The paths of creation
or
How can I help my Dybbouk to get out of me?

For a long time, I have been maintaining some sort of schizophrenia, divided between my artistic work, and my research and teaching theater at the University. As long as I can assault theatrical works or literary works to adapt, sometimes translate, and even play when it's possible, but always direct, my artistic gesture has been and will remain for me an art of living. These is the only way I can assume my human condition. I shaped my identity in this artistic gesture : first as a daughter (my father was an architect and my mother an actress in her youth) , as a woman, as a jew, as a citizen, and also - but it took me a long time to realize it - as a university researcher… My artistic creation accompanied me at all times, at all stages of my life, drawing an evolutive path that the research at the University could help me to inscribe write down.

Would we say, as Pablo Picasso did in nineteen twenty six : "I don't search, I find" [1]or on the contrary in theater : "I don't find, I search". Nobody can ever say in theater that he has found, we are always searching. However, creation is not research and of course research is not creation. Research is feeding creation which is feeding research. So we will try to follow the paths of creation, full of sound and fury, of laugh and work, to try to answer to these essential question s: "Was the chicken before the egg or the egg before the chicken?".

This is a fundamentally circular question that gives to research and creation, to both of them, an absolutely wonderful status of uselessness in our neoliberal society – to integrate the subject - while this uselessness is really a beginning of hope: the soul supplement that we need to live and not only to survive. Let's say that we are the cherry on the cake – as art could be perceived - but the cherry gives its flavour to the cake, gives the real taste of it.

The second point that comes after uselessness is the ability in creative practice research to give objectivity to our totally subjective artistic point of view. Let's ask how research, in the area of creative practice research, might be necessarily autobiographic. These objectification of our artistic subjectivity could be what Paul Claudel calls "co-naissance" : the new "born with" of the artist, a new birth to the world will show us how to follow the path through creation to reach knowledge.

[1] Picasso, Pablo (2014). *Je ne cherche pas, je trouve- Ecrits et pensées ;* Paris : Ed. Cherche Midi.

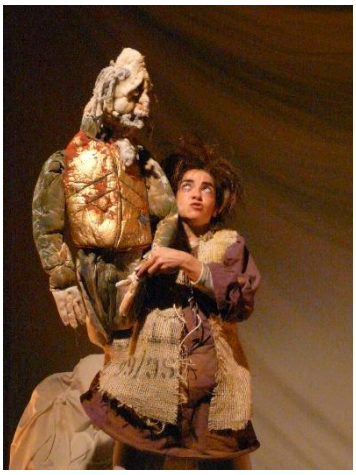
1) Theatrical adaptation of novels : a gesture of (re) writing

So what does happen between knowledge as knowhow and knowledge as practice and research? The first step would be to understand what to catch, what to snatch, what to extract on these paths of creation to make it and transmute it into knowledge.
Creation means intuition and research means analysis. In creative practice research, we take the risk of not knowing, following his our own intuition. ***It*** is, or ***something*** is searching during the process of creation more than we are searching voluntarily – a little bit like during a psychoanalytic cure. We are going to a mysterious end, far away from the limited date of the production submitted to the market law of the market : we follow the path of our project..
And because my own material could only be autobiographic, I will take as an example of my creative practice research the intuition that made me lean on the novel for a theatrical adaptation, or more precisely how to transfer great mythological characters of the novel's repertoire into theater, into theatrical shapes or scenic writings.

I began with ***Scrooge*** – from Charles Dickens's Christmas Tale. I wrote an adaptation for one actress and fourteen characters. The costume set (because her gigantic dress was the set from where every puppet and object were hidden) was representative of the Book from where the whole characters of the novel magically appeared as in a dream or a nightmare. The main character wasn't Scrooge but the Book itself. The words were becoming shapes, characters, incarnations. To integrate my explanations and because once more our material in creative practice research is our own plays and directions, I would be obliged to refer to video 's links : https://vimeo.com/118144784. Here, the narration was becoming theatrical in using dialogs between the different parts of the story that were told by the actress. I just kept very few sentences of the tale to get into a playing with the metaphorical incarnation of the characters (the employee is only represented by his muffler and a candle).



