

**ANTRIANNA MOUTOULA**

**NONSTOP  
LANGUAGING AS  
AUTOTHEORY  
IN ART AND  
ACADEMIA**

**HOME OF  
PERFORMANCE  
PRACTICES**

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**NONSTOP LANGUAGING AS  
AUTO THEORY IN ART AND ACADEMIA**

**ANTRI ANNA MOUTOULA**  
**MA PERFORMANCE PRACTICES**

A Thesis presented by Antrianna Moutoula to Master Performance Practices,  
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**HOME OF  
PERFORMANCE  
PRACTICES**

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## SYNOPSIS

This dissertation discusses the practice of nonstop languaging as a form of autotheory, which aims to renegotiate the confinements, norms, and proto-cols of knowledge production within artistic academic spaces. I am proposing a writing of the self that is not focused on recalling facts or narrating stories, but rather on tracing my thoughts in real time through language (languaging) and witnessing them simultaneously with another person (necessary other). In that uneditedness and encountering with the other I see a potentiality for carrying the self and producing discourse in the con-tinuous present. My research seeks to foreground the critical abilities of feminine writing and to contribute to the inclusion of non-phallogentric mode of working with language within artist academic discourse.

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me.

## DECLARATION

I, Antrianna Moutoula, hereby certify that I have personally  
carried out the work depicted in the thesis entitled, 'NONSTOP  
LANGUAGING AS AUTO THEORY IN ART AND ACADEMIA'.

No part of the thesis has been submitted for the award of any  
other degree or diploma prior to this date.

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## INTRODUCTION

*"If woman has always functioned 'within' the discourse of man, a signifier that has always referred back to the opposite signifier which annihilates its specific energy and diminishes or stifles its very different sounds, it is time for her to dislocate this 'within', to explode it, turn it around, and seize it; to make it hers, containing it, taking it in her own mouth, biting that tongue with her very own teeth to invent for herself a language to get inside of." (Cixous, 1976, p. 887)*

Situated in the ephemeral encounter between performer and spectator, this artistic research focuses on streams of consciousness as a form of au-totheory. The term autotheory, recently explored as a feminist practice by writer and artist Lauren Fournier, refers to modes of working within art, academia, and literature, that merge the autobiographical with the theoretical (2021). Over the past two years, in a space that is both artistic and academ-ic, I developed an autotheoretical practice in which I perform streams of consciousness by nonstop languaging my thoughts (tracing through lan-guage in real time) in simultaneously spoken and written form. In other words, I am nonstop writing and talking at the same time, trying to articulate my thoughts as they appear. In nonstop languaging, the gaps between words do not exceed the milliseconds a breath lasts or the millimetres of blank space between digitally written letters. Acknowledging how condi-tioned and circumstantial this practice is, I implement no further edit or re-hearsal. My interest lies both in creating a language-based performance method that integrates theory with autobiography, and in exploring how the language and

the content that emerges from this practice can contribute to the renegotiation of the norms, habits, protocols and parameters of knowledge production and dissemination within artistic academic discourse.

Considering the time-related notions of past and present within an autobiographical and hence an autotheoretical process is inevitable. Ever since French essayist Phillipe Lejeune wrote *The Autobiographical Pact*, autobiography has been associated with the narration of one's own life in retrospect (1989, p. 4). Aiming to subvert the retrospective character of autobiography, my research thinks of the present as continuous, following avant-garde writer Gertrude Stein, who through working with streams of consciousness as a linguistic tool which can transform reality (Sitrin, 2013-2014, p. 111) argued that "a continuous present is a continuous present" (1926, p. 220).

The past is specified as contemporary, referencing the archaeology of the contemporary past (often referred to as the archaeology of the present), a field of archaeological research that is essentially concerned with the here and now (Lucas & Buchli, 2001, p. 8). If "all archaeology is the archaeology of the contemporary past insofar as the archaeological record is contemporary with us" as Professor Gavin Lucas (2013) proposes in his lecture on contemporaneity, then my autotheoretical practice is always documenting the

continuous present, insofar the memory of the past is contemporary with me in the moment of performance. Framed by the continuous present and the contemporary past, I document my being in the here and now, composing an autotheory that records life in the present rather than in retrospect.

This practice is dependent on the presence of a necessary other as defined by feminist thinker Adriana Cavarero, who writes that the presence of a necessary other makes the self narratable (Cavarero, 2000). Cavarero's understanding of the narratability of the autobiographical subject is highly influenced by Hannah Arendt, the political theorist who argued that "no-body exists in this world whose very being does not presuppose a spectator" and that in life "being and appearing coincide" (1978, p. 19). Following the propositions of Cavarero and Arendt, I set the presence of a necessary other (mainly referring to another person) as an essential parameter for my autotheoretical practice of nonstop languaging to take place. Through this parameter, I aim to foreground the elements that are left out when both autobiography and the production of discourse, occur mainly in introspection.

Furthermore, poststructuralist feminists Hélène Cixous (1976) and Luce Irigaray (1977) insist that the structure of logic which distinguishes the appropriate from insignificant knowledge, the objective (critical) from the subjective (unintelligible)



theory, is built around a masculine history of reason: not only the structure is phallogocentric (in terms of whose voice gets to be heard and shared) but also all produced meaning is positioned in relation to the phallus. Therefore, the phallus does not only refer to the privilege of the western, white, male body within academic discourse but also the masculine as the centre that defines the meaning of all signifiers within the structure of language (Cixous, 1976). That is exactly how Cixous uses the word woman in *The Laugh of the Medusa*, both as the body of women as well as the signifier within a language that is centred around the masculine (Klages, 2001). Cixous realizes the impossibility of defining feminine writing through phallogocentric language and urges women to write, to create a critical mass of feminine writing that reveals and transforms the inadequacies of phallogocentric language (1976). She describes language as “that enormous machine that has been operating and turning out its ‘truth’ for centuries” (Cixous, 1976, p. 879). Similarly, Irigaray, by elaborating on the inability of scientific language and logic to fully comprehend and articulate all characteristics of fluids, draws a parallel to feminine language within the phallogocentric discourse (1977, p. 107). According to Irigaray, the hierarchical value of different elements (speaking through the metaphor of the feminine as fluid and the masculine as solid) is defined by their constrainability and the capacity of the given structure (scientific logic or language) to interpret them (p. 110).

In the years of being in artistic academic structures I have repeatedly experienced the inadequacies of what is considered suitable language for producing appropriate knowledge and critical discourse, to host modes of thinking that Cixous would perhaps identify as a woman writing herself (1976, p. 875). The idea of appropriate knowledge is found in Deirdre Heddon’s analysis of autobiography, where the researcher observes the tendency for women’s autobiographical texts to be disregarded as non-critical (2008, p. 5). Developing an autotheoretical practice of nonstop languaging and exploring it in a space that still considers the conventional academic language as necessary for the dissemination of knowledge, is a way to contribute to the transformation of language within artistic academic discourse. I intend to emphasize the capability of personal, manifestly subjective modes of dealing with language such as the stream of consciousness, to create critical theoretical discourse. My hope is that insisting on such modes, many of which are associated with feminine writing, enables the renegotiation of the confinements of academic language and consequently the reshaping of the logic of artistic academic spaces. Rather than being one of the exceptions that an artistic academic institution seems to accept, my research craves to contribute to the creation of a critical mass. Only through a critical mass such institutions will learn to “recognize difference as a crucial strength”, as feminist writer Audre Lorde imagined (1984, p. 120), and eventually

stop identifying as wrong or non-existent anything they do not (want to) understand (Irigaray, 1977).

