice at the end says "un truand marseillais," bringing the story closer to their common understanding as French reporters, giving the notion of hero an imaginable face.

Roberto Zucco, read as a score, unveils how the important vertical relationships between speech utterances function as harmonic units. Because in a live performance the score is not seen, the unity of the fragmented hero is impossible to portray except through sound resonance that relies on the spectator's memory. As in the previous scene, we see that the temporality of the statements becomes simultaneous in the score, and instead of hearing one voice after another, they can be read as a unit on the page. Though reading the text *Roberto Zucco* as a score does anticipate its stage performance, it accomplishes more by unveiling its own textually performative mechanisms.

III. C. HARMONIZING THE REFRAIN AND CREATING *HOME*

In the last scene, Koltès scores the voices to highlight how the simultaneous and plural identities of the hero are mirrored in the onstage and offstage spectators. Using the same mechanism in the characters who are not emphasized as being heroes, the diegetic citations become a multi-voiced *ritournelle* that counteracts the persistent violence, chaos, sadness, and suffering contained in the text. It is in this capacity that Koltès's awareness of music as diegetic *sound affect* draws on creating a calm and familiar space that likens a home. Koltès's use of musical poetic structures repurposes the creation of Deleuze and Guattari's *ritournelle* by

drawing attention to how the refrain can be a rescoring of textually diegetic voices. In moments of extreme distress, violence, or conflict, the characters cite each other in order to create a territory that wards off the feeling of chaos—a transportable and affective home. As we see most explicitly in the final scene, *Roberto Zucco* contains more than just a rhythmic pulse. It also contains a textual harmony. Throughout the play the harmony is contained in a melody, split between moving notes and heard in the resonant sonority of the poetic intervals such as the rescoring the discovery of the hero's name in Scène III "Sous la table" and Scène IX "Dalila." Koltès was aware of making textual language function as music. He wrote about the necessity of creating a truly dramatic character by infusing his/her speech with music: "Il n'existe pas de coupure fondamentale entre l'écriture et la littérature … à partir du moment où l'on comprend le système musical d'un personnage, on a compris l'essentiel et on pourrait lui faire dire n'importe quoi, il parlera toujours juste" (48).

The scoring of the many allusions and citations also makes up both the narrative and musical structure of the play. Koltès understood that music was a fundamental source of his writing for the stage in that it provided a counterpoint to the conflict created between characters. Anne Quentin writes:

> [Koltès] cherchait à reproduire … cette émotion qu'éprouve l'homme qui rentre à la maison. La musique est racine qu'il cherche à retrouver dans l'écriture. Ce sens si évident, si immédiat que recèlent les phrases musicales, là où les mots, seuls, échouent souvent. (48)

The home, then, is how Koltès defines the feeling of repose given by a particularly effective harmonic structure. Zucco's repeated escapes do not provide him with his own space or calm. Throughout the play he is searching to go somewhere, but never succeeds. He kills a woman's

son and takes her hostage in Scène X to steal their car, but leaves the scene to go to the train station because he doesn't like the car. In Scène XI he escapes into the metro only to get lost in the tunnels and to exit the next morning with no better idea of what his direction should be. This stasis once again references the artificiality of the theatrical space. However, instead of being trapped, Zucco becomes a nomad, taking his harmonic territory with him as he moves.

Koltès also draws attention to his other characters' *système musical*. This musical system is unique because it provides a potential way to rethink the genre of theatre. Just as I demonstrated in the previous chapter, Koltès claimed to hate theatre, yet kept coming back to it. In *Roberto Zucco*, Zucco's escape is less about a prison break, and more about a transforming of the prison itself. Koltès knew that he was writing words that would be performed by a cast; however, he was also writing into the characters, a transportable, transposable sensation of familiarity that could both add to and counteract the cruelty and violence in the text. He sought to reproduce a feeling reminiscent of the sensation of curling up with a book in a favorite chair at home. In a short text that was published posthumously in the collection *Prologue* (1991), Koltès writes:

> J'ai longtemps cherché à ressentir cette émotion dont j'avais entendu parler, qui est celle qu'éprouve l'homme qui rentre à la maison. Bien sûr, je ressentais vaguement quelque chose dans le genre, en rentrant à Paris après un voyage, mais je trouvais ce sentiment plutôt con et superficiel, en tous les cas, il n'y avait pas de quoi en faire des histoires. Un jour—je ne sais vraiment plus où, très loin de Paris, dans un milieu plutôt hostile et fermé—, tout à coup, venant d'un bar ou d'une voiture qui passait, étouffées, lointaines, j'ai entendu quelques mesures d'un vieux disque de Bob Marley; j'ai alors poussé une sorte de soupir, comme

> les propriétaires terriens, dans les livres, en poussent en s'asseyant le soir dans un fauteuil, près de la cheminée, dans le salon de leur hacienda. Et n'importe où maintenant, à entendre, même de loin, *Rat Race* ou *War*, je ressens l'odeur, la familiarité, et le sentiment d'invulnérabilité, le repos de la maison. (119)

For Koltès, *music* is what triggers a sensorial memory that recalls the home. It is a connection between a sensation of escape, return, and calm, a sigh that counteracts the chaos and unpredictability of violence. Though Zucco comes into constant contact with the idea of home, from his childhood front porch to the kitchen of the girl he has raped, he is unable to fulfill a sense of calm on his own.

Like the mediatized *fait divers* the play is based on, Zucco creates a violent poetic harmony through his relationship with the other characters that he comes into contact with. By drawing attention to the scoring of citations and diegetic sound, Koltès is able to create a textual melody that can make use of the unique textual performativity. Koltès spoke of using rhythm to define his style. He sought out rhythm that fell on the weaker beats, like reggae and the blues. The majority of popular music in 4/4 has a strong beat on the first and third beat of the measure; reggae and blues makes use of the weaker beats (the second and fourth). Koltès wrote:

> J'ai trouvé dans le reggae un équivalent esthétique de tout ce qui m'attire chez mes écrivains préférés. Le reggae, à cause de son système rythmique (un inversion radicale du temps fort et du temps faible) est à mon avis une musique qui transcende sa propre qualité musicale. (48)

In the case of La Gamine, her *système musical* comes from her ability to rescore and recreate different parts of the diegetic language, transferring moments of assumed strength to an intimate

but powerful weakness, as though contributing to its process and rewriting what is essential to the text's performance of potential sound.

La Gamine's relationship to citation moves the play's musical emphasis solidly from rhythm to harmony. From the title we are reminded that the character's mark (Zucco's Z) is part of the harmonization process. However, Zucco is the only character in the play to have a name. The others are simply known by common nouns, La Sœur, Le Frère, La Gamine, Le Commissaire, La Dame, L'Enfant, and so on. La Gamine first comes across as being the victim of all kinds of violence, from within her family unit, to her losing her virginity to Zucco. The reader first meets her in Scène III, "Sous la Table," where she has smuggled Zucco into her kitchen after having been raped. As the family's youngest member she has no real voice or name.

In Scène IX, however, La Gamine embodies the role of the traitorous woman in the biblical reference of Samson and Delilah and is given a title that likens the hero's. The scene is titled "Dalila" and it is where La Gamine provides the police with Zucco's name. At the beginning of the scene the stage directions note: "*Entre la gamine, suivie de son frère. Celui-ci reste dans l'ombre de la porte. La gamine s'avance vers le portrait de Zucco et le désigne du doigt*. La Gamine: Je le connais" (51). Her own missing name is added to by the name of the scene, though this name remains in the text as only the title. The fact that she is given a name other than the noun is only revealed in the title of the scene, not performed on stage. In Scène III as she tries to get to know her rapist, she says, "Moi, je n'ai plus de nom. On m'appelle tout le temps de noms de petites bêtes, poussin, pinson, moineau, alouette, étourneau, colombe, rossignol. Je préférais que l'on m'appelle rat, serpent à sonnettes ou porcelet …" (24). La Gamine is repeatedly referred to as a caged song-maker, a series of birds of all kinds. Her use of

sound contains a heightened element of textual harmony as seen in Scène III. As she hears her mother coming towards the kitchen she says to Zucco:

> La Gamine: … Cache-toi sous la table; voilà du monde.
>
> *Entre la mère.*
>
> La Mère: Tu parles toute seule, mon rossignol?
>
> La Gamine: Non. Je chantonne pour éloigner le malheur. (27)

La Gamine's utterance becomes a multi-layered citation, containing her sister and her father's speech as well as a direct quote from Deleuze and Guattari's "De la ritournelle." Firstly, she is quoting her sister, who she heard earlier in the evening respond to her drunk and abusive father's question. Secondly, recognizing the *agencement* between the quotes, she rescores the two quotes as her own refrain:

> Le Père: Tu pleures, ma fille? J'ai cru entendre quelqu'un pleurer. (*La Sœur se lève*.)
>
> La Sœur: Non. Je chantonne. (*Elle sort*)
>
> Le Père: Tu as bien raison. Cela éloigne le malheur. (*Il sort*). (23)

In quoting her sister and her father's response, "Je chantonne pour éloigner le malheur," she is in effect rescoring two separate voices who made up the two separate parts of the phrase, "Je chantonne" and "pour éloigner le malheur" becoming the rescored call and response of two family members and creating a new melodic line. She recognizes that *chantonner* is an acceptable sound to be making, as opposed to talking to herself or crying. "Chantonner" is not a *signe*, but a *signal*, an affective communicative system associated with her home and family unit. As in "De la ritournelle," the humming combats a feeling of unease and anxiety. As Koltès's remarks about seeking to reproduce a kind of writing that encompasses reggae's creation of

"cette émotion qu'éprouve l'homme qui rentre à la maison," this scene exemplifies how potential sound causes the text to provide the building blocks for territorialization, creating a safe *chez soi* or home to contrast against the chaos of the surrounding violence.

Through her use of the *ritournelle* as affective musical mechanism, La Gamine combines the performance of the role of sister with an extratextual artistry that alludes to the poetic process. Deleuze and Guattari write: "Harmonies are affects. Consonance and dissonance, harmonies of tone or color, are affects of music or painting … The artist creates blocs of percepts and affects, but the only law of creation is that the compound must stand up on its own" (164). The artist, according to Deleuze and Guattari, makes use of a bloc of sensations that contains three main elements: flesh, house, and cosmos. Flesh and house overlap to contrast with the cosmos in that they are two autonomous frames. The house element is what makes the flesh hold fast. "Flesh," they write, "is only the thermometer of a becoming" (179). But house "takes part in an entire becoming. It is the "nonorganic life of things" (180). It is also a step in the process from survival to art. Art begins with the construction of a house and when stylized becomes a collection of colors, postures, and refrains that make up a total work of art. With their examples of the *scenopoetes dentirostris*, a bird of the Australian rain forests, they show a possible relationship between stage and home. In their example, the bird:

> cuts leaves, makes them fall to the ground, and turns them over so that the paler, internal side contrast with the earth. In this way it constructs a *stage* for itself like a ready-made … it sings a complex song made up from its own notes and, at intervals, those of other birds that it imitates: it is a complete artist. (180, my emphasis)

La Gamine's role as songbird is therefore much more than an embodiment of the sentiment of theatrical imprisonment. Instead, her role as plural songbird is what allows her the artistry to manage a complex *système musical.* The creation of her art is uniquely paired with her relationship to her imprisonment on stage and in recreating the space to accommodate her as an artist.

However, we know that in both quotes by La Soeur and La Gamine, neither girl was actually humming. Just as the sound of humming is absent from the text, except in its potential, the actual sound of humming is absent from the performance. Both girls draw attention to the fact that it is a lie to cover up what they were actually doing, speaking to Zucco or crying. The utterance "je chantonne," becomes a hollow performative utterance, capable only of appeasing the feigned worry of a family member, unless focus is given instead to the recomposition of the initial words. La Gamine is scoring and writing new melodic lines, treating her father and sister's words like sonorities that recall a *ritournelle*. La Gamine is a songbird, at home—more specifically in the heart of the home: the kitchen. She has just been raped and returned to a place of chaos where her father beats her mother and her sister treats her like a caged bird. However, she takes control of the situation by reconstructing a safe zone, a *chez soi* that is dominated by her control over the "briques sonores" and harmonization of her family's words. Deleuze and Guattari write that it is in the composition of sounds that one creates a *ritournelle* and that the *ritournelle's* purpose is to ward off chaos by territorializing space into a collection of sounds:

> On trace un cercle, mais surtout on marche autour du cercle comme dans une ronde enfantine, et l'on combine les consonnes et les voyelles rythmées qui correspondent aux forces intérieures de la création comme aux parties différenciées d'un organisme. (382)

It is in the character of La Gamine that we best see the reappropriation of the violent interval, the taking back of control through the emphasis of the potential sound of the utterance. As I wrote earlier, La Gamine has a place in the story that paradoxically removes her from the role of the victim. As the youngest in her family, her older brother and sister have had a single purpose in life, to protect her virginity. For her brother, once that is lost she has lost all value. For her sister, La Gamine remains of central importance, because she is the one who provides her sister with the emotions that outline her as the performing body of La Soeur. Only a referential character, even in name, without La Gamine, La Soeur loses even her referential name and emotional connection to her own refrain.

The link between the siblings is a blood link, however their connection is interior, genetic and ultimately transparent without an emotional territory of affective space. La Gamine functions as the center of the affective territory shared with her sister who uses her as an outlet for a regulated emotional externalisation. When La Gamine is going to go in search of Zucco in Scène VII "Deux soeurs," La Soeur tries to keep her in the house, because she would be lost without her. Without the duty of protecting her and sharing a parallel sadness, she is lost:

> La Sœur: Et qu'est-ce que tu feras, quand tu l'auras retrouvé?
>
> La Gamine: Je lui dirai quelque chose.
>
> La Sœur: Quoi ?
>
> La Gamine: Quelque chose.
>
> La Sœur: Où penses-tu le retrouver?
>
> La Gamine: Dans le Petit Chicago.
>
> La Sœur: Pourquoi veux-tu te perdre, colombe innocente? Non, ne m'abandonne pas, ne me laisse pas toute seule. Je ne veux pas rester seule avec ton frère et tes

> parents. Je ne veux pas rester seule dans cette maison. Sans toi, ma vie ne vaudra plus rien, plus rien n'aura de sens. Ne m'abandonne pas, je t'en supplie, ne m'abandonne pas. Je déteste ton frère, et tes parents, et cette maison; il n'y a que toi que j'aime colombe, colombe; il n'y a que toi dans toute ma vie. (42)

The repetition of the use of the pronoun "tes, ton, ta" indicates that La Gamine is central to La Soeur's relationship with the rest of her family as well as to the creation of a safe *chez soi* within the violently chaotic home. She has created an emotionally charged territory by repurposing her family's utterances, just as the text has rescored citations to create a new oeuvre. La Soeur has a unique emotional commitment to her little sister and one that echoes her father's violent relationship with their mother.

> La Sœur: Je n'ai jamais été malheureuse, sauf de ton malheur à toi.
>
> La Gamine: Si, je sais que tu as été très malheureuse. Je t'ai souvent surprise en train de pleurer derrière le rideau.
>
> La Sœur: Je pleure sans raison, à des heures régulières, pour prendre de l'avance, et maintenant, tu ne me verras plus jamais pleurer; j'ai pris beaucoup d'avance. (41)

La Sœur's regulated sadness from behind the curtain, once again references the artificiality of the stage and of the dialogic status of creating a shared emotion within the theatrical space. Like the actor practicing an emotional scene that will be performed, La Soeur regulates her sadness from behind the curtain in order to be in control of her emotions, as though tears were finite.

La Soeur's ritualized and theatrical relationship with her sister is also seen in Scène XIII. In another allusion to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, La Soeur adds a further dimension to her relationship with La Gamine. Echoing Queen Gertrude's poetic retelling of Ophelia's suicide, La

Soeur narrates her search for her sister in the train station and in her monologue she recreates their relationship by alluding to how she took care of her, specifically by washing her ritually and rigorously. She says:

> Je l'ai **tant lavée**, cette petite. Tant **baignée** avant le dîner, et **baignée** le matin, frotté le dos et les mains à la **brosse**, et **brossé** le dessous des **ongles**, lavé **tous** les jours les cheveux, coupé les **ongles**, **lavée toute** entière **tous** les jours à l'eau chaude et au savon … (84, my emphasis).

In general, La Soeur's speech is repetitive and overlapping, however here, the repeated words function as an affective rhythmic pulse that highlights the potential sound of the play and recalls the assemblage of the overlapped *ritournelle*. The repeated words, "tant," "lavé(e)," "brosse/brossé," "ongles," and "tout(e)/s" highlight the physicality of the words themselves, and their movement within the textual syntax. The ritual cleaning of La Gamine takes on a corporal violence not unlike what we see in the role of the father before La Gamine leaves to find Zucco.

Le Père also uses repetition to assert some sort of control on the family. His language lays melodically over the rhythmic base/bass laid by La Soeur. He describes beating La Mère in the past as a duty, an exercise that will assure her obedience:

> Le Père: Votre mère a caché la bière. Je vais la battre comme je le faisais jadis. Pourquoi ai-je arrêté un jour? J'avais le bras fatigué, mais j'aurais dû me forcer, faire de l'exercice, le faire faire par quelqu'un d'autre. J'aurais dû continuer comme autrefois: la battre tous les jours, à heures régulières. Mais voilà j'ai été négligeant, et maintenant elle me cache la bière, et je suis sûr que vous êtes complices. (*Il regarde sous la table*.) Il en restait cinq bouteilles. Je vous battrai cinq fois chacune si je ne les retrouve pas. (43)

Le Père and La Soeur use repetition and habit to construct their territories with a ritualized violence but do so differently. Each has a uniquely rhythmic *système musical*. La Soeur inflicts herself with sadness on a regular basis, and regularly and rigorously washed La Gamine; Le Père subjected his wife to an hourly beating, not in response to an action, but in anticipation. Their actions prove the proximity the *chez soi* has with the external chaos.

In the above citations, poetic sound reminds the reader of the play between violence and duty, as analyzed in the first chapter. The poetic *tâche* is once again linked in the text to the *tache de sang*, or blood stain. Similarly, Deleuze and Guattari link the *ritournelle* with a chaos-appeasing duty:

> Voilà que les forces du chaos sont tenues à l'extérieur autant qu'il est possible, et l'espace intérieur protège les forces germinatives d'une *tâche à remplir, d'une œuvre à faire*. Il y a toute une activité de sélection, d'élimination, d'extraction, pour que les forces intimes terrestres, les forces intérieures de la terre, ne soient pas submergées, qu'elles puissent résister, ou même qu'elles puissent emprunter quelque chose au chaos à travers le filtre ou le crible de l'espace tracé. Or les composantes vocales, sonores, sont très importantes: un mur du son, en tout cas un mur dont certaines briques sont sonores. (382, my emphasis)

Though the exercised violence, washing, and sadness of Le Père and La Soeur territorializes the text with violence, the sonorous melodic repetitions in the father's language attest to a more hopeful poeticism that mirrors Zucco's relationship to language, and to the transparent, but ever present poetic figures surrounding him. In his monologue about exercised violence Le Père says, "J'avais le bras **fatigué**, mais j'aurais dû me **forcer**, **faire** de l'exercice, le **faire faire** par quelqu'un d'autre" (43, my emphasis). The repeated "faire" and the rhythmic and melodic "f"

sound of “fatigué” “forcer” and “faire” function as a textual sigh, the potential sound his mouth would make as Le Père exerted his violent force, arms flailing. In this way the text performs the violence by making use of the potential sound of the written word not unlike the gestural and cruel language of Artaud’s *Theatre of Cruelty*.

III. D. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, sound in *Roberto Zucco* is both an instrument of cruelty and a counterbalance to the cruelty created. As we saw in the previous chapter with outlining the seams of the makeup of citations and allusions, the text is a recomposition of already composed utterances. Apart from being material elements of textual *tissage*, these utterances are actually useful as *briques sonores* that build on the potential sound of the text and performance’s interval. By looking at the construction of citations from within the text itself, it is possible to see how the performative elements of the text are activated by sound. In transposing the actions into narration by the witnesses, the semantic meaning of language is displaced to make room for the acoustic affective element that plays with the absence and presence of textual sound. Koltès thus draws attention to how the hollowness of stage speech can be counteracted and enhanced by sonic elements such as the sound of trembling or the contagious silence of witnessing a violent act.

In the final scenes we see how the coded citations can work in two different ways. For Zucco, they draw attention to the composition of the hero as material mythical monument. Simultaneously, for La Gamine, the use of citation affects a transfer from rhythm to harmonization. The musical element inherent in writing a score-like text produces a sensation that mimics the familiarity of returning home. This sensation’s equivalent is seen in the process of reading. In reading, the presence of violence unveils the poetic makeup of the play while

simultaneously counteracting it. The sensation of reading shows that the text's semantic meaning is replaced with an affective space in which action is not accomplished but retold. In playing with the *système musical*, diegetic sound and coded citations, Koltès is showing how the insincerity of theatrical speech can be unveiled while still producing powerful affective results.

IV. CHAPTER 3: THE DRAFT: REWRITING CONFLICT IN YASMINA REZA'S *LE DIEU DU CARNAGE*

The quintessential blockbuster dramaturge, Yasmina Reza understands the craft of intellectual accessibility in a consumer culture. Though she is currently the most frequently staged living French playwright, her oeuvre is notably readable, particularly accessible to a broad public in textual form. Salah El Gharbi reads Reza through the reception of her works, analyzing her "lisibilité" (14) and accessibility as markers of her success. Reza exploits the contrast between mass popularity and intellectual substance in her two most successful plays, *Art* (1994) and *Le Dieu du carnage* (2007). *Art*, which won Molière awards for Best Play, Best Productions, and Best Author had an incredibly successful run in Paris, London, and New York in its first year. Though many of her critics were disappointed with Reza's dramatic work over the next twelve years, wondering if *Art* was just an accidental success for an otherwise mediocre writer, Reza succeeded once again with her play *Le Dieu du carnage*, a single-set play centered around two couples and their intended civil meeting over clafoutis and coffee to discuss their eleven-year-old sons' fight in the park. This meeting, however, quickly transforms into a series of escalating verbal and physical conflicts, which demonstrates how Reza once again assumes the unique role of negotiating being a popular writer and intellectual force.[10] Each of Reza's plays highlights a different style, while containing a signature set of commonalities, such as the play

[10] I will refer to the play as *Carnage* at several points during this chapter, not to be confused with the 2011 film adaptation by Roman Polanski and Yasmina Reza.

between tragedy and comedy, the 90-minute playing time, and a focus on small everyday struggles that serve as points of access into a discussion of more significant conflicts.[11]

Though scholarship on Reza is limited, scholars such as Anne Ubersfeld, Alice Bouchetard, Salah El Gharbi, and Denis Guénoun have approached Reza's writing from a literary perspective in an attempt to discover what about Reza's writing has captivated audiences and caused her to be the only woman playwright to have won two Tony awards for Best Play. Focus on Reza's relationship to writing and orality has been highlighted by Ubersfeld, who maintains that Reza has created a new type of speech based on long monologues to silent observers onstage that likens a performative lecture. In 2005, even before beginning to write *Carnage,* in the years when her critics were questioning whether she was a one-hit wonder, Reza was deemed by Denis Guénoun to be a literary figure worthy of study. Guénoun wrote *Avez-vous lu Reza?* in an attempt to rethink "le nouveau" in modern dramatic writing. He uses Reza's oeuvre as an object of experience, a new way to think of writing for the theatre. Guénoun writes,

> L'œuvre de Yasmina Reza, pour moi, vaut comme l'un de ces objets. Ou plutôt son travail en cours, que le mot *œuvre* fige. En quel sens ces écrits m'ordonnent-ils de rénover mon équipement de lecture—d'expérience des textes, et d'entrée dans l'expérience dont ils témoignent? Le trait le plus visible est celui-ci: ils ne se laissent pas distribuer dans mon classement entre grand art et divertissement. (11)

Guénoun recognizes that an important component of the definition of *grand art* is associated with rumor, with difficulty and opacity, and with a lack of pleasure in the deciphering process.

[11] The award-winning play *Le Dieu du carnage* was adapted into English both for London and Broadway productions in the first year after publication and was adapted by Reza and Roman Polanski into the 2011 film, *Carnage*.

Instead of classifying Reza's oeuvre, Guénoun tries to discover what it is about her writing that resists classification and causes her audience to read differently (18).

Reza's theatrical oeuvre, therefore, has drawn attention to a self-referential textuality that mirrors the playwright's own relationship to language. Recently, Giguere has approached the analysis of Reza's oeuvre from a more theatrical standpoint as a response to the literary criticism Reza's plays have produced. Giguere defines the device that unifies Reza's oeuvre as the *breach* and produces a study that treats each play as a different example of the rupture of expectations. Though her analysis is thorough and effective, Giguere's focus on the production of language as a theatrical device and not a literary device in *Le Dieu du carnage* can be enhanced by looking at the emphasis on the writing process that structures orality, action, and conflict, and serves as a paradigm for the relationship between playwright and play.

In this chapter, I focus on the leitmotiv of the *draft* as a counterpoint to Giguere's breach to demonstrate that the point of convergence between the emphasis on the written word and dialogic conflict provides a condensed *mode d'emploi* for reading how Reza's performative style has evolved to unveil the play between textuality and orality inherent in theatrical writing. As in the previous two chapters, the definition of "performative" originates from J.L. Austin's 1962 *How To Do Things with Words.* I maintain that the most effective performative moments in this play hinge on language in the written form. Because most of the scholarship on Reza mentioned above focuses on plays published before *Le Dieu du carnage*, this article extends a literary analysis of Reza's most recent and widely staged play. Though Reza is first and foremost a playwright, her attention to the written word as a legitimate counterweight to the spoken word provides a productive bridge between the stage and performative writing, as seen in her emphasis on the writing process.

In this chapter, I analyze the presence of writing and re-writing in the spoken word of Reza's performances of *Le Dieu du carnage*. Amanda Giguere writes that *Le Dieu du carnage* is essentially about the failure of language, the breach, the rupture, and the collapse of communication. She compares it to previous plays in which the theme of the breach is more obvious: a rupture in time, space, or reality:

> Instead Reza has turned on her very building blocks—the words she uses to construct her plays—and what appears in *Carnage* is a breach of language. The characters exist in a world where language fails … Reza has built a world in which words are inadequate, sentences are slippery, and language fails to achieve progress. (121)

Though I find Giguere's thesis useful, analyzing the distinction between written and spoken language is crucial to understanding communication in the play. I argue that writing succeeds where the spoken word has fallen short and that the confrontational tone and dramatic tension throughout the play hinge on more than misunderstandings of speech. While the original conflict remains unresolved, language in *Carnage* is remarkably successful at igniting new conflict, and singular words are reiterated to become successful, self-referential objects of escalating provocations and retaliations. The characters read aloud, dictate journalistic drafts, manipulate and rewrite each other's speech so that in *Carnage*, the spoken word is uniquely built to highlight its successful counterpart in writing.

IV. A. THE DRAFT

Writing and rewriting in this play distinguishes itself from speech through the leitmotiv of the draft. I define the draft in *Le Dieu du carnage* in three distinct but overlapping ways, all

with a focus on the process or document of writing within the play. Firstly, the draft is an unfinished document that shows various stages of the writing process, by overlapping omissions, rewrites, and substitutions. Secondly, the draft is a body of words conscripted and stylized to be used as weapons in verbal combat. Finally, the draft is a transaction, a communicative proof of signature or bill of exchange. Reza emphasizes writing in order to both charge the written word with an ephemeral perlocutionary quality and highlight how the spoken word can mimic writing by causing a lasting resonance, seen in the very opening discussion of the word "armé" (10).

The play's opening words are read aloud, drawing attention to the composition of recreating a past act of violence through written narrative. The beginning of the play finds the two couples (Annette and Alain Reille and Véronique and Michel Houllié) seated across from each other in the Houllié's living room. They are in the process of listening to Véronique write up a declaration that resembles a police report, or insurance claim:

> Véronique: Donc notre déclaration… Vous ferez la vôtre de votre côté… "Le 3 novembre, à dix-sept heures trente, au square de l'Aspirant-Dunant, à la suite d'une altercation verbale, Ferdinand Reille, onze ans, armé d'un bâton, a frappé au visage notre fils Bruno Houllié. Les conséquences de cet acte sont, outre la tuméfaction de la lèvre supérieure, une brisure des deux incisives, avec atteinte du nerf de l'incisive droite." (10)

The declaration itself recognizes that words are the instigators of the act of violence: "à la suite d'une altercation verbale" (10), which escalates into an act of brutality, resulting in permanent damage to Bruno's mouth. The mouth remains a focal point throughout the play—eating, drinking, vomiting, and insults bring us back to the original instigating off-stage event of the boys' fight. However, the mouth as producer of a spontaneous idea is anticipated by writing at

several key moments in the play. Like Giguere, Alice Bouchetard focuses on speech in the play, recognizing that the rhythm of Reza's dialogue mirrors the imperfections of the improvised spoken word: a string of unfinished thoughts, fragments, interruptions, and substitutions:

> Yasmina Reza traite la langue comme un matériau vivant et met en scène une langue parlée qui semble parfois s'improviser sur scène. Les personnages s'interrompent, cherchent leurs mots, se reprennent, corrigent au fur et à mesure leurs propos. (37)

However, the written document Véronique is reading is far from improvised, it is instead a previously composed statement that scaffolds the characters' discourse. This engagement between written and spoken language highlights how language can never produce a finished form free of possible edits, omissions, and rewrites, and yet remains a successful and irreversible communicative transaction. The performed written utterance of *armé* produces a sincere and spontaneous response from the Reille and removes what Austin calls the "hollowness of theatrical performatives" (22). For the Reille, the word *armé* produces a stronger reaction because it is being drafted into the document Véronique is writing, and thus claims a more permanent position in the dialogue.