The second step of my path was the creation of *Quichott*e. I began once more with the set as an opening Book to create the whole word world ? of the play, but this time the two main characters were Don Quichotte and Sancho Pança as two faces of the same mythological figure. As Franz Kafka said : “Sancho Panca, who has never boasted about it, succeeds over the years, devouring stories of brigand and novels of chivalry during the nights and evenings, to completely divert his demon entirely from himself. He did so well that he - whom he later called Don Quixote - threw himself now and again into the wildest adventures”[2]. In contrast to *Scrooge*, there was no more storyteller because it was no longer a tale. Here, we entered into the book but everything was seen through Quichotte’s eyes first and Pança’s eyes in the second part, except for the Countess, who is the repulsive character that judges Don Quichotte as a foolish and distractive jester, that makes fun of him and seems to be the external look of the reality, of the “reasonable” materialism: https://vimeo.com/7556354.



The third step was my adaptation of “Alice in Wonderland” and “Alice through the looking glass” called : “Du côté d’Alice”, in reference to the famous Proustian book “Du côté de chez Swann”.
I tried to manufacture the theatrical writing as the story itself seemed to be manufactured. I wanted the spectator to see how this unbelievable and mysterious, mystical story of Alice was built. It is not a tale, it is like a puzzle. So I did as if I was inventing the story with two Lewis Carroll –one was writing with the sounds (a musician) and the other with the drawing (a painter). So that I

[2] Kafka, Franz (1975). *La muraille de Chine* ; trad. Jean Carrive et Alexandre Vialatte, Mayenne : NRF Gallimard : 132 (translation is mine)

could write directly on stage, in the space with my words - my spatial, flesh words - the signs of Carroll's writing. https://vimeo.com/75768948



The fourth step in my creative practice research was *Un gros grand gras Gargantua.* Here my point of view was different because I wanted to rewrite in a modern area the keys that let us understand these mysterious and metaphoric Rabelais'novels, full of symbols and fables (I chased to mix different books as *Gargantua, Pantagruel*, *Le Quart Livre*…around the main character of Gargantua). So I began to take the keys of my own vision as a director : what I saw in the narrative story as the way men eat or think, the way we feed ourselves just to fulfill our emptiness and on the contrary how to taste and feel the life nourishing our brain and our body – as humanism can teach us. That was of course my reading of what gigantism could represent in our imaginations and instead of writing this new story only with the actor's bodies and the space, I decided to mix original parts I chased and a new (re)writing by a French playwriter : https://vimeo.com/174277583



My next step will be a play about a more contemporary character, Mangeclous, extracted from Albert Cohen's novels. The main interest will be to work on a

literary character speaking about other literary characters (Anna Karenine)…as too much literary! A book into a book, a sort of directing the deconstruction of a writing process…
All these theatrical adaptations are working on the "subground" (between the subconscious and the underground) of the writing process : the invisible part we have to make visible if we want to let appear the artistic gesture, this mysterious moment of creation that underlies the final "product".

2) "Full of hints for the workers in theater"

So if I come back to the link between intuition and analysis, research does'nt kill creation as all artists fear about. It seems like the very common fear artists have to go to a shrink because we think that understanding our process of fantasy that is the main background of our creation will stop any ability of creation. On the contrary, knowledge and in this case our own knowledge of ourselves digs the furrow of our creation which stays always mysterious and invisible. Research is drawing this mysterious way of creation to a conscious path – which helps to create and transmit.
Grotowski spoke wonderfully about "robbed transmission" in a "robbed film"[3]. And Grotowski tells us that we can't teach or give an artistic personal gesture, but only technical tricks and – more important and more invisible – the way to re-do it, to re-do the visible part of creation becoming at these point research : creative practice research.
Edward Gordon Craig did say the same when he asked his pupils to draw, to take notes as the best mean to ***know*** how to grab : "You have only a school now. Let no public see this grim "revival" – lovely here and there – full of hints for workers in theatres – no more."[4]. In my point of view, these "full of hints for the workers

