

# Representation and Literary Writing: From Identity to Alterity: Re-writing and De-writing Shakespeare with Laforgue and Bene

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**Abstract:** Literary writing, in contrast with writing as transcription, escapes the “world of representation.” This expression alludes to the world-as-it is, a world based on the reproduction of the same and the logic of identity. Representation recognizes the order of discourse, the word connected with power. Instead, literary writing offers the possibility of cultivating the artistic dimension of human semiosis, thus the escape from representation. The word of literary writing is objectified, indirect; it utters the impossibility of repeating the identical, the irreducibility of the other. In this framework, we examine *Hamlet* in re-writing and de-writing processes from Shakespeare, through Laforgue, to Bene (Artaud).

**Key words:** representation; literary writing; rewriting; dewriting;

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**标题:** 表征与文学书写：从同一性到异他性——拉弗格与贝内对莎士比亚的再书写与去书写

**内容摘要:** 与记录书写相反，文学书写逃离了“表征的世界”。“表征的世界”指的是实际世界，一个基于同相再造和身份逻辑的世界。表征所认同的是话语秩序，即与权力相连的语词；而文学书写则提供了创造人类符号活动的艺术维度的可能，从而实现逃离表征。文学书写的语词是客观化的、间接的；它表明重复同相的不可能性以及他者的不可约减性。通过这个框架，本文在从莎士比亚到拉弗格再到贝内（阿尔托）的多个再书写与去书写过程中对《哈姆雷特》进行了审视。

**关键词:** 表征；文学书写；再书写；去书写

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(“...it is not the tragic question, the Madman’s question: ‘Who am I?’,  
but the comic question, the Bewildered man’s question: ‘Am I?’”)  
(Barthes, *The Rustle of Language* 379).

## 1. Preface

This essay revolves around the Italian writer Carmelo Bene (1937-2002) who took a great interest in William Shakespeare and his writings. Bene reread and re-elaborated a few of Shakespeare’s works including *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Richard III* and *Macbeth*. Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) wrote an essay on Bene’s *Riccardo III* evidencing the novelty of his interpretation. Deleuze’s essay is entitled “A manifesto less,” published in Italian with Carmelo Bene in a book entitled *Overlappings. Richard III by Carmelo Bene* (Feltrinelli, 1978). Bene also progressively rewrote Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* in different phases. Indeed he dedicated his attention above all to *Hamlet*, reproposing this work in different scripts. In short, Bene’s theatrical writings overall consist in calling to question theatre traditionally understood in terms of rhetoric, re-citation, citing over and over again, repetition of the same text, while criticizing the actor understood reductively as a good speaker, a good reciter of a pre-established text.

Carmelo Bene’s reading of Shakespeare is fundamentally inspired by two figures, the French writer Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) and the Uruguayan-French writer Jules Laforgue (1860-1887). Artaud is renowned above all for having called to question theatre, normally understood as a copy, as a double of reality. Instead, rather than a reduction to the canons of theatrical convention, for Artaud, theatre is the interrogation of reality and not passive reproduction; theatre does not imitate or repeat reality, but questions it. Artaud adopted the same critical attitude towards translation. Translation is not simply to say the same thing in another language. The text that translates and the text that is translated are connected by a relation of alterity (otherness), dialogue, interference. Artaud translated Lewis Carroll (1832-1898). Most significant on this account is that Artaud maintained that Carroll had not succeeded in saying what Artaud himself succeeds in saying with his translation: consequently, Carroll’s text (the original) is described as a bad copy of Artaud’s text, that is, of the translation which he considers as the real original text.<sup>①</sup> For that which concerns *Hamlet*, the other author to take into consideration is Jules Laforgue. In his short life, Laforgue wrote *Hamlet*, subtitle, “Hamlet, or the consequences of filial pity.” This text by Laforgue together with an anthology of his poetical compositions was republished in a volume by various authors as a homage to Jules Laforgue (thus entitled). Laforgue’s work on *Hamlet* was held in high esteem by Carmelo Bene in his various theatrical interpretations of *Hamlet* such as *Hamlet Suite* (1995).

In this essay, special attention is turned to the problematic of the relation among texts: the theatrical text and its staging; the text to translate and its translation. In both cases the *text put on stage* or the *translated text* can be defined as the “same other”: in fact, it is a question of the same text, no doubt, but in a relation of alterity, of otherness (to the point that Artaud turns the relation

between original and its copy upside down, as mentioned above). The question of dialogue understood not simply in terms of exchange among rejoinders, but rather as encounter among words, as listening also comes into play here. From this point of view, another author who should be taken into consideration is the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975). The reading of a text to be a real and proper reading must take up a listening position towards writing. On this account too we can say that the reading text is never the same text, and that to reread a written text is always somehow to rewrite it.