Writing in *Carnage* is drafted from different directions, forever deferring a finished product or sole contributor. As Véronique is reading, Alain Reille interrupts to take issue with her choice of the word "armé" (10). The Reille's last name already contains the sonic allusion to the third person singular of the verb *rayer*, which means to scratch out, or draw a line through. This reminds the reader of the physical process of rewriting, but also contains the violent teeth-grating sound of a *disque rayé* or scratched disc, stuck on the same dissonant chord and playing in a loop. Alain is the character who is most concerned with word choice, at several times

throughout the play focusing on one particular word, taking it up again, repeating it in order to draw attention to the word's effect.

In the first scene, Alain simply repeats the word as a question, lifting it out of the drafted declaration. Véronique immediately understands that Alain has a problem with the violent objective the word *armé* contains.

> Véronique: Armé? Vous n'aimez pas "armé," qu'est-ce qu'on met Michel, muni, doté, muni d'un bâton, ça va?
>
> Alain: Muni oui.
>
> Michel: Muni d'un bâton.
>
> Véronique: (*corrigeant*). Muni … (10)

In taking issue with Véronique's choice of word, Alain is inserting himself into the writing process and destabilizing the permanence of the written word. Drafting calls into question word choice, syntax, style, and omission, but also promotes charging words with the ability to replace actions. Though we do not know why Véronique is writing up the declaration, (is it for her own records, is the Houllié family going to press charges?) Alain recognizes the power a single word can contain and the play becomes more about how the event is rewritten than about resolving the original conflict.

Alain also begins by reading something aloud, though it is to an unseen interlocutor, the person he is speaking to on his phone, a colleague named Maurice:

> Alain: Oui Maurice, merci de me rappeler. Bon, dans *Les Echos* de ce matin, je vous le lis… : "Selon une étude publiée dans la revue britannique *Lancet* et reprise hier dans le *F.T.*, deux chercheurs australiens auraient mis au jour les

> effets neurologique de l'Antril, antihypertenseur des laboratoires Verenz-Pharma, allant de la baisse d'audition à l'ataxie." (15)

Away from the office, Alain has to delegate the actual writing of the statement to his colleagues who call him periodically to read him their drafts. He then becomes the proofreader, orally drafting by dictating over the phone. He says,

> Vas-y…Oui…Pas "procédé". "Manœuvre". Une manœuvre, qui intervient à quinze jours de la reddition des comptes etc. … Une étude entre guillemets! Tu mets étude entre guillemets… Tu n'as qu'à me citer: "Il s'agit d'une lamentable tentative de manipulation du cours … du cours et de déstabilisation de mon client", affirme maître Reille, avocat de la société Verenz-Pharma. … A.F.P. Reuter, presse généraliste, pressée spécialisée, tutti frutti… (*raccroche*). (94-5)

Alain's phone conversation punctuates the stage dialogue throughout the play. Though he is not physically producing a written text, his attention to how the words will be printed, from speechmarks to his own signature are essential parts of the writing process. It is both realistic and symbolic that the journal that published the study was *Les Echos*, emphasizing the way language works in the play. Writing becomes re-writing, echoing the replacement and substitutions of words. However, more importantly, the idea of the echo returns at several points throughout the play, causing a way to link the written and the spoken word. Both contain an affective resonance that echoes the original shock. The echo becomes the bridge between spoken and written language and both contain an affective resonance that echoes the original shock, just as *armé* cannot be entirely replaced by *muni*. As *armé* echoes throughout the dialogue, both the written and spoken word contain a resonance of the words that are replaced.

Communication in *Carnage* succeeds through a complex styling of the draft process—creating a particular signature for each character that makes use of precision, omission, manipulation, and reflection. Bouchetard writes that each character in Reza's writing uses a signature style in order to define his/her own discourse. She writes, "Une constante se dessine dans l'expression des personnages: la volonté de précision. L'écriture joue ici sur le mélange des niveaux de langue, tour à tour quotidien, lyrique, familier, précieux, grossier" (17). Alain's use of precision is his own style of manipulating previously composed language. The article published in *Les Echos* that morning is disastrous for his client, and could bring serious consequences for his firm and for him as well. His signature depends on manipulating language to remove the authority of the original published statement. He must question motive, timing, and scientific process in order to insert even the seed of a doubt in the readership. Feeling helpless, he must speak his words, and hear them read, as opposed to seeing them drafted before him.

In Véronique's signature, language becomes objectified as a bridge between writing and speaking. Véronique sees language as an object—a product of careful composition. Throughout the play she emphasizes print as a necessary form that records and enhances the value of a memory. Her relationship to language hinges on how effectively the physical representation of communication in print can stand in for action. Véronique demonstrates how the draft evolves to become a conscription of language. She strives to manipulate perpetuity into the oral communication of the afternoon, and gives value to successful distribution and readership in her career as a writer and bookseller. Her husband Michel's speech is clumsy and lacks reflection but serves as a foil to Véronique by highlighting the value of each individual part necessary to compose a working apparatus. Véronique's attention to the products of language is paralleled by

Michel's profession selling "de la quincaillerie d'ameublement" and they become allies through their shared view of the importance of life's tools (20). As a writer, Véronique's attention to language as an object causes her to attempt to use writing not only to record history, but also to conscript it to achieve progress. As Michel explains to the Reille:

> Michel: Moi je suis grossiste en articles ménagers, Véronique est écrivain, et travaille mi-temps dans une librairie d'art et d'histoire.
>
> Annette: Ecrivain?
>
> Véronique: J'ai participé à un ouvrage collectif sur la civilisation sabéenne, à partir des fouilles reprises à la fin du conflit entre Ethiopie et l'Erythrée. Et à présent, je sors en janvier un livre sur la tragédie du Darfour. (16)

Véronique is neither a stranger to the draft, nor to conflict. She demonstrates a fascination with conflict and by writing about it she is putting boots to the ground in the only way possible to her. The document she drafts to reenact the boys' playground fight is a condensed and more intimate version of the books she publishes. Eager to use her writing to advance a cause, Véronique continues returning to the words in her statement. Giguere writes, "instead of focusing on the purpose of the written statement, Véronique seems more concerned with turning the boys' fight into a teachable moment" (122). Aware that the draft is not a resolution to the conflict, but only an unstable response, Véronique uses writing—both in her occupation and in this situation as a mother recording violence inflicted on her son—to counteract a feeling of helplessness and distance. As Michel says mockingly: "Elle se déploie pour la paix et la stabilité du monde" (100). Her words become conscripted to act in the absence of action.

Both Véronique and Alain emphasize the minute parts of speech in their drafts, but to very different ends. Language, for Véronique, contains an almost sacred power that rivals the

brutality of violence, or the calm of pacification. However, though she tries to use her writing to solidify her civility and mask of politeness, her choice of words ends up causing the façade to come crumbling down around her. Giguere considers Véronique's choice of the word *armé* as the first veiled attack that escapes from under her mask of social niceties. Giguere writes that each of the characters returns to the offstage "inciting incident" of the playground fight to progressively reveal more of their individual savagery (118). Véronique has invited the parents of the boy who attacked her son with a stick into her home to make peace because she believes as she says, " On ne gagne rien à s'installer dans une logique passionnelle … il existe encore un art de vivre ensemble, non?" (11). However, from the very beginning, the choice of the word *armé* sets in motion the building of the rupture in civility that occurs throughout the play. Véronique writing, then uttering the word *armé* is just as much of an instigator as the original act of violence that occurred offstage between the two 11-year-old boys. Though she removes and replaces the word *armé* with *muni*, the original intention has been inscribed into the play's discourse. Having written and then spoken the word has left a scar on the future proceedings of the afternoon. Like the printed word, the spoken word has been inscribed with a textual memory, which continues to resonate throughout the play. As the conflict rises, Alain brings the disagreement back to that original word:

> Véronique: Il n'y a pas d'origine. Il y a un enfant de onze ans qui frappe. Avec un bâton.
>
> Alain: Armé d'un bâton.
>
> Michel: Nous avons retiré ce mot.
>
> Alain: Vous l'avez retiré parce que nous avons émis une objection.

> Michel: Nous l'avons retiré sans discuter.
>
> Alain: Un mot qui exclut délibérément l'erreur, la maladresse, qui exclut l'enfance. (69)

In her drafted declaration, Véronique emphasizes the consequence of the inciting incident, the damage done to her son's mouth. He has lost two teeth, and in the process, his nerves were exposed, causing potentially permanent damage. Bruno's damage is mirrored in the exposed nerves of the Reille who find the idea of the pre-meditated intention in Ferdinand's act of brutality hard to swallow. Just as the collision of the stick to the mouth causes lasting pain in Bruno, Véronique's chosen word causes permanent damage to the potential civility of the relationship between the two families.

Giguere identifies the discussion around the word *armé* as the moment Reza "inserts a tiny rupture in the fabric of the play," stating that it is here "the breach emerges as a seedling as the audience witnesses the first failure of language" (125). However, the focus on how the action is recreated in the written narrative demonstrates Véronique's desire to trigger a feeling of guilt—and in that she is successful. The word choice does indicate a breach in civility, but not in language. Giguere's suggestion that the audience be asked to "reevaluate the relationship between language and truth" (125) is secondary to Reza drawing attention to how an event can be experienced differently through the rewriting process, stressing style, word choice, substitution, and omission. Continually returning to her written version of the instigating event, Véronique wants the Reille to feel badly about their son's action, more than she wants to simply record the event. Even when she is not physically writing, her choice of words leaves its mark in the discourse of the play. In the same way that she chose *armé* in her statement, she later uses the word *défiguré* to describe her son's face, this time standing by her chosen word.

> Véronique: Et Ferdinand qu'est-ce qu'il dit? Comment il vit la situation?
>
> Annette: Il ne parle pas beaucoup. Il est désemparé je crois.
>
> Véronique: Il **réalise** qu'il a **défiguré** son camarade?
>
> Alain: Non. Non, il ne **réalise** pas qu'il a **défiguré** son camarade.
>
> Annette: Mais pourquoi tu dis ça? Ferdinand **réalise** bien sûr!
>
> Alain: Il **réalise** qu'il a eu un comportement brutal, il ne **réalise** pas qu'il a **défiguré** son camarade.
>
> Véronique: Vous n'aimez pas le mot, mais le mot est malheureusement juste.
>
> Alain: Mon fils n'a pas **défiguré** votre fils.
>
> Véronique: Votre fils a **défiguré** notre fils. Revenez ici à cinq heures, vous verrez sa bouche et ses dents. (27-8, my emphasis)

Reza has stacked and repeated the dialogue to the point of being absurd and childlike. Not only are single words repeated (*défiguré, réalise(r)*)—entire phrases are parroted back and forth between Alain and Véronique. This time instead of producing an actual written document, the repetition of the performed utterance uses orality to imitate the permanence of print. Mimicking the way children speak on the playground, Alain quotes Véronique's exact phrase several times, in order to cause her to hear the absurdity in her word choice, simultaneously charging the words *défiguré, réalise(r)* with a combative force.

In emphasizing the draft of writing, Reza is showing how the written word contains a performative ephemerality that imitates the potential shock and cruelty of the performed utterance, yet causes a lasting resonance in future dialogue. In contrast to spontaneous improvisation, the notion of the draft requires reflection, oftentimes providing a filter for the choice of words, or unveiling the cruelty resonant in each choice. Each word in the written draft

remains easily changed or rewritten and follows the rhythm and cadence of the improvised spoken word, yet it cannot disappear, causing it to be fixed into the play's discourse in a way that imitates print. Véronique has brought the couples together to conduct a civil response to the savagery that happened on the playground, yet does not anticipate the actual power language contains.

Though Véronique is presented as wanting to solve the world's problems, she is also attached to the production and transmission of the textual products as a bookseller. The opening stage directions make direct reference to the functionality of the books as props that parallels Michel's profession selling "[s]errures, poignées de porte, cuivre à souder, et des articles de ménage, casseroles, poêles..." (20). Words become highlighted in their materiality through the Houllié's professions emphasized by the stage props in their living room. Reza writes: "*Un salon. Pas de réalisme. Pas d'éléments inutiles*" (7). The reader immediately knows that the objects on the table serve a purpose: "*Au centre, une table basse, couverte de livres d'art*." At first the books are used as an icebreaker, though the language they elicit from the women comes out in one-word spurts. Trying to make conversation while her husband talks rudely on the phone, Annette leafs through the books:

> Annette: J'adore Bacon aussi.
>
> Véronique: Ah oui, Bacon.
>
> Annette: (*tournant les pages*)… Cruauté et splendeur.
>
> Véronique: Chaos. Equilibre.
>
> Annette: Oui. (35)

The books elicit unfinished thoughts, ejections of clichéd one-word commentary. The images in the art books, and the words they elicit, mirror the building tension in the room and the

breakdown of civility. The four adults are positioned around the table and Annette's nervous nausea eventually builds through the scene until she cannot control it anymore. When she vomits, it comes out as a violent projectile all over the books on the coffee table: "*Annette vomit violemment. Une gerbe brutale et catastrophique qu'Alain reçoit pour partie. Les livres d'art sur la table basse sont également éclaboussés*" (53). The words in the stage directions repeat the women's interpretive lexicon as though their conversation had continued: "brutale, catastrophique" (53). Though Véronique pretends to be sympathetic to Annette feeling sick, she is mostly horror-struck at the state of her vomit-covered books, emphasizing the importance of the text's presence over the performative body.

While Annette and Alain clean up in the bathroom, Véronique and Michel frantically try to clean off the books, drench them in expensive perfume, and then dry them so the pages do not get wrinkled. The emphasis on the physicality of the books themselves dominates the scene and the value Véronique places in them is demonstrated by her attempt to salvage the books with Michel.

> Véronique: Ça va gondoler.
>
> Michel: On peut donner un coup de séchoir et aplatir avec d'autres livres par-dessus. Ou repasser comme avec les billets.
>
> Véronique: Oh là là là…
>
> Annette: Je vous le rachèterai.
>
> Véronique: Il est introuvable! Il est épuisé depuis longtemps!
>
> Annette: Je suis navrée …
>
> Véronique: C'est une réédition qui a plus de vingt ans du catalogue de l'exposition de 53 à Londres! (56-7)

The books become like the play's currency, physical representations of value in economic transactions. The books on the coffee table are art books, collections of images, but the textual artifacts have taken on the proper nouns of well-known family members, "Le Foujita," "Les Dolganes," "Le Kokoshka," and Reza uses them as a foundation for her stage décor (60). Véronique and Michel spend longer trying to salvage the books than they spend trying to assure that Annette is feeling better, or whether Alain has something clean to wear. Michel provides the action to accompany Véronique's words, adding power to her statements. Though he is apathetic and ridiculous, he is allied with his wife in the materiality of language and they work together to rectify the damage in way that is impossible when trying to pacify the Reille: "Michel: Lisse bien, lisse bien … Tourne la page. Tends-la, tends-la bien" (62).

For both Véronique and Michel, the books' value is representational—directly related to an affective memory. In contrast to mass-produced books, these are more like works of art or spoken words, irreplaceable and irreproducible. The pages are compared to physical money, as manipulable as bills: "ou repasser comme avec les billets" (57). Annette, who is a "conseillère en gestion de patrimoine" (18) is an expert in manipulating and securing fortunes, however she is unable to understand the value Véronique places in these coffee table books. Instead of containing text, they are filled with images, playing with the expression "une image vaut mieux qu'un long discours" and the rapport between interpretation, social status, and aesthetic taste. Throughout the play words contain different values, as displayed in how the four characters choose to rewrite the playground fight, not in how they try to resolve it. The coffee table books serve as a reminder that language is effective in the play because of the value singular words are given to those speaking them. The reproduced paintings elicit different reactions from the two women that ultimately contribute to their signature styles throughout the play. Alluding to her

blockbuster play from 1994, *Art*, Reza is again drawing attention to how the value we place in objects is a subjective process, yet contains the power to produce real societal shifts. In *Art*, Serge has bought a white painting for 200,000 francs, and the price he paid remains the driving force of the dialogue throughout the play. In *Carnage*, the intention behind a chosen word charges it with power while simultaneously fracturing its meaning. The books' value becomes a fluctuating subjective measurement. Here instead of a painting, the coffee table books are representations of already produced works, they are not the works themselves. They become reprinted indications of the commodification of art.

Annette's signature is seen primarily through her speech and body language, becoming apparent after she has had time to be able to reflect upon the degradation of civility that has made her nauseous. Annette recognizes the effort Véronique has gone to, and at first refuses to continue the aggression, praising the Houllié for their graciousness: "Annette: … Si Bruno avait cassé deux dents à Ferdinand, est-ce qu'on n'aurait pas eu Alain et moi une reaction plus épidermique? …" (27). Annette believes her hypothetical reaction would have been quicker to anger and less cordial. Her use of the word "épidermique" refers to the body and its signs, the epidermal flush of anger or cold sweat of anxiety. However, she is also alluding to the surface masks and niceties that she finds impossible to stomach. Once she has vomited and stripped herself of her mask, Annette remains huddled over the *cuvette* vomiting bile, unable to maintain her composure or politeness.

Annette's vomit becomes a refrain throughout the play as the symbol for what links interpreting meaning to affective reaction. At the beginning, Annette is able, through societal filtering, to control which words she utters. However, she cannot control her feeling of nausea, triggered by anxiety, guilt, tension, and the build up of unspoken thoughts. Her vomit brings her

into the dialogue, acting as a symbol for reading (ingesting, digesting) and speaking (expelling). In ruminating meaning, she must ingest the words spoken to her, digest them, and expel a response. Mirroring the eating of the clafoutis Véronique has baked, Annette's body takes over the process of dialogue in a Rabelaisian exaggeration. When her body can no longer hold back, it forces Annette to insert herself into the dialogue by means of the mouth. Unable to articulate her true feelings in words, her body provides the opportunity with vomit, charging speech with object (and abject) physicality. Vomiting provides the opportunity for Annette to express herself.

For both Annette and Alain, the stylistic reflection at the center of the drafting process is seen in how they discover value in the spoken word. While cleaning herself up in the bathroom, Annette has had time to think about their children's fight. She comes back and says,

> Annette: … Je me suis **dit** une chose dans la salle de bain…
>
> Véronique: Oui?
>
> Annette: Nous sommes peut-être trop vite passés sur… Enfin je veux **dire**…
>
> Michel: **Dites**, **dites** Annette.
>
> Annette: L'insulte aussi est une agression. (65, my emphasis)

The repetition of the word "dire, dit, dites" is not an accident in her revelation. Annette, having stayed apologetically silent on the subject of her son's aggression, reveals that she does not believe he is to blame for the altercation. Annette states what has come to the forefront of her thought, namely that Bruno calling her son "une balance" (66) is the reason Ferdinand hit back, which fires up the conversation between the four adults once again. It is here that Annette strips off her mask of false pleasantness and begins voicing her true cruel thoughts. Mirroring the previous scene in which she vomited, Annette begins to vomit words, each statement more shocking than the last:

Annette: Quoi Annette? (À Michel.) Vous pensez que mon fils est une balance?

Michel: Je ne pense rien du tout.

Annette: Alors si vous ne pensez rien, ne dites rien. Ne faites pas ces réflexions insinuantes.

Véronique: Annette, gardons notre calme. Michel et moi nous efforçons d'être conciliants, et modérés…

Annette: Pas si modérés.

Véronique: Ah bon? Pourquoi?

Annette: Modérés en surface.

Alain: Toutou, il faut vraiment que j'y aille…

Annette: Sois lâche, vas-y. (67)

Annette's time in the bathroom away from the group afforded her the possibility to reflect on the subject of the boys' fight. Having had time to collect her thoughts before she speaks, choose her words, and structure her utterance, her reflective oral drafting process produces a surprising, improvisatory, and sharp spoken style. She recognizes that her speech is a result of a thought process and the strength of an opinion that needs to be voiced. This realization causes her to use language as a weapon for aggression. This realization causes her to lose all patience with Michel's apathy, and with his offhand, undrafted style of speech. From this point on, Annette does not hesitate to make her voice heard and uses it as a tool for aggression.

Both written and spoken words have representatives among the stage props. The coffee table books are fixed objects in the Houllié's home, however, their presence and physicality highlight the portability of the written word and provide a physical representation of the value Véronique places in print. Contrasting the incident with the textual object of the books, Alain's

portable becomes the representative object of the spoken word. After the vomiting incident, the Reille stay with the Houllié even though Annette is continually dry-heaving into a bucket. Annette's nausea prevents her from escaping the cause if it. Alain is on his phone again, still drafting the response to the *Echos* article.

> Annette: Je vis ça du matin au soir, du matin au soir il est accroché à ce portable! Nous avons une vie hachée par le portable.
>
> Alain: Heu…Une seconde… (*couvrant le téléphone*)… Annette, c'est très important.
>
> Annette: C'est toujours très important. Ce qui se passe à distance est toujours plus important. (94)

As the conversation heats up, the dialogue mirrors Annette's "vie hachée" by the *portable* (94). Alain's conversation punctuates the stage dialogue serving as a climactic counterpoint that builds throughout the scene. Though Alain is talking to someone on the phone, he remains a part of the stage dialogue, still trying to control Annette and overlapping his responses to work in both conversations. His ability to pass between conversations is uniquely because of his phone, whose presence becomes a catalyst linking action with language, at the hand of Annette.

> Alain: Vigilance…Oui…Annette, c'est absurde de boire dans ton état…
>
> Annette: Quel état? Au contraire.
>
> Alain: C'est intéressant cette notion… (*portable*)…Oui, non, aucune interview avant la diffusion du communiqué…
>
> Véronique: Monsieur, je vous somme d'interrompre cette conversation éprouvante!

> Alain: … Surtout pas… Les actionnaires s'en foutront... Rappelle-lui la souveraineté des actionnaires…
>
> *Annette se dirige vers Alain, lui arrache le portable et… après avoir brièvement cherché où le mettre…le plonge dans le vase de tulipes.* (105)

Having realized in the bathroom that words and violence are equalized, Annette now takes silent action against the object of her irritation, the *portable*. In doing so, she deprives Alain of the possibility of dictating his draft over the phone. The realism of the stage objects acts more like an acoustic actor in the play—the surroundings and props become mere objects to bounce words off of, or to engulf a tense silence. Here the role of silence is overturned by the recognition of the objectified and portable language. The objects on stage are featured in the dialogue in the same way the objects incorporate the dialogue.

Each character uses citation as a destabilizing mockery, a way of echoing words in order to rob them of their authority. In focusing on the parts of speech themselves each character undermines the stylistic signature of the other. Even the eloquence of Alain's speech containing the origins of the title of the play is broken into its nuts and bolts, its meaning lost on the pettiness of how Alain pronounces the names of the weapons. In an example of Ubersfeld's recognition of Reza's *quasi-monologue*, Alain speaks at length to his silent audience:

> Alain: Véronique, moi je crois au dieu du carnage. C'est le seul qui gouverne, sans partage, depuis la nuit des temps. Vous vous intéressez à l'Afrique n'est-ce pas … Il se trouve que je reviens du Congo, voyez-vous. Là-bas, des gosses sont entraînés à tuer à l'âge de huit ans. Dans leur vie d'enfant, ils peuvent tuer des centaines de gens, à la machette, au twelve, au kalachnikov, au grenade launcher,

> alors comprenez que lorsque mon fils casse une dent, même deux, à un camarade avec une tige de bambou, square de l'Aspirant-Dunant, je sois moins disposé que vous à l'effroi et à l'indignation.
>
> Véronique: Vous avez tort.
>
> Annette: (*accentuant l'accent anglais*). Grenade launcher !...
>
> Alain: Oui, c'est comme ça que ça s'appelle. (98-9)

In immediately picking apart his speech and ridiculing his pronunciation, Annette counteracts Alain's eloquence but proves his belief in the god of carnage. Despite their disagreement, Annette and Alain both realize that weapons and words are interchangeable, and they become unified in their use of them.

IV. B. MUSIC, SOUND, CITATION, AND NAMES

The leitmotiv of the draft provides insight into how written language engages with speech on an acoustic level, causing speech to contain a performative element that likens a contract. Because of the emphasis on re-writing, echo, and resonance in the play, reference to sound contains a quality of citation yet undermines a universal meaning. In short, references to sound in *Carnage* are subjective markers of a language that has evolved between the characters on an intimate, affective level. At several points in the play, the power of the text is weakened by a transcribed sonic element that must rely on interpretation on stage. In this way, analysis of the presence of sound may be seen as a way of counteracting the informative presence of writing and text. However, sonic and musical citations remain structured in a way that highlights how language is put together as a subjective process, likening the signature in the first section. For instance, reference to music becomes another way of objectifying language in *Le Dieu du carnage*. Just

like the coffee table books that are named by their titles as though they were family members, the characters' intimate pet names are revealed as indications of the stripping off of social masks, and the need to revert to familiarity to combat the feeling of tension and chaos. Pet names become a pushback response of a character's signature, both a way of destabilizing chaos and undermining authority in each couple.

Highlighting Reza's own drafting process, each character's name contains a specific signification that enhances the focus on the mechanisms that allow for the production of language. Bouchetard writes that Reza's name choices signify a general reference to a bourgeoisie from Mitteleuropa. The characters' names incorporate their objectified counterparts. However, names in *Carnage* provide another important correlation between the spoken and written word. Though Reza alludes to music and melody in other works, the musical reference in Alain's pet name for Annette demonstrates how musical citation in *Carnage* is inherently related to language. As Bouchetard notices in other works, Reza's attention to the naming of her characters is not haphazard: "On remarque que les noms évoquant la Mitteleuropa sont empreints d'une certaine poésie; ils font souvent écho à des patronymes de musiciens originaires de cette région" (19).[12]

Because of her attention to musical references in previous works, it is important not to overlook the intervals between music and language in *Carnage*. Barbedette discusses the presence of music in Reza's writings as perplexing because it does not contribute to defining her as a musical writer. Though she published her article before *Le Dieu du carnage* debuted,

[12] Bouchetard recognizes the names of legendary violinists such as Nathan Milstein, Leopold Auer, Jasha Heifetz, and Itzhak Perlman in the synthesis of names of Reza's characters Nathan Weinberg, Avner Milstein, Samuel Perlman, and the original title for *Pique-nique de Lulu Kreutz*: *Jasha*.

Barbedette's idea of citation can be seen on a heightened level in *Carnage*. Barbedette looks at how Reza uses musical citation as a model for her use of citation in general, in order to discover the importance of the *entre guillemets* (62):

> Yasmina Reza parle peu de la musique. Elle cite le nom d'œuvres, évoque l'apprentissage de l'instrument, met en scène magnétophone, autoradio, pochette et livret de disques. Pas plus que les guillemets qui l'enserreraient, la musique ne souffre l'approximation ou la généralisation. La référence exacte est toujours glissée, avec le déséquilibre particulier que lui confère un souhait d'allègement de la part de celle qui en connaît l'amplitude, qui parle ainsi de l'opus 57 plutôt de que l'Appassionata. On se fait à la petite musique des chiffres. (62)

Unlike her previous works, classical music is absent from the dialogue, replaced by references to popular music. Reza's musical references in *Carnage* bring up a more intimate relationship from outside the theatrical space—from Michel's mother and her relationship with her doctor, to the married couples' pet names for each other. She uses citation to enhance the irony of the proper name. In a reference to sound and to the objectification of language, Michel's mother's doctor is named Dr. Perolo, which is also the name of a well-known brand of "robinetterie industrielle."[13] Michel is ironically linked to his mother's doctor since he is specialized in the sale of household appliances, fixtures, faucets, and toilet flushing systems:

> Michel: Je vends des casseroles je vous l'ai dit.
>
> Alain: Et des poignées de porte.
>
> Michel: Et des mécanismes de WC. Des tas d'autres choses encore.
>
> Alain: Ah des mécanismes de WC. J'aime bien ça. Ça m'intéresse.

[13] www.perolo.com

Annette: Alain.

Alain: Ça m'intéresse. Le mécanisme de WC m'intéresse.

Michel: Pourquoi pas.

Alain: Vous en avez combien de sortes?

Michel: Il y a deux systèmes. A poussoir ou à tirette.

Alain: Ah oui.

Michel: Ça dépend de l'alimentation.

Alain: … Vous avez l'air très compétant. (47)

Though Alain makes obvious fun of Michel, pretending to be interested in the workings of a toilet flusher, Michel continues to use his false interest as pretence to talk about what interests him. It is important to note that they repeat "WC," instead of "toilettes" linking the idea of flushing mechanism to the letters, the smallest parts of language, and the parts representing the acronym for Water Closet. In all the other examples of the bathroom, the characters reference "les toilettes" as being a place to escape the stage, a place of composure. Though Michel is specialized in home fixings, the brand Perolo is specialized in the disposal of hazardous waste using tanks and tankers. This allusion both widens the scope and signification of the dialogue, and alludes to how small and intimate of a space the actors are working in. What is happening at a distance—the drafting of the document at the law firm, and Michel's mother's conversation with her doctor—are injected into the stage dialogue by way of the telephone.