[3] Grotowski said : "There are two things in your question, there are two things. One thing: can we take ownership of someone else's practices? Obviously, we can, if we have a special guide who ... in truth it's like history: can we rob a Master? The great Master, indeed, he makes his disciple elected all the possibilities of robbing him. But he does not give it, no, he lets the other go rob, that's what's essential. He's a very bad teacher, if I can say teacher who ... (makes the gesture of giving) no, no ... create the conditions when he sees that we put something in the hat, a hidden rabbit, and we do not do not give him that rabbit, and leave the hat on the table. It's like when everyone who has the real job, he has a secret behind. This secret is never disclosed. So, we just rob him. We try the burglary. It is one of the most essential filiations, it is burglary. But yes, but it's not stealing the secret outside, it's like stealing things related to sources, secret processes, not the ones we see." in « La parole de Jerzy Grotowski : légende » is a registration of Jerzy Grotowski's talking during one of the Action of the Académie Expérimentale des Théâtres : « Le laboratoire d'acteur. Des origines au commencement avec Jerzy Grotowski », from 3 to 5 April 1996 at the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards at Pontedera (Italie). Vidéo realized by Pierre-Henri Magnin. Document from the Académie Expérimentale des Théâtres at the Institut des Mémoires de l'édition contemporaine (Imec). Thanks to Pascale Butel-Skrzyszowski, head of the archive division of the funds at Imec et of the funds of Académie Expérimentale des Théâtres and thanks to Michelle Kokosowski.
[4] Gordon Craig, Edward, "A note on sanity in stage production of Shakespearean plays", quoted by Le Bœuf Patrick, « Attention!(ce n'est qu'une) école », in *Faire théâtre sous le signe de la recherche*, sous la direction de Losco- Lena Mireille (2017), Presses Universitaires de Rennes.

in theater" are the best definition of creative practice research. Research goes with the creation, step by step. It allows us to know how to re-do what intuition just did.

Research helps us to glimpse what is absolutely invisible in creation. Art is digging the mysterious hole of the world, the matrix hole of human condition, deep as inferno and glowing as paradise[5] . We can't see inside (who could see the hinted face of God?), we can just turn around, hear voices that we can reinterpret, give shapes to these voices so that they could become visible. And as in alchemy where science and mysticism go together to search the philosophical stone, made of material and immaterial, or as in ancient Greek theater, at the origin of western theater, where sacred rituals become the foundations of democracy, research help us to find the way of turning around the black hole of our own human mythology. It allows us to stay, as a tightrope walker, in a delicate balance between intuition and cleverness, emotion and structure, Dionysus and Apollo. And before coming back to my own creative practical research, let's assert that it is the best way, in our hopelessness liberal society, to avoid falling into fascism or fundamentalism which is the religious way ***not to know*** about mystery but to fall in fear, trying to think (or precisely not to think!) to the incomprehensible of the world. We want, on the contrary, to know the way to turn, as in antique chorus, around the matrix hole and agree that consciousness and knowledge are part of our creation and of the creation's mystery. We don't fall in the dark deep hole, we are allowed to think the hole, to imagine it which is yet conceptualization, to think about his infinite deepness as Pascal did with the infinitely small and the infinitely big. And when Pascal gives as a philosopher an answer – or a non-answer – about God, I personally think that he gives us the answer as a poet which means : the path of thinking our inability to thin is creation, which is what philosophical rationalized thinking can't afford[6].

So, after a long time, suffering from being between research as a lecturer and creation as an artist, I resolved, as I said at the beginning, these schizophrenic pathology with creative practice research. When I tried to put words on my actions – and acting too - , to follow the steps of my intuition, of my emotion like through "a conscious diary", it was like reversing internal knowledge in external

[5] Victor Hugo said that « The sublime is down » - speaking about literary creation…

[6] « Mais si notre vue s'arrête là, que l'imagination passe outre ; elle se lassera plutôt de concevoir, que la nature de fournir. Tout ce monde visible n'est qu'un trait imperceptible dans l'ample sein de la nature. Nulle idée n'en approche. Nous avons beau enfler nos conceptions au-delà des espaces imaginables, nous n'enfantons que des atomes, au prix de la réalité des choses. C'est une sphère infinie dont le centre est partout, la circonférence nulle part. Enfin, c'est le plus grand caractère sensible de la toute puissance de Dieu, que notre imagination se perde dans cette pensée » ;Pascal, Blaise (1951). *Les Pensées* ; Luxembourg : Lafuma : fragment 199.

knowledge, transforming an artistic gesture in ideas : an "Idea's Theater" as Antoine Vitez called it[7] , putting words on his artistic way, as Peter Brook or many others did. Many of those whom we could call "Masters" are writing on their creation as it is a part of their creation process.