All this tells us how important it is to keep account of the category of alterity (or otherness) in the relation among texts—whether written, staged or translated. The prevalence of monological logic at the expense of dialogic logic, prevalence that can be witnessed fundamentally in Western thought, has always had consequences that are mystifying, reductive and reifying towards texts. This also reflects the mystifying, reductive and reifying character of interpersonal relations given that each one of us is a text as well in relations of intertextuality—which involve processes of continuous innovation, rereading, rewriting—and therefore in relations of inevitable dialogic involvement and co-participation with each other. If, as the semiotician Thomas Sebeok has claimed, life is semiosis, therefore life involves the ongoing renewal of signs, opening to alterity, it ensues that we can only conclude that identity flourishes in alterity.

## 2. Out of Frame

In a book coauthored by Augusto Ponzio and me, *FUORI CAMPO. I segni del corpo tra rappresentazione ed eccedenza* (*Out of frame. Signs of the body between representation and excess*, 1999), I used the expression “Fuori campo,” from the discourse of cinema, to indicate the condition of “outside discourse”<sup>②</sup>. “Fuori campo”: out of frame; out of shot; off screen. Also: “fuori campo”, off stage, outside representation, out of place, off limits. “Fuori campo” is an expression that indicates a project Augusto Ponzio and I have been working on over several years now, and which—for what specifically concerns our work on literary writing—has found expression in a series of co-authored works, such as *Fuori campo* and *La raffigurazione letteraria* (*Literary figuration*, 2006). The expression “raffigurazione” (figuration, depiction, portrayal) in this title refers to literary writing, to writing understood as portrayal, depiction, and figuration by contrast to representation. It alludes to the capacity of the word to escape the constrictions of representation. Writing understood in terms of depiction, as literary writing, alludes to the human propensity for innovation and creativity and together for critique. By contrast with writing understood as transcription, literary writing, the aesthetic word escapes the “world of representation.” This expression alludes to the world-as-it-is, to a world based on the reproduction of the same, on the logic of identity, a monologic. The world of representation recognizes the order of discourse, the word connected with power and control, the objective, direct word, the transcribed, re-cited, inscribed, pre-scribed word. This is the word sanctioned by representation. Instead, literary writing, writing understood as depiction, therefore artistic discourse generally, offers the possibility of transposing writing—that is, writing understood as a modeling device for creativity, innovation and critique—into life, therefore of cultivating the artistic dimension of human semiosis. Writing

as portrayal, as depiction or figuration involves the possibility of escape from representation, from the order of discourse, from the limits of official consciousness, of the subject. The word of literary writing, of artistic discourse generally, is objectified, indirect. It becomes *return*, de-description, de-writing, writing that utters the impossibility of repeating the identical, that announces the irreducibility of the other, and that celebrates otherness.

“Fuori campo,” “out of frame” understood as out of circumscribed spaces and precise boundaries, out of delimitations of type, genre, function, out of spaces for manoeuvres, tactical exercises, surrounded by works for defense, or open to battles. But what fortified fields today are not opened by new wartime technologies and by the new world order?

“Fuori campo,” “out of frame,” “off screen” understood as extraterritorialization. Extraterritorialization with respect to scientific fields, professional fields, disciplines, with respect to knowledge and specializations.

“Fuori campo,” “out of frame” with respect to semantics, with respect to meanings from the order of discourse which the system of language wants to hear us speak in our verbal and nonverbal acts. Out of context, out of coherence, out of cohesion. Antigrammatical enterprise.<sup>③</sup>

“Fuori campo,” as off the subject, off the topic, outside the subject, outside the ego, *hors sujet*<sup>④</sup>. Outside narration, vision, hearing, perceiving, feeling all functional to the subject, to its practices, to its roles. Field of visibility, of audibility (hearing, as *in a hearing*), anamnesis, medical history, case-history, memory.

