

# Typography, calligraphy, dance

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*What of the hands? We plead, we promise,  
call, dismiss, threaten, pray, entreat,  
deny, refuse, question, admire, count,  
confess, repent, fear, show shame,  
doubt, instruct, command, incite, encourage,  
swear oaths, bear witness, accuse, condemn, absolve,  
insult, despise, defy, annoy, flatter, applaud, bless,  
humiliate, mock, reconcile, recommend,  
exalt, celebrate, rejoice, complain,  
grieve, mope, despair, express astonishment, exclaim,  
keep silent –and what do we not do?– with a variety and multiplicity  
that rivals language*

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE, *L'Apologie de Raymond Sebond*, 1588

Montaigne goes on to ask: What does our head do? And he replies with an equally long list of actions; what of the eyebrows? what of the shoulders? “In us there is no movement that does not speak a language [...] alphabets of the fingers, and the grammar of gestures...”<sup>1</sup>. We could continue with the symptoms of an entire anatomy: syntax of trembling, dictionary of gazes, adjectives of desire... to reveal a lexis that illustrates the experience and the diversity of the minimal<sup>2</sup>. But Michel de Montaigne, at the end of the 16th century, has already located the core of the argument that we want to analyse in this document: the body speaks. It always speaks: when it enjoys, we hear its moans; when it shudders, we hear its cries; when it reasons, we listen to its utterances. It always speaks, the body is a box of noises and of language open to the world, at the centre of meaning, at the centre of the immaterial made flesh. Henri Michaux asked himself: centre of what; absence of what? The body is a paradoxical mechanism etched with language, but it also knows how to be silent, make itself material or dissolve into the air. But I should now like to dwell upon a particular or more specific aspect of body language: when the body wears a text engraved on its skin, when the text is written with the typography of the limbs, when it is drawn within a space beyond its frontiers, it is only then, perhaps, that the poetry of organism and language comes into being.

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1 Michel de Montaigne, *Essays*, Book II, chap. XII, in [http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras/01372719700248615644802/p0000004.htm#I\\_76\\_](http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras/01372719700248615644802/p0000004.htm#I_76_)

A version of the first French edition is to be found at <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5781116d.r=montaigne.langFR>

2 See Thierry Davila, *De L'inframince. Brève histoire de l'imperceptible de Marcel Duchamp à nos jours*, Éditions du Regard, Paris, 2010, especially pp. 32-41.

## The remains, the hollow

But let us start a bit before that, when bodies are still dumb, inscribed within history. *Remains* are what are left after an operation that has been duly completed, that has reached its end: the surplus part. They have participated at the beginning of the project, but their development and conclusion have made them unexpectedly useless. The *hollow*, on the other hand, constitutes the unfulfilled part of an unfinished project: the fraction that takes part at the start of the project, but its development and lack of conclusion have made it disappear, they have led it into the shadow, practically invisible, non-existent. In the re-evaluation of modern art, the idea of *remains* has been enormously successful; the notion of once more resituating them within the interior of the project, conjuring up the accursed share to reconstruct a more accurate history —and more just, if any glimmer of justice in history is possible— of the evolution of the modern, especially of the avant-gardes of the first half of the 20th century. Against the radiant building of the vanguards that progress and drag us along in their forward march —Picasso, Matisse, Mondrian, Malévich— the missionaries of the excluded would seek out the personages and events that had remained as *residue* from the combustion of that triumphant machine: attention turns towards Odilon Redon instead of Gustave Moreau, Thayaht instead of Marinetti, Desnos rather than Breton, Mina Loy rather than Gertrude Stein, *shades* of artists against the light of genius and, crowning the list, Georges Bataille, author of *La part maudite* (*The accursed share*) and his shapeless cartographies, as opposed to Alfred H. Barr, the entrepreneur-director of the MOMA who drew a meticulous map to chart a course through the modern and published it on the cover of the catalogue for an exhibition so that no-one would get lost wandering amongst residue that led nowhere<sup>3</sup>.

