Montage of Freedom. Phonesia: The Art of Logo-Somatic Articulation through Encounter with Other Livings

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This article delves into the concept of logo-somatic freedom through an analysis of three artworks: *Chairs Mots*, *Diaphoner*, and *#DanseAvecLesMots*. These works exemplify how encounters with 'other livings'—including language, dance, and digital technology—foster and enrich logo-somatic freedom, transcending conventional boundaries between language, body, artist, audience, and technology. Through practices such as phonesia, participatory performance, and online interaction, the artworks showcase the transformative potential of corporeal poetics and synesthetic communication. The exploration of logo-somatic freedom reveals a perpetual process of metamorphosis in the relationship between body and language, where the deconstruction of logo-somatic expressive habits goes hand-in-hand with the free will of their poetic recomposition. By fostering collective dialogue and individual creativity, these artworks pave the way for innovative forms of artistic expression and collective engagement in the contemporary world. This essay's exploration of logo-somatic freedom across these artworks highlights its ongoing evolution and its role in shaping the future of artistic expression.

> What is important is not what happens to us, but how we respond to what happens to us.
>
> *Jean-Paul Sartre (1952: 63)*

Montage of Freedom

In this essay, I share with you my process in inventing a performative technique called *phonesia*, which allows for a simultaneous articulation of dance and speech and for a reconfiguration of the relationship between gestures and words. This invention was born out of a felt need to decolonize my body and its sensations from the oppressive and denigrating words that

I have endured in my personal history, particularly from my father and from teachers in school. By expanding this individual issue to more collective realms, I believe I have glimpsed a tradition in the history of live performance that also imposed a form of language oppression on the body. For example, in opera until the nineteenth century, to produce the 'ideal' voice of a castrato, boy singers' testicles were removed: amputating a part of the body was meant to preserve the 'purity' of a childlike voice. In classical theater, the text often took precedence over everything else, subjecting the actor's body to the intelligibility of their words. In choreography, the dancer was always muted, following a doctrine that reduced them to being merely a body available for movement.

On the other hand, in Western philosophy, many thinkers have also testified to the oppressive, even totalitarian effects of language on the human body. Roland Barthes (1979) goes so far as to label language as fascist: 'Language—the performance of a language system—is neither reactionary nor progressive; it is simply fascist; because fascism does not prevent speech but compels speech' (p. 5). Faced with this observation, he proposes literature as a possibility to 'hear language outside of power' (Barthes 1979: 4). Giorgio Agamben (2007) describes language as a device that captures the discourses and gestures of living beings. He defines a device as 'anything that, in one way or another, has the capacity to capture, direct, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions, and discourses of living beings' (p. 26). Faced with this linguistic peculiarity, the philosopher suggests poetry as a means to deactivate language. For him, poetry is an 'operation in language that deactivates and disemploys communicative and informative functions to open them to a new possible usage' (Agamben 2018: 65). Alain Badiou (bioecon tv 2022), on his part, denounces the hegemony of the 'language of money' and emphasizes the responsibility of contemporary artists in inventing new fictions to replace those of capitalism, which mainly revolve around competitive and monetary values. As for Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1980), they propose to stretch language with an 'atypical expression' that varies standard forms to take them out of their normativity: 'Atypical expression constitutes a point of deterritorialization of language; it plays the role of a tensor, that is, it makes language tend towards a limit of its elements, forms, or notions, towards a beyond or below of language' (p. 125).

These foundational premises—encompassing both personal psychological sensations and collective observations—are what drove me to develop a new technique. This technique would serve to rebalance the dynamic between body and language, embodying resistance against language oppression through the medium of dance. I would call this technique phonesia, a means by which my moving body could influence my spoken language, diverting my logo-somatic automatism into ever-renewing poetic mutations—achieved through the montage of gestures and words, executed according to my free will. Freedom is here delineated as my ability to make choices regarding both the occurrences in my life (my automatism)

and the poetic transformations I aspire to achieve. This act of montage, extending beyond mere liberation, not only dismantles existing chains but also lays the foundation, through an ongoing process of decision-making, for the creation of innovative poetic artifacts.

In the case of phonesia, the 'existing chains' are the logo-somatic automatisms that link the pronunciation of words (verbal language) to bodily gestures (non-verbal language); the 'innovative poetic artifacts' are new poetic arrangements between spoken words and bodily gestures; and the 'montage of freedom' is the perpetual process of decision-making and de(re) articulation between these same words and gestures. Phonesia enables my emancipatory process through three stages: it undoes the automatisms that link my pronunciation of words to my bodily movements (desynchronization); then it makes choices for de(re)articulation (montage); and afterwards it welcomes new logo-somatic artifacts (poetic awareness). Put very simply, I am proposing a logo-somatic freedom formula for phonesia as follows: Phonesic freedom (F) = Desynchronization of logo-somatic automatisms (D) + Montage of spoken words and bodily gestures according to free will (M) + Poetic conscientization of new logo-somatic artifacts (P)

$$F = D + M + P$$

This formula seeks to express a perpetual process of metamorphosis in the relationship between body and language, where the deconstruction of logo-somatic expressive habits goes hand in hand with the free will of their poetic recomposition.