“Fuori campo” is the body, irreducible to being, to its functionalities and to its manifestations: consciousness, conscience, subject, individual, person (a necessary referent for that which is personal), the word, nomination, narration, politics, war, the extreme solution (*extrema ratio*) of coherent realistic administration appropriate to the objective hardness of things. Out of frame, off screen, off stage, off limits is the body, refractory to organization, other with respect to the organism. Situated out of, outside, beyond in synchronical and diachronical intercorporeity which surpasses the limits of single individuals, of differences, genres and species, thereby opening difference to a material and therefore inevitable unindifference—in spite of any attempts at dodging, at avoiding engagement, through alibis, loopholes and excuses provided by personal responsibility, by roles and affiliations.<sup>⑤</sup>

The body does not enter the representation of being. Signs of the body between representation and excess—signs from the perspective of global semiotics. For global semiotics the semiosphere is neither anthropocentrically nor logocentrically reduced to the human world, nor to its so-called paraverbal signs. Representation is not surface, epiphenomenon, appearance: it is reality itself, its own evidence. Representation is being in its realistic expression, in its hardness and indifference. We cannot be an individual, a person, a gender, a difference; there cannot be context and situation, role, affiliation and community; there cannot be a field without representation, without deferral, to another place, to another scene. Therefore there cannot be representation without alibis. “Fuori campo” as excess with respect to representation. Out of representation. Evasion through writing and its capacity for depiction, de-description, de-writing.

The above is from the presentation to our *FUORI CAMPO*. What follows are reflections on

experimentations in the laboratory of the word at theatre, a privileged place for representation and consequently for its interrogation: from William Shakespeare to Jules Laforgue to Carmelo Bene (via Antonin Artaud).

### 3. Theatre without Representation

To read a text we need another text. To read this other text we need yet another text. This is the way things go, *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare is a good example. The text that reads can simply limit itself to reading the preceding text passively, reverentially. The text that reads can simply limit itself to voicing the preceding text, reciting it like an actor, a more or less good “reciter”. But in such a case the act of reading, the work of interpretation is interpretive at a low degree so that the reading text is no more than a mere duplicate or worse still a poor copy, a mere *renvoi*, like a pointed finger, to the original text. Instead, to obtain a reading that is effectively interpretive a distance must be established among texts. How to achieve this? By interposing other texts for example between the text being read and the text that reads the preceding text (Ponzio, *La rivoluzione* 69-110). Recitation and comment belong to the *order of discourse*. But the order of discourse must be transgressed, or at least delayed, left unperformed, questioned, Hamletically deferred. “Must be”: this imperative too is altogether internal to the order of discourse. The order of discourse demands a commitment from Hamlet, which contradicts his tendency to linger and resist, to being recalcitrant. Also because, as Jules Laforgue’s Hamlet says, “Art is so great and life is so short” (Laforgue, *Moralités* 31).

All the same representation, theatre—which is the privileged place of representation, as Artaud says, a place that must be dismantled if we are to shatter the mirror of representation—cannot be escaped. “Must be”: yet again another imperative. As the challenging Italian artist, Carmelo Bene, once wrote, “it is not at all easy to enter the *non place* of *theatre* (definitive elimination of Ptolemaic representation)” (*Opere* xv). Obligation to representation is obligation to will, work, being. From the very time of birth. Again reading Carmelo Bene he evidences how “one is obliged to being present, to breathless *being there*: this bending to representation, to books, to this *nourritur*, something I could have done without absolutely, the vulgarity of action cannot be escaped” (*Opere* vi).

To interpret *Hamlet* is difficult: one is obliged to say, to act, to react, to be. To interpret *Hamlet* is to escape, but the law inscribed in the name of the father-author compels to be, to being there. The order of discourse is omniscient. All places, roles, gestures, words are an expression of the order of discourse:

The God-ego, the homeland, the government, untolerating State tolerance, the family, paternity, offspring, the population, History, politics, fraternity, one’s neighbor, Europe, the constitution, the register of birth, marriage and death, citizenship, ontology, education, progress, dialectics, the trade union, the problem of the workers, humanism, opinionism, equality, revolution, justice and injustice, social responsibility, actualism, news, information, freedom (above all freedom of the press), democracy, compulsory university education,

optimism, good common sense, the condominium, the public, the private, solidarity, altruism, the racial question, the cult of the dead (to bury the living), charity, the Jewish dilemma, will, faith, hope, utopia, ideology, vulgarity of the image, metaphysics, respect for work, the contemporary, the verb, sense, expression, pre-scribed orality, the word, thought, memory, the interdisciplinary discipline, virtuosity, the blind indiscipline of the contrary to all this. (*Opere* xvi)