In the first chapter I look at elements and parameters that constitute auto-biography and theory and elaborate on how this research aims to re-negotiate them. In the second chapter I introduce the practice of nonstop languaging as a process of knowledge production based on what Language writer Lyn Hejinian calls acknowledging (2000). The same chapter focuses on three key notions of my research as simultaneously performative methods and theoretical concepts. Those key notions are:

- the continuous present
- the necessary other
- *écriture féminine*

Furthermore, I explain the decision to read and cite mainly women's works, influenced by Sara Ahmed's and Lauren Fournier's proposition that citation is the shaping of a community and a possibility to build "a feminist shelter" (Ahmed, 2015).

At the end of chapter 2, I analyse the decision to engage with the medium of performance lecture, a format that according to performance artist-theorist Lucia Rainer, renders possible the negotiation of knowledge production and dissemination

between academia and art (2017).

Chapter 3 examines the findings from performing and thinking around nonstop languaging. The last chapter (4) begins with a summary of the dissertation. Finally, I address the responsibility that comes with the privilege of being "within" artistic academic spaces.

It is simultaneously a paradox and a proof of the urgency of resetting the confinements of language within artistic academic discourse that I must write this dissertation within these parameters. Perhaps, as Audre Lorde points out, "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (1984, p. 120). What is necessary is the continuous presence of explorations that simultaneously produce theory and expand the definition of knowledge production and dissemination. This dissertation, although viscerally troubled by the paradox, aims to contribute to that shift and invite a critical mass towards the shaping of a non-phallogentric positioning of meaning within artistic academic language. I hope that this text, even though conforming with the given parameters, can function as a brick<sup>1</sup> in the transformation of artistic academic spaces that still operate (consciously or unconsciously) through the phallogentric discourse.

<sup>1</sup> The image of the brick is explained in chapter 2. P.S. I really hope you are reading the footnotes.

## LANGUAGE AS A CONFINED SPACE

The words “white men” will often appear in this dissertation. As feminist writer Sara Ahmed points out, these words more than referring to the specific people that fit the characteristics can be used to address an institution:

*“An institution typically refers to a persistent structure or mechanism of social order governing the behaviour of a set of individuals within a given community. So when I am saying that “white men” is an institution I am referring not only to what has already been instituted or built but the mechanisms that ensure the persistence of that structure.” (Ahmed, 2014)*

Whenever I write about “white men” in the following pages I refer to Ahmed’s proposition of the institution.

The first big challenge in disseminating a practice of acknowledging through the parameters of a logic of knowing and assertions becomes visible when wanting to describe the confined space of which I propose a re-negotiation. Perhaps there is no need or no way to know where the confined space really begins and ends, if it describes one specific institution, or a type of institutions, or a specific logic that produced those institutions, or the circumstances that produced the specific logic that produced those institutions. Perhaps I can only articulate how it feels from within: it is white, it is academic, it cites men more than women, it considers the personal as non-critical, it disregards women’s autobiographies as insignificant, it expects words with one-

to-one meaning, it insists on grammatical and syntactical “correctness”, it loves Derrida, Lacan, Foucault more than it loves Cixous, Irigaray, Stein and Lorde, it asks for assertions, for conclusions, it speaks consistently, it considers silence, it wants me to sell hoses (hi dad), it wants to imitate science, it is serious but it also appreciates humour as long as it stays out of the official documents, it needs official documents, it says it wants to be inclusive, it says it wants to change, it likes methodologies, it does not always read the footnotes, it uses verbs in three tenses, it wonders why I am not breaking this to shorter sentences, it gives grades to art, it follows the trajectory from a considered unknown to a communicable known, it wants to read 10.000 words, it does not like the excess of words, it does not have time, it is busy, busy with producing appropriate knowledge, busy with proving its necessity in society, busy with staying alive. Maybe what the confined space really is, what and who it confines, who it excludes and for what reasons, can be only seen once the space has been drastically reshaped. In anything that did not allow the transformation, that insisted on excluding specific subjectivities and the modes of working with language and knowledge that they bring along, anything that masqueraded itself but remained phallogocentric.

## **AUTO THEORY = THE MERGING OF AUTO BIOGRAPHY**

Identifying the practice of nonstop languaging as an autobiographical method aims to challenge key ideas around the production of autobiography, as established by Phillippe Lejeune in *The Autobiographical Pact* (1989, p. 4). Lejeune’s text defines autobiography as an introspective and retrospective narrative written by a person that closely examines the story and evolution of her life (p. 4). Nonstop languaging proposes an alternative to the edited<sup>2</sup>, retrospective<sup>3</sup>, and introspective<sup>4</sup> character of the auto-biographical process; an autobiography that is not concerned with the preservation of facts but with languaging what constitutes the I in the continuous present. I articulate my stream of thought to compose an autobiography that includes the everyday and the uneventful as Virginia Woolf suggested (1925). I engage with a writing of the self that is not focused on recalling facts or narrating stories, but rather on tracing my thoughts through language (languaging) and witnessing them simultaneously with another person (the necessary other). In that uneditedness while encountering the other I see a potentiality for language to “carry” (Cixous,

<sup>2</sup> Editing in terms of trying to focus a stream of thought into one specific theme or direction such as the evolution of one’s life, as well as editing in terms of conforming to conventional grammar and syntax rules.

<sup>3</sup> Retrospection as a narrative mode that focuses on the past.

<sup>4</sup> Introspection as a process that requires a person to take distance from others, to look inwards, to individually reflect on her own thoughts and actions.

1976, p. 889) rather than attempt to contain or capture what constitutes the self. The difference between the two verbs (carry and contain) also becomes relevant when discussing the continuous present in the autobiographical process, especially through the lens of Clarice Lispector, who in her now-understood as autotheoretical novel *Água Viva* wrote about the impossibility of capturing the present (1973, p. 3). *Água Viva* is a work that is both autobiographical and theoretical, that speaks through a confined language and manages to transform it from within, that progresses in time and simultaneously carries the present, that narrates the most personal spaces of the self and always stays in relation to a (necessary) other.

Writing about the necessary other, Adriana Cavarero argues that Lejeune's *Autobiographical Pact* is flawed in claiming that in the autobiographical process one narrates her own life-story. Instead, Cavarero writes, one "claims to be telling it", since it is impossible for a human being to know her entire story, through her own autobiographical memory (2000, p. 40). The fact that a human's life starts with birth (a time a person can never remember from her own experience but only from the narration of others) removes the possibility for that person to be able to know (and even more narrate) her complete story (p. 40). Therefore, an autobiography is never entirely "auto", it is always one's story interwoven with the stories of others. The emphasis on the incomplete or the impossibility-

unified self that depends on the presence of the other, is important in this research in understanding why the other is thought of as a necessary parameter in an autotheoretical mode of producing non-phallogocentric academic discourse. There can be no objectivity that comes from one perspective or one subjectivity; there are only subjectivities which by continuously encountering each other, try to escape the impossibility of individual unity (Cavarero, p. 39-40).