Encounter with Other Livings

I also emphasize that, as I created phonesia as a performative technique, its emancipatory aspect was shaped through modulation around the notions of the 'other' and the 'living,' or what I would more precisely call 'the other livings.' This involves a speculative shift of the concept of alterity to include what is not always considered as part of the paradigm of the living. In my case, it pertains to language, dance, and technology. This speculative reevaluation of alterity as a form of living I have worked out through my three distinct artistic works (*Chairs Mots*, *Diaphoner*, *#DanseAvecLesMots*) that have acted on three scales: that of the Self, the Other, and the World.

The interactive performance *Chairs Mots*[1] explored the scale of the Self, specifically as an encounter of a 'speaking dancer' (Vlassov 2023b) with himself, where language and dance were reconsidered as 'the other livings.' The participatory spectacle *Diaphoner*[2] delved into the scale of the Other, particularly through an encounter between the performer and spectators, where the spectators were reconsidered as 'the other livings,' taking on the roles of language and dance as if they were semi-human life forms. Then, the interactive streaming performance *#DanseAvecLesMots*[3] explored the scale of the World, specifically as an encounter between the online performer and

online spectators, where digital technology was reconsidered as 'the other living.'

The rest of this essay is structured as a poïetic[4] exploration of the three above-mentioned dimensions. It presents the creation-research-technique approach of an artist who not only creates artworks and the discourse that accompanies them but also invents his own performative technique—an artistic act of freedom in itself, as it allows the artist-researcher-technician to emancipate himself from the artistic and academic worlds which he navigates.

1. Encounter with the Self

> The word passes through the individual, defines a state,
> illuminates a sequence of the material world;
> proposes also another state.

> *René Char (Charpier 1950: 4)*

Phonesia is a performative technique for a speaking dancer that I have been developing for several years (Vlassov 2018). It involves a simultaneous articulation of dance and speech in a specific manner. The uniqueness of this articulation lies in its impact on the structure of dance and spoken language and thus on the automatisms that link gestures and words. In everyday verbal and gestural communication, certain gestures often go hand in hand with specific words and expressions. However, the speaking dancer continually reorganizes these habitual patterns. For example, when I pronounce words and phrases while dancing, I ensure that the movements of my body influence the structure of the spoken language I use.

In my performance *Chairs Mots*, the audience is invited to suggest words of their choice to the speaking dancer. Words thus emerge from the mouths of spectators to land in the artist's glottis, who then engages simultaneously in speech and movement. To describe what happens within me (as a speaking dancer) when a spectator gives me a word—such as the word 'phonesia,' for example—and I articulate the pronunciation of that word with the dance, I offer here an auto-ethnographic note which represents the transcription of my inner experience. In this transcription, everything spoken by me is in italics, while the non-italicized text describes what is happening in my mind and what this conscientization is doing to the dance movement. This text is excerpted from my article 'La Phonésie':

PHONESIA

'—*Phooooneeeeeeesy, PhOOOOOOOOne*—It stretches my voice, rounds my mouth, opens my arms, bulges my eyes—Immersed in the first syllable, my attention finds itself in the stretched granularity of sound—

PhOOOOooOOne—This modulated elongation ignites the current of my thought through the meaning of the word "phoné," which means "voicing" in ancient Greek—I take advantage of this transfer from vocalization to meaning to chew the whole—*PhoOOne phOOOOne PHonéÉÉ*—This word-voice makes my spine undulate, merging with the sound of vowels. A space-time opens up for what follows—' (Vlassov 2018).

One can see here that the words are initially pronounced in their semantically correct form, then the dance movements affect the pronunciation of these words, transforming them into other syllabic vocalizations, and subsequently, they morph into new words and phrases.

Another word, 'performative,' is provided by the spectator, and I start to perform this word using phonesia:

PERFORMATIVE

'—*Peeeerfoooormaaatiiiive père fort père fOrt Pèèère fOOrt*—I freeze in a static posture, muscles tense—*Fort fOoort forme. père FORMS the form, fOrme la pair PAire*—This new meaning prompts me to observe my motionless body—*FooorMAT formateR fOOrma-ter*—The desire to inhabit this tenacious structure leads me to shake it from the inside with antagonistic movements—*mater fOrt. Mater mOts... my fAthEr mAstErEd my wOrds*—A memory of my mathematician father sparks within me—The dance, torn from within, stretches into song and emerges from my mouth—*fooormater mooots tiques, maux TIQUE, maAA tique... iiiinformatique... maathematically pathetic*—' (Vlassov 2018).

It is as if the body of the speaking dancer were a giant mouth that swallowed

verbs and phrases, then digested them by circulating them throughout its entire palate and spat them out in a different semantic form. Just as gestures can influence the structure of spoken language, the meaning of the words used can, in turn, transform the structure of the movements being danced. Thus, phonesia enables a dual process of de-automatization and recomposition of the structural connections that occur between the human subject, their words, and their gestures. The significance of this restructuring lies in its capacity to transcend conventional boundaries between body and language. By cultivating a symbiotic relationship between danced gestures and spoken words, phonesia surpasses a mere mechanical reorganization. It evolves into an artistic exploration, enabling the body to become a dynamic and fluid expression of speech, and vice versa. This meaningful transformation introduces a fresh dimension to human expression, broadening creative possibilities and challenging established norms in verbal and bodily communication.