But, also where a re-evaluation of modern art is concerned, the approach to the *hollow* is less loaded with controversy, because it does not deal with the damned but with simple phantoms, with works that are gaping with holes and did not reach their end, with artists who disappeared, cycles of creative thought that could not unfold for different reasons, interruptions or catastrophic collapses. Collaboration between artists in a sense of utopia but, above all, of art heading for the future, art and aspirations that history would take care to flatly deny. Dramatic examples of interruption can be found in Schlemmer's theatre project in the Bauhaus, or in the Czech *Poetism* of the 1920s, particularly embodied in the Devět-sil group of writers and artists. Vindications of remains are presented as alternatives, either this or that; sometimes with a desire to harmonise them within a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts, but in most cases from a clear determination to exclude and a certain hankering for revenge. Vindications of the hollow, meanwhile, due to their very nature, are of a constructive kind, critical bricklaying with a will to fill vacuums and, in more than a few instances, with a spirit of restoration. The remains tend to point to the sins of the avant-garde, its manoeuvres and its betrayals, while the hollow aims for

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3 Alfred H. Barr, Jr., *Cubism and Abstract Art*, New York, Museum of Modern Art, 1936.

rehabilitation. The aesthetic of the remains derives enjoyment from showing the fractures; that of the hollow, from restoring them. Laura Riding writes: “There is something to be told about us for the telling of which we all wait [...] We know we are explainable, and not explained. Many of the lesser things concerning us have been told but the greater things have not been told [...]. Until the missing story of ourselves is told, nothing besides told can suffice us”<sup>4</sup>.

## Joyful books

The interdisciplinary collaboration between writer Vítězslav Nezval, artist and designer Karel Teige and dancer and choreographer Milča Mayerová, who produced *Abeceda*, one of the exemplary achievements of the Czech and European avant-garde from the inter-war period, already had a large tradition, especially in the East of Europe, where the Russian futurists had developed this kind of collaboration, giving rise to remarkable books. In prerevolutionary Russia, the Cubist-Futurist faction, the most active and stormy group on the scene, stood out for its work on a new kind of book. This was basically due to a creative confluence between poetry and visual arts in which there was a profound questioning of established norms in these two fields and where for artists and writers collaboration acted as a catalyst that gave impetus to new and unprecedented forms of expression. Moreover, many of its components, including the brothers David and Nikolai Burliuk, Vladimir Maiakovski, Pavel Filonov and Velimir Khlebnikov combined poetic work with painting and graphics, while a substantial number of plastic artists made more or less deep inroads within the sphere of writing. But the circularity between poetry and photography, between painting and the theatre, between typography and collage, between design and book binding, the close collaboration between each of these disciplines was certainly extraordinarily fertile and produced, between 1910 and 1920, some of the most outstanding examples of collective work from the joint involvement of artists and their desires for change, but also through the combination of their words, their forms and their noises. They demonstrated thereby that collaboration between artists and its eventual crystallisation into a *total artwork* did not necessarily culminate in operatic grandeur, as Wagner had anticipated, and also that books —humble objects for private use, speechless and motionless— had the power, through the application of expressive techniques of intensification, to evoke from the reader-spectator a whole range of synesthetic deviations: text, image, body; poetry, photography, dance, all turning up for their appointment on the stage of the white page. A few years previously, though many kilometres away, Mallarmé had written that everything in the world exists so as to finish up in a book, the universal container of intelligence and creativity. Between these kinds of starting ideas and the practice of collaboration between artists, the fertile and novel terrain of the art