#### **+ THEORY**

Enforced by the increasing discussions on the interrelation between theoretical and artistic practice, the term autotheory has been rapidly popularized within artistic and literary circles in recent years (Fournier, 2021, p. 2). Autotheory as the word already hints, is an artistic method that explores the liminal space between the auto (in my case the auto-biographical) and the theoretical. In doing so, autotheory, more than an artistic method also functions as a provocation to a history of reason that has been disregarding self-reflective and self-referential work as a "supposedly narcissistic and therefore nonintellectual or fundamentally uncritical mode" (Fournier, 2021, p. 6). As Fournier (and earlier in this text Heddon) observes, the criticism on the inability of rigorosity is usually bound to the works of women and people of colour (p. 6). This view is shared in Linda Anderson's analysis of autobiography, where the writer mentions the example of Kate Millet's autobiographical book *Flying* (1979), described

by a white male critic as “insignificant” (2011, p. 86). This is one of the many exam-ples where works deriving from the personal space and specifically wom-en’s personal space are assumed unable to produce appropriate, critical, or even significant discourse within art and academia. In continuing its function as a provocation, autotheory, already from the fact that it consid-ers the self (auto) as a space that has something to do with theory, imme-diately brings up the trivial questions of who gets to produce texts that are validated as theoretical, what does criticality and rigorousness depend up-on and ultimately what is theory (Fournier, 2021, p. 6).

Throughout the book Fournier locates multiple functions and possibili-ties for autotheory as a mode of artistic production, among which she men-tions: transgression, dissent, resistance, institutional criticism, feminism, the ability to connect different communities (2021, pp. 3-4). In my view, amongst its many functions, autotheory works as a reminder that there is no such thing as objective knowledge. More than initiating a philosophical discussion of objectivity versus subjectivity, I aim to emphasize the results of one mode of working with language being established as “universal” and appropriate and excluding other modes as inappropriate and uncriti-cal. I am placing this practice and its intentions within language, specifical-ly within academic language in artistic research and perhaps even more specifically within this MA and other institutions that follow a similar logic on

how knowledge should be disseminated in an academic dissertation.

The conversation around artistic research and academia has many per-spectives, as explored by Per Zetterfalk, author of the article *The Journal for Artistic Research* (2020). According to Zetterfalk, some perspectives insist that artistic and academic research should stay as two distinguishable fields; some say that art should not imitate science by trying to justify re-search outcomes through the language of science; some say that imitating science would harm the outcomes of artistic research which are often im-possible to explain through language; or in the case of Swedish universi-ties which do not require theory for a doctoral thesis and where some fear that artistic research risks losing its integrity, being thus considered as something that could be done by anyone without any requirements (Zetterfalk, 2020). In my perspective, theory is a necessary component in the process of artistic research which, as Zetterfalk mentions, contextual-izes and provides a framework for the outcomes of each research to be understood (2020). The question that remains is what theory do artist re-searchers choose to be in relation to? Without being in relation to some-thing words lose their ability to carry any meaning. In that relationality the phallus can no longer stand as the prominent figure, not as a physical body and not as a signifier.

My performance practice is a proposition for working with and through theory, with and through language, with and through art, with and through autobiography. It is an attempt to remove the slashes between seemingly dissimilar notions (such as theory and autobiography, the past and the present) and see what happens to those structures that were previously thought of as unmalleable or necessarily distinct.

## SOME THOUGHTS SOME THROUGHS AND SOME THOUGHTS

The notions of reflecting, capturing, and looking back are antithetical to my research, which advocates acknowledging (over reflecting), carrying (over capturing) and articulating the continuous present (over looking back). Therefore, in this chapter I acknowledge, carry, and articulate the practice of nonstop languaging and specifically my graduation performance “i like the longer version more than love and anarchy (but i still call it film d’amore e d’anarchia)” that took place in ArtEZ, Arnhem in May 2021<sup>5</sup>. Through acknowledging-carrying-articulating<sup>6</sup>, I explore how non-stop languaging becomes critical; how it contributes to the shaping of a non-phallogocentric artistic academic discourse; how it approaches the im-possibility of containing the continuous present; and how it affects and is affected by the performative encounter with the audience. In that vein, I focus on three key notions of my research: the continuous present, the necessary other, and *écriture féminine*. These notions have functioned here both as theoretical concepts and as performance methods. Therefore, when referring to the necessary other, or women’s writing, I bring them in as concepts for discussion as well as

<sup>5</sup> For further understanding the practice of nonstop languaging please visit the online archive of encounters with a necessary other in the weeks before my graduation performance. Accessible at <https://www.antriannamoutoula.com/ilikethelongversion>

<sup>6</sup> Choosing the hyphen (-) over the slash (/) here, is a result of approaching the hyphen as a mark that usually joins words and the slash as a mark that usually divides them (Casagrande, 2014).



practical decisions in the process of developing my practice (ex. always performing in the presence of a necessary other, and mainly reading and citing women).

### **NONSTOP LANGUAGING - ACKNOWLEDGING**

Hannah Arendt in *The Life of the Mind* wonders “whether thinking and other invisible and soundless mental activities are meant to appear or whether in fact they can never find an adequate home in the world” (1978, p. 23). Moreover, Lyn Hejinian states that one is always “thinking about reality” as “reality is all there is” (2000, p. 8). Having considered both ideas, I position the appearance of thinking (specifically the stream of thought) which for Hejinian is “reality”, as a crucial element in the production of both autobiography and theory. Finding a home for thinking to appear through its own confinements (grammar, syntax, linearity, editing) within academic discourse is the “shaking of the apple tree” (Ramshaw in da Silva, 2015, p. 2) that I insist on. Nevertheless, for the apples to fall, there needs to be more than a single act of shaking. It requires “continuing presences” (Woolf, 1929, p. 95) continuously shaking the apple tree with different shaking methods, different rhythms, different intensities, different understandings of what shaking means.

My method of shaking entails tracing my thoughts through simultaneously talking and writing nonstop (mostly in English and sometimes in Greek), in the performative,

ephemeral encounter with a necessary other (mostly human). The rhythm is a slightly accelerated version of my habitual talking: a pace that challenges me to language my thoughts in real time (to synchronize the process of thinking with the articulation of thinking) and simultaneously prevents the performance from appearing as an execution of a task for the sake of exhaustion. In writing, which happens digitally in the platform of Google Docs, I press no backspace and I use no autocorrect. In that way the highly circumstantial written text rarely conforms to rules of grammatical and syntactical correctness. In both talking and writing, I seek to trace the linearity of the stream of thought, as “messy” or “nonsense” as it might appear<sup>7</sup>. Nonstop languaging, more than an attempt to trace my thoughts through language and witness them simultaneously with another person (the necessary other), is a method that allows me to carve a different path in the structure of language. It is a form of improvisation, a process “in and of language” (Hejinian, 2000, p. 2) which strives to be what Cixous calls a language that “does not contain, it carries” (1976, p. 889).