Carmelo Bene develops “cruelty” (“la cruauté”) from Antonin Artaud’s theatre. Here “cruelty” means control, deliberate behaviour, mediation, artifice, and not spontaneity which is inevitably respectful, nor blind unruliness. But Bene rejects Artaud’s way of *doing* theatre: the Shakespearian way of doing theatre aimed at *awakening the King’s consciousness*, so as to nail him down to his guilt, to unmask his conscience and reveal his bad conscience. On the contrary, Bene wants to undo theatre, undo the scene: cruelly. Hamlet organizes a performance at court, he is already taken by representation and carries out its will. “From the very first Hamletic performance I strongly evidenced the insipidity of the ‘performance at court’ tending (?) to ‘entrap the conscience of the king’” (*Opere* 1352). Hamlet’s “real” character (“real” in a dual sense): theatre that is real is already implicated with power. Laforgue’s text comes between the real Hamlet and the Bene Hamlet—“the little work of the artist type prince is the refrain of the lives that I have lived (*Opere* 1351)—with all the interpolations Laforgue’s text operates on the pre-scribed text, pre-scribed for Hamlet himself who must adapt to the part he has been pre-scribed to play, but always for the sake of filial piety, from Hamlet to William (this time he too an actor), for he must perform this text for the right person: for he who holds real power. Hamletically the hero is not decided in the part of the character: he is involved in a love story with the actress Kate (called Ophélie on stage) and dreams of becoming an actor: rather than follow through the text which he knows well, he wishes to leave with her for Paris and ride the Parisian scene. Hamlet does not even wish to hear Ophélie’s name anymore: yet another Ophélie! (Laforgue, *Moralités* 16) Hamlet attempts to escape the name, the law, that which the text predicts. A name is not merely an indicator, an identifier, an index. It is also charged with symbolic (conventional) value as well as iconic value (an acoustic, visual image), in the Peircean sense of these terms.<sup>⑥</sup> William Shakespeare knows what a name *wills*. And not only in *Hamlet*. Romeo’s love is forbidden to Juliet: not insofar as Romeo is that individual there in flesh and bone whom by virtue of an arbitrary convention responds to the name “Romeo,” but insofar as it is a name that relates indexically to another name, “Montecchi” and to all that which that name implies not only indexically, but also symbolically and iconically. In spite of himself, “Romeo” is condemned to the signifying import of his other name, his family name, “Montecchi,” a name with a history, a name endowed with semiotic materiality engendered through a chain of interpretants that escape “Romeo’s control, and Juliet’s desire in naming Romeo. This is the power of the name to which Romeo and Juliet must inexorably succumb.

Nomination plays an important role in establishing the order of discourse, in the production/reproduction of identity, in maintaining roles and performing relative behaviour. To play

with names means to question the established order, habits, reassuring repetition, privilege sanctioned by memory and tradition. In his *Hamlet*, Laforgue plays with names: the author William Shakespeare becomes the actor William, nicknamed *Bibi*, abbreviation of *Billy*, in turn a diminutive of *William*. On stage Ophelia's baptism name is *Kate*, and she is nicknamed *Lili*. "Poor Ophelia, poor Lili" (*Moralités* 31). Bene continues playing with names: *Hamlet*, *Hommelette*, "*Bibi*" *Shakespeare*. But Shakespeare is also *Will* and *Shake*: "Will un wants his Shake. What does that mean? But its saying that does not want, that has no will (will = double sex, will = to want, will = desire, power = shake-speare)" (*Opere* 1173). Hamlet retreats, he wishes to escape the power of the name. But he must die so that "everything is as it should be" (*Moralités* 44), killed by Laërtes, the man of action who performs that which is written in his destiny, inexorably: "I can't resist it," as recites the epigraph to the text by Laforgue (9). But in the end, Hamlet does not die as a result of filial piety, as recited by the title, but while attending to Laërtes on Ophélie's tombstone. In any case, Hamlet's execution, the "royal artist type," is achieved.

Hamletization and de-Hamletization—Shakespeare, Laforgue, Bene (via Artaud): this construction/deconstruction process leaves the jurisdiction understood as *transcription* with an attitude of servility towards the order of discourse. And the practice of "perverse" writing begins,<sup>⑦</sup> that is, writing, writing as portrayal and depiction, writing which is not productive, which is not oriented towards an end, in which *dépense*, expenditure, calculation, control serve *displacement* alone: displacement with respect to the places of discourse, of the subject, with respect to identity, belonging, inter-essament, persistence in being, ontology.