3) How did I let my own Dibbouk get away

So could we agree with Valere Novarina telling us that the thought is made, is manufactured in the mouth? I would say yes, as Marcel Proust does, when he offers us a kind of methodology for creative practice research with his "madeleine". The sensation comes first in the narrator's mouth eating a madeleine, and intuition arrives to open and let you just follow the path of your knowledge – which is exactly path of creation. It makes Marcel Proust as one of the major artist working as a searcher about his sensations, his intuition. Once more, Apollo builds shapes on the drunkness of Dionysus : reason gives frames to spontaneous gushing of our artistic intuition.

Creation would be to let emerge the vision (and not only the hearing) of God's voice[8] or, in other words, to dig the mysterious matrix hole of the world, this invisible universe that we make visible in creation. Research would be to interprete as Nietzsche could speak about "The being as being interpreted". Research will be the interpretation of these interpretation of the world – which is creation. Antoine Vitez, one of the greatest director in the 80th, said that "art has to let us hear what can't be heard, show what can't be showed and tell what we can't tell"[9] also said : "I think that everybody will not understand immediately what is in the play. Does'nt matter. When a tale is sufficiently exemplary, if it is sent in the public with enough violence, it stays in the memories and gives us the ability to ***think*****,** and understand ***after***. I send ideas, like punches"[10].

Research helps to create our Dibbouk and give him the ability to get out of yourselves. I speak about Dibbouk because it is for me the perfect metaphor of theater and what is acting (possession, exteriorization…). ***The Dibbouk (or Between two worlds***), play written by Shalom An-Ski inn 1917, was the first step of the creation of an Hebrew theater in Russia when it was directed by Vakhtangov. It is also the beginning of all my academic research on jewish theater. I wrote my PHD on the prohibition to make images : what could be a

[7] Vitez, Antoine (1991). *Le théâtre des Idées* ; Saint-Amand : Ed. Le Messager Gallimard : 271

[8] As it is told in the Bible (translation in french by Chouraqui, André (1989),Exode, 20, 20, La Flèche : Ed. Desclée de Brouwer : « Tout le peuple voit les voix » Exode 20,18

[9] Vitez, Antoine (1991). *Le théâtre des Idées ;* Saint-Amand : Ed. Le Messager Gallimard : 271

[10] Op.cit. : 63-64

theater born with the absolute prohibition to make images? That is probably what brought me, consciously and unconsciously, to work in my plays on grotesque in theater.



My artistic gesture mixed identity and creation in grotesque – as we can see how it is manufactured in Yiddish theater which influenced so much Kafka, and it allowed me in the same time to understand expressionism from an internal point of view. As a director and as an actress, I had to experiment the difference between caricature and stylization in expressionism. Expressionism is not over-acting as it could seem to be. It is the body 's writing in the space as if the actor's bodies were like letters on the white page of the stage. I had to experiment the way to drive an actor to essentialize his gesture, to stylize it as to use his own body as a sign and not as full of sense – as psychology can give to actor's play. So work with the actors on what could be expressionism in Yiddish theater helped me in my knowledge, as a reader at University, to transmit the meanings of expressionism, the operation that gives its aesthetics. This research went from "Kafka's dance" to "The man in the attic", two plays written by Timothy Daly, a famous Australian playwriter. : https://vimeo.com/174277910

My main tracks in this last play were :

- How the grotesque can allow to re-play the "big" History in a small history which would be the transposition in a stylized tale of the philosophical features that are underground
- How to tell History from an internal point of view which could be metaphorical : full of signs and not giving sense (interpretation)
- How the fable, told through this small world enclosure in the infernal circle between the Neighbor, the Man, the Woman and the Jew, allows us to understand how barbarity happens, where is

located the step where man falls in inhumanity. So the play was a sort of long scale going from an historical process to the internal human being.

I did some part of the same work during my last creation "The tango of wandering stars" which is a musical theatrical about Yiddish tango in relation to the trip of the jewish people at the twentieth century from Poland to United States and Argentina[11]

These is not only a way to do a therapy (letting the others pay for it!) but once more how to transform my own story in an universal tale –which gives us the definition of art.