According to queer movement artist João da Silva, improvisation, although always dependent on a base of knowing, strives towards encountering the unknown, an element which professional performers rarely encounter

<sup>7</sup> Words such as “nonsense”, “crazy” or “nuts” have often appeared in the audience’s feedback about my work



(2015, p. 7)<sup>8</sup>. Nevertheless, in moving (or languaging) towards the unknown, a performer might arrive to a different understanding of knowledge, where knowing and not knowing are not positioned as two antithetical, achievable states (da Silva, 2015, p. 7). In attempting to encounter the unknown within performance, I engage with what Hejinian calls a process of acknowledging (2000, p. 2). I bring in Hejinian's notion of acknowledging as a necessary component of nonstop languaging, because it entails a form of not knowing (Hejinian, 2000, p. 2). Acknowledging is a mode of thinking that does not claim "to know what things are" but "to know that" they are, and in knowing that without knowing what Hejinian finds the possibility for an inquiry through language and of language itself; an inquiry that is open towards the other (2000, p. 2).

Considering the concept of knowing in situations of encounter between human beings, Adriana Cavarero (2000, p. 35) concludes that knowing that the other has a story (Hejinian's knowing that), specifically a story that is unique (knowing otherness), does not presuppose knowing what her actual story is (knowing what). Knowing that something is without knowing what it is also relates to Lorde's suggestion of a form of knowing that is "beyond understanding" (1984, p. 51). In sharing the ideas that emerge from that sort of

<sup>8</sup> Although da Silva's analysis concerns mainly experienced performers within dance improvisation, his conclusion is directly positioned in relation to Cixous' writing and specifically her understanding of notions such as the unknown and the impossible.

knowing, Lorde sees a possibility for the transformation and reclaiming of language (1984, p. 51).

On the contrary, when asked about her process of editing during an interview, Maggie Nelson, writer of *The Argonauts* (2015) a book that heavily influenced the popularization of autotheory<sup>9</sup>, she responded that after writing in a way that follows her train of thought she then revisits the text in order to "slash out uncertainty" (Nelson, 2015). Nelson explains that although writing always is "a performance with uncertainty woven into it" she chooses to edit out a specific form of uncertainty for her writing to appear bolder and more assertive (2015). The question around assertiveness and uncertainty in language (especially in relation to academic writing) has been crucial in my research. Through nonstop languaging I search for a language that appears bold and assertive without having to remove any of the uncertainty. I look at how the personal (what Lorde calls truths [1984, p.51]) can become critical while making this uncertainty visible, without having to masquerade itself as proper, cleaner, or more serious.

In nonstop languaging, acknowledging differs from

<sup>9</sup> As Lauren Fournier explains, although Maggie Nelson's *The Argonauts* has been widely considered to coin the genre of autotheory, there are works of BIPOC writers like Gloria E. Anzaldúa that had engaged with autotheory much earlier. Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* is an example of a bilingual text that manages to bring together theory and auto-biography and the fact that it is often forgotten in the establishment of autotheory is one of the many cases of white-western works getting recognized for the work that BIPOC writers have initiated (Fournier, 2021).

reflecting. As new materialist Karen Barad drawing on the work of Donna Haraway argues, reflection is associated with the image of the mirror: “mirrors reflect” (Barad, 2007, p. 86). Mirrors, she continues, and consequently reflexive processes are associated with the possibility of providing an accurate representation of an original (Barad, 2007, p. 86). Therefore, having been introduced in critical scholarly circles as a method that creates space for the researcher’s subjectivity in the knowledge that she produces, reflection fails to do what it advocates (Barad, 2007, p. 86). Reflection (still associated with the mirror) represents, and hence fails to subvert the logic that wants “object and subject at a distance as the very condition for knowledge’s possibility” (Barad, 2007, p. 88). The idea of the object and subject being necessarily held at a distance for the possibility of discourse, springs from the same logic that deems autobiographical works unable for criticality and discursive knowledge. That is exactly the logic that the concept of autotheory aims (and to an extent manages) to subvert.

In her text, Barad makes a list of specific characteristics associated with reflection such as the certainty of a “preexisting determinate”, the reliance on an authentic original, the notion of objective knowledge, and the idea that “knowledge is true beliefs” (Barad, 2007, p. 89). In nonstop languaging, the process of acknowledging stems from the awareness of the

im-possibilities that pervade it: the impossibility of accuracy between words and thoughts, the impossibility of staying in the present, the impossibility of saying everything that I think exactly how I think it. The awareness of those impossibilities is what distinguishes acknowledging from reflecting. Rather than being failures, they are possibilities for entering a space that as da Silva concludes, entails “both distance and intimacy”, is determined by feeling and thinking, a space where the slash between known and un-known is momentarily removed (2015, p. 7).

I understand acknowledging as a language-driven process placed within knowing and not knowing. It aims to remove the slash between them because it positions both knowing and not knowing as necessary parameters for the production of knowledge. Not in the sense of a researcher starting up with a question (unknown) and finishing up with an answer (dissertation), but as two elements that are always present and continuously acknowledged. What I am ultimately trying to say here is that the production and especially the dissemination of knowledge should not require one arriving to assertions and clearing out all uncertainty (as Nelson does). Continuously entering situations of acknowledging both the known and the unknown is therefore an essential element in the production of a non-phallogocentric knowledge.

## WOMEN WOMEN WOMEN (AND SOME NOT)

### *Écriture féminine*

In chapter 1 I talked about the intention of this research to remove slashes such as the slash between theory and autobiography, past and present or as I will introduce later in this chapter the slash between per-forming and lecturing in the context of a performance lecture. Nevertheless, some slashes are not yet ready to be removed. One of them is the slash between women's and men's writing, specifically in relation but not only limited to academia<sup>10</sup>. Men's writing supported by its long history in the white western phallogocentric discourse has made steps that women's writing is not yet willing to make. Feminist theorist Nancy K. Miller mentions the postmodern example of the Death of the Author, as one decision that should not be imposed to women's writing (in Anderson, 2011, p. 88). According to Miller when the male author was ready to die, women were in no way urging to deconstruct their literary identities (one that they were only recently and somehow partially allowed to form), they had in no way experienced a history of their writing being accepted, published, appreciated and in no way felt the need to let go of the possibility to be subjects (in Anderson, 2011, p. 88). Therefore, considering the Death of the Author as a necessity for women's writing would be yet another removal

<sup>10</sup> By women I refer to anyone identifying as a woman.

of women's agency in the phallogocentric discourse subjects (in Anderson, 2011, p. 88).