The fact that the spectators give me words takes me into an imaginary realm where a form of alterity enters into me. It is as if something from elsewhere injects itself inside me, setting me in motion. What if I consider these words part of life forms other than human? For example, what if language were a form of life?[5] A semantic organism whose evolution is not only linked to anthropological transformations but also changes independently of humans, following its own structural mutations? And what if dance (and therefore my physical gestures, which encounter these words from the spectator in my corporeality), too, were a form of life? A somatic organism this time, one that transforms itself thanks to and with humans, but also has its own evolutionary autonomy? Thus, both language with its words, phrases, and accents, and dance with its gestures, sequences of movements, and bodily postures, are organisms that are not specifically botanical or zoological but nevertheless *biological*: living organisms that evolve not only through the human species but also independently; semantic and somatic organisms that, like other forms of life, live, die, and perpetuate their existence.[6]

In this sense, a speaking being is not alone during their act of enunciation but is in the presence of a language and a dance that manifest themselves with them. When they express themselves, they are no longer the sole producer of their discourse but become co-authors of a dance engaged with the words and gestures that flow through them. This anthropo-logo-somatic choreography constitutes a heterogeneous and fluid ecosystem that I will henceforth call *corpArléité*. This concept refers to a symbiotic environment where, as I have already written elsewhere, 'the human, language, and dance form a network of exchange and interdependence' (Vlassov quoted in Legrady 2019), and they manifest themselves in an association that is both intimate, dynamic, and heterogeneous. In the history of ideas, the concept of corpArléité seeks to extend the notions of 'body' and 'corporeality,' while emphasizing them through the presence of language. As a theoretical concept, it itself stems from the technique of phonesia,

organizing a framework to approach creation-research-technique whose aim is to reinvigorate the power dynamics between the body and language. If, until recently, as we have seen, it was the body that was dominated by language, in today's 'society of control,' as discussed by Deleuze (1987), we can observe a reversal of this power dynamic: language can also be dominated by the body, because today, power is exerted through the body and its desires, dictating individuals' behaviors. During a critical seminar on Pietro Montani's book *Bioestetica: Senso comune, tecnica e arte nell'età della globalizzazione* [*Bio-aesthetics: Common Sense, Technique, and Art in the Age of Globalization*], philosopher Bernard Stiegler mentions a metaphysical reversal in contemporary times:

> 'If we posit that metaphysics begins with Plato as a subjugation of the body to the soul, here we are in a case where, through biopolitics, it is the soul that is subjected to the body. A body that is itself disorganized, de-noetized, and ultimately assigned to what I call a symbolic misery' (CRAL — Centre de Recherches 2014).

Whether in the past or present, the question within the ecosystem of *corpArléité* is, in fact, political, as the abuse of power exists in both cases (domination of language or domination of the body). *CorpArléité* thus proposes an environment for addressing these power relations of domination. And since *corpArléité* treats dance and language as forms of life, it is more about biopolitics, meaning coexistence among different life forms in the same ecosystem. Michel Foucault (1976) called this biopolitics—a concept he used to describe the exercise of power not over territories and subjects, as in the old legal model, but over the body and the very life of humans. However, *corpArléité* offers a framework for the distribution of biopower among the human, the linguistic, and the somatic, and consequently for rebalancing the forces between these three forms of life. These notions of biopolitics and biopower, of which Foucault makes an anthropocentric use, can, in my opinion, be extended to the non-human, to a biodiversity of the living, and therefore also to the forms of semantic and somatic life.

In *corpArléité*, the goal is not to establish mathematical equality between saying and doing, but to give the meanings of gestures as much importance as the sense of words. *CorpArléité* is there to establish an environment that makes possible not only the dehierarchization of the body and language but also the reanimation of their relationship; somatic and linguistic biopowers can invent their own choreography. So, viewing the relation between human, dance, and language as a choreography of different life forms helps transcend the usual binary between discourse and action, and replace it with an ecological relationship. Our perspective shifts—from anthropocentrism towards seeing a human person as part of an ecosystem, which opens up the prospect of creating a common good for humans and two other forms of somatic and semantic life. Through this ecological stance, the protagonist of *corpArléité* becomes aware of the broader forces within them and the possibility of engaging in dialogue with them. They are no longer

under the illusion of isolated expression but partaking in shared enunciation.