In each of the couple's intimate pet names, musical citation takes the smallest nuts and bolts of language and strips them of universality. Instead sounds are reused to trigger affective memories specific to each relationship. Alain's pet name for his wife comes out when she becomes physically ill. As a marker of concern, he puts his phone down for a minute to attend to

her saying, “Regarde un point fixe. Regarde un point fixe, toutou” (52). Toutou, a child’s word for puppy, also signifies the name given by a master to his obedient pet. Later, Michel and Véronique make fun of the name *toutou* as they try to salvage the books.

> Michel: Quel merdeux. Comment il l’appelle?!...
>
> Véronique: Toutou.
>
> Michel: Ah oui, toutou!
>
> Véronique: Toutou! (*il rient tous les deux*). (61)

Alain returns, and having heard them make fun of his name for Annette, feigns insult. Véronique and Michel, having been put in a better mood in the communal laughter at their guests, offer an olive branch in revealing their own intimate names for each other, “Darjeeling” (63). In one of the rare moments of alleged pleasantries, the two men reveal the origins of their names. Toutou is a citation from a song, and Darjeeling a reference to the tea, and also to the Houllié’s honeymoon in India.

> Michel: Et d’où ça vient toutou?
>
> Alain: D’une chanson de Paolo Conte qui fait wa, wa, wa.
>
> Michel: Je la connais! Je la connais! (*Chantonne*.) Wa, wa, wa!... Toutou! Ha! ha!... Et nous c’est une variation de Darling, après un voyage de noces en Inde. C’est con! (63)

Having taken the sound of “toutou” from the refrain of *Via con me* by Paolo Conte “chips, chips, chips, da ti du di du du du du,” Reza does not try to transcribe the Italian or English words or actual sounds but instead appropriates it to charge it with additional meaning: the sparse “wa wa wa” leaves all interpretation up to the actor who performs the line and gives no indication of the actual melody of the refrain. Annette’s name comes from a scat-singing refrain, two meaningless

musical sounds strung together rewritten to assign a person with a label: a true pet name. This type of citation is most interesting when one looks at how Reza emphasizes the inherent qualities in the minute parts of speech. From *armé* and *défiguré,* the reader is asked to focus at a more microscopic level on the building blocks of language, the sounds themselves. Affective memory is an essential part of the inscription process of the pet names in *Carnage* and both nicknames bring up a tender moment in the couples' pasts, from the moment they became united. The unification process of marriage is compared and contrasted with the unification process of the two couples coming together to share in a linguistic retelling of a declaration of violence.

Marriage becomes both a unification and catalyst throughout the play. From the beginning, the notion of contract structures the play, and each of the couples move through moments and revelations that point to a rupture of contract. Though Bouchetard says nothing more about the chosen names in *Carnage* than that they are typical generational and bourgeois Parisian names, it is important to note that Reza is even playing with the objectification of language in her choice of surnames, the shared names of the married couples. The Houllié have invited the Reille into their home, to try to unite with them in a common understanding of what happened between their two children. Véronique remains a driving force, an underlying energy motivating the movements of the conversation throughout the play. The sound of Houllié alludes to a combination of "houille" or a type of coal and the sonic question "*où lier*."[14] Together Véronique and Michel are the ones who attempt unification, but cannot find what (or where: *où*) will unite (*lier*) the two couples. Véronique's seemingly selfless and mature gesture of inviting

[14] The term "houille" is the French equivalent to the Walloon *hoye*. In the province of Liège, the word goes back to the 6th century. According to Jean Haust, the word "hoye" existed before the discovery of this certain type of coal and meant instead "fragment, éclat, motte" in Liègois Walloon. With the discovery of coal, "hoye" began being used to describe pieces of coal. (24)

the parents of the boy who brutalized her son into her home to smooth things over fails from the moment the play begins. The moves between tension and release, dissonance and consonance mirror the roadmap of Véronique trying desperately to find where and what could unite the two families, the essential signification continually referenced in her last name.

As I wrote earlier, Reza also makes use of affective memory in naming the Reille (*rayer/rayé*). Alain's signature style is the repetition of the others' words to mock and mimic them as we saw in the exchange about the word *défiguré, muni*, and *volontairement*:

> Alain : … Mon fils blesse un autre enfant…
>
> Véronique : Volontairement.
>
> Alain : Vous voyez, c'est ce genre de remarque qui me raidit. **Volontairement**, nous le savons. (42, my emphasis)

Once again, Alain's focus on the most performative word in the sentence precedes a possible continuing discussion of the content of the entire sentence.

Because of the reason for their meeting, each of the couples is presented in a way that is far from flattering. Their marital relationships, like the "contract" that brought the two couples together, are strained and put on display, as though the conflict was contagious. As the play progresses, marriage and family life are seen as the source of the conflict, that which links the tension to violence. Putting aside his apathy, Michel finally makes a strong statement, "Moi je dis, le couple, la plus terrible épreuve que Dieu puisse nous infliger … Le couple, et la vie de famille" (90). In the conversation about marriage, the two couples' speech is essentialized like their surnames. Like a broken record, Annette says, "On se fiche de leur vie conjugale. On est là pour régler un problème d'enfants, on se fiche de leur vie conjugale" (91). The direction of pacification is changed to try to uncover the source of the conflict in the children. Michel

recognizes that home life and social life collide in the children's absorption of marital tension, finding *où lier* the violence.

> Michel: C'est lié! Bien sûr que c'est lié! … Les enfants absorbent notre vie, et la désagrègent. Les enfants nous entraînent au désastre, c'est la loi. Quand tu vois les couple qui s'embarquent en riant dans le matrimonial, tu te dis ils ne savent pas, ils ne savent rien les pauvres, ils sont contents … Les dix, quinze ans qui nous restent de bons avant le cancer ou le stroke, tu vas te faire chier avec un môme? (92)

Véronique is far from shocked by his broadly despicable statements. She sits back and drinks her rum, simultaneously hating her husband and ferociously defending him from judgment, proving that she is still unified with him: "Je vous défends de porter le moindre jugement sur notre famille" (97). However, she gets more frustrated as the conversation goes on, and Alain's speech about Africa and the *dieu du carnage* puts her over the edge. In another didascalic climax, she throws herself on Michel and beats him until Alain pulls her off: "*Véronique se jette sur son marie et le tape, plusieurs fois, avec un désespoir désordonné et irrationnel*" (100). Though the play contains other moments of violence, Véronique's move from speech to action is a turning point in the draft process. Whereas Annette's throwing of Alain's phone into the vase of tulips instigated action against language, she was targeting the object of portable language. Véronique, on the other hand, turns to beat her husband as a response to her frustration with her conversation with Alain, as though called upon by language to propagate violence.

Though the play's undulating climaxes and dips in tension build toward an ultimate failure to resolve the original conflict, the conspicuous absence of the boys who brought their parents together demonstrates how language has been called upon to achieve different results.

They play does not center around the boys' fight, but rather how the event is rewritten, and how the violence produced by the original event permeates the characters' stylistic signatures throughout the drafting process. Thinking about language as a portable but unfinished product contributes to how one reads dramatic writing by using the overlaps between speech and writing to bridge the ephemerality of speech and the perpetuity of print. The signature becomes the way of ascribing and transferring value between the textual and the performative world. In this way, style—as seen in the various overlapping drafts—becomes a process of textual marking unique to each character's signature. Reading the play with a focus on the leitmotiv of the draft shows how language does function productively in the play. Temporary alliances and moments of constructive communication are produced because of how the characters see language work in parallel ways. Alain's rewriting of *armé* is not only a breach in civility but also an acknowledgement to Véronique that they must rewrite the event together. Words, which contain the possibility to shock and incite violence, cannot be transferred effectively without attention to the textually stylistic structure they are drafted into, whether uttered or written. In this play, the strong focus on writing shows how communication becomes a transaction with traceable origins and an ability to affect and elicit actions. Language is not only a tool, however objectified it is to Véronique and Michel, nor is it entirely a weapon as seen by Annette and Alain. It is an agreement to carry out a linguistic transaction and engage with another character's style, citations, and composition technique.

IV. C. THE STAGE

Throughout the play, the body has a relationship of confinement to the stage. As I wrote in my first chapter, certain plays allude to their own performative framework as being inherently

dependent on the text. In *Roberto Zucco*, the character's body is confined by the stage, and liberated by the movement through a complex mesh of citations and allusions in a score-like metatext. In *Carnage*, the spoken word's relationship to writing is highlighted from the beginning as being changeable while carrying the resonance of the different choices, omissions and drafts. The stage is therefore both a space and a process. Making use of the theatrical process, writing in *Carnage* takes on the form of a rehearsal, each separate incident contributing to a specific performative atmosphere.

The actions on stage follow a series of tumultuous tensions that have been analyzed as the breakdown, rupture, and failure of communication by Giguère. However, as I have demonstrated, though there is a breach in civility, writing in *Carnage* shows that communication does not fail in the play. I have analyzed to what ends language is objectified throughout the play; however, it is through an analysis of how a living object fits into the creation of the language of cruelty and conflict that contributes the most to the notion of the draft. By living I mean growing, changing, evolving, and animate. Writing, in *Carnage*, is a living object in that it elides stasis, collecting and assuming different positions with each draft. Though there are a variety of important props that affect and create action on stage, it is in the off-stage elements that one sees the development of the performative paradigm from draft to stage.

The two most important missing living props are the children themselves and the abandoned pet hamster. The children's absence brings ultimate focus on the narrative of the events as opposed to the events themselves. None of the parents were present at the boys' fight, therefore the characters become members of an audience of a recreated action from the moment the play opens, causing them to each act as directors for different versions of the same event. Though the Houllié's daughter makes a peripheral contribution at the end of the play by way of a

one-sided telephone conversation, the children's absence becomes an important performative element of the division of on-stage and off-stage narrative. However, the repetition of the absurd story of the hamster most productively links the missing children to the stage because the hamster does not belong in the domestic (stage) or wild (extra-diegetic) realms.

The lack of the change of scenery and the building tension is contributed to by a methodological moving through of each of the stage props. By focusing on the props and well-placed furniture, Reza draws the reader's immediate attention to the fact that nothing placed on stage is superfluous. Each object is a part of the unique affective pulse that has built throughout the play. In the same way that uttered words cannot be replaced without containing an echo of the original word, each object is an irreplaceable, irreproducible result of the performance.

The props become variables of the building tension, creating the necessary link from word-object to space-object. The objects become more than a connection between body and space, they become the link to the world off-stage. It is not simply the rum that causes Véronique to begin crying, but the collision between inside and outside, triggering a desire to escape. From the cell phone, tulips, and books, to the clafoutis and coffee, to the rum, and finally to the offer of smoking a cigar, each prop makes a reference to the space off-stage, heightening the feeling of imprisonment of the actors. Michel's offers of the cigar to Alain once again brings the conversation toward the absent children. He offers twice. At first Véronique's vehement refusal to let him smoke in the house is not explained but unites the two women in their disgust at the notion of the two men smoking. The second time she refers to their son. She is no longer united with Michel, but stands alone against the other three who do not share her values.

> Véronique: On ne fume pas le cigare dans la maison!
>
> Michel: Hoyo ou D4… Hoyo du maire, Hoyo du deputé…

> Véronique: On ne fume pas dans une maison où un enfant est asthmatique!
>
> Annette: Qui est ashmatique?
>
> Véronique: Notre fils. (110-11)

Unable to ingest or digest the conversation around her, Véronique denies another form of interiorization: inhalation, another passage from outside to inside. In forbidding the men to smoke cigars in the home, Véronique is likening the characters' corporality with that of the stage, the theatrical space once again reflecting a visceral corporality. The actor's subjectivity is contingent on his/her relationship with the space, and to the ability to objectify language so as to become a working, living element of the space.

From the beginning, the provenance of objects links the interior space with the outside. The rum and cigars' origin are discussed as being exotic and rare commodities, the books both from a time and place that is impossible to access. The tulips come from "Le petit fleuriste du marché Mouton-Duvernet … celui qui est tout en haut … Elles arrivent tous les matins directement de Hollande, dix euros la brassée de cinquante" (13). However, the only stage prop that serves as a living link between inside and outside is the missing hamster. The hamster's previous existence mirrors the character's feelings of being trapped in mediocrity and monotony and is characterized by the incessant squeak of his hamster wheel. The hamster's narrative starts as an icebreaker, an attempt at sharing an intimate irritation between the wives. Michel has gotten rid of the hamster, to the horror of his nine-year-old daughter, and Annette, who is just as shocked when she learns the animal's fate.

> Michel: Oui. Ce hamster fait un bruit épouvantable la nuit. Ce sont des êtres qui dorment le jour. Bruno souffrait, il était exaspéré par le bruit du hamster. Moi, pour dire la vérité, ça faisait longtemps que j'avais envie de m'en débarrasser, je

> me suis dit ça suffit, je l'ai pris, je l'ai mis dans la rue. Je croyais que ces animaux aimaient les caniveaux, les égouts, pas du tout, il était pétrifié sur le trottoir. En fait, ce ne sont ni des animaux domestiques, ni des animaux sauvages, je ne sais pas où est leur milieu naturel. Fous-les dans une clairière, ils sont malheureux aussi. Je ne sais pas où on peut les mettre. (17-8)

The cigars open the discussion to the missing links to the outside, and to the instigators of the original action: the children. Symbolizing the relationship between parent and child, it is the hamster that balances the despicability of the Reille with the Houllié. Alain's rude interruptions and misanthropically pessimistic view of the world is countered by Michel's abandoning of a family pet on a busy sidewalk. Not only does he get rid of the hamster, he refuses to pick it up when he sees that it is petrified and motionless outside. In the same way that Annette's vomit causes her to irreparably externalize her true feelings, Michel has also ejected an element of his life that he found uncomfortable to contain. Each character objectifies language a little differently—Véronique bestows language with the ability to cause and pacify real conflict, Annette sees it as a mask to be employed or a weapon to be unleashed, Alain uses language as a manipulable tool and weapon. Michel's apathy seems to disregard language as a whole functioning being, instead seeing only the individual parts like nuts and bolts in his shop.

Abandoning the hamster is a leitmotiv that alludes to an essential element of the character's relationship to language as dictated by the stage. The hamster echoes the original removed word that opens the play: *armé*. Even though it is removed from space, the hamster haunts the dialogue and narrative in a similar way, stirring up feelings of insult, injustice, and inhumanity. Because it is a living creature, it complicates the notion of the objectification of language that mirrors the guilt the parents feel in their relationships with their children. First, the

hamster is neither a tool nor a weapon, originally. Secondly, it does not truly belong anywhere—it is neither domestic nor wild—and so must be attributed meaning by its elicitation of emotion in its owners. The hamster communicates a symbolic need to be nurtured and protected, which reflects the parents' relationship to their children. Lastly, the hamster's story alludes to the quality of language that is neither symbol nor action, but living being.

IV. D. CONCLUSION

Throughout the play, the ephemerality of speech is contrasted with the permanence of print through documentation, drafting, and exaggerated affective reactions. This demonstrates how Reza's relationship to language as a theatrical device relies on the tension between the written and the spoken and unveils the writing process of the playwright through diegetic writing in the play. According to Austin, theatrical discourse is inherently hollow, and the move in Reza's plays toward unidirectional speech such as monologues, soliloquies, or fragmented overlapping utterances could point to a failure of communication as noted by Giguere. However, what is created through the play between the written and spoken is a living and evolving language that must be nurtured even when its incessant squeaking causes irritation and incomprehension. As in *Roberto Zucco*, the stage serves as a prison in which the characters must engage with language on a compositional level in order to be able to escape.

Though the leitmotiv of the draft is specific to this play, Reza's focus on the link between diegetic writing and theatrical writing can be extended as a unifying characteristic of how she deals with conflict in her other plays, while opening up the dialogue of the evolution of the *théâtre de la parole* in contemporary French theatre. Seen explicitly in this play, Reza's readability and accessibility thus become qualified through an engagement with textual agency,

extending the reception of her plays to include a legitimate literary component that also enhances the stage performance.

V. CHAPTER 4: PERFORMING AUTHENTICITY: GRAND CORPS MALADE'S CITY STAGE AS AFFECTIVE DWELLING

In 2006, at the debut of his first text/album *Midi 20,* Grand Corps Malade (Fabien Marsaud) became the uncontested spokesperson for slam poetry in France. Though slam poetry in France was imported from the U.S., the cultural politics of the genre have differed immensely in the two countries. Susan B. A. Somers-Willett identifies the rise in popularity of competitive slam poetry in the U.S. as an answer to the question "can poetry matter?" raised by Dana Gioia in his 1991 *Atlantic* article by the same name (2). Similarly, in 1895 Mallarmé wrote of his fear that the death of Victor Hugo would also be the death of French poetry. In his "Crise de vers," he attaches a call to arms to the French poets to rethink the classical structures, rhythms, and syntaxes in order to create a new language, one that would reflect the individual mystery of each poetic creation: "Le vers qui de plusieurs vocables refait un mot total, neuf, étranger à la langue …" (368). His essays on poetry are filled with a musical lexicon, one that resonates into the 20th century and that recalls the foundation of what has become Affect theory. However, an interval between the material and the musical comes in to play in "La Musique et les Lettres," in which Mallarmé states: "on a touché au vers" (643). For Mallarmé, poetry must contain all the mystery hidden in the folds of the everyday, but also bring it to light. Literature, is a way of showing our correspondence between music and letters: "oublions la vieille distinction entre la Musique et les Lettres, n'étant que le partage …" (649). This interval allows the unveiling of the instrumentalisation, or the poetic mechanism of the new poetic language.

One hundred years later, at the end of the 1980s, poetry audiences in the U.S. were stagnant or falling and the debate caused poets to ask who their audiences were, and how they were reading. In 1986, white blue-collar worker turned poet Marc Smith had begun hosting a wild variety show in blue-collar venues such as the Green Mill in Chicago. Smith claimed he didn't only want the words to do the work, and encouraged the audience to get involved in the poetry readings by booing and applauding. In linking performance with affect, the format for these performances quickly became a competition, putting the audience into a position of power as judges. Though the competitive aspect exists in France, under the direction of such slam poets as Pilote le Hot and his Slam Productions, this chapter focuses on the slam stages around France that arose to meet the need of creating an inclusive collective voice of the marginalized communities of the *banlieue* that make use of affective correspondence. Where slam poetry in the U.S. is often performed in a competitive environment, GCM[15] and other slam poets in France have opened the genre into a more welcoming open mic type where anyone is encouraged to perform and where the organizers focus on the process of performing a highly stylized written text. In this way, many slam venues closely resemble what in the U.S. is called Spoken Word Poetry.

Though part of the same genre, according to Carrie Noland, this type of slam has followed a different path from much of French sound poetry of the 50s-90s because it has not "crossed the line" into abandoning "semantic tissue" or "referential meaning," such as François Dufrêne's *crirythms* and Henri Chopin's *synthesized expirations* (111). Slam poetry is not lost in the realm of the purely aural, but still relies on recognizable words, sentences, and syntax. In

[15] Grand Corps Malade: shortened to GCM, as he will be referred to at various points throughout the chapter.

fact, because of the popular live performance aspect of slam poetry, some of the poems themselves tend to use very basic poetic structures, simple rhymes, repetitions, and refrains that are easily memorable to bring the audience into participation through call and response. It is perhaps for this reason that slam poetry has not often been an object of formalist poetic analysis. However, GCM's repurposing of textual poetic techniques has made him stand out not only as a slam poet, but as a writer, successfully breaking into the French pedagogical cultural canon through his use of word play, rhyme, repetition, and integration of street language.

Through his poetry, GCM has become a symbol of the collective poetic genre of the Parisian suburbs by combining a sense of intimate memoir with a poetic connection to a collective urban experience. Hélène Guay de Bellissen writes about how he became what Cyberpress.ca called a "slambassadeur" (41) helping to make slam a form of resistance to the French hegemonic call for integration of immigrant subcultures, and stressing the unique experiences of the voices that go unheard in the mainstream media. Early slam venues such as the Café Culturel in Saint Denis opened each performance with the greeting, "Slam'Alikoum," stressing that the suburban location highlighted the African heritage of many of the performers and audience members (52). Slam poetry of this kind in France does share one important characteristic with American slam: the performer must embody what Willett calls an "authenticity at the physical, sonic, metaphysical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual levels," (8) often complicating a search for redefining marginalized identity.

GCM's poetry may contain a fictional or metaphorical narrative, but it always incorporates an intimate account from his own life in order to relate to those who have shared a similar path. His story is woven into his first and subsequent albums and has served as the prose for his memoir *Patients*, published in 2012, which tells of how, at the age of 19, while a camp

counselor, Fabien Marsaud dives into the shallow end of the pool breaking several vertebrae and finds himself tetraplegic. He was told he may never walk again, but after a year in a center for reeducation, leaves his wheelchair for a cane, hence the stage name Grand Corps Malade. Though hardship is at the heart of a successfully authentic slam performance, GCM uses his life story as a positive call to poetic arms, encouraging others to turn to writing as he did after his accident. In the past ten years, using GCM as an example, slam in France has become a tool for pedagogy, used as an effective method for teaching poetry in schools and called a "lien social" by *Le Parisien* (36).[16] Slam associations such as Universlam, 129h Productions, and Slam ô Féminin have included writing workshops into most slam events, encouraging audience members to write and perform or contribute words for a theme or refrain.

The next two chapters treat the poetry of slam as a performative text—this chapter focuses on Grand Corps Malade's first album *Midi 20*, while chapter 5 will turn to individual poets that add their voice to an association's message and are published in anthologies. Though it is not a brand new poetic genre, very little has been written about the poetry from an academic perspective. Analyses such as those of Willett and de Bellissen take a cultural studies approach to the genre itself, or focus on the biographies of the poets. My approach is to read the poetry produced by these slam artists from a formalist poetic perspective. Because few slam poets have published their own collections, much of the published poetry in slam is found in anthologies, echoing the performative structure of the stage. In contrasting the notion of the collection by one poet, with the multi-voiced anthology, these two chapters investigate how performative techniques such as rhythm, musicality, tone, and sound are written into the texts themselves and give clues to how they can be read to contain the resonance and cohesion of live performance.

[16] References to media reviews of Grand Corps Malade are quoted from de Bellissen's book.

Grand Corps Malade's move from stage to album is an important transition not only into celebrity, but also a focus on the textually transmissible product of the oral genre. As noted by *Les Inrockuptibles*, in a review of GCM's first album:

> *Midi 20* est un disque unique à tous points de vue … en général les slameurs ne font pas de disque, ils font de la scène … Une voix basse, horizontale, paisible et ample, a la fois douce et imposante … Ses slams sont des observations de la vie ordinaire, transcendée par des mots qui slaloment. Des mots joueurs et surtout justes … il slame en voisin. (14)

As a first album, *Midi 20* contains paradigms that have evolved over the course of GCM's next three albums and my choice to focus on the recorded liveness as opposed to actual performances serves as a starting point for this type of textually performative analysis. I do not mean to disregard the live performances of these texts, but instead intend to focus on live performance as a continuation of this chapter at a later time. *Midi 20* serves as a model for how orality can become textuality in the world of performance poetry by bridging the gap between liveness and transmissibility.

Through an analysis of the movement between temporality and spatiality in the texts in Grand Corps Malade's *Midi 20,* I argue that his album has anchors and influences in textual urban poetry, most specifically in Apollinaire's "Zone" from *Alcools* (1913). In interviews after the release of this first album, GCM maintained that he was not a reader of classic French poetry, saying even that reading Rimbaud "ne m'a rien fait" (rfi.fr). Instead, he associated himself with an oral and musical tradition, citing poetic inspiration in Jacques Brel and Georges Brassens. However, as his poetry has developed, his links to the French poetic canon have become more emphasized and he has even dedicated his fourth album *Funambule* as a "hommage à Verlaine et

Apollinaire" (rfimusique.com). I maintain that the influence of textual poets can be seen as early as the first album, particularly in the materiality of the language that describes GCM's temporal and spatial bearings. Therefore, French slam poetry as essentialized by GCM demonstrates that it is not a uniquely oral or contemporary genre, but shares aesthetic and stylistic themes with urban prose poetry as far back as Apollinaire. Intertextuality in this album embodies a striking optimism not only with social community-building consequences, but also answers the question "Can poetry matter?" The rising success of slam poetry has contributed to an increase in poetry reading and writing in schools not by differentiating itself from the canon, but by infusing intertextuality with an optimism shared over generations of readers.

This type of analysis contrasts with what has recently been published on Grand Corps Malade and slam poetry in France. In 2009 Héloïse Guay de Bellissen published *Au coeur du slam: Grand Corps Malade et les nouveaux poètes* as a sketch of the lives of several of the most well-known slam poets in Paris such as Grand Corps Malade, Souleymane Diamanka, Ami Karim, John Pucc'Chocolat, Rouda, Dame Gabrielle, Neobled, and Lyor. From the introduction, de Bellissen stresses the intimate encounter she had with slam poets, qualifying her book as a "temoignage slam, un journal intime, mais surtout un livre où tu vas rencontrer des êtres rares" (18). Though she included one poem by each poet at the end of each interview, the book lacked any form of poetic analysis, even when the poets interviewed had clearly put effort into stylizing and unveiling their writing process in their texts. De Bellissen's book is indicative of how slam is seen in the world of publishing, as a genre that appeals to the masses, straddles celebrity with notoriety, rap, and a view on the current political climate in France. This chapter on *Midi 20* endeavors to interrogate the formal elements of GCM's poetics as a model that takes French

slam poetry beyond a cultural studies reading by focusing on the text itself, and on its own textual origins in poetry.

The idea of slam's pre-existing structure—a *home* to be filled with various voices in refrain to make a chorus, is central to my analysis of *Midi 20*. One of the recurring questions in de Bellissen's book revolves around an attempt to define slam poetry in France. In his introduction, slam poet Ami Karim writes:

> Le slam n'est pas un style musical, il est un style d'oralité, qui s'allie parfois à certaines mélodies, pour se transcender, évoluer, changer, devenir autre chose. Le slam n'est pas un contenu qu'on fait sien, c'est un contenant qu'on remplit, une maison qu'on aménage sans cesse avec les sensibilités de chacun. L'endroit où tout peut exister, où les contraires s'attirent, où les différents courants ne s'opposent pas, mais se complètent pour que de petits ruisseaux continuent à former de grosses rivières. (13-4)

Unlike the competitive structure of American slam competitions, *Midi 20* undulates between a singular and plural memory by using different forms of "nous." In the singular *nous*, the listener is brought into the intimate retelling of moments in Fabien Marsaud's life, a kind of structured memoir that makes use of the rhythmic temporal progression of a life made micro, condensed into the hours in a day. This technique is prevalent in "Zone," where the poetic voice negotiates around a city as both an outsider (through memory and negation of the past) and a stylized view of the future. The "tu" of "Zone" resembles the particular and universal overlap in GCM's "nous." In the plural *nous*, GCM uses his suburban surroundings to attach his sound as a collaboration with those sharing a common existence. By highlighting the interval between time and space, GCM complicates and enhances the notion of *dwelling*: removing the negative

connotations associated with regret of past moments and instead creating an inclusively positive poetic space that augments the genre of urban *memoire,* a place where lives are shared at the intersections between hardship and hope. As he writes in “Je dors sur mes deux oreilles,” dwelling on regretful moments of suffering in the past counteracts *dwelling*—or living as a member in a community:

> J'ai constaté que la douleur était une bonne source d'inspiration/Et que les zones d'ombre du passé montrent au stylo la direction/La colère et la galère sont des sentiments productifs/Qui donnent des thèmes puissants, quoi qu'un peu trop répétitifs/À croire qu'il est plus facile de livrer nos peines et nos cris/Et qu'en un battement de cils un texte triste est écrit/On se laisse aller sur le papier et on emploie trop de métaphores/Pourtant je t'ai déjà dit que tout ce qui ne nous tue pas nous rend plus forts/C'est pour ça qu'aujourd'hui j'ai décidé de changer de thème/D'embrasser le premier connard venu pour lui dire je t'aime/Des lyrics pleins de vie avec des rimes pleines d'envie/Je vois, je veux, je vis, je vais, je viens, je suis ravi. (vv. 1-12)

“Passé” is contrasted with “aujourd’hui” just as the poetic voice of “Zone” undulates between “le matin” and “ce matin.” For GCM, however, regret must be reinvented to combat the repetition of negative feelings and actions. In addressing his community, GCM is changing the narrative of slam to focus on the positive affect created by writing and performing his writing. GCM frames writing in a way that resembles how Deleuze and Guattari frame art in life. Deleuze and Guattari start with the flesh, which through a combination of synesthetic sensations can begin to build the “house,” then expand it through ritualization to create a territory. Discussed in more detail in the chapter “De la ritournelle” from *Mille plateaux*, the territory (a coded, pulsed milieu and a

rhythm) is an "entre-deux" and always begins with a refrain, or *ritournelle* (397). It is this refrain that produces the best bridge between music, poetry, and affect. The chapter starts out with a young child, alone in the dark. To counteract his fear he begins to hum a song. In effect, he is fighting the passive passion of fear with an active emotion triggered by a music that has at one point in his life calmed him. In this way, the affective territory is both spatial and temporal. In releasing the sound of the song, he is making the past active emotion *present*, and creating a *chez soi* or house that through its sonority becomes larger as he moves. The metaphor of the refrain that creates a territory is necessary and based on the abstract power of emotions. In this case the territory is a positive construction, contrasting itself from the negative connotations of the verb "territorialize" particularly because it is an intimate, moveable, and regenerative act. GCM makes use of the optimism of the positive and active emotions released by writing to call to arms other poets in his current community and encouraging an optimistic reading of past poets such as Apollinaire.