In writing thus understood the indirect word, parody, irony, the diverse forms of taciturnity, or silence, as says Bakhtin in "From Notes Made in 1970-71" (1986), of "restrained laughter," all find a place, since in the current social system the "laughing laugh" (Bakhtin 135) of comic popular culture (which Rabelais succeeded in capturing and translating into "verbal art") is no longer possible (as Sterne, his Yorik, and Swift as well already knew). As B. Vercier claims: "Parody is not the end of literature, but the way, a way for its renewal. Above all it doesn't let itself be imprisoned by filial piety: fathers joyously recognizing what we owe them [...] [In *Moralités légendaires*] parody simply becomes creation" (xv and xxx). The objective word of both the author and the personage are replaced with the objectified word, which is neither direct, as in drama, nor indirect, as in the author's discourse when reporting the word of others. The objectified word takes the form of *free indirect* discourse, possible not only in literature, but also, as observed by Pasolini, in filmic discourse thanks to an expedient used by the movie camera, what he calls "free indirect subjective"<sup>⑧</sup>.

Instead of putting on stage and representing a dramatic dialogue among voices, what is proposed is a single voice characterized by *internal dialogue*, which puts in check the subject's presumed unitariness. A transition is achieved from drama—which, because of its very constitution as a genre, as observed by Bakhtin in his *Dostoevsky* (1929), not even Shakespeare was able to shift in the direction of polyphony and dialogism—to forms of writing, including voiced writing (as in Bene's case) in which the movement of the artwork is irreversibly oriented by the logic of alterity, the artwork is opening to the other; and in this movement return, recomposition of the

subject, unilinearity of narration, a concluding finale are rendered impossible. It is not incidental that Laforgue abandoned the dramatic genre and resorted to prose (hybridized with poetic genres) which favoured ironic-parodic displacement, a mingling of parts, travesties: William disguised as an actor, Kate as Ophélie, Hamlet oblivious of the part assigned to him by his father-author. Dialogue is no longer put on stage and represented: on the contrary, it presents itself in the word of a single voice, the narrating voice, the voice of the character: monologue itself is dialogized and free indirect discourse may now play its part in deconstructing the word's identity.

The step is short from Laforgue to Bene, his voice, his monologue in which the subject is forgotten: de-Hamletization of Will's Hamlet. This is a process which had already been inaugurated by Laforgue, a Hamlet who is the "*demotivated will*" ("*will demotivato*"), ever more Yorik's brother (including Stern's Yorik), a "will dewilled of his own will." "There is no doubt, my dear ladies: we undo theatre" (*Opere* 1174).

Writing—the written sign or the actor's voice—establishes a one-way movement, without return, including in the sense of "without profit," a movement in the sense of alterity, towards the other, outside the economy of the subject and its identity logic, outside the interests of identity. Now writing is no longer transcription, reproduction, mnemotechy functional to the subject's memory, whether individual or collective, to the subject's image, history, identity (how many crimes in the name of memory and identity!).

"Actorial reading" may also become writing, an expression of pure resonance beyond form, clichés, roles performed by the "reciter-actor-speaker." Bene works on "actoriality." Actoriality removed from representation, from "social entertainment," "foreign to its own performance." An actuarial reading which is not "re-citation," repetitive citation of the text, which is not memory, "re-cognition" of the text, but "amnesia," writing-transcription, "disindividuated and unheard of, unattestable voice," dispossessed by the I; and which "alone, consents an *interior* to shift into another *interior, cutting the thread of communication*" (*Opere* 1015): therefore, a relation from one singularity to another, from one other to an other other, a frontal relation without deviations, without rhetorical and pedagogic strategies, a "face to face" relation as understood by Emmanuel Levinas.<sup>⑨</sup>

*Hamlet Suite* by Bene, as a text and as performance, is a magnificent expression of *rewriting* that makes fun of transcription and memory in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, presenting itself as a "collage-version from all of Jules Laforgue's work (morality and poetry) 'betrayed' by *rhythmic* and sometimes *libretto* composition of musical-stage requirements" (*Opere* 1354). Here the "script"—similarly to the specificity of music, and this "script" too destined to an indissoluble dialogue with music—becomes a *score*, which a performance reinvents in the "dis-concertedness" of actuarial reading, which pitilessly parodies the subject in its roles as "I," those of "thinker" and artist, his image, commitments, projects, word. In actuarial reading-writing, "pure resonance beyond form," "no longer acknowledging any text," "at last alien to its self-production," "*amnesia* of the writing of the oral dead," "vocality dressed in reverberation," and "phenomenology of the Subject who has failed" (*Opere* xxxvi). On the part of the subject and the spectres that accompany it: the Order of Discourse, Truth, Memory, History. "*Lyrical* verticality crucified on the shortcuted



*epos* of all fanciful ambitions of listening” (*Opere* xxxvi), of “écoute appliquée,” as Roland Barthes (*L’ovvie* 229) would say, of institutionalized listening, or, of “the wish to hear”<sup>⑩</sup>.