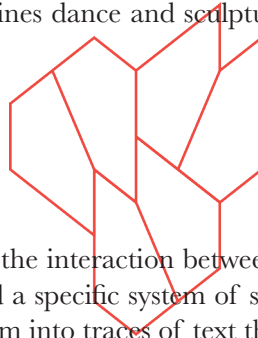
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<sup>4</sup> Laura Riding, *The Telling*, Harper and Row, Nueva York, 1972, pág. 9, citado en Javier Chavarria, “El cuerpo fragmentado. Definición de un sujeto plural en las prácticas artísticas del siglo XX”, en *Versiones*, núm. 1, Universidad Europea de Madrid, 2007, pág. 43.

book began to take shape. To get the right perspective when analysing the formal poetic precision with which these artists in the Czech avant-garde went about this interdisciplinary collaboration, the poetic material they were working with must be taken into consideration: a playful unbounded optimistic text, confident of the unstoppable power of the future, of the superiority of the body, pleasure and joy over the troubled aromas of melancholy, trusting in the erotic functionality of the modern against the funeral drive of tradition. With the ingenuousness and daring of the explorer, the Czech poets' group penetrated the dusty conventions of contemporary bibliographic tradition like a violent gust of wind set to clean up the atmosphere. Rather than being intelligent or deep, books should be joyful and exact.

And many years later, displaying a capacity for translation, for transversality, not only between disciplines but also from within history itself, Mabi Revuelta has turned the primitive Czech creation *Abeceda* into a homonymous piece of ballet or, to be more precise, into a piece that, revisiting some features of Schlemmer's dance in the Bauhaus —reflected as a citation-cum-tribute in Ballet Triádico / Triadic Ballet, the subtitle of his piece— combines dance and sculpture, body and story, human material and manipulation of scenic objects.

### The body as a language factory



What is set in play in *Abeceda* is the interaction between body and language and, more concretely, between written representation and a specific system of signs that associate the body with writing, turning members of the human organism into traces of text that write the world with their alphabet of flesh. *Abeceda* is an indicator of the possibilities of the organism and of language when they decide to work in parallel: a body that talks, a physical system that writes, a language of “flesh and blood”, just as Oskar Schlemmer wanted for his “Art Figures”.

The body constitutes the language medium, its limbs are the foundations of a dynamic alphabet: at rest it stays dumb, in the dark silence of dream or in the stillness of reverie, but in a state of wakefulness, in broad daylight, it is a permanent source of noise, from the murmur of the minimal gestures of intimacy to the deafening roar of public acrobatic<sup>5</sup>. When this semiotic system kicks in it is capable of

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5 We have to distinguish the body that *produces* language, the body of the dancer or of mime and corporeal expression, from the body that *supports* language, like the T-shirts bearing political demands that made their appearance back in the 1960s and were later assimilated by the fashion industry. The printed T-shirt is the most consummate example of a talking body within the contemporary scene. A memorable precedent was also set in the Bauhaus: the couple formed by Hajo and Katia Rose, designers who worked in the Bauhaus within the field of textile design, introducing the striking innovation of a typewriter for inscribing language on the body in the shape of decorative patterns... See Anja Baumhoff, “El taller de tejidos”, in Jeannine Fiedler and Meter Feierabend (eds.), *Bauhaus*, Könemann, Cologne, 1999, pp. 466-477.

expressing words, syntagmata, phrases, tales, and their enunciation —directed not by the vocal chords but by the limbs, the torso, the feet, the whole body— may produce subtle nuances of pronunciation, of intonation, of insinuation. And different languages, specific intonations, dialects produced by different skin colours, eyes, builds. When the dancer really succeeds in becoming a typographical machine, transforming her figure into text production, she liberates herself from the angst of ego to penetrate the objectivity of the physical world. *Abeceda* manages to enunciate words never pronounced, unwritten texts, fables, myths, fragments of a discourse that can only be expressed with the grammar of arms and legs, gazes and gestures. The dance freezes time within an eternal instant, and from this figure arises the discourse of the corporeal word. The choreographer’s work consists of rooting around in this “archive of gestures” and placing it once more in action upon the stage.