2. Encounter with the Other

Now, let us see how this logo-somatic freedom can not only be shared with other human beings (the spectators) but also experienced by and with them. In the participatory performance *Diaphoner*, I offered the audience, after sharing some phonesia tools with them, the opportunity to stage the concept of *corpArléité*. Inviting three individuals onto the stage, I asked one of them to generate a flow of words to represent language (a semantic form of life), another to produce movements to represent dance (a somatic form of life), and the third to embody a human form of life that blends the gestures and words from the other two participants. Here is a transcription of a spectator who becomes a speaking dancer when performing phonesia based on the words 'forms of life,' with another spectator playing the role of language and yet another playing the role of dance:

FORMS OF LIFE

'—I watch one person dancing while simultaneously listening to another person beginning their verbal variation around the words "form of life": *"Forms of life. For lives form. Guess which one is life..."*—I start uttering fragments of what I can remember from these words, all the while attempting to mimic the movements of the other person, who is writhing as if possessed by tremors throughout their body—*Forrr fort of lifffffffffffffff...* —On the stretched sound of *"fffffffffffffff,"* my body's tremors begin to synchronize with my voice. It's as if the sound of my voice has become the sound generated by my tremors—*fffffffffffffff...* —I tremble. *"fffffffffffffff..."*—I tremble at the same time I *"fffffffffffffff..."*—Suddenly, the person verbalizing their poetic words stops. Consequently, I stop making the *"fffffffffffffff"* sound. However, my body continues to tremble because the other person keeps trembling. So, I find myself trembling in silence. I tremble, and I *"............"*—The person verbalizing resumes generating language: *Life is a form. A form of life. A spiral distorts. A spiral life*—My body is still trembling. In silence. While still trembling, I start pronouncing snippets of words that I "catch" from the vocalizing spectator: *life is form of life life spirale life, spiiiiiiiireal, real reaaaaaaal, real real real real real real real...*—The spectator who was producing the trembling dance stops trembling and begins another series of movements—sort of spirals coursing through their entire body—Meanwhile, still pronouncing the word *"real,"* I also take up this spiraling movement. I feel my spine curling in on itself, slowly but surely—*real real real real real real real...*—'

Through this role-play, this spectator, who turns into a 'speaking dancer,' becomes a crossroads where transduction between words and movements takes place. He becomes the medium of logo-somatic circulation. Far from being a passive conduit, he is an active agent in this circulation; he is not

merely subject to the vital forces that flow through him but participates in what happens to him by making choices through his phonesic montage. This is how this third spectator-dancing-speaker represents a form of human life that encounters the other two forms of life, semantic and somatic. To draw a parallel with cinema, I would like to reference Jean-Luc Godard's (1985) reflection on the concept of montage: 'Cinema is not one image after another; it is one image plus another image that together form a third' (p. 460).
In another text, he continues:

'The third: the current between a positive pole and a negative pole. The third, a child between two genders. The third, a thousand-dollar bill between two hands. The third, a delegate between a master and a slave. The third, knowledge between a student and a teacher. The third, a dream between yesterday and today tomorrow' (Godard, quoted in Forum des images 2010).

If Godard talks about montage as a current that flows between two images to reveal a third one, then the third person in the 'spectator-dancer-speaker' trio allows this same current to flow between one spectator's words and another's movements. If we consider these three individuals as a whole, we can see that human nature is no longer alone inside it but coexists with two other forms of life. Within the spectator-dancer-speaker trio, human life is demoted in favor of an encounter with alterity, that of other livings: dance and language as forms of life.

From a person-device to a person-ecosystem

The decreasing human role of the third person within *corpArléité* shifts the speaking being, as I mentioned earlier, away from their anthropocentric stance, allowing them to make space for other forms of life and participate in the production of a shared act of enunciation. The Italian philosopher Roberto Esposito (2012), in his book *Third Person*, exposes that in our control society, the individual becomes a device to exploit, and reflects on ways of life that can mitigate this orientation. Esposito (2012) defines the 'person-device' as a set of identifications (such as name, face, gender, nationality, personal biography) that allows the individual to exist in their social environment but, at the same time, creates an effect of exclusion for other humans and also enables the state apparatus to capture individuals within what Barbara Cassin (2014) calls 'evaluation grids.' These grids are classifications that shape all human beings by defining them solely by their performative and quantifiable actions, in order to reduce them to devices to be governed. To break free from these societal cages, Esposito (2012) proposes the more impersonal notion of a third person, a notion that incorporates 'she' or 'he' into the 'I-you' relationship. Esposito suggests this concept of the third person as a way to transcend the limitations imposed by societal categorizations, aiming to foster a relational dynamic that goes beyond the confines of gender-based roles and expectations, allowing for a more fluid and equitable 'I-you' interaction. By making room for a third person within the individual, the philosopher gives space to that other who resides within us all. As Arthur Rimbaud (1871/2009) once said, 'I is another,' and it is through this other that 'the poet becomes a seer through a lengthy, immense, and reasoned derangement of all the senses' (p. 343).

Thus, it is by shifting the focus towards the otherness of dance and language that a speaking dancer becomes this 'third person.' And even though this posture abolishes a human being's monopoly over their act of enunciation, it still grants them the possibility to participate in it actively and liberally. This new stance of freedom allows them not only to regulate the vital forces within them but also, through this participation, to bring forth new logo-somatic creations. It is by no means about controlling life; it is about dancing with life. I would replace the verb 'to dance' with 'to tense' because it involves a movement that is neither a confrontation nor an agreement, but a perpetual back-and-forth movement of resistance and collaboration (Vlassov 2015).