Through an analysis of seven of the sixteen poems in the album—"Vu de ma fenêtre," "Le jour se lève," "Midi 20," "Saint-Denis," "Je dors sur mes deux oreilles," "Toucher l'instant," and "Attentat verbal"—I demonstrate how GCM makes use of four key poetic techniques that Apollinaire highlights in his opening poem of the collection *Alcools*. First, a rhythmic trajectory of the sights and sounds of the urban experience; second, a productive look at the future through moments in the past; third, a performative repetition and anticipation that incites the reader to write; and finally an invitation to the reader to share in the poetic intimacy by addressing him/her with *tu/vous/nous*. Though GCM has spoken of reading Apollinaire, he makes no outright claim to be quoting the poet in these specific poems and the intertextual readings done in this chapter are entirely my own. Though I will not do close readings of them in this chapter, the other poems

in the album follow the same rhythm of contrasting the collective everyday experience with a personal *memoire* such as “6ème sens,” in which GCM writes about the accident that almost paralyzed him at the age of 19 and the collective feeling of being regarded as handicapped, contagious, and other. In “Les voyages en train,” he compares a love story with choosing the right seat in the RER, weaving in his own story of heartbreak: “Moi après mon seul voyage j'ai souffert pendant des mois/On s'est quittés d'un commun accord mais elle était plus d'accord que moi” (vv. 49-50). The album thus reads as a complete text, not only a collection of various poems and the poetic mechanisms that enhance the genre of urban *memoire*. This chapter is therefore only a preliminary demonstration of GCM’s poetics.

V. A. LA *CITÉ*

The city figures as a strong leitmotiv throughout the album, and much of the interpellation assumes a similar background shared by its readers. Though GCM’s urban dweller has undergone hardships, he finds humor and hope in his lot. His city becomes the place to call on the future, by highlighting writing and poetry as a way out of the monotonous suffering. As GCM stated in an interview with François Busnel after writing about his year in reeducation: “derrière ce drame, derrière cette difficulté au quotidien de chaque jour et de chaque geste, il y a quand même la vie qui reprend ses droits” (youtube.com). GCM’s “je” contains resemblances to Apollinaire’s “tu,” in that the city they move in is temporal as well as spatial and turning toward the future means letting go of the past. The dweller must therefore perform the city, just as he performs his daily routine. As De Certeau writes, reading the city as a whole becomes an operation that requires more than just a reading of the “geometrical” or “geographical” (93) and necessitates an understanding of how the city becomes a subject through the “intertwined

paths”of footsteps (97).

GCM gives life to his suburban space in a similar way to Apollinaire. However, the distance maintained by the “tu” in “Zone” is broached through an intimate nostalgia in GCM’s relationship with his city. Apollinaire animates his cityscape from the beginning with the pastoral in lines like “Bergère ô tour Eiffel le troupeau des ponts bêle ce matin” (v. 2), “les affiches chantent tout haut” (v. 11), “Une cloche rageuse y aboie vers midi” (v. 20), “Des troupeaux d’autobus mugissants près de toi roulent” (v. 72). Similarly, GCM animates his cityscape, but does so as a living, breathing person, not a landscape made up of separate entities. GCM’s Saint-Denis instead becomes a woman:

> J'voudrais faire un slam pour **une grande dame** que j'connais depuis tout petit/J'voudrais faire un slam pour celle qui voit ma vieille canne du lundi au samedi/J'voudrais faire un slam pour **une vieille femme** dans laquelle j'ai grandi/J'voudrais faire un slam pour cette banlieue nord de Paname qu'on appelle Saint-Denis. (vv. 1-4, my emphasis)

GCM sees his readers and those operating in his city all as potential poets. The spatial practices of its citizens cause the city to be an *espace,* not a *lieu*, because it is practiced space and takes into consideration “vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables” of the many inhabitants and moments (117). In the poetry of GCM, and many other slam poets, the *cités* in the *banlieue* of Seine-Saint-Denis, because of the many ethnicities, religions, genders, and cultures, become the stage for the marginalized voices outside of Paris.

> Vu de ma fenêtre, y'a que des bâtiments,/Si j'te disais que je vois de la verdure, tu saurais que je mens,/Et puis pour voir un bout de ciel, faut se pencher franchement,/Vu de ma fenêtre, y'a des petits qui font du skate, ça fait un bruit,

> t'as mal à la tête,/Et puis y'a des gars en bas qui galèrent, Ils sont là, ils font rien, ils prennent l'air,/Surtout le printemps, surtout l'été, surtout l'automne, surtout l'hiver,/Vu de ma fenêtre, y'a vachement de passage, de Carrefour à la mairie je vois des gens de tout âge,/Du métro à la boulangerie, je vois toutes sortes de visages. (vv. 1-9).

The lack of greenery addresses the resonance of the clichéd platitude found in the classical and romantic poetic canon but also to what is typically considered beautiful in more wealthy parts of central Paris. He does not look out his window to see the Tour Eiffel, nor the manicured branches of the *platanes* arching over the Grands Boulevards. GCM is thus separating his muse from the culturally accepted poetic past and forging a new direction by finding beauty in the people surrounding him. It is the members of the community who act as muses, and GCM encourages his readers to pick up a pen, demonstrating in "Le jour se lève" how the "tours" of the city become "à notre tour," (vv. 1-2): space making way for opportunity through poetry.

GCM's view of his *cité* attempts to counteract the view of suburban Paris as a series of what Foucault calls "hétérotopies de déviation" (46). These are spaces in which the inhabitants are often relegated and forgotten, unable to participate in society as citizens. He gives examples such as: "les minorités, immigrés, deviants et musiciens ambulants" (47). Subsequently, these inhabitants have a relationship of crisis to their communities, rebelling in various ways against the fabric of society. GCM maintains that slam poetry provides the perfect way to make separate identities heard in a diverse community. From his window, he sees people of "toutes sortes de visages" (v. 9) the "petits qui font du skate" (v. 4), the "Rebeus" whose café is called "Café de France," (v. 16) the "meufs bien coiffées" (v. 17), the pickpockets, and more specifically: "Ludo, il est gentil mais quand tu le croises c'est pas forcement un cadeau … c'est le mec qu'on

appelle la cerise sur le ghetto" (vv. 25-28). He sees suffering and hardship, and though he lives in the same place differentiates himself with the "pas mal de gens qui triment et voient la vie comme une sanction" (v. 30) by focusing on a contagious optimism he calls "l'âme de mon slam" (v. 38):

> Parce que oui, vu de ma fenêtre, je vois pas mal d'espoir,/Quand je vois le petit blond jouer au foot avec le petit noir,/Quand je vois des gens qui se bougent, quand je vois des gens qui se mettent des coups de pied au cul,/Pour sortir de la zone rouge, et pour que la vie vaille le coup d'être vécue./Quand je vois ces deux hommes qui boivent un coup en riant, alors qu'ils sont soi-disant différents,/Parce que l'un dit "Shalom" et l'autre dit "Salam" mais putain ils se serrent la main, c'est ça l'âme de mon slam,/Je prends ça comme un bon signe, c'est peut-être un espoir infime,/Mais je te jure que je l'ai vu, c'est pas pour la rime. (vv. 33-40)

GCM's position as observer does not give him the authority as "slambassadeur." As I wrote earlier, the question of an authentic narrative is the backbone of most slam poems. For the performers, authenticity revolves around a question of identity, and like in U. S. slams, marginalized identities of race, religion, gender, sexuality, or social status are received as more authentic on stage. What makes GCM's observations authentic is that they come from his daily routine—he is picking out what he sees on a daily basis and condensing them into the temporality of a glance through his window. He harmonizes the space to include multiple moments, faces, and trajectories of the lives lived around him. Somers-Willett writes:

> The identities expressed by slam poets are performative—that is, they are performed consciously or unconsciously for audiences to certain ends … Slams

> prove cultural stages where poets perform identities and their audience confirm or deny them as "authentic" via scoring. (8)

Even in slam performances that are not competitions, the most commonly successful "authentic" identity uses a voice and register that attaches itself to a community that is spatially marginal—the *cités* of the *banlieue* Noisy-le-Sec in Seine-Saint-Denis. Francesco Paolo Adorno breaks down the linguistic make-up of *la cité* in a way that unveils GCM's own definition:

> Dans la langue courante le terme de "cite" est utilisé surtout en trois sens: pour indiquer un groupement d'individus basé sur des institutions politiques; pour indiquer une ville; ou encore dans le sens le plus moderne, pour désigner une agglomération de bâtiments destinés à une catégorie spécifique de personnes. (221)

For GCM, *la cité* in Seine-Saint-Denis, where he grew up, exists as a group of people, and it is to these people that he addresses the album. GCM's authenticity comes from his having grown up in the *banlieue* of Noisy-le-Sec and his specific connection to the people that shared his home. (As a slam artist he would not have had the authentic authority to speak about the *cité* had he grown up in a *hôtel particulier* in the 5th arrondissement.) Into his poems, he interweaves the suburban slang of *verlan* (syllable inversion: each word following the mirror inversion of "l'envers-verlan"), words in Arabic, Creole, and other languages spoken in his surroundings, and his story of hardship and recovery make for a successful scaffold for his *memoire*. However, how is one to analyze authenticity in a recorded album, or reading performed poems in an anthology? Where does authenticity reside in the text, separate from his biography? GCM's position of authority in slam is not only related to his growing up in the *cité*, but to how he expertly calls upon language to associate his poetics with his city space.

GCM uses his relationship to city sounds to complicate how poetry is written and how it is received. For him, living as a functioning member of a community means operating in the city in the same vein as De Certeau describes. Dwelling then, becomes a combination of reading your surroundings and writing yourself into them. Though orality is the medium, written poetry originates. GCM's slam is not an improvised form, and he refers back to the writing process at several key moments in his album. GCM is not taking on the complex relationship between sound and poetry for the first time—he is attaching his style to a long line of textual poets who have theorized the connection at length. Jacques Roubaud writes that a poem has two internal and two external aspects. The external aspects are the written form and the oral form and both together make up the "score" (19). However, for Roubaud, the relationship between the written and the oral is antagonistic, which is productive in that it makes up the rhythm of the poem. These two aspects could form the foundation of most poetic analysis. However, Roubaud's two internal aspects are even more central to GCM's slam poetics because they are qualified by the person receiving the poem: the *wRitten* form (orally the homonym of written) and the aural form (19). Roubaud fails to recognize, however, that slam poetry deals with the internal aspects in clever ways—through a complex scoring of rhythm, puns, word play, suspense, and anticipation. Roubaud writes negatively of performance poetry calling it the "*erasure of poetry* … presented with an utter scorn for the written word" (25). In this way, GCM does not fit into Roubaud's model of performance poetry. GCM's regard for the written word is at the foundation of each of the poems in his first album, solidifying his place as a poet before performer. However, he must determine the anticipated cliché that contains the poetic aura Roubaud writes about, in order to establish how his own suburban poetics enact the rupture with the past.

From the first poem in the album, GCM uses allusions to banal poetic metaphors to establish his own language. In “Le jour se lève,” he contrasts his surroundings and muse with nature, imitating Apollinaire’s move to find beauty in the modern, mechanical, and architectural, instead of the classically pastoral. GCM’s *cité* is an environment void of greenery and babbling brooks, but teeming with the faces and sounds of people. *Midi 20’s* first track opens with the background hum of an RER line, and then as GCM begins speaking, he speaks in a positive tone, with a call to poetic arms. The direction and trajectory of the album thus begins with a connection between the album *piste* or track, and the direction the train is following, bringing the listener into the *banlieue*. As the hum grows louder, Malade’s voice rises above it:

> Le jour se lève sur notre grisaille, sur les trottoirs de nos ruelles et sur nos tours/Le jour se lève sur notre envie de vous faire comprendre à tous que c'est à notre tour/D’assumer nos rêves, d’en récolter la sève pour les graver dans chaque mur de pierre. (vv. 1-3)

From the beginning, GCM contrasts his urban environment: “grisaille,” “trottoirs,” “ruelles,” “tours,” and “pierre” with the cliché pastoral image of the harvest in the truism “récolter la sève” (v. 3) referencing a close contemporary, MC Solaar, as well as Apollinaire. The harsh consonant clusters in “**gr**isaille” and “**tr**ottoirs” are contrasted with the softer Rs in “**ru**elles, tou**rs**” (vv 1-2). Sound, therefore, originates in space, and is specific to the suburban towers of the cité. Orality is connected to textuality in “Le jour se lève” through the consonant cluster which links sound with writing in the word “graver.” *Grave* is both the adjective for “low-pitched,” and the third person singular verb for “engrave” and it also connotes “grave” as an adjective meaning “serious.” The onomatopoeic sound of the consonant cluster links the harsh sounds of the city to the “**gr**aver,” in the third line, highlighting the necessity to leave a metaphorical mark on the

city's structure through writing. The sonic scratch of writing is echoed as the "**br**igade de poètes" (v. 21) are called upon to use "é**cr**iture" (v. 14) to rewrite history.

As we saw in the chapter on Reza's draft, the sonic sound that emphasizes writing complicates the relationship between stage and page. GCM uses his biographical relationship to writing to answer Dana Gioia's question, "Can poetry matter?" In this poem, we see how poetry takes on a materiality, mimicking how the urban space invites its inhabitants to inscribe the topography and leave a mark to combat a feeling of anonymity. GCM becomes a sort of graffiti artist, leaving marks for strangers to find and be affected by. Here, the recording both enhances the distinction between the material and the oral and masks it. Because of the orality of the recorded album, the sound of the performance overshadows the preparation of the writing process. However, what GCM draws attention to at the opening of his album is not the performance aspect of slam poetry, but the written preparation, the sound of pen on paper. Writing becomes a way out of the shadows, the darkness of night: "Il a fait nuit trop longtemps et avancer sans lumière nous a souvent fait tâtonner" (v. 5). As day comes: "On s'est armé de nos stylos pour écrire nous-mêmes la suite de toute cette histoire" (v. 8). It is with pens and paper that nightfall ends, not with the sounds of voices: "Finies la patience et la méfiance, on s'offre simplement avec l'écriture une renaissance" (v.14). GCM's word choice makes use of the consonant cluster throughout the poem, each time linked to the idea of taking up poetic arms, calling upon his readers and fellow citizens to write.

> Le jour se lève, sort de sa **gr**ève, c'est **gr**ave à quel point la nuit a été agitée/On en a de belles à raconter même si j'imagine que ça sera sûrement loin de tes JT/Le soleil é**cl**aire no**tr**e papier qu'on avait **gr**atté dans l'ombre pendant toute la nuit/La chaleur fait couler l'en**cr**e, nos mots quittent nos cahiers, nos voix so**rt**ent de

> l'ennui/Alors nous allons **pr**en**dr**e la parole, monter sur scène pour un moment, j'espère que t'en as conscience. (vv. 9-14, my emphasis)

The aural sound of the repeated "gr" and "tr" link the act of writing with the act of sharing, and the scratching in *cahiers* becomes an essential part of the "é**cr**iture" (v. 14) before the "**pr**en**dre** parole" (v. 13).

In contrast, the repeated refrain, "le jour se lève" rings like a bell ten times throughout the poem, sounding smooth in comparison to the periodic scratch of the consonant cluster. Repetition is a key mechanical element of GCM's poetics and though the exact refrain begins ten of the 29 lines in the poem, the rhythmic climax is built at the center of the cyclical poem, at the sixth refrain. Here the consonant cluster becomes more prominent, happening at shorter intervals, and the movement, content, and syntax are hurried: "Le jour se lève et la joie se li**vre**, la soif se lit sur nos lè**vre**s, tu de**vr**ais nous sui**vre**/Si no**tre** heure est **br**ève, nous allons quand même la vi**vre**, nous ne sommes pas bons élèves mais l'envie nous eni**vre"** (vv. 17-18). This climax best illustrates how two lines can be successfully scored to imitate different musical lines. The repeated "j" and "l" at the beginning serves as a bass beat that is contrasted with the alternating vowel voices of the "EE" in "livre," "suivre," "vivre," "envie," "enivre," and the open "EH" in "lève," "lèvres," "brève," "même," and "élèves." This ensemble of voices is counterpointed in the recording by a synthetic chamber orchestra (arranged by S Petit Nico) in which the top instruments play agitated pick-ups leading into each new bass measure drone. The ensemble is contrasted with the consonant clusters whose increasing frequency punctuates the climax at unexpected beats. This climax echoes the rhythmic quality found in the 45th line of "Zone," where repetitive sounds are used to evoke velocity: "Ils crient qu'il sait **voler** qu'on l'appelle **voleur**/Les anges **voltigent** autour du joli **voltigeur**" (vv.47-8). Similarly, the higher

pitched “é” and “EE” sounds in “voler” and “voltigent” are alternated with the “eur” in “voleur” and “voltigeur.” Through these repeated sound profiles, the reader is required to “hear” the orality inherent in the textual choices. The reader or audience will be more likely to recall the original sound in shorter intervals. Though this style resembles how rhyme and repetition is used in hip hop, the example of Apollinaire shows that sound memory is an essential element in textual poetry as well. Memory, then, is an essential part of GCM’s sound poetics and his use of temporal structures and repeated sound resonances echoes those used by Apollinaire in “Zone.” Both of these citations demonstrate how the repeated and altered rhymes work more effectively in closer intervals to one another because they more actively contain the resonance to the previous sound.

V. B. AFFECTIVE TEMPORALITY

Though this sonic connection to Apollinaire’s style shows that slam poetry has origins in textual poetics, it is through the treatment of the connection between space, memory, and temporality that GCM most closely resembles Apollinaire. Though the poetic technique of monotonous repetition is seen as a style indicative of oral slam, its presence in textual poetry at the turn of the 20th century showed how poetic techniques were mirroring the feelings of disorientation, the uncanny, and the glorified spontaneity of the everyday. Similarly, as I wrote earlier, in the early 2000s, GCM looks upon his surroundings as a place of difference, marginal spatially from Paris, the cultural center of the world, and marginal culturally because of the many nationalities, cultures, and religions that are being asked to assimilate into a commonly acceptable “French.” However, as we saw in “Vu de ma fenêtre,” GCM’s environment is suggestively made up of stacked moments and simultaneous temporalities. The square he looks

down upon becomes an example of Henri Lefebvre's "space of representation" that has drawn much attention and debates among space theory theorists (80). David Harvey has taken up the third of what Lefebvre calls the three "moments" of social space and shown how it overlaps with Foucault's heterotopias (80). Time changes a space by giving shape to and even imposing limits on what activities can be performed there. Festivals, riots, impromptu skate parks, and markets can redefine the city space on a minute-to-minute basis. GCM makes use of the reinvention of a space through a look at how regret negatively affects a space and those occupying it.

GCM turns monotony into optimism by drawing attention to how the city space performs the repeated phrases, feelings, and thoughts that circulate on an everyday basis. Life, for GCM is a series of repetitions that can sound like drudgery but can be made to sound like music in the right poetic structure. "Le jour se lève" is a circular poem, starting with the same four lines with which it ends. The refrain that starts ten of the lines functions as a reminder both of time and action: it is morning, it is the beginning, and the repetition functions as a tolling bell that is drawing attention to the time to act. GCM uses circular narratives that follow the hours in a day in several of the more personal poems on his album: "Midi 20," "6eme sens," "Je connaissais pas Paris le matin." Used as a leitmotiv to suggest how the minutes and hours in a day are reminders of the broader strokes of life, temporality in these poems is an affective construct that adds to the building of slam as a memoir-like genre. Greg Seigworth recognizes what Spinoza writes as a constant and perpetual "becoming" of bodies. He calls it the "yet-ness" of our bodily capacity and encounters (3). It is this notion of becoming that best describes GCM's contribution to suburban memoir and his temporal circularity echoes Apollinaire's at several moments.

GCM's refrain of "le jour se lève" echoes the repetition of Apollinaire's "ce matin," which is repeated three more times in the first fifteen lines: "D'entrer dans une église et de t'y

confesser *ce matin* … Voilà la poésie *ce matin* et pour la prose il y a les journaux … J'ai vu *ce matin* une jolie rue dont j'ai oublié le nom" (vv. 10-15, my emphasis). In line 19 "ce matin" becomes "le matin," complicating the specific moment with a repetitive routine-like temporality. For Apollinaire, the "jolie petite rue … industrielle" (v. 15, 23) triggers visions of childhood when the poet was dressed in blue and white, wandering and taking in the sounds, smells, and sensations of the street. The intersection of the poetic territory, which starts as a collective vision of the personification and bea(s)tification of the city, enlarges to include a poetic and religious past, one that is called forth by a litany to Christ, and a multiplied symbol of different birds in different beliefs, countries and religions. The repetition of "tu" only changes to "vous" when the poetic voice enters into a religious collective, a monastery at nine o'clock and the subsequent litany for Christ becomes a stacked list starting with "C'est …" (vv. 33-40) that is repeated eight times, a musical technique to create a beat and emphasize the monotony and the plurality of the space and moment.

GCM also exploits this technique for monotonous repetition in his refrain in Saint Denis, the poem beginning and ending with: "J'voudrais faire un slam" repeated four times, and in "J'ai oublié" in which he repeats the line "j'ai oublié" 36 times in 55 lines, and with the repeated "Et puis" in "Vu de ma fenêtre." Repetition highlights the play between orality and textuality throughout the album, but raises the question: what is it that monotonous repetition provides differently in oral and textual poetics? Though connected to the performer because of the objective of authenticity on stage, the poetic voice must have its own being apart from the performer. The poetic "je" is more easily seen as an autonomous life form in the text, where it more resembles Apollinaire's "tu" because of the automatic distance established between thought and text. In "Zone" the voice is alone to maneuver amongst the newly created territory,

to widen it and explore it. The now of "*Maintenant* tu marches dans Paris parmi la foule" (my emphasis) is a harmonized "maintenant." The poetic voice is walking alone in Paris, but recalling Prague, now the Mediterranean, now Marseille, Rome, Amsterdam. He has travelled and seen many things, and recalled many emotions: shame, sadness, loneliness. In recalling these images, the poetic voice is recalling the emotions that created them, making them present, and adding to his constant becoming.

However, unlike Apollinaire, GCM's poetic voice establishes distance and widening, not through an employment of the third person, but of a collective *nous*. The urban contrast to the pastoral and his repeated refrain is not about modernity but about an ever-renewing possibility to change the future as a society: "Notre futur est incertain, c'est vrai que ces deux mots là vont toujours de paire/Mais notre jour s'est bien levé, dorénavant il sera difficile de nous faire taire" (vv. 28-29). Speaking up and speaking out becomes an action the poetic voice must propagate outside of the text by providing a contagious optimism and inciting others to act through writing.

Where Apollinaire's "Zone" begins at daybreak and ends with the setting of the sun, GCM's opening text is circular to provide this optimism—beginning and ending with "Le jour se lève." However, although "Adieu adieu/Soleil cou coupé" can be read as a pessimistic end, it too contains in the orality the optimism GCM searches for in his poetics. Here the sun is setting, its throat cut, and so the present cannot continue into the future. Though it will come back with morning, it will not be the same day, same moment, or same event. It is a sonorous "coup" to the "paix," and a visually material cutting of the word "cou/pé." Simultaneously however, contained in the last line is the sound "cou cou" or a childlike "hello" that counterpoints the repetition of "Adieu adieu." Like the cuckoo bird that lays its egg in another species' nest, the "**cou cou**pé" functions like Deleuze and Guattari's *agencement* between territories, the interval that contains

its origin and its destination, and functions as the memory or bridge between temporal moments.

Memory both shapes events and reorganizes the spatial surroundings in *Midi 20*. GCM employs socially constructed methods of telling time—the twenty-four hours in a day and the seasons to contrast with a more affective and metaphorical time, for example the sun rising and setting, and the dark of night. GCM's most life-changing memory, his accident, is the topos that functions as a formula for how memory can be a productive awakening, not a realm in which to dwell regretfully on a moment of crisis. In the fourth track, the album's namesake, "Midi 20" plays with these two constructions of time to recreate GCM's *matinée* until 12:20 p.m., when he finds himself a bit past his prime and in a hurry to live fully. The poem opens at daybreak, at the poetic voice's metaphorical birth, once again echoing the spatial temporality of "Zone" with the "ce matin": "Je suis né tôt **ce matin**, juste avant que le soleil comprenne/qu'il va falloir qu'il se lève et qu'il prenne son petit crème" (v. 1-2, my emphasis). Using the same poetic mechanism as the personalized city in Saint-Denis, the poetic voice is contrasted with a personification of the sun who must wake and drink his first coffee. Time in this poem is masculine, not only because "soleil" is a masculine noun in French, but also to contrast with the feminized space of "la grande dame" of Saint-Denis and feminized home space in the album.

The leitmotiv of clock time structures the poem, providing the background onto which GCM weaves multiple formulaic metaphors for life. Drawing attention to formulaic writing and set structures, GCM echoes Ami Karim's definition of slam poetry: "[l]e slam n'est pas un contenu qu'on fait sien, c'est un contenant qu'on remplit, une maison qu'on aménage sans cesse avec les sensibilités de chacun" (14). In emphasizing the structure of time he establishes a frame that bridges the temporal and spatial, constructing the frame of the house that he inhabits with his memories and language. The poem is split into sixty lines, alluding to the sixty seconds in a

minute and sixty minutes in an hour, and though each line does not describe only one metaphorical life event, the “horloge de [s]on existence” (v. 7) chimes at specific intervals: “7 heures du mat’” (v. 7), “Sur les coups de 7 heures et demie” (v. 12), “Il est bientôt 9 heures et demie” (v. 15), “il est déjà 11 heures moins le quart” (v. 20), “à 11 heures” (v. 22), “sur les coups d’11 heures moins 2” (v. 24), “Il est 11 heures 08” (v. 27), “À 11 heures 20” (v. 34), “À midi moins le quart” (v. 41), “Il est midi 19” (v. 49), finishing with “il est déjà midi 20” (v. 60). In addition to this textual passing of time, the background track adds the recording of a ticking clock that begins in line 40 and though this adds to the atmosphere of the passage of time, the musical accompaniment negates this progression.

The musical background of “Midi 20” is a good example of how music is used in slam poetry albums, as opposed to rap or hip hop albums. Musical accompaniment is an element added in the recording process, oftentimes not present on slam stages. Though there is a commercial reason to add musical backgrounds to the poems—it would be more difficult to sell an album of poems being read aloud—the music here shows how the atmospheric component can be effective in adding to the thematic structure of the poem while differing from the text itself. In slam poetry, the words do not conform to the music, but set their own rhythms moving on a separate plane from the recorded instruments. In “Midi 20,” the advancing chime of the hours in the day is echoed by a recorded ticking clock that begins immediately after the accident in line 40. However, though time advances, the background music continues to alternate between two static chords for the entire track, refusing to musically progress. Throughout the track, the lack of musical resolution adds an atmospheric tension that is resolved in the text, showing that text and musical accompaniment work together differently than they would in a song. The poem begins with musical accompaniment of solo piano playing broken arpeggios of a c# minor and

G# Major chords, the Tonic and Dominant chords in the key of c# minor. The melody plays a repeated figure made up of dissonant intervals (minor 2nds and tritones) until the poetic climax when, instead of the two chords, the harmony stagnates on the tonic chord and the melody plays syncopated scales in c# minor while the synthetic orchestra gets louder over the stagnant tonic chord. This play between tense atmospheric stagnation and textual progression through consciousness, education, crisis, and resolution proves an effective expression of GCM's poetics as a whole. Throughout the album, time is atmospheric and circular, and the repeated hardship, poverty, violence, and heartbreak that surround him and his community could easily cause a person to fall into a cloud of negativity and regret. As I demonstrated in "Vu de ma fenêtre," the life that surrounds him is a silent struggle for many in his community:

> Vu de ma fenêtre c'est pas de la télé-réalité, ni un sitcom d'AB Productions,/Et je vois pas mal de gens qui triment et voient la vie comme une sanction,/Et même face à la galère,/ils préfèrent se taire,/ils mettent pas de genoux à terre et le poing en l'air ils restent fiers,/Surtout le printemps, surtout l'été, surtout l'automne, surtout l'hiver. (vv. 29-32)

The musical accompaniment in "Midi 20" echoes this silent and constant struggling, and demonstrates that the poet too has been challenged by life, successfully providing him with an authenticity that gives effectiveness to his poetry. However, GCM has not remained silent, choosing instead to raise his voice and his pen. It is through writing that one is able to counteract the "sanction" that is everyday life without a voice.