The identification between different parts of the body and the constituent elements of the alphabet is as old as the calendar and perhaps as numbering itself, and forms part of the general relation between the body and the world’s big spaces, between the micro- and the macrocosm which, in traditional symbolic thought, were related in their totality and in their constituent parts. It is known that the origin of all numbering systems, and not just the base 10 system which is most used today, lies in the hands: from one to five with the fingers of one hand, and from six to ten with those of the other. And the identification of fingers with letters, words, musical notes, concepts or symbols is practically universal. In cabalistic illustrations from the 16th and 17th centuries, words are formed —they are pronounced, although it be in secret or, at least, discretely— by joining or separating certain fingers, bending them, combining them within a system of postures that turn the hand into a second throat: a digital language with equal doses of the secret and of the initiatic and whose implications in ritual, symbolic and liturgical dance are of extreme importance<sup>6</sup>. In *Abeceda*, Nezval himself describes the letter M, representing the lines of the hand as the “clear star of chiromancy”. But also, when silence falls, the body language gently kicks in to ensure the transmission of immobility: in meditation or in Masonic societies, in dumb forms of theatre such as ballet or mime and, naturally, in the sign language of the deaf<sup>7</sup>.

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6 See Jennifer Blessing, “Fotofilia”, in *Hablando con las manos*, exhibition catalogue in the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, November 2005, February 2006, p. 40.

7 Just four years after the appearance of *Abeceda*, the Belgian artist and writer E.L.T. Mesens began to write his extraordinary *Alphabet sourd-aveugle*, published in Brussels in 1933; short poems, one for each letter of the alphabet, in which all the verses begin with that letter. Mesens speaks in this book of “tangential theatre” and the prologuist, Paul Eluard, urges the reader to “Pause a little before assembling the letters... forget the reading, the writing and the spelling and even the sensational hesitancy of the stammerer”. The book and the preface can be found at:

<http://homepage.mac.com/emmapeel/mesens/intro.html>

## Dislocated bodies, erasures

*Abeceda*, in its typographical-corporeal integrity, lies at the antipodes of Hans Bellmer's *Poupée*, the obsessive doll that the German artist designed to provoke and satisfy male fantasies that a real woman might not agree to; the doll that Salvador Dalí theorised as a “detachable woman”, an organism that parts of the body are added to or eliminated from and which correspond to specific erotic dramatisations. It is true that Hans Bellmer's *Poupée*, with its articulated interchangeable limbs, forms something resembling a combinatorial alphabet, but it is the inert writing of a marionette, capable only of saying what its master and lord wishes, which is always a discourse of sexual contortion that we can only imagine as pronounced from the *lieu clos*, from Sade's tunnel; this contrasts sharply with the corporeal alphabet devised by Nezval, Teige and Mayerová: diurnal, gymnastic, optimistic and, especially, multi-expressive, with the ability to pronounce the entire broad range of human desires. If the body of *Abeceda* seeks its expression in the geometric clarity of the open air, in the hygiene of significance, Bellmer's dislocated body would correspond to an erasure, an inkblot that places language in the darkness of the cave.

As characteristic “symbolic working objects”, Bellmer's or Dalí's dolls are not so much objects of desire as mechanisms for producing it. At the other end of the scale, *Abeceda's* doll-dancer is a producer of language and of meaning; it is not oriented towards onanistic fantasies, but towards the construction of a new symbolic order supported by the interactive mechanisms of language: its eventual erotic appearance is, at any rate, a collateral effect. *Abeceda* shows the body, exposes it to the inclemency of interpretations and, among them, there also arises an erotic dimension, a carnal text that brings language close to the caress, text close to touch. Roland Barthes, although he was specifically referring to photographed text, expressed it with matchless poetic exactitude in his *Cámara lúcida (Lucid Camera)*: “A sort of umbilical cord links the body of the photographed thing to my gaze: light, though impalpable, is here a carnal medium, a skin I share with anyone who has been photographe”<sup>8</sup>. Looking now at the new series of static poses that Mabi Revuelta has made from her corporeal alphabet, photographs of extreme concision, black of the body on white background, like a printed text, I have a powerful sensation of the close touch of the umbilical cord intuited by Barthes.