If Charles Darwin, an English naturalist and Victorian bourgeois, based his studies on the competitive aspect of survival among species, the Russian geographer, naturalist, and anarchist Peter Kropotkin (1902/1976)—in the same era of the nineteenth century—provided numerous examples of cooperation where species helped each other in their respective survival. Darwin and Kropotkin arrived at different conclusions due to their opposing political ideas, but also because they worked in regions of the world with different climates: Darwin explored the tropical Galapagos Islands where, in

the face of overpopulation, competition was the most suitable solution; and Kropotkin conducted his experiments in the vast and sparsely populated expanses of Siberia, where harsh conditions made it more likely for animals that cooperated to survive. Whether it is competition or mutual aid, life finds its most suitable expression according to various contexts.

CorpArléité is thus the field of experience where the three forms of life—human, somatic, and linguistic—*tense* within a common ecosystem. They do not fight for 'natural selection,' nor do they help each other for any moral reasons. Together, they compose an act of enunciation whose content they do not predict in advance. *CorpArléité* is therefore a person-ecosystem where the human, language, and dance come together to bring forth the unknown. Within this person-ecosystem, the convergence of human, language, and dance cultivates a space for collective narratives that challenge today's 'society of control,' fostering an inclusive exploration of diverse perspectives. This collaborative endeavor to unveil the unknown intricately intertwines with self-liberation, shaping a future that embraces pluralistic expressions and redefines its trajectory: a future of life.

3. Encounter with the World

Let us delve even further into the concept of 'other livings' to expand our understanding to the realm of digital technology and see how this logo-somatic freedom operates among people who create together via the internet.

During the first COVID-19 lockdown, I initiated the project *#DanseAvecLesMots* (Dance with Words), where I would daily invite viewers on my Facebook page[7] to provide words in real-time for me to immediately integrate into a dance performance in front of them. To my surprise, shortly after its launch, the project took an unexpected turn. Some viewers began to interact with me not only with isolated words, as initially proposed, but also with objects, drawings, and pieces of music. An even more surprising evolution occurred as some viewers started performing simultaneously with me during my live streams: shasring improvised poetic texts, instant drawings, graphic collages, sound and image remixes of the live broadcasts into musical compositions and videos, parallel performances—a profusion of creative gestures emerged around this confined rendezvous.[8] I responded to this abundance myself: every evening, right after my live streams, I composed a graphic work I called *Tenseurs Images*, where I assembled photos, drawings, and texts from all these people who were performing with me. Then, one by one, I invited viewers to perform with me with the help of a split screen: the screen divided into two, with the host occupying one half and the guest the other. *#DanseAvecLesMots* lasted for fifty-one days and concluded with the end of the first lockdown in May 2020.

But how can we explain this creative outburst? Here, I propose that this enthusiasm for singular creativity was made possible not only through

the liberating performativity of logo-somatic automatism of phonesia but also due to the interactivity of the digital streaming platform, which could be described as @live. I intentionally replace here the letter 'a' with the symbol '@' because I believe that nothing can replace the presence of live dance in a live performance. I share Elena Polivtseva's (2020) view expressed in her article on live arts in the virtualization world that 'live arts have a unique power to place us in the "here and now," where we are exposed to a reality at a given moment, without any intermediary means of communication' (p. 12). However, the pandemic thrust live performance artists into a situation where this *in vivo* presence was simply impossible. And it was through digital technology that performers were able to compensate for this absence of a living presence while continuing what was vital to them, namely, sharing their dances with the audience. But let us see if, within this seemingly non-living digital technology, there might, after all, exist a hint of the living.

Screens as Quasi-Subjects

It is no coincidence that the word 'live' stands for 'live internet broadcasting,' which refers to live streaming on the internet that emerged around the 2010s. The word 'live' emphasizes a new form of online communication where, using a webcam and a microphone (portable or not), one can become a creator of their own content, akin to a personal television channel. Therefore, *#DanseAvecLesMots* is a video stream where a human subject interacts in real-time with an audience. Here, the digital screen itself is not just a passive object but an active, even *living*, device.

Philosopher Mauro Carbone (2016) defines screens as 'quasi-subjects.' In his book *Philosophy-Screens, from Cinema to the Digital Revolution*, he begins his reflection by tracing the history of screens, which, in his view, existed long before the technical sense of the term. For Carbone, screens have existed 'forever,' specifically since humans projected their shadows onto their surroundings. By echoing Plato's description of shadows as a first image, Carbone posits that in this case, the human body can be considered a proto-screen. When discussing cinematic and multimedia screens in particular, he draws from Mikel Dufrenne's (1953/2011) ideas to claim that screens are 'quasi-subjects.' Screens, as part of aesthetic artifacts, are capable of their own expressions and actions. They have always influenced the human subjects who use them. For Carbone (2016), screens are alluring because they 'both divert and captivate,' hiding and revealing while provoking in viewers an experience that is perceptual, affective, and somatic at once (p. 74). Between the screen and the viewer, there exists a symbiotic relationship, where a sensory object and a perceiving subject come together to form, as Dufrenne said, an 'indiscernible' whole (Dufrenne 2011: 425, cited in Carbone 2016: 132). Through this interdependent relationship between subject and object, 'the aesthetic object will then reveal itself to be endowed with its own world, with its own particular sensory and affective

structure' (Carbone 2011: 132). This is where the technical screen and the human subject, the technical object, and the living body merge, forming, as Carbone (2011) says citing philosopher Gilbert Simondon, a 'coupling' (Simondon 1958/2012, cited in Carbone: 167).