The textual clock functions as the structure for the awakening poetic consciousness, which develops through language, and later writing. The poetic register begins with the subjunctive, a string of "que" repeated four times in the first two lines, and evolves to

incorporate a more suburban spoken dialect, integrating slang and verlan. The subjunctive opens the poem, once again connecting time: “avant que” with the atmosphere of possibility, and a tone of optimism. Born before sunrise the poetic voice’s consciousness is activated “Quand le soleil apparaît” (v. 5), and he immediately begins to study the three most important topoi in his album, time, space, and language: “Je tente de comprendre le temps et j’analyse mon espace/Pas de temps à perdre ce matin, je commence par l’alphabet/Y’a plein de choses à apprendre si tu veux pas finir tebê” (vv. 6-10). Intelligence and education are therefore linked to two languages: the alphabet, with which we learn to “lire et à écrire” (v. 12), and street language: adapting, manipulating, and restructuring common language to meet other needs. While verlan and other slang are important components in most French slam poetry as examples of authenticity, GCM uses verlan to highlight the direction language moves through mastery. In using words like “tebê,” verlan for “bête,” he defines his background, restricts his audience, and establishes his mastery of a language that takes the French of l’Académie Française and reappropriates it for his home spaces. Verlan also serves the purpose of giving him poetic authority: he assures his reader “je vais pas faire le tho-my” (“mytho”—“mythomane”). In creating the distance between himself and an audience who doesn’t understand the word “tebê,” GCM is removing the hierarchical power from the Frenchman who believes he speaks a more pure, original French, surreptitiously calling him stupid. Verlan also serves to ally his cause to a common rebellion against those who might think there is a definable static French into which marginal dialects do not fit. In so doing, GCM becomes an effective “slambassadeur” and labels the mastery of different registers of language as a foundation for a writer.

Becoming a writer is biographically linked to his accident and to his loss of movement which happens at “11 heures 08” in line 27, however, the becoming is also written into the fabric

of the poem through the movement from language to metaphor. From learning the alphabet, to learning to read and write, the poetic voice must now show mastery of the many directions language can take. Through the repetition of the word "coup," GCM links each metaphor to the overarching theme of the play between writing and orality. It is in line 20 that the clock begins chiming at increased intervals and the formulaic metaphors begin to increase, widening the clock time/life metaphor to include being a target: "Celui qui veut me viser, je lui conseille de changer de cible" (v. 21), to weather metaphors: "Il fait chaud … mais tout à coup, alors que dans le ciel, y'avait pas un seul nuage/A éclaté au-dessus de moi un intolerable orage" (vv. 25-6), to a driving and movement metaphor: "Il est 11 heures 08 quand ma journée prend un virage" (v. 27), and finally a chess metaphor: "J'ai eu de la chance je suis pas passé très loin de l'échec et mat" (v. 39). Time moves more quickly in the moments before the accident, and though it is not narrated, the storm building through the middle of the poem strikes with the same word that strikes the hour: *coup* ("sur les **coups** de __heures vv. 12, 24, "tout à **coup**" (v. 25, my emphasis)): "Je me suis pris un éclair comme un **coup** d'électricité/Je me suis relevé mais j'ai laissé un peu de mobilité" (vv. 29-30, my emphasis).

The repetition of *coup* in the middle section of the poem connects time to the body, by way of the "cou" or neck, the biographical accident physically causing change to the area of the writer's body that produces speech: "Mais y'a des cicatrices plus profondes qu'une trachéotomie" (v. 38). In an interview with François Busnel on France 5 (December 6, 2012) GCM is asked whether he thinks he became an artist who uses language because he had his mobility (and therefore his potential career in sports) taken away. He answers:

> Je pense que j'aurais jamais la réponse. Des fois je me dis, mais non, j'aurais trouvé le slam, j'aurais su developer cette passion même si j'avais continué à faire

> du sport, des fois je me dis que j'aurais pas mis la même énergie si j'avais continué à faire du sport à côté. Donc, voilà. Peut-être pas finalement. (youtube.com)

Though he resists the idea in the interview in 2012, "Midi 20" provides a different answer. It is through the breaking of his neck that the GCM of the poem is able to find his poetic voice, and though it enters as a violent element cutting into his life, it causes him to begin writing:

> À midi moins le quart, j'ai pris mon stylo bleu foncé/J'ai compris que lui et ma béquille pouvaient me faire avancer/J'ai posé des mots sur tout ce que j'avais dans le bide/J'ai posé des mots et j'ai fait plus que combler le vide. (vv. 41-4)

The play with the sound of *coup/cou* alludes to the "Adieu adieu soleil cou coupé" that finishes Apollinaire's "Zone," however, GCM's sun has only gone behind a cloud, not set for the day. It is still before noon and the throat that was cut has now taken up a pen in order to create his own daylight: "Et dans l'obscurité, j'avance au clair de ma plume" (v. 46). Instead of looking back and saying adieu, the passing time and the climax of the accident becomes the optimistic greeting—the repetition of the sound in *coucou*, this time to a new community: "le cercle des poètes du bitume" (v. 45). Seen most clearly in the title track, this repetition of "coup" as optimistic *ritournelle* is seen in other poems in the album. The word "coup" takes on a polyphonic meaning for GCM, challenging the ephemerality of language. Just like a shock, a word can make a difference and leave a mark that resonates outside of its textual structure. In "Vu de ma fenêtre," even more of the synonyms of "coup" are used and GCM assures the audience/reader that the word choice is not purely stylistic:

> Parce que oui, vu de ma fenêtre, je vois pas mal d'espoir,/Quand je vois le petit blond jouer au foot avec le petit noir,/Quand je vois des gens qui se bougent,

> quand je vois des gens qui se mettent des **coups** de pied au cul,/Pour sortir de la zone rouge, et pour que la vie vaille le **coup** d'être vécue./Quand je vois ces deux hommes qui boivent un **coup** en riant, alors qu'ils sont soi-disant différents,/Parce que l'un dit "Shalom" et l'autre dit "Salam" mais putain ils se serrent la main, c'est ça l'âme de mon slam,/Je prends ça comme un bon signe, c'est peut-être un espoir infime,/Mais je te jure que je l'ai vu, c'est pas pour la rime. (vv. 33-40)

With the repetition of "coup," GCM takes the metaphorical and makes it material, linking it to its dialogic function as a connection between two bodies. Though *coup* contains an allusion to violence, it also bridges the divide between two separate entities, forming an *agencement* between separate intimate territories and times. "Coup" therefore links the material to the oral, producing a poetic understanding of shared space and time.

The salutation "cou cou" shows that there exists a moment in writing that is what the writer forever searches to reproduce. In "Toucher l'instant" he speaks of creating an atmosphere that exists outside of space and time, a territory created by his *ritournelle*:

> Il existe paraît-il, un instant dans l'écriture/Qui oublie la page blanche et efface les ratures/Un véritable état second, une espèce de transe/Qui apparaît mystérieusement et s'envole en silence/Que l'on rape ou que l'on slam, on recherche ce moment/Il allume une flamme qui nous éclaire brièvement/Cette flamme est la preuve, laisse-moi t'en faire une démo/Qu'il est possible de combattre le mal par les mots/C'est tout sauf une légende, on espère juste toucher l'instant/Les quelques secondes du poète qui échappent à **l'espace-temps**. (vv. 5-15, my emphasis)

In "Midi 20," the poetic voice is nostalgic for the time before the accident, ("[m]ais j'avoue que

j’ai encore souvent la nostalgie de 10 heures du mat’” (v. 40)), and realizes he is no longer a child: “[j]e voudrais être encore un enfant mais j’ai déjà 28 piges” (v. 58). But the accident brings an understanding and acceptance in the optimism by looking towards the future. Because *pige* is both slang for year, and for the verb *piger* meaning “to understand,” time is once again allied with a growing understanding of language and of the resilience that writing produces. The poem ends on an especially positive note, bending the metaphorical time beyond a life that would end at sunset to life ending at midnight, providing the time to still accomplish a great amount: “Car si la journée finit à minuit, il me reste quand même pas mal de temps” (v. 51). Though the end is inevitable, both in writing and in life (“C'est vrai que la vie est rarement un roman en 18 tomes” (v. 53)), writing is a gateway into action, and into the enjoyment of the everyday: “Je vais croquer dans chaque instant, je ne dois pas perdre une minute/Il me reste tellement de choses à faire que j'en ai presque le vertige” (vv. 56-7).

In contrast to the *nous* in other poems, the poetic voice separates the *slameur* from his reader through a focus on the specific context that brought him to the moment he sat down to write this poem. He addresses his reader as *vous* here, stressing the personal aspects of his life’s temporality, as opposed to the communal space described for the “tu” in “Saint-Denis.” He does this in order to draw attention to how sharing space and sharing memories are different affective operations. He ends the poem by leaving his readers/audience to follow what his writing has driven him to do, namely act:

> **J'ai** assommé ma pudeur, **j'ai** assumé mes ardeurs/Et **j'ai** slamé **mes** joies, **mes** peines, **mes** envies et **mes** erreurs/Il est midi 19 à l'heure où **j'**écris ce con d'texte/**Je vous** ai décrit ma matinée pour que **vous** sachiez le contexte/Car si la journée finit à minuit, il **me** reste quand même pas mal de temps/**J'ai** encore tout

> l'après-midi pour faire des trucs importants/C'est vrai que la vie est rarement un roman en 18 tomes/Toutes les bonnes choses ont une fin, on ne repousse pas l'ultimatum/Alors **je** vais profiter de tous les moments qui me séparent de la chute **Je** vais croquer dans chaque instant, **je** ne dois pas perdre une minute/Il **me** reste tellement de choses à faire que **j'en ai** presque le vertige/**Je** voudrais être encore un enfant mais **j'ai** déjà 28 piges/Alors **je** vais faire ce qu'il faut pour que **mes** espoirs ne restent pas vains/D'ailleurs **je vous** laisse, là c'est chaud, il est déjà midi 20. (vv. 47-60)

In this poem, which is the most autobiographical poem and also namesake of the album, it would seem he is saying that living life to the fullest means departing from writing. However, the stress on the gap between the "je" and the "vous" demonstrates how this moment in his life is particular to his memory, movements, and choices. Though the singular poetic voice stands out against the idea of a collectively lived life, the move from metaphorical time back to writing time once again stresses the importance of the present moment. The end to the poem confirms the hurry the poet is in to live each moment. Having established the intimacy of affective temporality, the next section demonstrates how space provides the stage on which to share the experience of dwelling. As I have shown, dwelling for GCM is living through memory and focusing not on regret, but on inviting others to share in the optimism life can provide.

V. C. SPATIAL DWELLING AND THE STAGE

After having established how performing space is linked to leaving a mark in "Le jour se lève" and redefined through memory and affective temporality in "Midi 20," this section looks at the plurality of perspectives and trajectories that make up the album's spatial component that

mimics the slam stage. The second track, “Saint-Denis” is one of the more well-known and more often performed of GCM’s poems. The poem’s place as second track in the album means that its position serves as descriptor to set the stage with an overview of the diversity in sounds, smells, tastes, and sights that the city has to offer before delving into the overall metaphor of city as stage. The invitation into Saint-Denis calls upon the whole body of the audience/reader as a mirror image of the make-up of the body of the “grande dame.” The reader becomes a tourist of the poetic voice’s spaces, but is ordered to participate as though through an initiation rite. As I showed earlier, the poem begins with a conditional dedication to the personification of the city as a “grande dame” (v. 1) and “vieille femme” (v. 3). After the first stanza, which is identical to the last, the conditional “voudrais” becomes an imperative as the poem is directed not at the “grande dame” but at a “tu” who is invited to discover the diverse community that makes up “cette banlieue nord de Paname qu’on appelle Saint-Denis” (v. 4).

The poem is divided into grammatical sections, each with a presiding temporal structure in the dialogue between poetic voice and reader. From the conditional to the imperative, the “tu” of the reader is brought into the future sights, the logical next step after having followed the poetic voice’s instructions: “Prends la ligne D du RER et erre dans les rues sévères … Prends la ligne 13 du métro et va bouffer au McDo … prends le tramway et va au marché” (vv. 5-7). The imperative instructions situate the spatial, by echoing directions from a GPS while adding an invitation to get lost. Once the directions are given, the poetic voice and “tu” move together through the poem, sights, sounds, smells, and feelings experienced in the *futur simple*: “tu verras” (v. 8), “je t’apprendrai la danse” (v. 16), “j’t’enseignerai la patience” (v. 16). Getting lost becomes part of the imperative, the advice about multiple choices—“erre, va bouffer au McDo **ou** dans le bistrots” (vv. 5-6, my emphasis) functioning as an invitation for a repeated gesture

that mimics the everyday experience of a local inhabitant. The poetic voice uses the space to stack choices, echoing Lefebvre's third moment of social space, showing that an activity is what defines the space. Each line of the poem harmonizes the potential choices to be made to experience the city by stacking the choices instead of advancing in a linear manner through the markets and streets. The poetic voice complicates the choice: "ou" (or) by aligning it with "où" (where). The space becomes stacked temporalities and plural possibilities that complicate what it means to perform a space. The poetic voice is not asking the *tu* to visit Saint-Denis, but to rehearse and then perform it through repetition.

The first example of the repetition as rehearsal takes place through meals. In *Midi 20*, food becomes a way of linking the ideas of orality with instinct. GCM writes: "On a faim de se faire entendre, moi j'ai l'appétit cannibal" (v. 6). Food, like writing, is a necessity for GCM, and as he sees it, for all of humanity. From the beginning of "Saint-Denis" the possibility of eating diverse cuisines is presented not as a sequential list but as a list of choices enticing the possibility of a return. The "McDo," "bistrots," "bouffer du Mafé à Bamako et à Yamoussoukro," "on ira juste derrière manger une crêpe là où ça sent Quimper et où ça a un petit air de Finistère" (vv. 6-10) initially show the diversity of the center of Saint-Denis as a multi-ethnic space, but it also causes the space to span enough time to eat several meals, showing that the poem is going deeper than just giving an exposition of sounds, sights, smells, and tastes of the city. The poetic voice repeats his invitation to eat: "Si tu veux bouffer pour 3 fois rien, j'connais bien tous les petits coins un peu poisseux/On y retrouvera tous les vauriens, toute la jet-set des aristocrasseux" (vv. 20-1) and again in verse 30 "où à Carrefour tu peux même acheter de la choucroute Hallal" (v. 30). Eating becomes the repeated activity that differentiates the tourist from the local through an invited dialogic relationship with Saint-Denis as a multi-ethnic space.

Though meals link the traveling body to the city, the body must learn the different activities that define each space, putting it in dialogue through the performative mechanism of pedagogy. The poetic voice serves as guide and teacher: “Devant les magasins de zouk, je t’apprendrai la danse. Les après-midis de galère, tu connaîtras l’errance. Si on va à la Poste j’t’enseignerai la patience…” (vv. 16-18). He continues with his lesson by way of the guided tour: “La rue de la République mène à la Basilique où sont enterrés tous les rois de France, tu dois le savoir! Après Géographie, petite leçon d’histoire” (v. 17). In a similar way to the memoir narrative of “Midi 20,” “Saint-Denis” causes the reader to advance through the space like the poetic consciousness in “Midi-20,” beginning with food, movement, and advancing through language to poetry. Words signify multiple meanings and highlight choice of sound in homonyms or choice of verlan usage with synonyms:

> Au **marché** de Saint-Denis, faut que tu sois **sique-phy**. Si t’aimes pas être bousculé tu devras rester **zen**/Mais sûr que tu prendras des accents plein les tympans et des odeurs plein le **zen**/Après le **marché** on ira **ché-mar** rue de la République, le sanctuaire des magasins pas chers. (vv. 12-4)

Repetitions of homonyms “zen” as calm and “zen” as the verlan for “nez” show different degrees of definition between adjective and noun, while “marché” and “ché-mar” complicates the definition of market by adding how it should be experienced. The noun is aligned with the verb in verlan, once again highlighting the invitation to perform the city through a complex combination of physical trajectories and footsteps that become both verbs, “ché-mar,” nouns “zen,” and adjectives: “sique-phy.” Each production of a word reimagines its textual performance in the same way as each spatial moment can be defined differently through a variety of actions. At the end of the poem, the poetic voice assumes the “je” as an explanation. He has

both been changed by his city and is actively changing it. Experiencing the city leads the poetic voice to want to write about it:

> C'est pas une ville toute rose mais c'est une ville vivante. Il s'passe toujours quelqu'chose, pour moi elle est kiffante/J'connais bien ses rouages, j'connais bien ses virages, y'a tout le temps du passage, y'a plein d'enfants pas sages, **j'veux écrire une belle page**, ville aux cent mille visages,/St-Denis-centre mon village/J'ai 93200 raisons de te faire connaître cette agglomération. Et t'as autant de façons de découvrir toutes ses attractions. (vv. 25-8, my emphasis)

In stacking census information with the topographical—population ("ville aux cent mille visages," zip code: "J'ai 93200 raisons," guide book blurb: "rouages, virages, y'a tout le temps du passage"), he is contrasting how the urban space is changed by how the inhabitants are invited to read and write it. Both the spaces and the words are recreated by the movements of the inhabitants, for example the "passages" are split by "plein d'enfants **pas sages**" (v. 25, my emphasis). More importantly, GCM asks the reader to participate in the writing of the poem, by playing with the resonance and rhyme in the last line before the final refrain: "Ici on est fier d'être dyonisiens, j'espère que j't'ai convaincu. Et si tu m'traites de parisien, j't'enfonce ma béquille dans l'... nonnnnn" (v. 31). The audience/reader anticipates the missing humorous rhyme of "cul" from the final sound in "convaincu." The vulgarity of the phrase is elided, but elicits laughter from the audience through an understanding of the omitted sound. Having added to the writing of the poem solidifies the invitation to participate in a *soirée slam*:

> Derrière ce bâtiment monumental, j't'emmène au bout de la ruelle, dans un petit lieu plus convivial, bienvenu au Café Culturel/On y va pour discuter, pour boire, ou jouer aux dames. Certains vendredi soirs, y'a même des soirées slam. (vv. 18-

9)

The Café Culturel is where GCM started his first slam show called “Slam’Aleikoum” with his friend John Pucc’Chocolat. Though Saint-Denis is not inhabited only by slam poets, GCM’s Saint-Denis is a space created through the performance of its citizens and tourists. In referencing the many kinds of people who make up Saint-Denis, he is creating a polyphonic space that mirrors the slam stage. The city becomes the stage just as the stage embodies the diversity of the city. The slam stage thus becomes a condensed version of the everyday experience, a microcosm that serves as dwelling or affective home of those who frequent it, making it a successful platform for slam’s pedagogical message.

V. D. THE PEDAGOGICAL REBELLION

As a conclusion to the connection between space, temporality, writing, and affect, I end this chapter with a reading of “Attentat verbal,” in which slam takes on its paradoxical role of rebellion through pedagogy. The slam stage in *Midi 20* becomes a self-reflexive space that mirrors how GCM sets up his vision of the *cité* throughout the album. It is temporary and moveable and its only definition made up of people, words, and text. As we saw in “Le jour se lève,” GCM’s relationship to writing is sonic and physical, and he mirrors the graffiti artist who leaves his mark for others to read and to be incited to respond by engraving his surroundings. In “Attentat verbal,” GCM defines the slam space as plural, focusing on the element of unexpectedness, a sort of rebellion with words that echoes the affect searched for through graffiti. However, “Attentat verbal” takes on a pedagogical tone, becoming an explanation of slam to those who do not know about it, even stressing that the slam stage can be found in schools and other unexpected public spaces. It is both an attack and a community builder. In

describing the many definitions of slam, the poet is both educating his audience and enticing them to contribute, if only through a positive memory: “Mais si tu écoutes un tout petit bout, p’t-être bien que t’en sortiras ravi/Et ça c’est important pour nous, c’est grace à ça qu’on se sent en vie” (vv. 3-4). *Midi 20* thus functions as an exposition of slam, by focusing on its spaces, structures, rhythms, and performers and “Attentat verbal” brings all definitions to a climax that mimics the live:

> Capable de faire irruption dans des endroits inattendus/Dans des bars et des théâtres, tu nous a déjà entendu/Mais on a déboulé aussi dans des collèges, dans des lycées/Dans des squares et dans la rue, on a posé, toi-même tu sais/Le principe est clair: lâcher des textes là où et quand tu t'y attends pas/Claquer des mots un peu partout et que ça pète comme un attentat/Dans des salles ou en plein air, laisser des traces, faire des ravages/Va demander au 129H ce qu'on appelle le slam sauvage. (vv. 9-16)

Throughout the album, shared writing and text are what define the performative urban space. In “Attentat Verbal,” the track opens with eleven clips from other slam artists: Rouda, Hocine Ben, Samy, Droopy &Techa, Néobled, Sancho, S Petit Nico, Lyor, Ami Karim, and John’Pucc Chocolat. Though several other tracks on the album are collaborations with other slam artists, or have been set to music by S Petit Nico, they still contain the studio sound of prerecorded sound production and voice-over. The penultimate track, “Ma tête, mon coeur et mes couilles” is the only live recording, taken from a performance at Café Culturel.

In beginning with the oral clips of other artists, GCM is making a dedication, giving the artists name recognition, and playing with the notion of liveness. Philip Auslander questions the rivalry between the live and the recorded as a movement between the real and the artificial (11).

In contrast to Peggy Phelan, who states that a performance only has life in the present and cannot be saved in any way and cannot therefore be captured by writing, Auslander focuses on how all performance is already a commodity, and already based on a relationship with memory (148). The qualities associated with liveness—spontaneity, community, presence, and feedback still have to be consistent with a previous experience. In slam poetry, the written composition is already a performance in that it relies on sound memory and symbolic capital as part of the writing process. However, an album or a performance by a single slam artist contrasts the open-mic setting of the original *soirées slam* to which GCM is referring. For this reason, in order to recreate a definition of slam, he must recreate the stage as communal space.

In his description of slam, GCM redefines the pronoun *nous/on* to mean slam poet. His slam poet is part of a community, but brings the element of authenticity through a personal, intimate memoir, weaving the life stories together to make up the fabric of their shared urban space. It is here one sees the *nous/on* as both singular and plural, paradoxically a relationship that relies on individual experience to produce the effect of community. GCM raises the question to answer it through his definition of slam:

> C'est quoi, c'est qui, ces mecs chelous qui viennent pour raconter leur vie/C'est elle, c'est lui, c'est moi, c'est nous, on vient même si t'as pas envie/Mais si t'écoutes un tout petit bout, p't-être bien que t'en sortiras ravi/Et ça c'est important pour nous, c'est grâce à ça qu'on se sent en vie. (vv. 1-4)

In answering his own question, he is complicating his transmission on a solo album: “On arrive comme un accident dans des endroits insolites/Tu nous verras souvent en groupe, on vient rarement en soliste” (v.41-2). Slam is a collective art form, based on individual authentic experiences transmissible through writing. Though the stage is essential to the process, the album

shows that the aura of the performance can be transmissible in another way. The transmission is essential to the slam experience. It may be a verbal attack, but GCM and the other slam artists feel strongly about wanting their texts to be well-received and appreciated. Connection to the audience is essential: “Crois pas que ton avis m’est égal” (v. 8).

As though giving a lecture to his students of slam, GCM outlines the variety that makes up a slam stage, but focuses just as closely on the connection to the shared affect with the audience. He writes:

> On pose des textes énervés, ou de geon-pi sentimental/On aborde un peu tous les thêmes avec ou sans instrumental/Mentalement prêt à proposer partout un intermède vocal/Une interruption sonore, un homicide amical … C'est un poème, c'est une chanson, c'est du rap ou du slam/Ferait tellement plaisir qu'après ce texte tu t'enflammes/Appelle ça un ego-trip ou appelle ça du freestyle/On est solide comme de la brique et fragile comme du cristal. (vv. 17-20, 33-6)

With the repetition of paradoxical definitions, GCM is saying there is no definition for slam poetry. Instead, he focuses on slam *moments*, and the urban stage as affective shared space—the *dwelling* he has set up throughout the album, as seen most clearly in “Toucher l’instant:” “Il existe paraît-il, un instant dans l’écriture/Qui oublie la page blanche et efface les ratures/Un veritable état second, une espèce de transe/Qui apparaît mystérieusement et s’envole en silence” (vv. 5-8). Anticipating the final track of the album, “Attentat verbal” states clearly that the emotional and dialogic connection to other people is essential: “J’ai des paroles pour te réveiller et j’en ai pour te bercer” (v. 23). Slam is an attack and it is a pleasure: “Le plaisir de capter des regards un peu déstabilisés/Qui se disent ceux-là, ils ont pas peur de se ridiculiser/Le plaisir de capter des regards parfois remplis d'émotion/Dans ces cas là, on sait qu'on a passé le test avec

mention" (vv. 25-28). The pedagogical lexicon in "Attentat verbal" links necessity to the promise of social connectedness by way of emotional memory of having been collectively judged, scored, graded, passed, or failed. This collective intimacy mirrors the emotional investment of performing a text on stage since as an emotion it is inherently paradoxical, unpredictable, and untamable.

The classroom is a reminder of a shared institutional past in the same way meals are a way of crossing national and cultural borders in "Saint-Denis." Good food, shared meals and emotions are contrasted with grades—the ultimate elements of institutional measurement: "On prend la parole à l'apéro et on la prend au dessert/Mais si les plus sceptiques nous disent 'mais à quoi ça sert ?'/À pas grand chose c'est vrai, j'avoue, si ce n'est à partager/Des bons mots, des bons moments et des lyrics enragés" (vv. 29-32). In mirroring the slam stage to the city and the slam performance to a shared meal, GCM is overturning a social and national hierarchy based on a set standard of judgment through a pre-existing language and inviting his audience to define what slam is on a more personal, less institutional level. In opening the track with eleven other overlapping slam artists, he shows how their varied styles are impossible to define or summarize.

The hybrid recording of this track as both live and studio highlights the aura created by the medium, and attempts to condense the *instant* in a similar way to the condensed life in a day in "Midi 20." The clips are more sound bite than narrative, an exposition of the variety of timbres, rhythms, and word play used by the slam artists. The track is entirely without musical accompaniment and GCM recites with an urgent and naked intimacy. Before beginning his recitation, he picks up where the final clip by John Pucc'Chocolat leaves off, becoming the singular spokesperson for a collective genre. His response to "va! Apporte leur ceci" is to educate in order to expand his audience, legitimizing slam as an intertextual art form and

pedagogical tool. Seen performed in this track, intertextuality is a portable pedagogical device used in slam workshops. Poets are inspired to listen, interrupt, and quote each other, working in new rhymes into their texts in order to accommodate for the specific slam moment. Many writing workshops even use canonical texts as poetic inspiration, asking their students to rewrite, update, or respond to original texts (as I will show in the next chapter). For this reason, slam provides an access and a refreshing look at the type of French poetry that has become unpopular among students and readers.

This point of access proves an essential response to Gioia's question, "Can poetry matter?" Though each track has its own refrain, the overarching *ritournelle* of the album becomes intertextuality. GCM's play with the poetized urban space as seen through citations and allusions to the canonical Apollinaire legitimizes slam as a genre that resonates beyond the stage but has a lasting physical presence on the page. In so doing, GCM calls upon Apollinaire as a slam poet *avant la lettre*, eliminating the contemporaneity and generational aspects of the poetry and universalizing the necessity to write, leave a mark, and engrave our surroundings. For this reason, he redefines slam poetry as an equally textual genre: transmissible, material, and contagious. *Midi 20* brings to light its own intertextual and diegetic correspondences, poetic instrumentalisation, and proves that poetry can redefine a space to fit the needs of its community.

VI. CHAPTER 5: *SLAM AU FÉMININ*: NEGOTIATING THE MARGINAL AND THE *LUDIQUE*

In the previous four chapters, performance has been inextricably linked to unveiling the poetic mechanisms of the text by drawing on its own materiality and its ability to produce words that replace and incite actions. Because of this link, my analysis has shown that language and action are perceptibly dialogic in moments of conflict. In the texts I have studied, cruelty, shock, suffering, and hardship provide for interesting and useful paradigms through which to read how writing is itself performative. Though the text functions as a score, it is ultimately separate from its stage performance and transmission becomes an essential part of the performative process—what I call the affective interval. As I showed in the first three chapters, a word can be as effective as a punch and as resonant as guilt. In the previous chapter, I analyzed the textual performativity of slam poetry through a transcription of the recorded poetry on Grand Corps Malade's debut album *Midi 20*. Though the stage was present through the poetic voice's relationship with the construction of the suburban space, the album differentiated itself from slam in that it was a stage dominated by a single performer. In contrast to GCM's commercial success as a slam artist, much of slam poetry remains an irreproducible singular performance at an open mic night, a writing workshop, or competition in which the performer is given 3-5 minutes to recite a previously composed work in front of an audience. As popularity for the genre has grown, compilations of those most involved with the slam scene have been published, sometimes including one to five poems by 20-30 poets. It is here that one sees the polyphonic

contribution from women slam artists. Anthologies of slam poetry have become the most common ways in which oral poetry has bridged the textual and the form that most closely mirrors the live stage performance at the *soirées slam*. In this chapter I analyze the collective aspect of slam poetry from the point of view of contributions made by women through the associations *Slam ô féminin* and 129H Productions.