My understanding of the word woman here is shaped by Cixous' *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1976). As writer Mary Klages writes in her analysis of the text, Cixous when talking about woman, describes her as both the bio-logical body as well as the linguistic signifier attached to the meaning that has been attributed to her by the phallogocentric structure of language (Klages, 2001)<sup>11</sup>. Cixous coined the term *écriture féminine* (feminine writ-ing) as the counterpart of the phallogocentric masculine writing (Klages, 2001). The phallogocentric character of language, where the masculine is understood as the universal is visible in examples of even everyday words like the word Man, a term which by identifying as universal is supposed to include women, nevertheless very few women seem capable of recognizing themselves in that word (Cavarero, 2000, p. 52). Therefore, when asking women to "write themselves" Cixous invites them to write both their identity, and also to re-negotiate through writing the meaning that is imposed to "woman" as a signifier in language (Klages, 2001). I consider Cixous' proposition for women to make themselves the subjects of their writing as a call to autobiographical writing, and the proposition to challenge the meaning of the signifier as a

<sup>11</sup> Both Cixous and Irigaray define the structure as phallogocentric because it has at its centre the phallus. All meanings to signifiers are attributed in relation to the phallus.

call to the production and sharing of theory. Through that association *écriture féminine* can be understood as a deeply autotheoretical practice, one aiming to communicate one's life as well as to contribute to the discourse that surrounds and invalidates the autobiographical subject. Thus, *écriture féminine*, although born in the field of poetry, is able to critically participate in the formation of theoretical, academic knowledge. This understanding is important when thinking what is considered an appropriate reference in academic writing as well as where theoretical knowledge and critical discourse is usually expected to be found within many artistic academic spaces.

For Cixous, realist prose and fiction are supporting representationalism: "they... try to speak in stable language, language with one-to-one fixed meanings of words, language where words seemingly point to things (and not to the structure of language itself)" (Cixous in Klages, 2001). I consider stream of consciousness (practiced as nonstop languaging) as a realist prose<sup>12</sup> able to challenge representation and destabilize one-to-one meaning. During nonstop languaging the thinking occurs through the process of pronunciation, through language. While at first, thinking emerges from a confined "stable" language, through commitment and continuous insistence (nonstopping in the

<sup>12</sup> Because it "carries" thinking, and thinking is always about reality.

continuous present) it questions and renegotiates the limits and parameters of language.

Like Hejinian situating the language of inquiry within poetic language, Cixous states that writing *écriture féminine* is only possible within poetry. Although the understanding of poetry might have shifted from when Cixous wrote *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1976), it still describes a mode of writing that appears very different from academic writing. I argue that both Hejinian's language of inquiry and *écriture féminine* must enter the academic discourse, not only as citations (Cixous and Hejinian are often cited within academic writing) but most importantly as modes of thinking with language, producing and disseminating theory so that their ideas are not extracted from these texts and then edited through academic parameters into appropriate knowledge. Such modes of dealing with language must appear as they are created, bringing along their own confinements, their own logic and meaning structures.

#### *Citational practice*

In the same text Cixous suggests that for the signifier "woman" to renegotiate its meaning, women's writing has to stop being determined in relation to the phallus (1976). Citation is an opportunity for shifting one's point of reference both in writing and thinking. It is a way to highlight specific voices as well as to define one's writing in relation to a self-determined

community and history (Fournier, 2021). If women want to "draw their story into history" as Cixous urges them to, they must reshape the history that contextualizes them, a history that can no longer be constituted as prominently masculine (1976, p. 881).

As Ahmed points out, citations are like bricks used for the building of books which are like houses (2015)<sup>13</sup>. Choosing sources to read and reference is like choosing which type of bricks are better for construction. The current statistics of male versus female sources being cited reveal that men's writing is still being considered better for the construction of critical discourse than women's texts. As reporter Rachael Pells notes, recent research findings show that men are being cited much more than women within academia (2018)<sup>14</sup>. The gender gap in citations, the fact that there are much less women professors, much less women's biographies being sold and published (Pells, 2018), shows that the need for women's work to become part of history, to speak and to be spoken about is still unfulfilled. Without claiming that all men write in one way and all women in another, it is inevitable to notice that the mode of written dissemination that is considered appropriate within academic discourse in many

<sup>13</sup> Other uses of bricks except construction: throwing towards an object or obstacle to break it when wanting to reshape a confined space, uplifting an object's position, temporarily sit and rest, curving hard surfaces.

<sup>14</sup> For academics, how much one is cited, more than offering recognition and a higher academic status, also provides practical advantages such as more work opportunities, and consequently financial safety (Pells, 2018).

educational systems, has been giving prominence to the voices of those who belong to the institution of “white men”. Women (and feminine writing) should be given the space to challenge that logic, to actively participate in the reshaping of its confinements. Autotheory as a feminist mode of working with language is able to provide that space (Fournier, 2021). Therefore, in the process of accepting the personal as critical within academic writing it is extremely important to focus on women’s works. Otherwise, as Ahmed writes there is a danger that “feminist fields (formed, say, around the study of emotions, bodies, and intimacies)” like autotheory, will “end up being reorganised around white men” (Ahmed, 2014). Through citation women, more than individually writing their story into history, are able to draw the stories of women that tend to be forgotten or considered invalid over some other more appropriate sources<sup>15</sup>. Through women getting more space in critical discourse, a room of their own, and a sufficient salary, Woolf’s Judith Shakespeare and the witches of Cixous might come to life and be the writers they should have been when society thought they shouldn’t.

Listening the discussion on autotheory between McKenzie Wark and Lauren Fournier in the MIT press podcast (2020), I was disappointed to hear Wark pointing a direction of what should be considered as appropriate autotheory. She

<sup>15</sup> A thought in my own head, at the beginning of the year: How will you write an academic thesis about language without reading or citing Derrida???

phrased a concern about “anything vaguely memoir-y by millennial white girls” being called autotheory (Fournier & Wark, 2020). On the one hand, I understand Wark’s worry about the commercialization of the term and the risk of works named autotheoretical not standing up to the concept of autotheory. Nonetheless, the feminist shaping of academia to which autotheory has great potential of contributing, cannot base itself on elitism, cannot start off by saying this woman’s writing is more appropriate than that woman’s writing. It should no longer be identified in relation to an ideal, a prominent something (phallus or not). It must be based on differences (Lorde, 1984) if it wants to escape the politics and consequences of one thing (text, field, person) being considered proper and the other wrong, unintelligible, insignificant or non-existent (Irigaray, 1977).