Simondon always advocated for a reconciliation between the world of craftsmanship and the world of ideas in a technology that, for him, not only belongs to humans but also makes humans. It is through and thanks to our technical acts that humans evolve and become what distinguishes them from other animals. Technical objects are not just tools that humans use; they are organs through which we perceive the world. The particularity of these technical organs is that they are both supports and hindrances since, even as they enhance our capacity to act, they also condition that capacity through their enhancement. Thus, as Carbone (2011) posits, they are prostheses—portable and detachable technical extensions that allow us to 'amplify and even alter human possibilities for perceiving (understood as inseparable from moving), experiencing emotions, knowing, and acting' (p. 152). Technical prostheses amplify our relationship with the world while modifying it.

Synesthetic communication

Now, let us see how the screen of *#DanseAvecLesMots* puts people in communication while reconfiguring that communication. Analogous to a screen that extends but also transforms our perceptions, the digital screen of *#DanseAvecLesMots* is a prosthesis that enables the interactive performer in the live stream (whom I will now refer to as the inter@ctor) to both extend and alter the performativity of their dialogue with the audience. Indeed, if I compare what happens between two people in an *in vivo* dialogue (like for example in the *in vivo* performance *Diaphoner*, described above) with what happens in a *#DanseAvecLesMots* dialogue, they are very different. In *in vivo* dialogic communication, the different communicative gestures of each interlocutor are organized into a unity: words, voice, intonation, facial expression, and body movements are all associated within a monist communicative structure. However, during a live broadcast of *#DanseAvecLesMots*, the inter@ctor cannot see or hear the viewer (whom I will now call the spect@tor). Thus, the inter@ctor only perceives the words written by their interlocutor. One could say that the *#DanseAvecLesMots* setup significantly alters the usual dialogic communication by emphasizing its semantic dimension while removing its somatic aspect. Conversely, from the perspective of the spect@tor, the perception of the interlocutor is enhanced because the inter@ctor not only speaks but also dances simultaneously.

The spect@tor, however, can neither be seen nor heard; they can only write their words. What's interesting here is that, by writing these words, the
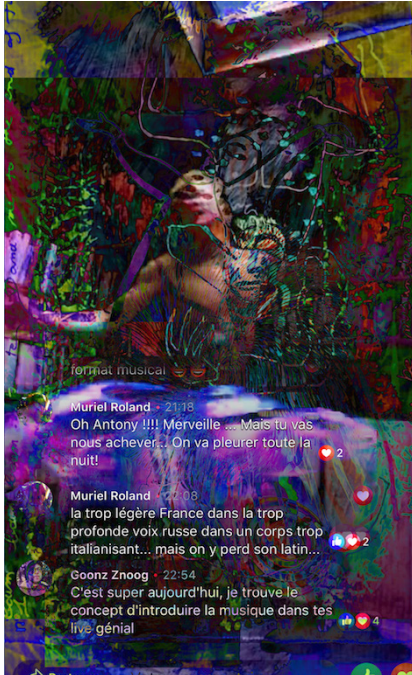
Figure 3. Anatoli Vlassov, *#DanseAvecLesMots*, 2020. © Anatoli Vlassov, all rights reserved, used with permission.

spect@tor touches the touchscreen or keyboard of the computer. It is as if the spect@tor is speaking through touch. If Antonin Artaud (1938/1985) invites us in his book *The Theater and Its Double* to 'break language to touch life' (p. 7), here it is about entering the screen with language in order to touch life. This synesthetic aspect of the exchange between the sensory and the intelligible, and vice versa, aligns with the goal of phonesia to free logo-somatic automatisms, generating what I call *Sens-Ations*—events on the scale of an individual speaking body where meaning transforms into sensation and vice versa (Vlassov 2021). In other words, phonesia rearticulates correspondences between words and gestures and provokes transmutations between semantics and somatics. Thus, within the framework of *#DanseAvecLesMots* the spect@tor and the inter@ctor 'touch' each other thanks to the screen in a relationship which transmutes the carnal into language.