Through an analysis of the different relationship women's associations have had with slam, this chapter demonstrates how the notion of the collective is portrayed in poetry in order to combat gendered struggles in the urban environment. My analysis focuses on the productivity of the marginal, in terms of both genre and gender. The marginal takes on a multi-directional format in my analysis because several marginal points of view make up the collective culture of slam. First, as a genre, slam is still a marginally published genre, relying ultimately on live moments, anthologies, and recorded albums for transmission. Secondly, successful slam performers highlight their authentic marginal identities as poetic authority on stage. Third, slam's rise in popularity is due in part to the programs of social outreach to marginalized urban communities such as homeless people, people with mental illness, drug addicts, juvenile delinquents, abused women, and the hospitalized.

In this chapter, I focus on the interval between poetic victim and a collectively poetic slam voice, as demonstrated in the text's reflection on the journalistic *fait divers*. In creating a collective, marginality becomes a new *noyau*, a territory formed through making the writing process part of an everyday experience. Displacing the collective to a marginal community disrupts stable notions of gender, class, and cultural heritage in order to accommodate an alternate view of victimization in a way that makes use of language to reestablish social positions. In reaching out to marginalized communities through writing workshops, the slam

association has redefined the mainstream cultural context of structures of meaning— in a way that puts in dialogue journalistic language and intimate private linguistic structures. Since there is no universal language for suffering, or for humor, reading the poetry of these associations must make use of an internal intertextuality in a way that produces an intimate familiarity to counteract solitude and suffering through linguistic structures. Though that which I define as the affective space as *home* is created differently in each of my chapters, its synthesis can be seen most clearly in this chapter in the move between the particular to the collective through writing. From scribbles on a napkin at a bar to stepping up behind the microphone, the writing process in these associations is a nurturing space in which the collective feeling of acceptance is coupled with encouragement for each writer to find her own voice from her past experiences and struggles, and to cause it to take life in a new direction. An affective bond is created between those who share the stage yet also exists between the writer and her own poetic process. Therefore it is not only the stage collective that becomes a home for the performers, but the process of transforming writing into an element of everyday routine as natural as using the bathroom. Split into two sections, this chapter demonstrates how the writing process of slam can achieve two very different goals—the first, in the poetry of *Slam ô féminin* as therapeutic and inclusive; the second, in the poetry of slam poet RiM as playful and lighthearted.

My first section focuses on the reappropriation and redefinition of the marginality inherent in the *fait divers* by *Slam ô féminin* from poetic structure to poetic process through which to address women's victimization. This section focuses on the writing workshops and *Slam ô féminin*'s recently published anthology by L'Harmattan through the lens of the condensed narrative in the *fait divers*'s sound bite as potential response and refuge to cruelty, violence, depression, and loneliness. Because of the way the poems in the anthology are in dialogue with

each other, the intertextuality produces a polyphony that is habitually found in this form of poetry, and unveils the patterns of play between textuality and orality. For *Slam ô féminin*, marginality begets *marginalia*: a writing style that encourages writing as a constant, ubiquitous, everyday process. Napkins, notebooks, metro tickets, and margins of newspapers should be scribbled with ideas, rhymes, and responses to other written sources, because writing, and then sharing, is what combats the psychological and social struggles of the urban woman according to *Slam ô féminin*.

The second section analyzes a different reaction to women's marginality through humor, play, and artifice in the poetry and work of RiM (Amélie Picq Grumbach), the sole female member of 129H Productions (one of the first slam collectives) and founder of *One Maman Show*, a *soirée slam*, album, and recording targeting young children. For RiM, slam is a uniquely oral medium and though she has been published, her writing style reflects her mission as an artist to make a performer out of an audience, through an infusion of energy, intonation, and oral interactivity. I interviewed RiM about her poetry, musical, and performance projects and have incorporated her own analysis about slam poetry as an effective structure for newly forming marginal identities into this chapter. As an artist acutely aware of her own process and aesthetic message, RiM claims that textuality does not have a place in her poetry. However, through an analysis of two of her published poems, I argue that her message of the *ludique* highlights a point of convergence between textuality and orality that constructs slam as a hybrid genre.

VI. A. MARGINALIA AND THE *FAIT DIVERS*

As an association of only women, *Slam ô féminin* has had a unique role in the slam scene since 2003. Slam has thrived in France with the rise to celebrity status of men like Grand Corps

Malade, Souleymane Diamanka, and Abd al Malik, all of whom have broken into the realm of recording and mainstream publication. In contrast, *Slam ô féminin* has taken to community stages, focusing on the live element of slam. Though all slam artists must endeavor to exploit the many facets of live slam—from open mic nights, to soirées slam, to social outreach, to writing workshops in pedagogical settings, to rehearsed performances or slam competitions—the social outreach aspects of slam have been embraced by women slam artists and associations such as *SoF*[17] as a central aspect of the genre. According to the founders of *SoF*, a woman's role in the media overlaps with women's role in poetry. Where women in journalistic discourse often fall into a realm of objectification and victimization through stories that make use of the abject and shock value, the founders of *Slam ô féminin* maintain that women in poetry have traditionally been objectified as muse seen through the masculine poetic voice. In the work of *Slam ô féminin*, the journalistic *fait divers* is put into dialogue with the objectified poetic muse to uproot the role of the woman victim as inspiration of the gasp.

Though there exist many definitions of the *fait divers*, what remains constant is the connection to an affective response and the way marginality creates a bridge between print and oral cultures. Through a look at how the *fait divers* has become a point of departure for theorists such as Roland Barthes, Georges Auclair, and Jean Baudrillard in David H. Walker's analysis of the *fait divers* in modern French literature, one can see its use as a tool for emotional sharing transferred by word of mouth. Horrible stories of rape, murder, and accidents are not only transmitted by journals but by hearsay and *rumeur*. The Petit Robert dictionary defines a certain type of newspaper story as a *fait divers*, or "nouvelles peu importantes d'un journal" (1) and there is a notion of triviality associated with it. According to Walker, "the news function defines

[17] I will shorten *Slam ô féminin* to *SoF* at several points throughout the chapter.

itself by excluding what challenges it: hence the term *fait divers*, which separates out that which cannot be classified systematically, that which has no social consequence and therefore no news value" (1). Barthes claims that the very definition of the *fait divers* stems from the fact that it cannot be integrated into a system of meaning. If the context contains meaning, like a political assassination, then it draws on that meaning to define itself out of the margins. For Baudrillard it is the main category of thought in a consumer society since it puts political, historical and cultural information into terms that we can understand, the dramas and phantasms of everyday life. The *fait divers*'s value, then, falls ironically outside of a culturally constructed context, and yet its occurrence can be used to create context through emotions such as horror, surprise, empathy, shock, and disgust.

In a society where viral media stories have all but replaced investigative journalism, the *fait divers* is becoming a platform that bridges ideological and affective communities, even inciting action by counteracting communal apathy (think of animal rights activists and animal shelters using stories of mistreatment to raise money or adoption rates). News sources serve a variety of needs and the psychosocial needs are met by the *fait divers*, which addresses scandal, eliciting emotions of shock and gasps. Louis Chevalier writes:

> Les faits divers satisfont surtout … aux frustrations qui rongent les civilizations de masse. Comment expliquer autrement la lecture quotidienne par de nombreuses personnes de ces colonnes interminables et monotones d'incidents (vols, viols, accidents etc.) en trois lignes, qui, chaque jour, répètent leur litanie? (4)

Much of what is defined as trivial news cannot fit into a dominant ideology, causing much of what is of great intimate importance to remain unarticulated from the first person's point of view,

which is also that of the victim. The public's craving of stories of violence and victimization places the victim on a stage while also removing her ability to tell her own story. The players in the stories perform on a stage to which the readers remain riveted, day in and day out, perpetuating the marginality and solidifying the collective gasp at the expense of the voiceless.

Slam ô féminin's poetic community asks what is so appealing about scandal, violence, and suffering in others and how this appeal can be turned into a productive community building exercise. The affective quality of the *fait divers* that assures readership is remarkably strong. If writers over time have tried to employ the literary techniques of the *frisson* given by the *fait divers* through raw brutal reality, the *fait divers* ultimately places the victim in the role of third person. Deborah Streifford Reisinger writes that with a *fait divers* the media gives the criminal a voice and in doing so, activates the text through the point of view of the criminal. However, in the case of slam poetry, the authenticity inherent in the "je" causes the affective response of the *fait divers* to contribute to a collective understanding of what it means to be a victim—marginal spatially—relegated to the small print of the back of a newspaper, or to the edges of our understanding of the mysteries of everyday life. The *fait divers,* then, can also give voice to a productive subjectivity from the point of view of the victim. Women slam poets exploit the formal elements of the *fait divers* to manipulate how the *fait divers* can straddle print and oral cultures. These formal elements are: accessibility, universal intimacy, and a desire to be shared. The poets studied in this chapter do not focus on how the writer becomes a journalist, but how she responds to the *fait divers*, qualifies it, puts it into an affective context she can manipulate and understand. In doing so, she removes herself from the category of marginal and trivial and attaches herself to a community of victims with voices. Meaning, truth, and historicity remain unimportant because the context created is entirely affective. Consequently, the *fait divers* can be

a community builder from the point of view of the reader or writer. Georges Auclair shows how the *fait divers* "engages with the symbolic systems of a culture," calling on "la pensée naturelle" to make sense of the "scandale logique" which defies rational categories. Its themes include "mystery, chance and destiny, and unconscious fears and impulses which activate the collective imagination and bring into play various forms of projection and identification" (6). Both writing and reading give access to the imagination, but it is through sharing that the *collective* imagination is activated. SoF strives to activate this as a more productive process by harnessing the contagious abject element of the *fait divers*.

Using sensationalistic sound bites and newspaper articles as a scaffold from which to personalize global struggles, *Slam ô féminin* has provided a platform for tabloids to engender poetry. Their *ateliers d'écriture* focus on transforming marginality into a community that reverses the power of the abject voyeur. In their opening collective poem, the members of *SoF* write about making use of "le petit bruit du monde" (9) to generate hope in their community of writers. I argue that here, the *fait divers* is "le petit bruit du monde," transformed from information into a structure used to convert the macro into an intimate productive process. Their presence as an association is collaborative and therapeutic. In the *Annuaire des Associations for the Mairie de Paris,* their mission incorporates organizing regular open mic nights and writing workshops in the Parisian region, nationally, and even internationally. As an institution, their target audiences are already marginal communities and they stress that anyone is welcome: "enfants, adolescents, retraités, adultes en cours d'alphabétisation, chômeurs, SDF, handicapés mentaux, jeunes malvoyants, femmes en prison, tout public" (associations.apps.paris.fr).

Though reaching out to marginal communities is a practice embraced by many slam associations, *Slam ô féminin* connects marginality to gender in ways that transforms the *fait*

divers into a productive action. Last year the association celebrated their 10-year anniversary with a focus on how gender plays a role in the genre of slam. In an article in which she interviews four women slam artists, Hédi Moaroufi writes: “Après une galerie de portraits 100% testostéronée, il fallait d’urgence rééquilibrer la balance!” (57). She interviews Cat Mat, founder of *Slam ô féminin*, asking her how Cat Mat explains the role of poetry as a gendered discipline:

> Moaroufi: Comment expliques-tu l’image plutôt féminine de la poésie et la mise en avant d’auteurs surtout masculins? Cat Mat: Les muses sont au féminin, les poètes au masculin… La poésie, ça n’est pas féminin, c’est l’inspiratrice qui est féminine. On parle de représentation symbolique, bien sûr. Pourtant, il y a eu des artistes femmes, mais elles ont été mises dans un coin. Dans l’histoire des arts, ce sont surtout les hommes qui ont été reconnus. C’est souvent le regard d’hommes sur la femme en tant qu’image, en tant qu’objet, et en tant que muse, qui est reconnu. (58)

The role of poetic muse is already objectified and marginal, and women poets are relegated to the corner. With their writing workshops, *SoF* strives to make what Cat Mat considers the feminine side of poetry more than an inspiration by adopting a different view of the object. In doing so, poetic inspiration itself becomes an object and tool. Poetic inspiration must be welcomed at anytime, take the form of anything, and be transmissible anywhere. *SoF*’s mission is to incite people to respond to everyday struggles, joys, surprises, boredom, and the mundane by writing. As with other associations, slam is not about the final product, but about the process of writing, and the ability to articulate thoughts and feelings into a structure that can be shared. For example, *SoF* maintains that while reading an article in a magazine, a reader should be writing in the margins, responding to and raising questions. This everyday writing or marginalia

becomes a condensed version of the original text, a new centrality of the article, what you re-read to remember the essential elements. From these notes, memory can be shared and recreated. Marginalia is less of a rewriting of text, than a performance of what the text has inspired in the reader.

Marginalia thus reverses the trope of woman as muse because it becomes in itself an object worthy of poetic inspiration, and pushes the poet to see the poetic inspiration in the everyday. In one example of how marginalia becomes productive process, in a writing exercise organized for the *Nuit de l'Écriture* by *La Moquette par Compagnons de la Nuit*, the *animatrice* guided the group to write "on nothing," bridging the physical with the metaphorical by having the participants write their finished poetry on balloons. As initial inspiration, the poem "L'orange" by Francis Ponge was read aloud as an example of how to create the banal everyday objects into poetic inspiration. In this particular exercise the writing happened in three steps:

> Dans un premier temps, les participants ont été invités à écrire sur le ballon de baudruche en insistant sur la nature protéiforme de l'objet, sur ses dimensions sensorielles, mais surtout en jouant avec les mots, leur sonorité, leur possible double-sens. Dans un deuxième temps, les participants ont écrit dans l'esprit de l'exercice de style "Un état de chose" proposé par les papous dans la tête, l'histoire imaginaire du ballon singulier qu'il avait en main. Dans un troisième temps, les participants ont eu a écrire un texte ramassé à partir de leurs précédents écrits qu'ils ont ensuite recopiés sur leur ballon. (passages-ecriture.fr)

This process begins with setting up the lexicon and word play in the description, and finding the sound patterns in the choices. With each new step writing becomes a condensed version of the first impressions given by the object. In the final step, the poem must be condensed even more to

be able to fit onto the balloon itself. In this way, writing about the everyday object becomes a process of marginalia, condensing and finding the essential elements to recreate the text to reflect the mood and memory of a particular moment. The woman as muse is replaced and redefined by the everyday object as muse and separated from it as writer.

In the anthology published as a collection of the founders of *Slam ô féminin*'s first activity as an association during the "Journée internationale de la femme" in 2003, Cat Mat includes a poem ("Si je meurs tout à l'heure"), which was born spontaneously, beginning with this explanation: "*Un soir, au hasard, accoudée au comptoir d'un bar je me suis demandée*:" (76). In the poem, becoming a hypothetical victim through death, Cat Mat causes the reader of her poem to become like the reader of a *fait divers*, imagining the death of a lonely, poor poet and to pick apart her intimate belongings to try to piece together her life and death. Where the female poetic muse can be seen to fall into the category of the victim of the *fait divers*, the focus of this poem shows how to make use of the *inattendu* inherent in the *fait divers*'s objectified victim. Instead of removing scandal, horror, and the gasp from the *fait divers*, Cat Mat proposes inserting the same energy into the mundane. She writes out the inventory of what can be found in her apartment: "Si je meurs/Tout à l'heure/En sortant/D'ici/Je laisse peu/Peu de biens:/Des bouquins/Tas d'bouquins/Des CD/Des vinyls/2 tableaux/d'Art moderne/De mon frère/D'un ami/Et des films/À la pelle/Sur K7/Magnétiques" (vv. 1-18).

What she leaves behind are fragments of other media, useless souvenirs and "fantômes" (v. 26) that cannot resonate with an unknowing reader. Each item, like the hypothetical dead poet, is only a voiceless objects unless it is written into a structure that reflects the patterns and processes of a life. The poetic "je" only displaces the notion of the mysterious victim of the *fait divers* when rediscovered in refrain and performed:

> Si je meurs/Tout à l'heure/Ce soir/Je laisse peu/Peu de biens:/Mais du mien /Des refrains/De papier/Mes espoirs/D'encres noires/Des morceaux/De mémoire/Des histories/De ceux qui/Avant moi/Sont parties/La passion/Emotion/Mots qui swing/Dans la rime/Va et swing/Sur mes mots/Dans ta bouche/Après moi. (vv. 28-51)

Rewriting the *fait divers*, therefore, becomes an exercise in memory—finding the patterns that recreate emotions well enough to bring them into the present through sharing. For Cat Mat, this sharing can take place orally or textually. By leaving a trace of her passion and emotions, she is sharing a part of herself, inciting others to repeat her refrain through rhyme and rhythm: "Va et swing/Sur mes mots/Dans ta bouche/Après moi" (vv. 47-51). Though she considers slam poetry as indefinable, Cat Mat's refrain points to the oral quality of swinging words, rhymes, repetitions, and rhythms that resonate even after the poem has been read or performed. This kind of writing, like the voyeuristic *fait divers,* attempts to reproduce the feeling of contagious *rumeur,* inviting the audience to want to reproduce a similar effect through their own words. In this way, Cat Mat entices others to inhabit the marginal with her and develop a new centrality through language.

As one of the most outspoken of the original founders of *SoF*, Cat Mat's relationship to poetry is attached to the specificities of slam as a genre of the urban everyday. Battling a feeling of anonymity with words is an essential part of the role of slam on city stages, but for Cat Mat slam must reflect the spontaneity, orality, and the living, breathing materiality of language. Death serves as a metaphor for unshared poetic inspiration. When Cat Mat first discovered slam, she was delighted to find a place where her many texts could be given new life. She says:

"J'avais plein de textes dans les poches, qui étaient comme des petits cadavres, morts de ne pas être dits, je cherchais désespérément des scènes" (58). When she first started sharing her texts in traditional writing groups, the poets would give her advice about how to make her poetry more ethereal, less realistic. She sought a stage that was more anchored in the everyday, the "aujourd'hui, là, maintenant" (58) and found a place for her marginalia in slam. For Cat Mat, slam is a genre for everyone because it reflects the communicative desire to share moments of the everyday:

> Chacun l'a, ce droit à la parole, et n'importe quel lieu est bon. Aussi bien les bibliothèques que la rue, le café du coin, un théâtre, une prison, une église… Ça circule, ça écoute, ça se partage, et ça suscite. Ça circule parce que ça parle de nous avec nos mots, qui vont donner envie à d'autres de prendre ces mots pour les mettre dans leur bouche. (59)

For the founders of *SoF*, writing is a conscious and productively contagious act. However, women slam artists circulating around the various open mic nights in the early 2000s were in the minority. One of *SoF*'s early objectives was to entice more women to write and share by performing on stage. Cat Mat explains:

> Les spectacles sont l'occasion d'approfondir notre démarche, mais aussi de susciter l'envie du public de venir sur scène. Nos spectacles sont quasiment toujours suivis de scènes ouvertes, pour ne pas revenir au schéma classique du "nous sommes sur scène et tu es dans la salle, et tu la boucles parce que nous, on sait et toi, tu ne sais pas." On cherche à démystifier tout ça: le mot poésie, la prise de parole, le fait d'être sur scène… Les ateliers se font dans un esprit de partage,

> pour aider à passer le pas. S'essayer ensemble, tester, voir, donner des idées. Aider à accéder à la scène ouverte. C'est l'aboutissement. (59-60)

The stage is the space where process, structure, affect, and resonance come together into a cohesive moment. However, what is created by the stage can be accessed on a continual basis through the everyday writing of marginalia. The everyday becomes temporally defined by a constant renewing of the now through writing and spatially defined in the transfer from page to stage. Knowledge and experience are arbitrary as the goal is to reproduce the rawness of the now—the joy of sharing for sharing's sake. Sharing develops the notion of the collective experience, whose goal is to become a repeatable process. Cat Mat speaks about the role of identity in the *ateliers d'écriture* as an essential element of the slam process:

> Chaque être a des idées, des émotions, une richesse à partager et ses mots pour le dire quelles que soient ses origines culturelles ou artistiques, son âge, son niveau scolaire. Un atelier slam est un travail et une expression individuelle qui, dans un deuxième temps, s'ouvre au partage par la lecture, l'interprétation, la scène ouverte. Il s'agit de valoriser la personne, son vécu, ses capacités et ses connaissances, l'aider à les développer, puis de l'inscrire dans une dynamique de socialisation. Nous menons un travail sur la qualité artistique de l'expression (richesse de la langue, sonorité, rythme...) et de l'interprétation. (passages-ecriture.fr)

Though there is a strong focus on the live element of the interpreted written text, the choice to publish an anthology is an important one. *SoF*'s decision to extend their message beyond the stage was necessary in getting them off the ground as a cohesive association and not just a group of women who happened to perform together for one event. The anthology becomes a way of

drawing continued attention to the inherent plurality and fluidity of the slam stage. Because the goal is to increase the audience of slam poetry and to entice others to live their lives through the constant writing of marginalia, publication is a necessary step in that process. The anthology helps solidify the specific poetic intervals between the particular and universal identities by finding the spaces and moments where the notion of collective can thrive as a productive system.

VI. B. THE LIMINAL COLLECTIVE AND THE WAY *HOME*

In the first poem of the anthology, Audrey Chenu, Chantal Carbon, Cat Mat, Fleur, Marie Martias, and SheinB present a collectively written poem called "Sagesse" that functions as a *mode d'emploi* for their slam stage and an example of how they envision the role of writing slam as a refuge from women's struggles and suffering in the everyday urban experience. It begins as a call to arms to write—the most combative force and refuge against internal and external violence. The theme of writing as combative yet therapeutic resource echoes throughout the anthology. Chantal Carbon fights with her "soldats de papier" (v. 1): "Il y a dans mes cahiers/Des soldats de papier/Qui renaissent chaque jour/Pour parcourir le monde" (vv. 65-8). Fleur speaks about the revolutionary risk of speaking from your heart in "Les MOTS des-Armes": "Oser!/Prendre le risque de sortir des sentiers battus,/des themes trop de fois débattus! … Oser!/Prendre le risque/de parler des causes ignorées" (vv. 1-13). Audrey Chenu writes aggressively about how language and writing brings her back to a community from the violence she endured from a former partner: "Dans un brouillard de mots à couper au couteau, l'encre coule à flots,/il paraît qu'on est tous sur le même bateau?" (vv. 1-2). Shein B recognizes the affective weapon slam creates on stage in "À tous ceux et celles…": "Celle que je suis tu ne la connais que par mon Slam, cette arme au bord des larmes" (v. 7). Though the competitive

element of slam poetry is present at times in their spectacles, *SoF*'s goal remains to create a space of refuge—a set of rituals that contain the element of suspension inherent in the idea of *home*. As in the previous chapter, the stage as home exists on a symbolic level since it is an affective and fluid creation. Here, home is a nurturing environment that serves as a physical and psychological refuge from the negative triggers in everyday life. For some of the women—the homeless women particularly, the stage is more than a metaphorical refuge, it is a place to come in out of the cold and be offered a free drink for every text shared.

In this opening text, the "tu" is interpellated to discover the interval between the particular and universal in the *when* of writing. "Quand" activates writing as a response for a certain kind of weather, the "temps" of the "déluge" (v. 1) of violence and the temporal "temps" that "s'amoncellent" (v. 26)—crises, suffering, and violence becoming the monotony of life. Both weather and time are something that all humanity share and they create classless categories as a collective platform to respond to crisis:

> **Quand** violence pleut comme le déluge **quand** dans ta tête/Y'a plus d'refuge/Donne toi le droit d'parler d'crier, te contente pas d'croire/Et d'prier non, donne toi le droit de dire et d'être dure/Personne dicte ta vie en rature donne toi le droit d'pleurer/D'changer. Écrire le mot sagesse plutôt que venger. (vv. 1-6, my emphasis)

Though it opens with a call to arms at a specific moment of violence, it finishes by prompting writing as a universal answer to life: "Écrire le mot sagesse/Continuellement en devenir/Éternellement/Écrire le mot sagesse" (vv. 73-6).

Slam poetry that highlights the role of women becomes a social process that nudges the realm of anthropological performance, namely Victor Turner's notion of the liminal and the

threshold as ways to resolve crises. As we see in the opening stanza, the slam stage becomes a refuge by way of the collective pen. Turner's passion in performance studies was to seek out the networks and links in ritualistic behavior. Slam writing workshops highlight the process of writing as a network paradigm for how to combat crisis through social networks built through poetry. In Turner's work on the anthropology of performance he comes close to defining a collectively evolved brain: "a global population of brains … whose members are incessantly communicating with one another through every physical and mental instrumentality" (13). What writing produces in this environment is a productive affect that functions not unlike Aristotle's catharsis or Turner's "spontaneous communitas" (15) in which the "rhythmic activity of ritual, aided by sonic, visual, photic, and other kinds of 'driving,' may lead in time to simultaneous maximal stimulation of both systems, causing ritual par-affect" (15). Writing as a process is therapeutic, but what is it about slam that makes it particularly amenable to community building?

As I wrote earlier, according to *SoF*, slam poetry focuses on the "là, aujourd'hui, maintenant," (58) and is infused with an orality of street language. Most of the poetry in the anthology is missing consistent punctuation and is written phonetically, containing grammatical and spelling errors. The rhythmic and rhyming quality of slam is often used to create oral resonance and assure that the audience soaks in a given style or theme and is enticed to join in the refrain. For these slam poets, writing slam not only embodies the everyday, but *becomes* the everyday. Writing here overlaps with everyday life in that it is about repetition, dialogue, silence, choice, style, the cyclical, retracing our steps, finding our bearings, negotiating around temporal and spatial landmarks, confronting internal conflict, and daring to be a productive element in society. In this way the repetition inherent in slam becomes a constant performance—a set of

repeated movements and rehearsals, stage performances, and assumptions of multiple identities depending on context.

Because of the plural writing style, the pronouns in “Sagesse” are fluid, fluctuating between the particular and universal, and thereby both presenting and challenging stereotypes of gender and class. This first poem removes the obligation to understand the individual biographical backgrounds of each of the poets and instead focuses on a new plural identity. The narrative of “Sagesse” is already collective, interwoven with several storylines of hardship and crisis through the point of view of “la terre” or “elle” and a “je” who states “je m’appelle DIGNITÉ je n’oserais dire HUMANITÉ” (v. 22). The earth character plays against the plural “je” because the “je” fits into a vision of humanity that excludes its own members:

> Vite une échelle les larmes de la terre ruissellent tout comme les blessures/Du temps s’amoncellent. Elle croit que son sort est scellé comme elle/Vomie cette humanité qui semble ensorcelée, Pour ne plus alimenter/Sa rage elle refuse de se nourrir car ce monde est à vomir. Elle ne peut même/Pas gémir dans cette vie trop lisse. Trop éprise de justice chaque exclusion/Lui porte préjudice. (vv. 25-30)

The earth is mirrored in the solitude of a homeless woman: “Alors elle déguise sa tristesse écoeurée par ce monde qui l’a prise de vitesse/Dont chaque SDF atteste. Des resources elle en a mais ça ne l’aide pas/parce que tout le monde/N’en n’a pas … On s’tape souvent des coups d’blues dans les coulisses de la solitude” (vv. 31-4). In this stanza, solitude is both instigator and consequence of the woman’s victimization. “Tristesse” and “coups d’blues” are symptoms of solitude that need to be masked in order to move forward.

However, though the earth is a singular pronoun, she encompasses the collective through the idea of resource. Ubiquitous resources do not solve the problem of homelessness, exclusion,

or solitude. In an effort to combat her situation as marginalized in the "coulisses de la solitude," the homeless woman removes herself from the commerce of resources by refusing to eat: "pour ne plus alimenter/Sa rage elle refuse de se nourrir car ce monde est à vomir" (v. 29). Eating and vomiting as alternatives for speech have become leitmotivs of problematic orality in several of the texts in my dissertation. In "Sagesse," the homeless woman is without resource because she is voiceless and therefore mirrors her voicelessness in her refusal to eat. Like the victim of the *fait divers*, she is relegated to the stage through the eyes of the voyeur. In order to remove herself from that position, she must remove herself from the "coulisses de la solitude" by finding another ubiquitous and renewable resource: language. The poem's message reaches the homeless woman in the same way it reaches the earth—through the intertextual and collective message in the first stanza: "Donne toi le droit d'parler d'crier …" (v. 3).

Because it is collectively written, only the pronoun "tu" remains constant as someone receiving directions to better her life: "Donne toi le droit d'parler d'crier … Écrire le mot sagesse plutôt que venger" (vv. 3, 6). The *tu* arrives by way of the imperative, directed at a plural and fluid collective to strengthen a writer's community, spoken to in French, English, and Creole: "Kimbé rèd pa moli sisters and brothers sé moli là ki rèd" (v. 43) ("Hold on tight, not weakly, brothers and sisters, it is sweet that which holds tightly," my translation). The *tu* blends with the *je* at moments, the overlap between subject and object becoming blurred:

> Celui qui se tait empêche l'autre de parler. Sache que le temps lui n'oublie jamais/Parfois on se détruit à trop se protéger. Où que tu sois si tu m'entends j'ai retenu la leçon/Trouver les mots pour le dire, briser les chaînes du passé se battre pour changer redevenir/Soi même." (vv. 40-2)

Here the verbs in the infinitive can be the imperative or the explanation of the lesson the *je* has learned. The voiceless *tu* here brings the homeless woman's voice into the collective *tu* by calling on it to make use of the renewable resource of language. The past is both particular and shared, as is the right to speak. Orality begets orality in a dialogic continuum that breaks from past hardships.