Bene introduces the term *di-scrittura* (de-writing) for writing that does not limit itself to transcribing the text, that does not put the text on stage, and that takes the text off stage, *de-writing* (*Opere* xiii). De-writing, literary writing is critical of *representation*; and for this reason, as Artaud knew well, the place it privileges is theatre, that is, the place chosen specifically for representation. A *good conscience* needs representation, because representation supplies alibis and limits responsibility, reduces it to a minimum. To speak and act in the role of, as representing this or that, is to have alibis which guarantee and reassure a good conscience. Staging is the condition for a conscience that is in order, for a pacified conscience, a conscience at peace. And theatre is the privileged place for this type of staging. This is why Artaud reserved special attention for theatre: indeed, putting on stage and representing must be attacked beginning from here. This attack is directed towards transmitted discourse, the pre-scribed text, memory, tradition, language, the economy of truth, responsibility with alibis typical of a good conscience. The word and its notation, phonetic writing, cease to be dictation, citation, re-citation and order. The word retreats from the generality of the concept and from repetition, identification, reiteration, from leveling onto the status of signal. As such the word is subjected completely to the processes of codification and decodification (Petrilli, *Riflessioni* 4-5).

More than opposing theatre to anti-theatre, this is a question of *removal*: one Hamlet less, in fact. But not in the sense of opposing, illusorily, non-being to being, emptiness to fullness. Nor is it a question of the fact, as claimed instead by Umberto Artioli (1990), that Bene’s theatre “exalts the joy of annihilation” “against the temptation of being and its inevitable corollary, the dialectics of reappropriation” (Bene, *Opere* 1498). On the contrary, as observed by Deleuze, the operation we are discussing here is far more precise and consists of removing, detracting all that which in language, in gestures, in the subject-object relation, in dialogue, communication, representation constitutes an element of power (the subject is detracted, the text is amputated, dialogue is suppressed, representation is avoided, diction as well as action are eliminated). But given that removal thus celebrated puts a plethora of positive processes into motion, it cannot even be described as a negative operation (Bene-Deleuze 77).

And if by dialogue we understand the distribution of parts, a pre-ordained exchange of rejoinders, a symmetrical relation among prefixed roles, an exchange of rejoinders channelled into a narration and as such equipped with a beginning and a conclusion, dialogue functional to an accord, to truth, pacification, a good conscience, then suppression of dialogue in Shakespeare’s text (a process started by Laforgue, as we have observed), is also an operation against the power of the order of discourse. Dialogue is suppressed, because dialogue thus described transmits elements of power to the word and makes them circulate: and now it’s up to *you* to speak, as willed and dictated by the conditions that have already been set into codes (the linguist attempts to determine the “universes of dialogue”) (Bene-Deleuze 77-78).

The single voice becomes dialogic, polyphonic: it resounds with many voices and their multiple intonations. Or, as Deleuze says, all we hear are the voice’s “variables”, so that it emerges

as the simultaneous sum of its own variations (Bene-Deleuze 78). To use language according to the principle of variation is to impose heterogeneity on language, to allow perception of minority usage, to disturb the elements of power or of the majority, to render language itself dialogic and not just the word, to enable perception of plurilingualism internal to a single language, to render expression pluri-accentuated, pluri-intonated. Reflecting on Bene's artwork Deleuze asks what is this use of (historico-natural) language according to variation, and replies that we could express it in various ways: to be bilingual, but in a single language, in a unique language. To be a foreigner, but in one's own language. To stammer, but as a stammerer in language itself, and not only in the word (Bene-Deleuze 79). And in his book co-authored with Guattari, Deleuze reflects further on Carmelo Bene's "ascending" and "descending" variations, commenting that stammering is easy. But to be a stammerer in language itself is something completely different. This is a question of continual variation in all linguistic and non linguistic elements, involving the variables of expression and the variables of content (Deleuze-Guattari 169).