4) In conclusion : how to open the door…

To come to conclusion, creative practice research allows us ***to name the doing***, to name what is acting. Research in creative practical research would be to think the creation, I mean the process of creation so that we would be able to transmit neither creation which is invisible, neither the technics of creation – which is the way we teach theater in practical classes – but to transmit the process of creation, the visible paths that brings us to creation, as Antoine Vitez, Peter Brook, Jacques Lassalle, Edward Gordon Craig and so many others did in essays on their theater – trying to understand the way they create so they could be "robbed" by their pupils, as Grotowski said.

Research put distance between us and our intuition, our emotion, not to leave them but on the contrary to follow them in a visible, readable and clear way even if we don't know what is behind the door. Kafka tells the story of a man walking all his life to reach a door behind which he sees the truth of the light . At the end of his path, he arrives exhausted to the door where light is more and more brilliant and asks the guard in front of the door to allow him to enter at the end of his life to see the truth behind these door. And the guard refuses, answering that the truth is not behind the door but is the path that the man did all his life to reach the door…[12]
This philosophical and poetical tale is also my creative practice research's personal path, working in my creation on the process of creation itself. Working on the great figures of literature's mythology as Scrooge, Don Quichotte, Alice or either Gargantua. All these characters are following an initiatory trip to reach

[11] https://vimeo.com/233634431

[12] In Kafka, Franz (2000). *Récits, romans et journaux*, trad. Marthe Robert, Classiques modernes, Librairie Générale Française, La Pochothèque : 1054-1056

at the end…the understanding of their own path. Scrooge understands that his real life is only the metaphor of a philosophical process about human being. Alice tries to interpret the puzzle of her growth and her femininity, jumping from a mystery to another one just to accept that her growing is puzzling and enigmatic. Gargantua is the tale of an initiatory travel in his own body which is the world and Quichotte, in particular, begins to travel at fifteen[13], and go on the world's paths to give sense to his life, returning at the end on his death's bed, telling Sancho Pança that all his apparently crazy path was to discover that : "I am who I am"(soy quien soy).

Charles Dullin could be the final reference about what transmission as the fundamental of these creative practice research : "Past gives you examples. It does'nt say : "Imitate to do as perfect as possible what I did". But he says "Do as I do, search as I searched, work""[14]. In that sense, creative practice research is at the perfect contrary of our society, built on uselessness, consumption, efficiency, far away of the time of research. We eat the cake but we don't have any more the essential flavor of the cherry : it is a stodgy cake, without any color and flavor.

To know is to do in creative practice research : research is the path to get inside our own creation and to question it. Not to answer but to ask question…As a rabbi said to his pupils : "I got the answer! I got the answer!...But who have the question?". Creative practical research is the research of the truth revealed by creation, the horse hidden in the stone that the sculptor lets appear with his work. In the doing is the process of knowing – coming back to these this incredible Grotowski's definition of transmission about the "ignorant master" and the "robbed talks". "Art is path" said Paul Klee and that will sum what creative practice research has to be.

[13] Kabbala is studied only after fourteen which seems the beginning of understanding our own mysteries
[14] Dullin, Charles (2011). *Introduction, choix et textes*, Mayenne : Editions Actes Sud : 61.

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Abstract

Understand what, in our creations, follow a path that research must bring out, means to start from my deepness intimacy to help my Dybbouk to get out and become an performance for humanity, an artistic gesture that I can share , that I can transmit to others. Starting from my theater director experiment as a know-how with more than thirty plays and my academic knowledge, I will try to follow this path that leads me to a theoretical research on both theatrical forms and the prohibition of representation , to an artistic gesture that leads once again to its capacity for transmission, pedagogy of the gesture through its theorization. From experiment to practice and from practice to experiment, we will try to put words on our own path in regard to what we call practice research which is at his beginning in France particularly in theater.

Biography

Student of the Ecole Normale Supérieure, “agrégée” of modern letters, associate professor directing PHD in theatrical studies at the University of Evry, Dr. Isabelle Starkier is also a director, actress and company director in theater. She works on the link between theory and practice, bringing together her plays (about forty), her work as a company-in-residence and her research on otherness as well as theater in the heart of the city. Last plays : Le Bal de Kafka, L’homme dans le plafond de Timothy Daly, Le bourgeois Gentilhomme, Un gros grand gras Gargantua, Le tango des étoiles errantes…