### THE CONTINUOUS PRESENT

The second notion I focus on is the continuous present found in Gertrude Stein’s *Composition as Explanation* (1926). In this text that, Stein manages to articulate her understanding of the continuous present, without ever explicitly saying what it is<sup>16</sup>. Stein’s writing is bold and assertive: “a continuous present is a continuous present” (Stein, 1926, p. 3) but it never appears unmalleable. It is constantly reshaped by its own assertions, in and through language. Stein “explains” through a stream of consciousness, which ponders over the same signifiers

<sup>16</sup> Thinking again of Hejiniian’s knowing what versus knowing that.

such as the continuous pre-sent rewriting them over and over again. In that rewriting there is space for uncertainty through assertions. While she articulates her understanding of the continuous present, she also articulates her own being in the continuous present. As writer Carly Sitrin explains, Stein's writing manages to capture life as an experience rather than aiming to communicate the streams of meanings and subject that life entails (Sitrin, 2013-2014, p. 111). In doing that Stein rejects conventional grammar and syntax rules, a strategy which similarly to my practice of nonstop languaging, is often perceived as nonsense, meaningless or empty. What this rejection encloses though, is the possibility to engage with different modes of thinking which can lead to different ways of knowing and producing theory. These modes cannot be explored if one is busy with applying to "logical" rules in order to be valued as significant and proper. Challenging and renegotiating the confinements of language, as Stein's work does, is a possibility to shape reality, to subvert and destabilize the meaning and prominence of different signifiers such as woman and the phallus within academic discourse.

In a similar vein to Stein's continuous present, Woolf writes about continuing presences (1929, p. 95). Although they are always perceived as separate, she argues, "books continue each other" (Woolf, 1929, p. 67). Focusing on the absence of women's voice in the history of literature Woolf addresses "the accumulation of unrecorded life" (Woolf, 1929, p. 75).

Reading her work almost a century later, one could identify this accumulation as a problem of the past yet thinking of the present as continuous removes that possibility.

A blurring of the notions of past and present is also found in the archaeology of the contemporary past. Often referred to as the archaeology of the present, this area of research investigates present findings through applying archaeological methods. Aiming to push further, one of the experts in the field, Gavin Lucas argues that "all archaeology is the archaeology of the contemporary past insofar as the archaeological record is contemporary with us" (2013). Thinking of the present as continuous and the past as contemporary shifts the understanding of the past from unchangeable to malleable. That idea is especially interesting in relation to autobiography, a process that is driven by memory and retrospect (Lejeune, 1989, p. 4).

In my practice I think of events of the past that appear through memory as the archaeologists of the present think of the remains of previous archaeological eras: as contemporaries, matters of the present. This understanding does not limit the language of my practice to use verbs only in the present tense. As Lispector writes "even if I say 'I lived' or 'I shall live' it's present because I'm saying them now" (Lispector, 1973, p. 12). Engaging with autotheory through languaging the continuous present is an attempt to "carry" the present through assertions without editing out any of its uncertainty,



and to renegotiate “the accumulation of unrecorded life” (1929, p. 75) that Woolf expressed almost 100 years ago.

### THE NECESSARY OTHER

The third notion that I am looking at is the necessary other, found in Cavarero’s *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood* (2000). Cavarero examines multiple examples from the history of autobiography and argues that the necessary other enables the narratability of the self (2000). Cavarero’s theory stems from Arendt’s proposition that the perspective of the singular self is not capable of containing the reality of one’s life, which is always dependent on the presence of a witness” (1978, p. 19). This proposition challenges Lejeune’s idea that autobiography is a process of introspection (Lejeune, 1989, p. 4). The dependence of the autobiographical subject to another person is pivotal for my practice which places as a condition the presence of a necessary other.

The idea of the necessary other can be recognized in Shoshana Felman’s description of an “autobiography as a form of testifying” (in Anderson, 2011, p. 127). The autobiographical subject, Felman argues, cannot individually and consciously narrate her own story and is therefore always dependent to other people and other works (Anderson, 2011, p. 127).

*“What she proposes is autobiography as a form of testifying... which involves the speaker and the listener in a shared project to recover ‘something the speaking subject is not - and cannot be - in possession of.’” (in Anderson, p. 127)*

Similarly, Woolf uses the metaphor of a specific spot in the back of the head that a person is not able to see (Woolf, 1929, p. 76) and in learning about that part on her own head, a person needs the perspective of the other. I bring these ideas together, to address not only the incapability of the autobiographical subject to narrate her life through introspection, but also the incapability of one mode of working with language (“white men”) to produce theoretical discourse in artistic academic spaces.

In the months of performing nonstop languaging and engaging with multiple necessary others, my understanding of the notion and its function within my research transformed. I discovered that there are two sorts of necessary others appearing:

- The ones present in the moment of performance who by witnessing my nonstop languaging allow me to become narratable.
- Those who in working with language in manifestly subjective modes contribute to the critical mass that prevents one voice from being established as universal and objective (“white men”).

From those two types of necessary others, two forms of listening appear, which will be further examined in the findings.



### CONFINED SPACES - PERFORMANCE LECTURE

In the process of developing my graduation work, I got interested in how contextualizing it as a performance lecture would affect the audience's perception of nonstop languaging as well as my own engagement with the practice. I understand performance lecture as a research method as well as a tool for identifying the intentions of my practice. Although in previous pages I have insisted on slashes like men's/women's writing, this dissertation is primarily concerned with the removing of slashes. In this case, the slash between performing and lecturing in the context of a performance lecture.

In her analysis of the medium, Lucia Rainer, investigates performance lecture as a format that renders possible the debate around the production and dissemination of knowledge between academic and artistic discourse (2017, p. 74). Mentioning Xavier Le Roy's *Product of Circumstances* (1999) as an influential work for the history of the format, Rainer explains the reasons why performance lectures have been gaining extensive popularity within the field of artistic research (2017). Rainer locates the differences in using the various terms available for describing the format (lecture performance, performative lecture, performance demonstration). Although in my view they distinction between the terms is not so clear, I chose to stick with the term performance lecture, highlighting the importance of

ephemeral performative encounters between spectator and performer as a component for knowledge production within academia.

Le Roy's work not only combines performing with lecturing but situates them both within the autobiographical process, composing a lecture that narrates in parallel his life and his artistic practice. During his performance, the artist lectures, then pauses, then walks to the centre of the stage, then performs a movement sequence, then walks back to the microphone, and narrates an autobiographical event. According to Rainer, the processes of performing and lecturing (and if I may add the process of autobiography) in Le Roy's work, despite their appearance as equally present, operate as distinct processes which at the same time inform, contextualize and negate each other (2017). This is not a rare phenomenon in history of a format where the frames of performing and lecturing are rarely indistinguishable (Rainer, 2017). Performance lectures are "always situated between academia and art... without entirely being one or the other" (Rainer, 2017, p. 76). This view is shared in a text focusing on performance lectures written by performing arts theorists and dramaturgs Konstantina Georgelou and Jasna Žmak's (2015). In their perspective, performance lectures rarely fulfil the genre's intention of merging performing and lecturing, achieving the triptych researching-performing-lecturing, and ultimately becoming a format that produces what one could

consider as appropriate academic knowledge (Georgelou & Žmak, 2015, p. 267). Instead, performance lectures often appear to highlight the performativity of lecturing, to “just perform the presentation of research” or, in cases like Le Roy’s work where performing and lecturing appear equally considered, to produce knowledge about performing (Georgelou & Žmak, 2015, p. 267).