The blurred relationship between subject and object complicates the authority of the *je* normally used in slam poetry to establish authenticity, while strengthening the notion of repurposing the *fait divers*. Here the *je* is already plural through a string of verbs, and through adjectives that link it to the many women who have contributed to writing this poem. The plural *je* is complicated through changes in style from section to section, but also remains plural in each section itself, through unpredictable punctuation and a self-referentiality that ties the poem together. Each sense is accounted for and contributes to a multi-directional view of the self-judging subject that straddles objectified stage presence and omniscient narrator: "J'entends, je comprends, je vois,/Je capte tout ce qui m'est néfaste./Obstinée têtue, engagée, activiste, beaucoup trop réaliste,/Même si on ne l'est jamais assez,/Je reste tout de même sur la piste" (vv. 8-12), "Je suis égoïste et même avare" (v. 47), "Je fume je m'évade tout ce qui constitue mon entourage me rend malade/Je pense donc je souffre,/je fuis c'est lâche la vie me rend aveugle de belles rimes" (vv. 50-1). Though it is impossible to textually separate which slam poet has written which section, each *je* contributes to part of a particular and part of a universal poetic voice. For example, the *je* who aligns her voice to the "Nous les filles femmes mères de mon pays l'Algérie, capitale de mon âme," (v. 49) a string of comma-less identities, embodies an Algerian identity that is both specific to this poet's voice within the poem, and yet attaches itself to the community of Algerian women as a universal collective. The collective becomes the

cohesive element of *Slam ô féminin*'s poetic *mode d'emploi* by focusing not on each individual poet, but on how the text is brought to life and continues to evolve separate from its author: "La tristesse du monde déteint sur mes textes la froideur de mes maux te fait fondre/Dans leur contexte consciente d'avoir entre les mains le pinceau je me demande/Si chaque peintre est maître de son tableau" (vv. 53-5).

For this reason, the slam artist as authority is overturned, willingly, in order to unveil how the female muse can achieve the voice of poetic inspiration and create a living, breathing object that continues to live outside the voice of its poet, becoming in essence a *textual performance*. The performative aspect of the text is demonstrated through the undulating affective atmosphere created by life and writing. The poem finishes with a juxtaposition and comparison of emotion transmitted by art, and emotion brought through everyday life. In each example, the affective lexicon remains negative, "tristesse," "La froideur de mes maux" (v. 53), "terrible" (v. 56, 58, 68, 70) come to a climax through the only possible way to combat the negative of the past—by writing. The gendered victim is consequently replaced by the manipulation of the poetic inspiration from object to subject.

Poetic inspiration is both subject and object through a conscious reappropriation of the marginal space of victimization, solitude, and suffering. Building off of Baudrillard's take on the *fait divers*, this process contextualizes the global by putting into terms we can understand, the phantasms and dramas of everyday life. Though conflict, victimization, and marginalization are transmitted incessantly to use through the mediatized *fait divers* ("Il est terrible le petit bruit qui gronde/Dans ma tête résonne porté par des ondes" (vv. 59-9)), *Slam ô féminin* makes use of conflict, drama, pain, and suffering to enhance stage emotions via productive replacements for vengeance, solitude, or violence through anger. The poem ends with a cyclical reminder of the

original imperative—to pick up a pen and respond to hardship through a constant and continuous writing:

> Il est terrible le petit bruit du monde/Quand doucement mes pas m'inscrivent dans la ronde/Il est terrible le petit bruit qui gronde/Dans leurs têtes resonnent nos actions/Fécondes…fécondes…fécondes…/Écrire le mot sagesse/Continuellement en devenir/Éternellement/Écrire le mot sagesse/Quand violence pleut comme le déluge, tourne le dos sans subterfuge/Toi tu restes droite, restes zen/Et de l'espoir tu sèmes les graines. (vv. 68-79)

Once again, writing is aligned with the movements of everyday life, the repetitive ritual cycles and the way our individual movements become the marginalia of the urban topography: "doucement mes pas m'inscrivent dans la ronde" (v. 69).

Writing is thus transformed from the structural to the processual, a movement central to Turner's analysis of anthropological performance. Though *SoF*'s message contains links to the slam of GCM in the previous chapter by way of the pen as weapon against hardship, the optimism is not a given in the collective writing of this anthology. Instead of removing regret from past moments, *SoF*'s message is to redirect solitude and vengeance through writing as action as specific to women. Though the gendered message of reclaiming the feminine poetic inspiration contains metaphors specific to the cycles of women—from fertility ("actions fécondes" (v. 71-2)), to menstruation ("le flot qui m'inonde" (v. 59)), the metaphors are presented as a *lieu commun* from which to escape into a more masculine poetic model by way of the marginalized feminine process. The poem ends with the clichéd masculine seminal metaphor: "Et de l'espoir tu sèmes les graines," providing a final exclamation against being the result of an action, a voiceless victim or muse.

VI. C. RiM: HUMOR AND THE *LUDIQUE*: REVERSING THE PERFORMER AND AUDIENCE

Though *SoF*'s message is gendered through the particular definitions of the feminization of poetic inspiration, many women slam poets differentiate themselves from other slam artists, only hinting at gender as a defining characteristic. Though some have stage names that embody gendered difference before even performing, such as Dame Gabrielle or Miss Kaëly, many of the stage names adopted by women are notably gender-less. *SoF*'s collaboration with other women does not create a large one-dimensional field of *slameuses*, but instead underlines how the gender niche is only a point of entry into the open and welcoming world of the slam stage. However, women slam artists remain a minority on the established slam stages, as well as in anthologies, and many of them do not associate with the same gendered image of the genre as seen by *Slam ô féminin*. One of these artists, RiM (Amélie Picq Grumbach), has taken a different approach to gender and genre. In this section I will analyze RiM's poetry published in Stéphane Martinez's second slam anthology, *Slam entre les mots*, published in 2007 soon after the release of GCM's debut album *Midi 20*. Since this publication of the anthology, RiM has become a well-known *animatrice* of several *ateliers d'écriture*, and is currently working on an album and live slam and musical performance directed at young children called *One Maman Show*.

In her poetry, conflict and suffering gives way to artifice, wordplay, and the *ludique*. Originally a singer, RiM's language is notably musical, testing the limits of the oral genre. Included in this section is her own analysis of her place as a *slameuse*, which I recorded during a phone interview from the beginning of February, 2014. Though an established member of one of

the original slam associations, 129H, and a performer alongside GCM at the Bataclan, the Olympia, the televised program *Taratata* on France 4 (video.mytaratata.com), RiM has avoided textual publication as a valid transmission of her art. She states: “j’estime que le slam passe par les oreilles et pas par les yeux. Je préfère qu’on entende mes textes plutôt qu’on les lise. Je travaille beaucoup sur la musicalité qui n’est pas forcément audible quand on lit un texte” (personal interview). However, her poetry enhances and complicates the gap between textuality and orality through wordplay, phonetics, and puzzles, causing the reader to have to perform the text aloud. In this way she uses text to reverse the roles of performer and audience, poem and reader. Play as bridge between orality and textuality is an essential element in her poetry and has drawn attention to how to infuse a poem with interpretive markings such as breathing, diction, tone, rhythm, and voice placement.

The anthology begins with an introduction that explains slam’s rise in popularity in the last few years. In setting up his collection, Martinez is also presenting slam to the laymen, once again exemplifying the pedagogical aspect of the genre. Though many of those included in the collection show a perceptible rage and use language of revolt, Martinez does not characterize slam poetry as a genre of rebellion that propagates a language in crisis. It is, however, a language in “gestation” (18), and Martinez recognizes the fragility of grouping slam artists together as an ensemble. For this reason, the anthology as textual format of slam remains a cross section that highlights plurality and diversity, while falling short of defining the fluid genre. Slam anthologies continue to begin with an explanation of what slam poetry was/is/is becoming by comparing to rap, hip hop, and performance poetry and each explanation falls short of definition. Martinez states slam’s differences with rap as related to the atmosphere of community:

> Les différences entre les deux mouvements sont nombreuses. Chez les slameurs, la scène est ouverte au public, et elle est nettement moins codifiée, sexiste et violente. Il suffit d'être volontaire, de monter sur l'estrade, de venir déclamer le texte de son choix devant une salle au public varié, bruyante ou silencieuse. (13)

It is impossible to recreate the live atmosphere of a *soirée slam* in a textual format, however, a slam artist's presence in a published anthology draws attention to the artifice behind the interpretation by presenting material evidence of his/her rhythm, style, and word play. For this reason, my analysis will draw on text and video recordings in order to unveil the textual performance behind RiM's oral wordplay.

Slam's popularity has given rise to an attempt to categorize, qualify, and expand its reach, and the anthology is still the best format to attempt to do that. Martinez writes: "En l'espace de quelques années, le slam a su séduire, au fil des soirées organisées dans des rades de quartiers ou dans des salles de fortune, une foule d'habitués ou de pratiquants occasionnels" (9). Those included in the anthology are meant to represent the *habitués,* and those who have provided slam in France with a unique angle and platform. Similar to the effect created by the many poets in *Slam ô féminin*'s anthology, the style of the twenty-three included poets differs greatly while claiming a common source of inspiration: the everyday. Martinez writes: "Quand on demande aux slameurs d'où viennent ces phrases abruptes, ces paroles enflammées, ce besoin de noircir quotidiennement plusieurs pages, ou ce plaisir à suivre des voies détournées, leur réponse est immuable: de l'observation de la vie quotidienne" (15). Marginalia remains a process for this medley of poets as well. Martinez describes a *soirée slam*: "Sur les tables, il n'est pas rare d'apercevoir une pile de feuilles chiffonnées, les marges noircies de notes crayonnées. Entre

deux verres, nos rimailleurs virevoltent, interpellent les spectateurs, jouent la comédie. La théâtralisation est un point important de cette scène underground" (17).

As a member of one of the first slam associations, RiM has two poems included at the end of the collection: "D chiffres et D lettres" and "Les maux que je crie." Her presence in the collection functions as a representative style of slam, just as her collaboration with the all-male association 129H places her in a representative role as *slameuse*. In the previous chapter, I analyzed the recorded version of GCM's "Attentat Verbal" on *Midi 20,* which begins with a number of citations taken from slam performances by other slam artists. Though GCM writes about the plural stage and includes the woman *slameuse* in the list of slam artists, the recording only includes men, an incomplete example of what the text claims:

> C'est quoi, c'est qui, ces mecs chelous qui viennent pour raconter leur vie/C'est elle, c'est lui, c'est moi, c'est nous, on vient même si t'as pas envie/Mais si t'écoutes un tout petit bout, p't-être bien que t'en sortiras ravi/Et ça c'est important pour nous, c'est grâce à ça qu'on se sent en vie. (vv. 1-4)

However, when performed live on France 4's program *Taratata* on May 11, 2007, one *slameuse* is included in the performance: RiM. As GCM is presented on stage, the spotlights turn towards him and he begins to speak, only to be interrupted by someone (a *slameur* named Rouda) in the audience who begins to slam. Throughout the first several minutes of the performance, several more "audience" members stand up and slam larger portions of their own texts than were included in *Midi 20*. This live version of the textual analysis I demonstrated in the previous chapter reveals the reversal of roles that a slam stage accomplishes. The authority is not contained by the person at the microphone, but shared among the audience members who will in

turn be performing their own texts. Audience and performer are consequently blurred roles with the relationship between them fluctuating.

Though RiM is not included in the album, her position as *slameuse* on the televised stage is importantly representative and her poetry also reverses the role between performer and spectator/reader. She stands for the "C'est elle" in "on vient même si t'as pas envie" (v. 2), and her first excerpt chastises "la caricature" of "les mecs" for thinking only of "cul" (video.mytaratata.com) taken from her first poem "D chiffres et D lettres" in the anthology *Slam entre les mots*. She recites the text that is written as a play on phonetic signs by emphasizing the syllables that also stand alone as letters and numbers:

> Si je réKpitule/Ma KriKture/Les mecs Kpitulent/C dans leur nature/Ils partent faire le Kcous à Cancun/En quête de coquines Ktins/Qu'ils taquinent et qu'ils ken/Sans Qlpabilité/Car ils ne pensent qu'O Q/Et qu'OQune corde au cou ne les retient/Les mecs nous font coQ/On n'y peut rien. (vv. 126-37)

Her voice is unique as the only female performer on stage, and because she is the only performer who sings part of her slam. On stage, she is one of the chosen, one of the original disciples to GCM and his poetic message. RiM's poem "D chiffres et D lettres" is also included in the collection *Slam entre les mots* and plays with the notion of the representative sign explicitly by replacing any possible syllables with the equivalent sound in letters or numbers. In the Taratata performance, RiM only performs a short excerpt of this poem to showcase rhythm and wordplay. However, in the original vision for the performance of this particular poem, RiM goes on stage with two other women, one who performs the numbers, the other who performs the letters, while RiM performs the rest of the text. The result is a counterpointed spectacle that is difficult to

follow due to the number and letter performers interrupting to punctuate the narrative. (dailymotion.com)

Though she performs several different excerpts from a variety of poems and songs in the "Attentat Verbal" performance, her first excerpt is notably focused on stereotypical gender roles. The poem reads as a list of advice for "les meufs" and "les mecs" mixed with a list of gripes about how women are materialistic and men "pensent qu'O Q" (v. 134). RiM presents both "les mecs" and "les meufs" of the poem through ironic vulgarity: "Par exemple si T une meuf/et que tu veux qu'un mec te tringle,/Achète-toi D vêt'ments 9/et sois tirée à 4 épingles" (vv. 10-13). Making use of the shock effect of the vulgar and slang, she also mocks the women for only caring about money: "Si vous voulez D2moizL/éviT d'rouler en 4L/faut minimum une 206/pour une nuit à l'Otel Ibis/… il fa falloir diner A6/et puis autre chose qu'un 100dwich/C sur tu serres plus si T riche" (vv. 60-7).

The gendered content of the poem remains cliché and static with a final bitter message to unfaithful men:

> Les mecs nous font coQ/On n'y peut rien/Pourquoi tenter d'les coincer/Si c'est pour encaisser/Les coups qui secouent le coeur/La rancune et la rancoeur m'écoeurent/Donc j'me dis qu'y a K accepter leur/KpaciT à faire des French kiss/À toutes celles qui passent/Et ce slam, je leur D10cass. (vv. 136-45)

However, the form unveils a performative style that pervades RiM's poetry and demonstrates why she is a representative of the *slameuse*. Though she is claiming a victimized resignation to the stereotype of the cheating partner, because her final word is split between three performers, the final syllable pronounced by her overturns the message of the poem. The final syllable she pronounces is the "cass," (v. 145) from "dédicace," alluding to the expression meaning to leave,

(“je me casse”) and the expression meaning to break up with, (“je casse avec lui”). RiM is notably the only woman member of professionalized slam association 129H, started in 2001 by Rouda, Lyor, Neobled, and RiM. 129H is a collective based on a combination of slam and musical pedagogy, performance, and recording. However, it is RiM’s use of the *ludique* and not her status as representative woman that contributes effectively to the association’s message of slam as an indefinable medium and the *slameur* as a new performer every time s/he takes the microphone.

The way “D chiffres et D lettres” is written out on the page causes it to be impossible to read in a traditional manner. Instead, the reader must mouth or recite the combinations of letters, numbers, and syllables in order to hear them as recognizable words. The first line: “On 10 quand on M on n’compte pas” (v. 1) eases the reader into the code only to increasingly complicate the written signs as the poem progresses. The name Émilie is written “é1000i” and liaisons create 3-sign words such as “LzM” (v. 89, *elles aiment*). She adds in “D maTmatik” (v. 43), even writing in the delta symbol: “G Δ d’hectares et 1 car 2 touristes/et mon pote Hector est assuré tout risque” (vv. 104-5). In writing out the poem to reflect how it is performed as divided between three women, RiM causes the reader to become a slam artist and perform her portable text. The text, therefore, takes on a pedagogical nature on the page, removing the audience from a passive role and forcing an armchair performance. Guided by the text’s unveiling of its own artifice, the spectator/reader takes on an active role as performer, caused to pay attention to the structures and sounds that fit together as poetry.

As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, the pedagogical role slam plays has been an increasingly important component of its success as a genre. RiM has been involved as an *animatrice d’atelier slam* both privately, and through 129H. Since 2002, 129H has organized

writing workshops called “Écrire et Dire” in which they teach the discipline of writing slam poetry, “combinant l’écriture, l’oralité et l’expression scénique” (129h.org). However, because of their production studios, 129H is able to use the pedagogical aspect of slam to a more developed level. Their message does not stop at combating the struggles of the everyday, but encourages a finished, rehearsed, and transmissible object:

> On y développe son écoute, son style littéraire, sa créativité, son imagination, sa présence sur scène. L'objectif fixé avec chaque groupe de participants est d'écrire, maîtriser, interpréter et finalement slamer un ou plusieurs textes libres. Sur chaque cycle d’ateliers, 129H et les porteurs du projet définissent ensemble l’objectif final de restitution: édition d’un recueil, enregistrement des productions en lien avec 129H STUDIO, représentation scénique. (129h.org)

RiM’s collaboration with 129H includes the goal to “déscolariser l’écriture” by focusing on performing as *slameur*, and performing as an audience member. Unlike many of the poets in *Slam ô féminin*, RiM has made a career out of slam. In our interview, I asked her about how her days were structured and she responded with an overview of her current week:

> Je travaille avec des groupes différents: ce matin j’étais avec un groupe de théâtre, demain je travaille avec un groupe qui travaille avec des enfants qui ont eu des problèmes de scolarisation, de discipline, qui sont dans les classes plus petites, de 6 élèves, au lieu de 20 ou 30. Ils ont un cadre spécifique et plus personnalisé pour essayer de leur réintégrer dans une scolarisation normale. J’ai des groupes des petits, où on apprend à lire et écrire, des étrangers qui arrivent en France qui ne savent pas parler ni lire et écrire le français. Il y a un peu de tout, des hospitaliers,

> des maisons de quartiers, des ateliers de théâtre. C'est très divers. (Personal interview)

Though each day is different, RiM has a common mission that incorporates infusing play into the writing and performing process:

> Après, mon approche à moi, quant à mes ateliers… on va dire que ma mission, c'est pas de les faire écrire des textes magnifiques, dignes des plus grands poètes, mais par contre, vraiment mon objectif, c'est qu'ils passent un bon moment, qu'ils se rendent compte qu'on peut, avec les mots et avec l'écriture, qu'on peut produire quelque chose à nous, qu'ils comprennent et prennent conscience du partage et du respect de la parole des autres. Je montre la manière d'oraliser le texte, j'essaye de leur faire comprendre comment dire un texte, et pas de le lire. Que la manière dont ils partagent leurs mots avec quelqu'un d'autre soit vraiment à eux. (Personal interview)

Play and enjoyment in her *ateliers* are inextricably linked to learning how to put an identificatory mark on style. The performer is encouraged to see how s/he is creator and proprietor of his/her ideas by developing a unique textual voice and stage diction. Sharing, in these settings, highlights the respectful listening as much as taking possession of the moment.

The juxtaposition of "dire" and "lire" speaks to the performative aspect of the moment as created through the dialogic stage/audience relationship. The way she achieves this atmosphere is through a series of games. Coming from a theatre background, RiM highlights orality as much more than diction. She states:

> Je travaille beaucoup sur le regard et l'énergie. En écrit ou à l'oral, ça passe beaucoup par le jeu. Je veux qu'ils s'amusent et qu'ils prennent plaisir à se faire

> écouter. Je donne des situations ridicules, je leur demande de faire des accents. Je demande qu'ils trouvent un volume de voix, des articulations, des intonations, le regard, c'est des éléments sur lesquelles je mets le doigt en tout cas. Il y a d'autres slameurs pour qui le texte est plus important, chacun porte sa croix, si on peut dire ça. Mais pour moi, c'est l'oralité, le regard et l'énergie. (Personal interview)

RiM's vision of performance, as seen through how she structures her workshops and how she approaches stage presence seem to be incompatible with an analysis of textual performance. However, her vision of the relationship between performer and audience as based on "oralité," "regard," and "énergie" can be transposed to the relationship between poem and reader. Recently, RiM organized a *soirée slam* for her birthday. As a gift, some of her friends got up and performed her poems. What was striking, she said, was that she didn't recognize her own texts due to the different way they were performed.

In recognizing how the text took on a new character when performed by a different person, RiM in effect exemplifies William Worthen's approach to reading a written text that is meant to be performed. Worthen sees the text as anticipatory to the stage in that it enables agency by drawing attention to the way it represents drama (142). Texts represent drama rather than instigate it and the instrumentalization of words is useful for exposing motive, character, and behavior needed to perform them. In this way, the performer does not reproduce a character, but assembles a role by being attentive to the mood constructed through the series of actions and interactions. For RiM, poetry is not so much about what is written, but what is added to the writing to cause it to be compatible with orality. Through an analysis of her second poem in the anthology *Slam entre les mots*, "Les maux que je crie," it is possible to differentiate the various levels and layers of textual performance stacked vertically. In both poems included in the

anthology, RiM enhances textuality to provide the reader with his/her own portable orality, causing the reader to perform and enhance the text.

As in my previous chapters, the focus on the verticality and horizontality unveils the musicality written into the text itself. The relationship between textual verticality and horizontality is most clearly seen in word play, where one interpretation is enhanced by another oral interpretation stacked on top. In "Les maux que je crie," the title already presents the stacked play between the textual and the oral, "les maux que je crie" being *heard* equally as "les mots que j'écris." Here, I define verticality as the ensemble of the rhyme scheme, word play, grammar structures, and punctuation, while horizontality provides the melody, rhythm, repetition, elision, context, and narrative. RiM's poetic style focuses on the intersection between verticality and horizontality that become clues to reading orality in her printed works.

I approach my analysis by demonstrating RiM's definition of slam through her poetry. In the interview she defined slam by ridding it of the possibility of definition past the idea of sharing language:

> Tu peux à la fois chanter, rapper, ou avoir un style plus théâtral, ça reste du slam, dès qu'il y a l'échange et la partage de la parole. En fait c'est ça le slam. Après ma façon de slamer, elle est très axée à la technique, à des jeux de mots, c'est ça qui m'amuse, je suis plus dans l'écriture ludique plus que dans quelque chose d'engagé. C'est pas forcement ma définition du slam, c'est plutôt ma façon de slamer, mais ça ne va pas dire que si tu ne fais pas de rime ou de jeux de mots que tu ne fais pas de slam, quoi. C'est ça qui donne la richesse, c'est pas du tout formatté, chacun fait ce qu'il veut, comment il veut, il faut juste respecter quelques règles, 3-4 minutes, mais après ça peut être des textes d'amour, des

> textes ludiques, tout tout tout. Il y a pas une façon de slamer, quoi. (Personal interview)

For RiM, the *ludique* is not compatible with the *engagé*. However, she splits the *ludique* into what is written into the text, "très axée à la technique, à des jeux de mots" (Personal interview), and what is experienced in performing it on stage, diction, rhythm, tone, energy, and *regard*. I argue that RiM's technical employment of the *ludique* is incredibly *engagé* because it anticipates the text's possibility to interact with the audience, triggering a performative agency.

Though the post-structuralist notion of *play* as put forth in Jacques Derrida's 1966 lecture "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" plays a role in the stacking of meanings for RiM, play here is more associated with sharing the mastery of structures and sounds and unveiling the mechanisms that provide agency to the textual orality as anticipatory performance. Instead of emphasizing the impossibility of seeking a single unified meaning in a given context, RiM unveils the poetic mechanisms that make the search for meanings possible. In her interview with me, RiM failed to acknowledge what is lost in a performance when the audience is not able to see the text, but must rely on the ephemeral hearing, complicating the notions of presence and absence. Her own textual agency, then, is not related to motive, but rather a result of the goal of infusing language with the *ludique*.

The poem places itself in the interval between text and performance through an active and continuous comparison between the two disciplines of orality and textuality by way of the *ludique* that is present through technique. The poem opens questioning the definition of writing by splitting it into its smallest phonemes: "Tous ces S/Tous ces L/Que l'on triture/Est-ce/Ce qu'on appelle/L'écriture?" (vv. 1-6). Immediately the notion of play comes into the definition of writing, "triture" constrasting only by the missing initial sound of the word "écriture." The sound

of the letter “es” in the first line fits into the text as a mirror image of its preceding sound, “ces” (v. 1), whose homonyms, *ses, c’est* also allude to their close phonemes *sait(s).* The S sound is also heard, split, mirrored, and then repeated through enjambment in the question “**Est-ce**/**Ce** qu’on appelle” (vv. 4-5, my emphasis). The “el” sound also contains a verticality by alluding to the pronoun “elle(s)” and echoed as a building block in the subsequent words, “app**elle**” (v. 4), “voy**elles**” (v. 6) and “qu’**elles**” (v. 10). The L also alludes to the homonym “aile” meaning wing (of the body or of a building). Therefore, from the beginning, the smallest phonemes occupy the textual body by way of the mouth through allusions to the performative margins of the slam stage. The stacked sounds that occupy the words that occupy the body that occupy the space show how poetic technique can bridge the oral and textual components of the slam genre.

Textuality and orality are contrasted but work together throughout the poem to exemplify RiM’s choice of slam poetry as a genre on which to build a career. After having presented and performed a new definition of writing as choice and instrumentalization of phonemes, the poetic voice throughout the poem swings between extolling the virtues of orality and sound and highlighting the physical and technical game of preparing the sounds for the page. The words chosen are both seen and heard: “Toutes ces voyelles/Toutes ces consonnes/Que l’on delivre/Pour qu’on n’**voie** qu’elles/Et que ça **sonne**/Comme dans les livres” (vv. 8-12, my emphasis). Though missing an essential element of the slam experience, the goal is to infuse textual sound with resonance that anticipates or replaces stage orality through play and choice: “Toutes ces phrases/Qu’on embreille/Tour à tour/Pour qu’elles embrasent/Même les oreilles/Des sourds” (vv. 13-8). This phrase recognizes that words contain an anticipatory sonority that can be experienced through the text, even by the deaf. The choice of the word “embreille” is presented as a phonetically misspelled *embrayer*, meaning to engage, put into gear, or embark upon.

However, the word is spelled differently, causing the eye to provide clues the ear cannot understand. The ending of the word, "breille" is a homonym and just one letter away from the third person singular of the verb "brailler" (bray, bawl, yell, bellow) and therefore relates back to the title of the active "je crie." However, it also alludes to the other sensory handicap that one must accommodate for as a slam poet: the blind. The homonym "Embreille" is also just one sound and one sign away from *en Braille* the tactile writing system for the blind. In this way, RiM is accommodating for the deaf and blind but presenting each with their own set of codes and challenges to be able to read, and more importantly, enjoy her poetry. Once again, reading her poetry points to a reversal of the roles of audience and performer. The tactility alluded to in Braille highlights encouraging a hands-on approach to consuming her poetry just as the way she writes phonetically in "D chiffres et D letters"—("réKpitule/Ma KriKture" (v. 126)), causing the reader to sound out the phonemes in order to reproduce the meaning orally.

From the set-up that presents the two sides of slam poetry, the structure of the poem continues to juxtapose text and orality following a rhythmic pendulum that swings between the two disciplines throughout the poem. It becomes clear that not all writing is amenable to an enjoyable slam performance, leading the reader to discover which elements of *écriture ludique* are productive. The climax in the line "Moralité: j'ai choisi l'oralité" (v. 63) contrasts with the final stanza's "Moi j'veux vivre de l'écriture/Un point c'est tout" (v. 87) to highlight that the writing RiM has chosen is a break from the stiff association scholarly writing contains for her, but not to abandon writing altogether. Writing slam poetry for RiM comes down to making choices of putting together signs within a working structure in order to anticipate the pleasure of performance: "Je dois l'admettre/C'est mon sweetest taboo" (vv. 22-3). The two letters that begin the poem, S and L, are also the two letters that begin the word *slam*, and are chosen as a

starting point from “Toutes ces voyelles/Toutes ces consonnes … toutes ces lettres/Qu’on doit mettre/Bout à bout” (vv. 7-8, 19-21). Therefore, even the sign (the word slam) that stands for the poetic genre is picked apart in order to draw attention to its smallest parts as starting point for a specific type of poem. Continually auto-referential, slam as a genre has survived and grown by drawing attention to itself and its plural and fluid definition. Slam is the structure, theme, and leitmotiv in performed poems, causing the genre itself to be of central inspiration for slam artists.