Screen @live

It is through the screen's synesthetic aspect that, in *#DanseAvecLesMots*, it comes to life. This happens because, through its prosthetic function that both enables and restricts communication, it reorganizes and restructures the sensory-semiotic way its user engages with the world. As this transformation is made possible through the internet, I would like to refer to this interactive digital screen of *#DanseAvecLesMots* as the 'screen @live'—'@live' replacing 'alive' to emphasize the technical aspect of the connection between

individuals. The '@' symbol is used in email addresses to connect a user to a domain. By replacing the letter 'a' with '@' in this context, I underline the link that connects the protagonists of *#DanseAvecLesMots*. This concept aligns with what Bernard Stiegler refers to as 'exo-somatization' (Adrien Payet 2016/2020), drawing on the terminology of American mathematician and statistician Alfred Lotka. It represents a process wherein the coupling between humans and technology evolves in a dual movement of disintegration and reintegration. In other words, screens, which can be considered prostheses or, as Stiegler terms them, exo-somatic organs, both degrade and enhance human beings. To think and engage with this paradoxical dynamic is essential if we want to shape our lives in relation to screens constructively, aiming to minimize their tendency to introduce separation into our existence. In this sense, *#DanseAvecLesMots*, with its screen @live aspect, facilitates this regenerative circulation of the relationship between humans and their technology.

Connective Art

#DanseAvecLesMots has successfully leveraged the live streaming technological setup, particularly the interactivity it allows. Through live streaming, dialogues have been established within the project on various levels: within the speaking dancer himself, between his words and gestures; between the speaking dancer and the spectators through words exchanged via the live streaming instant messaging; among different spectators (comments on each performance) through the same instant messaging. This multiplicity of dialogues implies a dense circulation of statements and expressions, along with attentive listening and responsive viewing. This active receptivity has not only encouraged spectators to watch but also to write, comment, and ultimately perform their own artistic uniqueness, a phenomenon I have previously defined as 'connective art' (Vlassov 2023a): 'art' because this project has generated creations that are both aesthetic and ethical responses to the challenges of a given context (the COVID-19 lockdown), and 'connective' because it has fostered a collective in a cyberspace where various connected individuals have generated a flow of creative gestures, thereby giving rise to a new form of collective creation.

It is through this active and attentive connectivity that the aesthetic aspect of *#DanseAvecLesMots* is complemented by its liberating aspect. Whether in the realm of creation or within a healthcare context, we all need to be listened to and heard. In an article I wrote about my collaborations with autistic performers, I approach the notion of care not as medicalized support (which is inherently unequal) but as 'sensitive attention given to differences' (Vlassov 2019). Although we are not in an autistic context here (there is only one letter of difference between the words 'autistic' and 'artistic'), uniqueness is paramount in artistic creation. The dialogic environment of *#DanseAvecLesMots* has, therefore, created a conducive

milieu for both creation and creative freedom in a time of crisis. In this sense, whereas screens connect us while also creating a distance, and the COVID-19 pandemic amplifies the need for relationships, *#DanseAvecLesMots* has addressed this dual aesthetic and liberating challenge by establishing not just a polyphony but a genuine ecosystem of creative relationships, a dense network of artistic singularities for new ways of being together.

Conclusion

To conclude, the concept of logo-somatic freedom, expressed at the outset through the formula 'Phonesic Freedom = Desynchronization of Logo-Somatic Automatisms + Montage of Spoken Words and Performed Gestures through Free Will + Poetic Conscientization of New Logo-Somatic Artifacts,' appears in a thread that connects the three artworks we have explored: *Chairs Mots*, *Diaphoner*, and *#DanseAvecLesMots*. These pieces of art provide fertile ground for examining how this formula manifests uniquely while demonstrating that the encounter with the 'other livings' is an essential element in nurturing this freedom.

In *Chairs Mots*, the desynchronization of logo-somatic automatisms is embodied in composing where words become flesh. This desynchronization reveals a *corpArléité* that comes to life through the poetic encounter between language and body. The work transcends conventional boundaries between word and gesture, unveiling a new form of expression where speech resonates together with dance. The poetic conscientization of the resulting new logo-somatic artifacts opens unexplored expressive horizons, thereby liberating unsuspected poetic potential. Here, decolonization occurred at an individual level, within the scope of my personal individuation. By practicing phonesia in interaction with the audience, I could decolonize myself from the logo-somatic habits I possess. Deconstructing and instantly recomposing these structurally bound arrangements of my body and language allowed me to make choices in how I compose my new phonesic reality.

In *Diaphoner*, the concept of logo-somatic freedom is explored in the context of a participatory performance where it is the spectators who make the experience. Here, the desynchronization of logo-somatic automatisms is staged through the encounter of three forms of life: language, dance, and humans. This desynchronization becomes a crossroads where the transmutation between words and gestures of multiple people takes place, liberating the individual from their anthropocentric stance. By composing *corpArléité* together this time, the spectators become mediators of a new form of expression where multiple forms of life coexist in mutual reciprocity. This collective experience reflects the convergence of living alterities, illustrating how logo-somatic freedom can be shared and lived together. In this sense, I observed how the way I communicate with another human is decolonized. I experienced the possibility of an alternate form of communication and genuine encounters with others, communicating in a

new mode beyond conventional languages.

In *#DanseAvecLesMots*, logo-somatic freedom takes on an innovative and dynamic form thanks to digital technology. The project becomes a @live screen where the desynchronization of logo-somatic automatisms occurs between the streaming performer inte@ctor and online spect@tors. The synesthetic interactions between spoken dance and live-written words reveal how technology can both alter and amplify communication among participants. The @live screen becomes an organ of expression that brings individuals together from a distance, creating a connective ecosystem where singular creativity is supported by others. In this context, decolonization of the usual ways of collective action took place. From a distance but nevertheless together, we managed to bring forth an entire creative process and create a work which was unforeseen from the start. Moreover, as a live performance artist, I was able to decolonize the usual ways of forming my own audience. While I generally use conventional networks of festivals and theaters to present my pieces, here I was able to build my own audience by bypassing traditional dissemination venues.