My intention when entering the space of performance lecture is to re-move the slash between performing autobiography, producing knowledge, and disseminating that knowledge. In my performance I aim to avoid the separation of languaging theory and languaging life. The autobiography and the theory are given to the necessary other in one go, through one act, the act of languaging. Rather than being opposites, theory and autobiography are taking place together through the act of languaging my thoughts in encountering the necessary other. They are both necessary components for the production of my autotheoretical practice but when appearing to the other the aim is that they are not distinguishable.

Furthermore, Rainer introduces the “un-know-able” as the key element through which performance lectures challenge the concept of knowledge production (Rainer, 2017, p. 16). An example of a work that deals with the “un-know-able” is Sibylle Peters’ LECTURE THEATRE 1700 - 2000: index of persons (incomplete) presented in Overgaden LECTURES:

‘Lecture Performance - Between Art and Academia’ (2013). In her performance Peters shares with the audience the index of her book on the history of lecturing, including the main theorists who according to her research, have contributed to the development of the concept. She asks the audience to collectively choose one of the theorists they would like to know more about. Then, the artist engages in a spoken stream of consciousness, sharing with the audience everything she knows about the theorist’s contribution to the field of lecturing. Peters examines how a more unedited, spontaneous language can be used to transmit and produce knowledge. Nevertheless, her stream of consciousness, although often informal, humorous, and accidental, appears to controllably position its aboutness in relation to the chosen theorist. Although speaking a stream of consciousness, the performer stays within the subject, makes sure to be talking about Derrida, Cage, Foucault, Goffman, Hegel (her index mostly presents men).

In a similar attempt towards including the “un-know-able”, I engage with spoken and written streams of consciousness. As mentioned earlier, I choose a fast paced, nonstop stream of consciousness in order to arrive to a state where I am not pre-deciding what I am going to say or write before it is communicated. A process of languaging where I am witnessing my thoughts simultaneously with the necessary other. Through engaging with nonstop languaging, I aim to

push further towards the exploration of the “un-know-able” and stay open to always putting at risk the aboutness of my performance lecture, an intention that becomes especially challenging in moments of “higher” academic importance as in the case of an assessed graduation performance. In my practice it is crucial that the language, the aboutness and the content of the performance lecture is always open to the right here / right now of the ephemeral encounter, so that performing and thinking are indistinguishable. This intention is unfortunately not always met, a reality that emphasizes the fragility of performative encounters that that unfold in the now.

For Rainer, performance lecture is a way to speak “with a topic - and not merely about it” (2017, p. 197). For Georgelou and Žmak, it is an action that aims towards the impossibility of unpacking a subject “while being (in) it” (2015, p. 270). I strongly connect the aim of my research in those two definitions, proposing to bring the triptych of researching-performing-lecturing all in one performative action. I see the potential for performing and lecturing to become truly merged within the format of performance lecture. What I understand as the unknown, the unconscious or the “un-know-able” in the case of performance lectures is an element that cannot be known in advance. For a performance lecture to really research something, (and not only perform a sort of lecturing or lecture a sort of performing) there needs to

be a knowledge that the performer herself cannot produce in advance or by herself. A knowledge that can only be produced because of the ephemeral encounter between the performer engaged in the practice of nonstop languaging, and the necessary other<sup>17</sup>. That is what I mean by staying open to the encounter and risking the aboutness of the work and my proposition of producing of autobiography in relation to the necessary other.

Although first presented as a lecture, Gertrude Stein’s *Composition as Explanation* (1926) is not referred to as a performance lecture. Arguably, Stein’s written text is an example of how the production of knowledge, the sharing of knowledge and simultaneously a renegotiation of both those practices, can take place all at once through an action “in and of language” (Hejinian, 2000, p. 2). In *Composition as Explanation* (1926), as the title already reveals, there is not a clear distinction between composing and explaining: explaining is the parameter for composing, which gives meaning to the explaining, which frames the composing, which transforms the explaining. Stein’s text is not limited to the realm of poetry<sup>18</sup>, it is based on lectures that she

<sup>17</sup> I like the longer version more than love and anarchy (but I still call it film d’amore e d’anarchia) = (WANTS TO BE) nonstop talking + nonstop writing + encountering necessary other + researching + autobiography + continuous present + producing knowledge + disseminating knowledge + reshaping structure + unclogging ears

<sup>18</sup> I am using the word limited here, because by overlooking Stein’s intention to explain (an intention foregrounded in the title), by paying all attention to her compositional experimentation, *Composition as Explanation* could be read as merely a poetic word play, and therefore one that does not aim to challenge the production of academic discourse

gave in Oxford and Cambridge in 1926. It is an indication that in Stein's time there was already a questioning of what appropriate knowledge is and the forms through which it can be produced and disseminated. Like Cixous and Hejinian, Stein's texts have been widely explored within academic discourse. What will it take for such modes of writing (and even more languaging) to be considered as appropriate forms of academic knowledge production and dissemination, rather than poetic spaces where brilliant ideas can be found, extracted, and edited into the confined language of white - western - phallogocentric, academic criteria?

## FINDINGS (EARS)

In this chapter I discuss the findings from performing nonstop languaging. It would be impossible to include all findings that emerged from two years of engaging with a practice based on externalizing, acknowledging and articulating, in various ways, formats and durations, offline and online, in the presence of so many different necessary others. Therefore, I decided to focus on listening, as the notion that grew from being not so prominent into being very important for both the practice but also the renegotiation of the confined space that I have been addressing throughout this dissertation.

### *Listening (of the performer) without being in silence*

The performer of the practice of nonstop languaging as the woman in the non-phallogocentric system has to practice a form of listening, that does not require one's own silence. She has to learn how to listen while talking and writing continuously, to listen without being in silence. She has been told that silence is gold, is a thousand words, is less which is actually more, but in the right here right now more is more and less is less. The ability to maintain silence has been imposed on the woman as an attribute<sup>19</sup>. Artistic

<sup>19</sup> Think of the Boleyn sisters: Two women in the 16th century England (also the century and place that Woolf has been placing her fictional character Judith Shakespeare in Room of one's own) both involved in an affair with the king. The one who got to live is the one who managed to keep silent. The other, who spoke a lot, was executed. Watching the film, I thought that she was crazy, that she was playing with fire, that she was out of line. No initial criticism on the line itself, on the fire that burns whoever does not keep silent. I am a "product of circumstances", I am an outcome of the structure's confinements, and this practice is an attempt to renegotiate the confinements of my listening as of the spaces that I am part of.

academic discourse has to be shaped by what Felman calls testi-monies (in Anderson, p.127), texts that do not claim to contain a universal truth but are entering reality and history always in dependence to other's testimonies. In that process, exploring a multiplicity of modes of working with language is of major importance. The absence of multiple voices (and ways of articulation) has led to one perspective (phallogocentric discourse) appearing as the absolute truth, naming itself as objective knowledge, and criticising as inappropriate anything that exceeds its confinements such as the feminine writing (Irigaray, 1977).