Writing, in “Les maux que je crie,” is split into two categories: the mechanical and the affective. RiM speaks of breaking from the mechanical to embrace the affective assonance of writing slam poetry by tracing her own poetic trajectory of infusing and enhancing her poetry. She comes to the conclusion that her writing must include:

> De rimes riches qui rafraîchissent les lettres en friches/Transforment banalités et ratures/En une forme de littérature/Qui s’acclame/Et se clame à l’oral/Sans leçon de moral/La seule chose à faire/C’est dire ses passions/Les fautes d’orthographe/Ne me font plus peur/Mes mots je les dégrafe/Avec moins de pudeur/Depuis qu’mes paragraphes/Sont pour des auditeurs/Moralité: j’ai choisi l’oralité. (vv. 55-63)

The elision between the “l—” sound and the “m—” sound from “l’oralité to “Moralité” hints at a move between the third person and the first person possessive “mon.” The orality she has chosen is specific to her style and her instrumentalization of language. In her interview with me she spoke of the link between identity, possession, and language as an objective of her style of slam pedagogy. As I demonstrated earlier, she states that it is important that the students understand: “qu’on peut produire quelque chose **à nous**, qu’ils comprennent et prennent conscience du partage et du respect de la parole des autres … Que la manière dont ils partagent leurs mots avec

quelqu'un d'autre soit vraiment **à eux**" (Personal interview). Her message can be seen in action in "Les maux que je crie" through drawing attention to how the *ludique* can be teased out through elision, alliteration, rhythm, and word play.

As I wrote earlier, the distinction between the vertical and the horizontal poetic structures unveils how RiM has arrived at her own distinctive style. The poem takes us into her linguistic laboratory and walks the reader through her experiments with play: "J'ai découvert/Ces syllabes oratoires/J'ai donc ouvert/Un grand laboratoire/Où l'on expérimente/Les rimes qui pimentent/Les slams, les poésies/Et puis la vie aussi" (vv. 24-7). Once again, RiM focuses on the smallest building blocks: the "syllabes oratoires" (v. 24) but recognizes that her experimentations lead her not only to stringing the words "bout à bout" (v. 21) but to adding and enhancing each syllable vertically:

> L'engrais d'ma poésie/C'est mon grain de folie/Et je le cultive/à l'eau de source d'inspiration/À laquelle j'ajoute/les mots, les sons les émotions/Des cornes d'assonance/et des fleurs d'allitération/Poussent en abondance/dans les fruits de mes plantations. (vv. 46-51)

What she places on paper rises vertically, as a seed planted in the ground grows into plants, flowers, and even yields fruit. The verticality becomes what is added to language both stylistically over time ("l'engrais" (v. 46), "l'eau de source d'inspiration" (v. 48)) and within a particular poem: "mots, les sons les émotions/ Des cornes d'assonance/et des fleurs d'allitération" (vv. 49-50).

However, embellishment in RiM's poetry relies on both the affective and the mechanical. The harvest metaphor adds to the verticalization of her language through the affective memory of writing on stacks of post-it notes, watching her words pulled apart and stacked back together:

"Ya des souv'nirs de mes mots/Sur tout un tas de post-it/Normal j'écris des mémos/Depuis qu'j'suis toute petite" (vv. 34-8). Memory and marginalia (the same everyday writing I demonstrated in the first section of this chapter) are taken possession of through elision, in "j'écris des mémos" (v. 36), "mémos" becoming *mes mots*—a stylistic set of shared sounds. Once again alluding to the word play in the title, pain must elicit sound through writing: "Les maux que j'écris/Sont toujours partants/Pour que je les crie/Même à bout portant/Mes vers sont-ils versatiles pour autant?" (vv. 40-2). Pain is both a source that produces the words and a result of them. In splitting from the past to forge a new writing style, the words themselves produce sound: "Je sais que mes ex clament/Que j'les ai délaissés/Afin qu'enfin les points s'exclament" (vv. 64-6). The split between "ex" and "clament" produces the sonic protest of the past being left behind, while once again highlighting the single letter X as one of the many letters to be chosen from as a building block for the new poetry. Meanwhile, the past writing needs to be broken from in order to make the "points s'exclament" (v. 66) as though by bringing punctuation to life on the page.

Simultaneously, the affective embellishments stacked onto the words, the "cornes d'assonance" (v. 50) and "des fleurs d'allitérations," take on the role of material, technical embellishments. She contrasts these additions to the mechanical writing she learned at school, the grammar, spelling, accents, and punctuation: "Je mets les cédilles sous les C/Si j'vous ai mis entre parentheses,/C'était pas volontaire/C'était juste pour/Vous entendre vous taire" (vv. 67-70). Ironically, after stating that she puts "les cédilles sous les C" she reproduces the same sound twice in "C'était" without needing the cédille to soften the "C." However, though she disregards the type of writing learned in school that is associated with fear, universal judgment, and disregard for her own sense of style, she recognizes that textual markings can produce sonic

change: “Si j’vous ai mis entre parentheses,/C’était pas volontaire/C’était juste pour/Vous entendre vous taire” (vv. 68-70). The parentheses reproduce a visible and palpable silence and the knowledge that punctuation can also be performative, becomes a useful tool for RiM as slam poet.

The sound of orality and the silence of textual poetics come together in the final third of the poem in the repetition of the word “point.” *Point* becomes both the bridge and the interval between texuality and orality through the exaggerated repetition (20 times in 25 lines). It is through the break with the past that the “points s’exclament” (v. 66), and this line triggers a wave of word play with “point” at the origin. RiM uses each pun as a “point de repère” (v. 73) negotiating through memories. Her life, told as though punctuated with *points*, is described on an axis: the compass containing the “4 points cardinaux de mes souv’nirs” (v. 77). Like her writing, the poetic voice has a choice between vertical and horizontal axes, each taking her in a different direction stylistically and sonically. This complicates the notion of time as linear and plays with the idea that temporal origins can be regained through writing. She writes:

> J’avais besoin de reprendre **point** par **point**/Mes aventures/J’y ai trouvé des coups de **poing**/Et des **points** de suture/J’ai fait le **point** juste à **point** pour pouvoir choisir/Entre les 4 **points** cardinaux de mes souv’nirs/Ceux qui **pointaient** le doigt vers mon av’nir/À l’ouest: 1er test/Un **point** de vue sur **point** à pitre **pointe** le bout de son nez/Mes **pointillés** inventent une vitre pour mieux le dessiner/À l’est: j’lâche du l’est/Pour un nouveau **point** de chute/où j’ai assécher les **points** d’eau/À force d’être assoiffé de mots/Au sud: Je suis restée en suspension/Devant trois p’tits **points** peu banal/Mes interrogations sur mes exclamations/Ont pris un

> coup de **point** final:/Moi j'veux vivre de l'écriture/Un **point** c'est tout. (vv. 72-87, my emphasis)

Besides functioning as a list of all the expressions using the word/sound *point*, the narrative of this section contains a central point from which each adventure can be reached. Because of the 3-dimensional narration, each pun is either a center-point or a counterpoint. Suffering and violence "J'y ai trouvé des coups de poing" (v. 75) is countered by the healing treatment of "points de suture" (v. 75). The centralizing "faire le point" becomes a way of focusing a "point de repère" (v. 73) on a choice between four different directions ("les 4 points cardinaux de mes souv'nirs" (v. 75)).

However, the *point* can also provide direction ("Ceux qui pointaient le doigt vers mon av'nir" (v.78)), and the poetic voice tries all directions in order to discover which way will lead her to her future as a writer. The poetic voice travels in three compass directions, "À l'ouest" (v. 79), "À l'est" (v. 82), and "Au sud" (v. 84), but instead of traveling north, her upward mobility is achieved through a pun worked into the Eastern direction. As though in a hot air balloon, she needs to discard excess weight in order to follow the upper arrow or the compass and rise vertically into the sky: "À l'est: j'lâche du lest" (v. 82), drawing attention to the physical materiality of her writing with words that replace actions. This movement, by making use of word play, liberates her from the uni-dimensional compass and pulls her upward. Instead of discovering points on a map, each destination becomes a new point of origin. The phrase "Un point de vue sur point à pitre" (v. 80) alludes to the city in Guadeloupe, Pointe-à-Pitre, however, to "faire le pitre" means to clown around. The missing capital letter cannot be heard orally, and the play with words accomplishes the action by showing itself: "pointe le bout de son nez" (v. 81), unveiling the writing mechanism of the *ludique* that anticipates orality.

At this point in the text, the play on *point* reverts back to the allusions of punctuation reminding the reader that the poetic voice's goal is "afin qu'enfin les points s'exclament" (v. 66). Just as the parentheses silenced the "vous" in line 68, the ellipsis causes the poetic voice to remain suspended: "Je suis restée en suspension/Devant trois p'tits points peu banal (v. 85). This suspension leads to the poetic voice being able to question and articulate her goal with enthusiasm: "Mes interrogations sur mes exclamations/Ont pris un coup de point final:/Moi j'veux vivre de l'écriture/Un point c'est tout/Mon objectif c'est l'adjectif/qu'il soit super-latif ou com-paratif" (vv. 85-9). In stressing the sonic quality provided by punctuation, RiM causes her *points* to perform the connection between textuality and orality and punctuation becomes a textually performative tool. RiM is aware of the performative qualities of punctuation and stresses the connection between the physical points on the page and the direction it takes orality. In the newly forming realm of textuality and performance studies, punctuation can provide an essential connection between page and stage. As Jennifer DeVere Brody writes:

> Punctuation points out the problem, the (k)not of connection that ties together binary terms such as orality and literacy, as well as mind and body. Punctuation stages an intervention between utterance and inscription, speech and writing, activism/activity and apathy, body and gesture. It is seen and unspoken, sounded and unseen. (9)

RiM makes use of punctuation as a vertical tool that cues oral performance. Throughout the poem, added or omitted apostrophes cause the words to be read phonetically, for example: "Ya des souv'nirs de mes mots" (v. 34). This play with punctuation brings the reader back to the original omitted apostrophe in the title: the point that links "Je crie" with "j'écris." The punctuation becomes the performance cues for the reader that assures that the poem can be

accessible as laid out in the final lines of the poem: “Et je m’emporte à faire du porte à porte pour vous les apporter/Ils sont à votre portée/Alors: ‘sur place ou à emporter?’ (vv. 89-91). Though RiM discounts reading slam as a viable replacement for watching a performer slam in a live setting, reading the verticality and horizontality inherent in the poetic style in “Les maux que je crie” clearly demonstrates how slam poetry can be accessible in the textual form of the anthology through techniques that make use of punctuation, rhythm, alliteration, and even breaking meaning into the original phonemes.

In the past few years, RiM’s slam style has evolved in accordance with changes in her life. She is now the mother of a three-year-old and has begun performing and recording for a project entitled “One Maman Show,” which will be published as a book/CD and promoted as a show tour. The album has 12 tracks, to symbolize the 12 hours in a child’s day. RiM explains:

> Il y a 12 titres sur l’album, qui représentent 12 heures de la vie d’un enfant. C’est les chansons et paroles qui accompagnent les enfants pendant les moments clés de la journée, comme l’heure du bain, l’heure de s’habiller, l’heure de manger, l’heure de dormir, l’heure de l’histoire etc. Donc il y’en a douze: onze chansons et un slam. Mais pour le spectacle il y a une place plus importante donnée au slam. J’avais envie quand même de garder cette partie de mon identité artistique. J’avais envie de cibler un autre public, mais il y a quand même le même esprit du slam: l’oralité et les jeux de mots etc. (Personal interview)

Her promotional poster includes puns that will appeal to young children, such as “Pipizza,” “Pipicacasso,” “Caca-mion,” “Ma copipine Jessicaca,” and “Vive la poezizi” (Personal interview). This evolution as slam artist has enhanced both the genre and RiM’s position as representative *slameuse*. Continuing her message to create accessibility into poetry through the

ludique, she has expanded the audience of slam poetry and increased its reach. The *ludique* provides a platform that reestablishes the importance of the mastery of written language as an anticipatory tool for performance while making use of how notions of performance must draw on everyday experiences that affect the writer strongly. Affect, then, is a central element in the efficacy of the *ludique*, since it provides the possibility for a performer to be allied with a collective, while maintaining a unique and particular voice.

VI. D. CONCLUSION

Though Slam ô féminin and RiM have approached their roles as representatives of women in the slam genre differently, social outreach is a key element in both of their platforms. In the first section, I demonstrated how the notion of collective is portrayed in poetry through the productivity of the marginal in genre and gender. I do not mean to say that slam is inherently a gendered medium, but instead that marginalized communities have found a refuge in the genre itself. For *Slam ô féminin*, marginality becomes a practice of marginalia in order to overturn the role of the victim and in the process this creates a new *noyau*—a centrality and a home—where women slam artists feel accepted, respected, empowered, and heard. Marginalia becomes effective through how it unveils the play between textuality and orality and the move between the particular and the universal (constructed or imagined). In the first section I compared how the object of the *fait divers* comes to take on the traditional role of the female poetic muse in that both are voiceless objects that elicit a collective gasp. But the *fait divers* contains other characteristics that cause it to provide the framework for a productive process of anthropological performance. The *fait divers* wants to be shared by word of mouth, as does the everyday

marginalia of the slam scribblings. The objectified victim of the *fait divers* can be overturned by the polyphonic voice of the collective, as seen in the group poem "Sagesse" in *SoF*'s anthology.

RiM's place in the anthology *Slam entre les mots* shows that she is one of the chosen by Stéphane Martinez to represent slam poetry for the masses. Her voice is uniquely playful, and she aligns herself with the pedagogical message inherent in the budding genre of slam. As a representative on stage with GCM and as a published poet in *Slam entre les mots*, RiM's slam style provides concrete examples for how the genre becomes self-referential. In both sections, polyphony and intertextuality in the medium of the anthology draw attention to the fluid diversity of the slam stage at a particular moment and becomes symbolic for the genre as a whole. The stage becomes a refuge and a home through a set of shared writing and performing rituals and contextualizes global problem in terms that we can understand.

Because they are still in a minority on slam stages, women unveil how the mechanism of *representation* is inextricably linked to this performative language. Language—from its phonemes and letters to its polyphonic structures—is a process, which contributes to a fluid meaning that shows the movement between particular and collective affect as related to memory and the construction of the now. How women artists choose to represent the affective process with language is a direct way to combat how gender has become a representation of identity. Sharing in the ritual of writing then performing as a way to combat objectification, is a unique component of slam.

The ritual of writing slam has taken on an inherently pedagogical nature because of its emphasis on process. RiM makes use of the pedagogical nature of slam to question how to write orality into the anticipatory text. Her text becomes an anticipatory performance that uses play and sonority to invite the reader to produce his/her own orality while reading. In this way, the

roles of performer and audience are reversed, just as they are during a writing workshop. This process mimics the polyphonic intertextual performance seen in *SoF*'s *soirées slam*, and in their anthology. More importantly, the notion of anticipatory sonority relates back to the potential sound made use of by Bernard-Marie Koltès's performative poetics in *Roberto Zucco* analyzed in the first two chapters. In both cases, the performative text, as seen as a theatrical and poetic medium, is more than a score, blueprint, or incomplete formula. It is not less than a live performance, but a different point of access to the performance process, providing distinctive pedagogical paradigms that cannot be reproduced live. The point of access exists at the interval between temporal, acoustic, and affective spaces highlighted in the play between writing and speaking in poetry and theatre. Therefore, what performative texts have in common is a self-referential awareness of the performance process that functions as a dialogue between inter and extratextual relationships.

VII. CONCLUSION

When applied to the carefully selected texts in my dissertation, the interdisciplinarity methodological platform of Performance studies and Affect theory puts the processes of textuality and orality into productive dialogue. *Roberto Zucco*, *Le Dieu du carnage*, *Midi 20*, and the polyphonic slam poetry of *Slam ô féminin* and RiM are all works meant to be performed on stage, yet contain an inextricable link to the functions, nuances, and mechanics of writing. Heightened during moments of conflict and cruelty, one sees how the text itself becomes an acoustic actor that helps shape, build, and release moments of tension. Where these two theoretical apparatuses have served as useful platforms for analysis that hinges on cultural, social, and anthropological systems, this dissertation proves that the affective nuances can be found in even the smallest building blocks of language. Where Performance studies in theatre focuses on register, delivery, and embodiment, analysis of how a refrain is created through potential sound, intervals, and scoring bridges musical and literary analysis to provide agency to the text itself as producer of untapped performative information. Therefore, the home of the text relies on more than subjective and unscientific sentiment.

In each work, the formalist elements of the text unveil the affective resonances of the work itself, sometimes in disregards to the intention of the author. In *Roberto Zucco,* the hero himself is created by shreds and scraps of previously composed utterances, whose recomposition hints at the physical and emotional pain the characters feel at the nodes of their points of connection. The quest for materiality is a driving force in the hero's transposition from artificial

to metatextual hero. Through the scoring of diegetic and extratextual citation by characters such as La Gamine, Roberto Zucco as hero becomes a symbol for *Roberto Zucco* the play. In *Carnage*, the text's presence as a dialogic instigator productively complicates the gulf between page and stage. Throughout the play, writing is used to sway, manipulate, anger, and appease, and the idea of the performative utterance able to do, act, and change the fate of a person or a population can be seen in the drafting process. In this way, the play challenges the idea both of the written as irrefutable and the oral as ephemeral.

Both plays treated in my dissertation are as easily transmittable in textual form as on stage. However, in the two chapters on slam poetry, the text contains a less physical presence. In *Midi 20* the notion of text is complicated by the medium. For one, there is no published score, the text is instead embedded in the recorded album and printed in the album notes. Grand Corps Malade's voice is thus an essential medium for transmission. However, for Grand Corps Malade, writing is as sonic and effective an activity as slam performance. He uses writing to bridge urban space with the creation of a collective optimistic memory. His *dwelling* most effectively bridges the aspects of spatiality and temporality inherent in the text's *home*. For the *slameuses*, slam itself is a refuge and only becomes a home through infusing the everyday with writing. However, the text's presence in the poetry is not widely transmittable, echoing the ephemerality of the performed poem at an open mic night or *soirée slam*. The physical text is referenced through marginalia and frames the self-referentiality inherent in slam poetry by being called upon and emphasized by the *slameuses*. Slam, like theatre, is a processual art form, with writing at the origin and inspiration.

This dissertation accomplishes three important analytical maneuvers that are essential to reading text as performance. First, an analytical look at refrain and scoring removes the negative

connotation associated with the idea of the *lieu commun* and *territoire*. Through rescoring, a cited utterance takes on a new dynamic and a commonly traveled path is no longer static, tamed, or banal. Repetition and citation become important indicators of the text's agency. The *territoire*, instead of being a conquered space, becomes a shared space. Second, focus on affective memory addresses problems associated with the relationship between text and reader and shows how the text itself can continually do, generate, construct, and recreate. The text is not only an artifact as Diana Taylor claims, but a living, breathing, dynamic network. Finally, in looking at the in-between and the entre-deux as an *interval*, it charges each gap, margin, and rift with an element of correspondence through resonance. Marginality is thus redefined as a productive space not unlike Foucault's heterotopia, Glissant's *Tout-monde*, or Bhahba's *tiers-espace*.

While textual performativity opens up a dialogue of hybridity, correspondence, and the dialogic, in order to engage with and enlarge this methodology of reading performative text, one could undertake similar texts in different genres, as well as carry out a reversal of the analysis. Because of the texts I have focused on in this dissertation, I have limited my analysis to very contemporary texts that were written to be performed. Therefore, to open up my thesis even further, I could enlarge the temporal and generic scope of the corpus to first include texts from other time periods and genres (music, musical theatre, film), and second, analyze texts whose performance never leaves the page (novels). First, I will outline some examples of original texts that would fit in to the continuation enlarging the generic analysis of this methodology of written to be performed: Jean Anouilh's *Le Bal des voleurs* (1938), Alexandre de la Patellière and Matthieu Delaportes's play and film *Le Prénom* (2011), and the musical group Java's album *Hawaï* (2000). Finally, I will examine the direction my thesis would take if I were to integrate a

reading of novels such as Colette's *La Vagabonde* (1910) and Patrick Chamoiseau's *Solibo Magnifique* (1988).

One of the most enigmatic and canonical playwrights of the 20th century, Jean Anouilh, through his collaboration with contemporary composers such as Darius Milhaud, wrote lyricism and harmony into the textual fabric as well as staged music into his hybrid theatrical productions. *Le Bal des voleurs* raises the question of the process of the exploitation of poetic language, sound, and disguise to create an embodied home. Anouilh's characters remain superficial, sometimes even stock stereotypes that reappear under the same name in different plays. However, his style and poetic language use masks and disguises to destabilize convention and look behind the curtain of the narrative and theatrical processes. In unveiling his language's instrumentalization, his plays provide insight into the interface of text and performance in art as well as in everyday life. His characters do not correspond to a historical or cultural reality, but instead represent a representation. The *interval* can be found within the multiple levels of theater in the play and highlight Anouilh's use of *mise en abyme*, emphasizing the role of the stage, actors, masks, and disguises that make up everyday life. For example, the play opens with the three thieves working the crowd, each in disguise. When they come together to share their spoils, they realize their disguises have worked so well that they have been stealing from each other:

> Peterbono: Tu n'as rien fait, toi, ce matin, naturellement?
>
> Gustave: Si, deux choses. D'abord ce magnifique portefeuille.
>
> Peterbono: Voyons cela. *Il l'examine, puis soudain se fouille inquiet*. À qui l'as-tu fait, ce portefeuille, et où?
>
> Gustave: Je l'ai fait boulevard Ravachol à un vieux monsieur avec une grande barbe blanche…

> Peterbono: *achève, terrible*. Un pantalon à carreaux, un constadt et un rase-pet vert-olive, n'est-ce pas, imbécile?
>
> Gustave: *tremblant*. Oui monsieur Peterbono…Vou m'avez vu?
>
> Peterbono: *tombe affalé sous ce dernier coup*. C'était moi, imbécile, c'était moi !... Je vous dis que nous ne couvrirons même pas nos frais! (136-7)

Le Bal des voleurs has often been read as a key to Anouilh's theatrical philosophy. Part of his "Pièces roses" compiled in 1942, it is a comedy-ballet that spends most of the time setting up a play within the play and drawing attention to its artifice. It treats the recurring theme of challenging stable social hierarchies condensed into a familial structure. A rich aunt is in Vichy with her two nieces and an old friend. The arrival of three thieves becomes a welcome source of entertainment for the old woman who invites them to her house in the country under the pretext that they are old friends. They all spend the next few days preparing their costumes and characters for the local masquerade, the "bal des voleurs," while unknowingly already playing out the ball in the preparation. Anouilh said himself in an interview in 1951: "Il me semble que tout est dans *Le Bal des voleurs*: mes personnages, mes thèmes" (6). Integral to his style, this play contains a binary of adult characters who are conscious of their desire to return to childhood, and child characters who dream of becoming adults. This structure functions as a reversal of the banal family unit. The deconstruction of the stock family unit is instrumental in the creation of Anouilh's poetic and performed home. By analyzing the artificiality of the familial unit's construction in *Le Bal des voleurs*, I will be able to deconstruct the idea that the "family" is necessarily constructed as a necessary component of the idea of the home. Between the rich and detailed stage directions and the added on-stage musicians that open each *tableau*, *Le Bal des voleurs* represents a hybrid theatrical paradigm, and adds an important element to the

analysis of *Roberto Zucco* that problematizes how the presence of music and its ballet-musical-play form complicates the metatheatrical performative home of the text.

An analysis of *Le Prénom* would engage with the domestic space and problematize the conflictual family and societal units established in the analysis of *Le Dieu du Carnage*. Like *Carnage*, the play takes place entirely in the living room of a Parisian apartment and hinges on rising and falling levels of tension and conflict between the characters. Gathered together to celebrate the imminent birth of the first child of Vincent and Anna, the discussion of what the couple will name their child brings out a plethora of other familial issues and causes the characters to remove their masks of politeness and acceptance. Language becomes emphasized through the historical resonance the chosen name contains, and creates links between the micro tensions of the domestic space that overlap with national and historical tensions. Where *Carnage* emphasized the nuclear family unit, *Le Prénom* extends the ties to assumed familial roles and generational gaps. Because of its success as a film, an analysis of *Le Prénom* would push the generic analysis to incorporate the translation of the text from print to stage to screen in a way that cannot be done as effectively with the film version of *Carnage* (in English).

In order to engage with the sonic urban quality of the slam poetry analyzed in this dissertation, I will put word play, instrumentalization, and urban space into dialogue with slam through an analysis of the musical group Java's first album *Hawaï*. Though I provided a preliminary musical analysis in *Midi 20* to demonstrate how added-on musical background complicates the text's reception, my analysis does not treat text and music that is written to function as a unit. Because Grand Corps Malade is not a musician, his album is a collaborative effort to use musical accompaniment to increase the marketability and reach of his texts. In

contrast, Java's texts and music are written simultaneously, and analyzing their first album would answer questions raised by *Midi 20* about the inherent sonic quality of urban slam poetry.

Already a genre in fusion, Java mixes rap and musette ballroom melodies on the accordion, complicating the hip hop origins with the assumed Frenchness of the instrumental sound of the accordion. Like RiM, their songs are founded on a healthy dose of *ludique*, word play, and linguistic maneuvering. Similar to Grand Corps Malade, several of the songs are anchored between style and content to the urban space. In the song "Métro," for example, Java weaves in a multitude of names of metro stations into the dialogue, resulting in word play that is expertly linked to the representation of space on the well-known metro map: "Raconte un Monceau d'Clichy que tout le monde connaît Pasteur. [Raconte un morceau cliché que tout le monde connaît par coeur]. Actual musical analysis would add a dimension to the chapters on slam by comparing how the recognizable musical refrain engages with the textually performative refrain that creates *home*. Analyzing music as text helps to negotiate generic difference by showing how sonorous language functions as a network that mirrors urban spatial networks.

As a second step in enlarging my thesis and addressing questions these texts could not treat, I could also add an analysis of two novels: Colette's *La Vagabonde*, and Patrick Chamoiseau's *Solibo Magnifique*. Where my existing corpus contains texts that make a presence for themselves onstage, the next step would be to analyze texts that emphasize performance and the stage's presence without ever being performed. This reversal of the analysis would best frame the change in genre to longer formats such as novels. Through an analysis of these two novels, a demonstration of how both performance and affect encompass vital acts of transfer that transmit memory and a sense of identity causes the focus to be turned to the relationship of

translation between bodies, space, and language. These two novels focus on characters whose performativity is used to negotiate identificatory community based relationships. The performance spaces in both novels: the music-hall stage in *La Vagabonde* and the public market stage in *Solibo* both set up new structures of authority through spectatorship while emphasizing how performative text is a necessary part of the acts of transfer between audience and spectator.

In *La Vagabonde*, the idea of performance as a projection is written into the fabric of the novel. As in the case studies of my dissertation, writing and performance are contrasted, compared, and played off of one another. Framed around the idea of the mirror, translation becomes reversal in the movements of the main character Renée Néré. Renée is a dancer and a mime, and even her name is a palindrome and sonic mirror image of itself. The novel opens with her staring at herself in the mirror while preparing her stage persona.

> Je vais me retrouver seule avec moi-même, en face de cette conseillère maquillée qui me regarde, de l'autre côté de la glace, avec de profonds yeux aux paupières frottées d'une pate grasse et violâtres. Elle a des pommettes vives, de la même couleur que les phlox des jardins, des lèvres d'un rouge noir, brillantes et comme vernies… (5)

Throughout the novel, acting and writing become complex mirror images of each other. Writing is contrasted with stage presence as an activity that is best performed alone. Renée states:

> Écrire! Pouvoir écrire! cela signifie la longue rêverie devant la feuille blanche, le griffonnage inconscient, les jeux de la plume qui tourne en rond autour d'une tache d'encre, qui mordille le mot imparfait, le griffe, le hérissée de fléchettes, l'orne d'antennes, de pattes, jusqu'à ce qu'il perde sa figure lisible de mot, mué en insecte fantastique, envolé de papillon-fée… (15)

Writing becomes a process of ornamenting physical text just like the process of preparing the make-up for the mime's act. However, the narration itself is in first person, extending the solitude to encompass a shared space between reader and writer that mimics the projection of the relationship between spectator and performer. Each space—from the "coins intimes" of the dressing room and apartment, to the public stage, restaurants, and parks, renews the binary power struggle between observer and observed. The idea of reversal, projection, and translation opens up a new line of analysis that adds an additional dimension to the creation of the home.

Solibo Magnifique presents an important set of questions in regards to the gulf (and interval) between textuality and orality. Centered around the police investigation of the death of a *conteur*, Solibo Magnifique, the text is structured as a series of poetic narrations and witness accounts that attempt to determine the cause of his death more scientifically than from an "égorgette de la parole." Chamoiseau inserts himself into the story as author-narrator in order to represent the oral traditions of the Martiniquais Creole into written French. The attempt at a synthesis of the many cultures, classes, and identities within the novel creates a performative language connected to the shared boundaries between people. As in the corpus of my dissertation, the focus on the recreation of events through the style and musicality of the narration is key to deciphering the actions. The accounts provided by the witnesses cause us to rethink ideas of translation and the role of cultural rationalism, providing an opening into the more nuanced poetic musicalities inherent in the accounts themselves.

In conclusion, the methodology set up to analyze these case studies provides a multitude of possible directions to continue in the process of analyzing performative writing. Performance studies' move to disregard the importance of the text only shows that the performance becomes itself a text through an analysis of its composition, construction, and harmonies. In creating a

lexicon that bridges performative, affective and musical structures and processes, the interval between text and performance can become more than a binary relationship and instead open up a productive dialogue on analysis, intertextuality, and interdisciplinary criticism. In this way, the interval helps to deconstruct and define new boundaries that frame stage, page, territory, and home.

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