Finally, logo-somatic freedom transcends classical boundaries between language and body, between artist and audience, and between human and technology. It flourishes uniquely in each work, but they all share an essential element: the recognition of 'other livings' as catalysts for this freedom. Whether through spoken dance, participative performance, or connective art, these works illustrate how the encounter with 'other livings' nurtures and enriches logo-somatic freedom, thus paving the way for new artistic expressions and new ways of being together in the contemporary world. It is in this encounter with 'other livings' that this freedom finds its breath, renews itself, and evolves, shaping the future of artistic expression—the living.

1. *Chairs Mots* was performed in Paris at the International Scientific Colloquium on Pragmatism 'Performing Lives' (2015); at the CUTLOG Contemporary Art Fair; and for *Jeune Création* at Thaddaeus Ropac Gallery in Pantin. You can view a trailer online at vimeo.com/161065776.

2. *Diaphoner* premiered in 2020 at the International Performers Meeting at the Sopot State Art Gallery, Sopot, Poland.

3. *#DanseAvecLesMots* consisted of 51 live streams on Facebook during the first COVID-19 lockdown in 2020. They are archived on my Youtube channel at youtube.com/playlist?list=PLThg4vEdi_iT0MettGxA_iq6qOxdDmQcn.

4. In art, poïetics refers to the study of the creative processes and the relationship between the author and the work of art. The term 'poïetic' emphasizes the act of creation and the transformative nature of artistic expression. In 1937, Paul Valéry discussed poïetics in his first lecture of the course on poetics at the Collège de France. René Passeron (1977) also explored poïetics as a specific science of art in his work 'La poïétique comme science spécifique de l'art.'

5. The idea of considering language as a form of life is not new. Charles Darwin himself drew

an intriguing parallel between the evolution of species and that of languages. In his work 'The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex,' he noted that 'languages, like organic beings, can be classed in groups subordinate to groups; and they can be classed naturally according to their affinities, or artificially by other characters' (Darwin 1891: 96). Indeed, one can observe that languages evolve over time and across territories, interact with each other through different cultures, and sometimes even die out, overshadowed by dominant languages.

6. I have already offered some speculative suggestions on these ideas in an article written in a collaborative duet with a Ukrainian psychoanalyst: see Reshe and Vlassov 2022.

7. www.facebook.com/anatoli.vlassov

8. For example, one of these individuals, named Muriel Roland, who lives in France, generates a substantial number of poetic texts that she posts in the chat while other spectators communicate with me solely through their words. Another person, Na Jak, residing in Switzerland, draws in front of her computer screen where my live performance is being broadcast. Her drawing improvises simultaneously with and is based on my phonesia, as well as in relation to words and texts posted in the chat. A third person, Miklos Legrady, who lives in Canada, captures screenshots of my live performances and creates a kind of graphic collage performance. Two different composers, Dmitri Kourliandski, lived in Russia and now in Paris, and Auguste Dard, residing in France, remix the sound of my live performances into musical compositions. Kourliandski transforms the sound of my live performances by manipulating various parameters (temporal, spatial, pitch, volume), while Dard combines my vocalizations with prerecorded voices of individuals engaged in sexual activity. Finally, another person, Josef Ka, who lives in Finland, remixes not only the sounds but also the video images of my live performances, incorporating them into her own video creations that she subsequently shares on Facebook. She eventually conducts her own live performance simultaneously with mine, projecting my performance onto the wall as a backdrop for her own performance. In this way, she interacts live with my phonesia while also being in a performative broadcast on her personal account.

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Author's bio

Anatoli Vlassov is a talking dancer, choreographer, videographer, and holds a PhD in creation-research from the University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. He is the inventor of the performative technique phonesia, which enables the simultaneous articulation of dance and speech. From 2003 to 2013, he created choreographies with street cleaners in France, Canada, and Bolivia, as well as with people with autism in France, Russia, and Brazil. He also danced with a wireless endoscopic camera in France, Russia, and Austria. Since 2013, his speaking dance choreography creations, whether solo, trio, septet, or nonet, have been featured in numerous dance and film festivals worldwide. He is frequently invited by national and international universities for lectures and teaching engagements. Additionally, he engages in scientific editorial work published in French and English in academic journals worldwide. Vlassov has authored and published the manifestos *Manifeste tenser* (Jannink, 2015) and 'Manifeste de la Phonésie' (*Recherches en danse* no. 12, 2023). His PhD thesis, which explores the invention of phonesia as a form of speaking dance, is currently under consideration for publication in 2024 in Les presses du réel's Gestures collection. Furthermore, in 2024, his work on the invention of organological cinema is forthcoming from Editions Harmattan, in the Champs Visuel collection, and his work on the invention of connecting art is forthcoming from Editions Jannink.

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