#### *The ears unclogging their listening*

The autotheoretical knowledge that nonstop languaging produces, re-quires ears able to listen, to situate and embrace what is being produced. In order for those to exist, the practice has to unclog the ears that are "clogged with meaning" as Irigaray calls them (Irigaray, 1977, p. 113), and challenge the "deaf male ear, which hears in language only that which speaks in the masculine" that Cixous writes about (1976, p. 881). Those ears are not only attached to white western male heads. They are glued to all heads that have been conditioned by the phallogocentric meaning, by the institution of white men (Ahmed, 2014). Thus, the urgency for unclogging does not only require the transformation of artistic academic spaces but all those who are part of such spaces in any position, to

unclog their ears from the phallogocentric meaning<sup>20</sup>.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, I realized that this research is dependent on two types of necessary others: One makes me narratable by being present in the moment of performance. The other, by engaging in creating their own testimonies through different modes of language, contributes to the creation of a critical mass that renegotiates the confinements of academic language within artistic academic discourse. It recently became apparent that the format of performance lecture is relevant as a way to invite those present in the performance (necessary other type 1) to initiate non-phallogocentric processes of languaging (necessary other type 2).

<sup>20</sup> Sticking pointy things (like the ones that look a bit like phallos you know) is dangerous for the ears, as they might push the wax deeper inside. When needing to clean your ears at home, a few drops of liquids such as mineral oil or peroxide, (fluids you know) can help to soften and remove the wax. In ideal circumstances you would not have to clean your ears at all. Ears are supposed to clean themselves without ever getting clogged.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

### **CAN I GO A LITTLE UNEDITED, JUST FOR THE SUMMARY? I PROMISE I'LL KEEP AUTOCORRECT ON**

Language in artistic academic spaces such as the one I am writing this dissertation in, has been confined by: phallogentrism, the need for asser-tions, the concept of appropriate knowledge, the idea that the personal cannot be critical, syntactical and grammatical correctness. Autotheory which is the merging of autobiography and theory (Fournier, 2021), can shift the logic of artistic academic discourse in order to carve out space not only for each individual case but also for other manifestly subjective modes of working with language to stop being thought of as wrong, non existent or inappropriate (Irigaray, 1977). Women's writing has the capacity to change knowledge, how it is produced, transferred and understood, so that the mode of working with language becomes an option for all genders. I cannot start from the principle that *écriture féminine* (Cixous, 1976) does not speak mainly about women, because the logic needs to first be estab-lished, or far more established than it feels in 2021 in a white-western aca-demia. What does it mean that this or that didn't happen in the past? Those findings are contemporary to us in the present, so why accept them as a given (Lucas & Buchli, 2001)? The fact that Derrida has been cited 20000000 times more than Cixous (and keep in mind Cixous is white, im-agine if she wasn't) is a concern

of the present which is continuous (Stein, 1926). More than the shaping of a community (Fournier, 2021) citation is a way to shape the past which is contemporary (Lucas, 2013), by drawing women's stories into history (Cixous, 1976, p. 881), it is a way to highlight voices that have been heard softer than others. Citations are like bricks (Ahmed, 2015) which build houses which host subjectivities, so it is really a pity and also boring that most bricks look like "white men" (Ahmed, 2014).

My practice of nonstop languaging is my tool for carving a different path within language and the lens through which I want to challenge the language of artistic academic spaces. I create my own parameters (nonstop languaging, writing and talking simultaneously, always encountering a necessary other) to renegotiate or propose alternatives to the existing constraints. It is like the repetition in *Composition as Explanation* (Stein, 1926), a repetition that unclogs the ears (Irigaray, 1977, p. 113) that are clogged with masculine meaning (Cixous, 1976, p. 881). I want to contribute to a critical mass because that is the only way that something will change. I am not proposing an answer but an attitude, which might be an answer. In women's tennis (WTA) for every Grand Slam there is a new unseeded winner and fans say this is such a mess and they prefer men's tennis because 99% of times it's going to be either Roger, or Nadal, or Djokovic that wins it. I don't think women's tennis is messy at all. The unknowable, the unconstituted, the unconscious, the unknown is the

common element between ideas that were brought together in this dissertation: acknowledging (Hejinian, 2000), dance improvisation (da Silva, 2015), the necessary other (Cavarero, 2000), *écriture féminine* (Cixous, 1976), the archaeology of the contemporary past (Lucas & Buchli, 2001). Some identify these elements (unconstituted etc.) as inappropriate (for knowledge) or insignificant or messy (like in women's tennis), but that's because their ears are clogged with meaning (Irigaray, 1977, p. 881) and because artistic research is in danger of not having any funding and any place in society if it stops looking like fields that are thought of as "serious knowledge" like science (Georgelou & Žmak, 2015, p. 265).

My autotheoretical practice is trying to push further than Maggie Nelson's *The Argonauts* (2015), where citations appear on the edges of the autobiographical text, it also does not intend to clear out all uncertainty, as it does not think of uncertainty as the opposite of assertiveness. I couldn't do this in this text or maybe I was afraid to lose something and stop being "within". One of the reasons I choose notions that risk their disappearance by being defined into one thing, like *écriture féminine*, or the continuous present, is to communicate that such fluid terms, like Irigaray's fluids (Irigaray, 1977), do not need to edit out their uncertainty in order to start existing within academic discourse. Instead, the logic needs to bend in order to accept that some things although very real, and very existent (elephant in the room)



cannot be articulated in the language of the phallogentric log-ic. This paradox has to stop being defined as a lack of the fluid, and start being defined as a lack of the structure. To do that, the fluid could enter a language that might appear similar to the phallogentric language but is confined by the fluid itself. In other words, we must keep “shaking the apple tree” (Ramshaw in da Silva, 2015, p. 2) until the critical mass is there, or until the ears unclog enough to understand or at least consider as existent what practices like mine propose.

## CONCLUSION

Reading my dissertation one might wonder, “why don’t you just go somewhere else”, out of academia, or in places that they do it more to your liking. Writing this text, I tried to keep in mind Lauren Fournier’s question of “who gets to produce theory” (2021, p. 6) or why I do. Revisiting Cixous’ quote that opened the introduction “If woman has always functioned ‘within’ the discourse of man...” (Cixous, 1976, p. 887) the word “within” sticks a little longer. To have the ability to enter such spaces of education, which challenge your mind, your soul and your beliefs, your view of the world, which allow you to tear yourself apart and just before the finish line form it into a thing again, a thing that looks like you in the beginning, but doesn’t talk, doesn’t think, doesn’t know (knowing as a process) anything like you in the beginning, is a huge privilege. One that did not come to me only from the fact of being white and western, but also from having a job, having a family, having

tutors, having colleagues, having friends and a lover. So to end up being “within” is not a given and to risk that “within” is not easy, once you get comfortable in getting along the ways and tricks and norms of what that within entails. Nevertheless, acknowledging the boundaries, negotiating the limitations, reshaping the confinements (because nothing could work without confinements) is a responsibility for those that feel that things should be “different” in that within. As writer artist Emma Cocker says,

*“to know your limits does not mean to dutifully remain within their bounds but rather... to develop the border knowledge that will allow the limit to be negotiated differently or rendered porous, to learn where the boundaries are and be mindful of how to facilitate their crossing” (Cocker, 2016, p. 14).*

This dissertation has been my attempt to do so.



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