Foreignness to another language from one's own, to be foreign to that language even while speaking it, is not a very different condition from *foreignness to one's own language*, in spite of the native speaker's arrogance, from being *foreign to language*. Nor is this condition of foreignness very different from foreignness of language to itself, from the *otherness of language with respect to itself*, in spite of the centripetal forces operating within it, in spite of unifying movements, in spite of the ideology of "linguistic unity." Awareness of one's own language, made possible by gazing at it through the worldview of another language, allows for experiences which do not converge with those offered by one's own language. These experiences enrich not only the speaker's linguistic consciousness, but also the linguistic consciousness of language itself.

Moreover, relations with a foreign language involve recovering sounds produced in lallation processes during infancy, but subsequently interdicted by the mother-tongue. Such recovery means to renew the relation between the word and the body. It is not incidental that the authors referred to by Deleuze and Guattari—Kafka, Beckett, Gherasim Luca, Jean-Luc Godard (an arbitrary list of authors whom they love) (Deleuze and Guattari 168)—to explain what they mean by putting all types of elements into continuous variation, all these authors share in a certain degree bilingualism. On one hand, silence is suffered as the effect of being foreign to a language; on the other, silence is the deliberate effect of becoming estranged to one's own language, to *language*. This process is favoured by literary writing. Through different forms of silence literary writing as "*subversion hors de soupçon*" retreats from the obligation to say, to speak as ordained by language. The transition from the first modality of being foreign to language to the second is admirably described by Julia Kristeva in her book, *Étrangers à nous-mêmes* (26-29).

Bene's work on the text, on language, is the work of literary writing. His is the work of silencing language which with its compulsion to speak imposes silence in terms of the lack of sense. Instead, by keeping silent, by using the expedients of signifying silence, theatre and writing come together once again in the effort to withdraw from representation, to escape from representation. But they also come together in putting language to silence, in putting it in the condition of continuous variation between theatre and music. Once the text is nothing but the

material of variation, the utterance flows through a scale of variables as though it were performing a musical score. *Hamlet suite: show concert* is the expression of this encounter which is not a question of assimilation or fusion between the written text and the musical text.

To put elements into continuous variation: as Deleuze and Guattari maintain (168), this operation in principle concerns at once voice, word, language, and music. But it also concerns the act, the gesture. To escape from the pre-scribed text, to make of Laforgue's *Hamlet* a "collage-version from Jules Laforgue" (the subtitle of Bene's *Hamlet suite*) is to approach music again and the verbal, music and act, music and gesture. This is possible by putting all linguistic and sonorous elements into a state of continuous variation, by freeing language from the Power that structures it, and by releasing the gesture and the act from the system of Ownership and Dominion that organizes them by transforming them into actions and placing them into a narration.

Carmelo Bene's work on realizing the condition of "aphasia" in language converges with his work on hindering the status of thingness and gestures (Bene-Deleuze 81). This sharpens the effect of Hamletism, that is, by operating processes of de-Hamletization with respect to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, but also Laforgue's, as well as with respect to antecedent "ever changing stage performances" ("esecuzioni sceniche sempre cangianti") (*Opere* 1351) of *Hamlet suite*.

In this encounter of the verbal with music, which transforms the Shakespearian text into a sound machine, in rendering the act—including the linguistic act, independent from action, from narration, from (hi)story, speaking recovers its relation with listening and breaks away from vision. Vision, in fact, puts language at the service of representation. Bene celebrates recovery of the primacy of listening over hearing, of the audio over the visual, of voice-writing (Barthes, *Le Plaisir* 104-105) over voice-transcription, of sound over image. As observed by Bene:

In the human animal as well perception of sound precedes birth—but by far!: this *coming to the dark* (certainly not to the light). In the maternal waters we *hear-each-other*: we're *informed* of external (electrical) household noises. We *passively* register the lumps of a discourse that does not belong to us (which in life to follow—I have said elsewhere—in any case will never belong to the speaking subject). As to *seeing-each-other*, once we are in the "world," we will have to wait patiently for quite a few days. So in our physiological adventure the *audio* precedes the *visual*. Regardless of the velocity of sound and light.) (*Opere* xv)

To recover listening. This is also perhaps to recover the *maternal*. But not in a sexist sense, as asserted or as rejected by the female subject. Laforgue ironizes about the female Subject as much as about the male:

However adorable and fatally sensitive, we inevitably find that the English are imbued from birth with Hobbes' selfish philosophy. "There is nothing more pleasant than thinking that one's own possessions are superior to those of others. This is how Ophelia loved me, as her "possession," and because I was socially and morally superior to her friend's "possessions".

[...] A comfortable Hamlet! (*Moralités* 13)

But “lowering”—in a Bakhtinian sense—of the Subject Ophelia and irony concerning her inability to listen had already been initiated by Shakespeare:

Hamlet: O God, your only jig-maker. What should a man do but be merry, for, look you, how cheerfully my mother looks, and my father died within's two hours.

Ophelia: Nay, 'tis twice two months, my lord.

Hamlet: So long? nay then, let the devil wear black, for I'll have a suit of sables; O heavens, die two months ago, and not forgotten yet? then there's hope a great man's memory may outlive his life half a year, but by'r lady a' must build churches then, or else shall a suffer not thinking on, with the hobby-horse, whose epitaph is “For, O! for, O! the hobby-horse is forgot! (*Hamlet*, 3.2.123-133)

However, as Carmelo Bene points out, “before the piano sonata for four hands with Jules Laforgue, it was clear to me that to *de-Hamletize myself* integrally, one only, brutal performance was not going to be enough. [...] One less Hamlet, as Jules warns, but the breed is not extinct” (*Opere* 1351). In any case, to proceed from Shakespeare to Laforgue to Bene (via Artaud) is to break with the “phenomenology of the Subject” (*Opere* xxxvi). And this is a preliminary to recovering listening and the maternal.

To take the point of view of writing, of literary discourse means to give up clinging to the idea of a subject that is always ready to respond, to justify and to explain, to clarify. To refer to writing understood as literary writing bears consequences in terms of the right of property over the word, for the category of “responsibility” and also for the “subject” (Bakhtin 1993). Writing understood as literary writing and not as transcription emerges as a sort of de-writing, disarranging, disruption, disorder, disarray, splitting up, division of the subject, of identification. Writing as de-Hamletization of the word—the word outside official roles and functions as prescribed by the order of discourse. Writing achieves separation, the coming apart, escape from discourse, a space for disobedience towards Language. In fact, Language with a capital “L,” the order of discourse, imposes coherence, convergence between the speaking subject and the subject of discourse. On the contrary, the otherness, the alterity of writing involves shifting processes. With respect to the roles and common places of language, the otherness of writing gives itself as *atopos*, as absence. Writing speaks the unspeakable; it speaks the unspeakable by keeping silent. The otherness of writing as we are describing it calls for listening, it does not require hearing, given that its aim is not to inform, persuade, educate, or sensitize. Writing has nothing to unveil; and yet it speaks and is at once disquieting, disturbing and attractive, like the face that keeps silent. The otherness of writing calls for listening and gives itself in silence (Petrilli, *Sign Studies* 111-121), in the silence of reading.

### 【Notes】

- ① See Antonin Artaud, *L'Arve et l'aume. Tentative anti-grammaticale contre Lewis Carroll*, *Œuvres Complètes*, ed. Antonin Artaud (Paris: Gallimard, 1979).
- ② See Augusto Ponzio and Susan Petrilli, *Fuori campo. II segni del corpo tra rappresentazione ed eccedenza* (Milan: Mimesis, 1999).
- ③ See Antonin Artaud, *Le Théâtre et son double* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938).
- ④ See Emmanuel Levinas, *Hors sujet* (Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 1987).
- ⑤ See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Tvorcestvo Fransua Rable i narodnaja kul'tura srednevekov'ja i*, (Moscow, 1965).
- ⑥ See Susan Petrilli, *Riflessioni sulla teoria del linguaggio e dei segni*. (Milan: Mimesis, 2014)229-34; Augusto Ponzio and Susan Petrilli, *Lineamenti di semiotica e di filosofia del linguaggio* (Bari: Graphis, 2008)170-90.
- ⑦ See Roland Barthes, *Essais critiques. Sur racine* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1964).
- ⑧ See Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Empirismo eretico* (Milan: Garzanti, 1972); Gilles Deleuze, *L'immagine-movimento. Cinema 1* (Milan: Ubulibri, 1984), and *L'immagine-tempo. Cinema 2* (Milan: Ululibri, 1989).
- ⑨ See Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalité et infini. Essai sur l'extériorité* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961).
- ⑩ See Augusto Ponzio and Susan Petrilli, *Il sentire della comunicazione globale, Semioetica e il sentire della comunicazione globale*, ed. Susan Petrilli (Milan: Mimesis, 2014).

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