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8 Roland Barthes, *La cámara lúcida. Nota sobre la fotografía*, Gustavo Gili, Barcelona, 1982, pág 136.

## Text excavation project<sup>9</sup>

Although the *Abeceda* project as such was finished and published in Prague in 1926, there is a core of the spirit that inspired and set it in motion that could not reach its conclusion due to the unfavourable historical conditions in which it had to unfold. When its testimonies of risk and beauty should have flowered and its fruits become ripe to feed the imaginary of another generation, the general slaughter began and there were no longer any flowers or fruits, just heaps of bone and blood. Here, in this lack, is where Mabi Revuelta's work of recovery finds its own voice, which is particularly in evidence in the process of stage dramatisation that the original project has experienced at the hands of the artist, from the first *mise-en scène* of the alphabet with skeletons —the body's "depictive" core— to the plenitude of flesh and skin on the stage of the Teatro Arriaga in Bilbao. In this representation, the beginning of Paul Hindemith's *Sonata for oboe and piano*, with its atonal harmony, suggests an original inarticulate noise, prior to language, a sonorous intuition that, after a process of formalisation, will give rise to the alphabet. In the book published in 1926, the photographs of Milča Mayerová's poses that corresponded to each letter of the alphabet were unable to enunciate a complete text and referred only to the foundation of its minimum: the letter, isolated type, the inarticulate murmur, just spelling, child's babble in which nonetheless the promise of an adult language was to be found. Only in the production of the new *Abeceda*, through discourse over time, in the material reconstruction of history, is it possible to remake the fluidity of the spoken language, the miraculous elasticity of the talking body. Because it is precisely text, linked to dance, that produces the wonder of the transformation of the prosaic body of the ordinary, the body of the rhythm of work, into poetic body, an organism of ludic and lucid rhythm.

The same density is not demanded when an artist works on oeuvres from the past that managed to reach their culminating point —take, for instance, Henri Matisse's decorative project or Jackson Pollock's drip paintings— as when the undertaking is to update projects that in one sense or another hung suspended, partial or unfinished, as shoots that the political climatology did not let flower. The first of these cases is a kind of plundering, with more or less sense of meaning and opportunity, greater or lesser doses of erudition, of homage or of ironic attitude, but it tends in general to conclude with a favourable balance for the citing artist, who gets more from the past than what s/he is offering. But in the second case, which is the category I think Mabi Revuelta's project falls into, it seems clear that the balance of debts and assets is inverted and the work stands within the equilibrium of a negotiation between homage and the conclusion of an unfinished past: a closing operation and, to a fair degree, an exercise of poetic justice, of compensating history. In this regard, *Abeceda* is an operation upon uncompleted art and also, therefore, around time as predator, in an attempt to define its margins, draw its surface and assess the wear and tear as it erodes reality and, through this action in the present, to question this attrition, reconstruct the particles that became detached from this erosion.

<sup>9</sup> The title of this paragraph was inspired by the series *Progetti di restauro testuale* executed by Juan Luis Moraza in 1992, in which images of virgins and saints from classical painting crossed paths with the iconography of war and pornography in an attempt to resituate the images and their meaning within a return journey.

## Body archives

When gesture produces text, body movements at once disappear into the air of the moment. That is why we need some kind of notation, mechanisms of documentation capable of setting them in time, of inscribing them in a register: a body archive that classifies the documents of what only existed in the dimension of the instant: an imperceptible turn of the ankle, inflection of a knee, a shoulder raised. The language of the dancer forms phrases in the air, but once this has been captured within this archive of gesture, time will not carry them away. Leaps as accents, raised arms as exclamations, turns of the waist as question marks... when in the end the body is quiet and the movement stops, a dust of words still remains, floating in the atmosphere. And, in this sense, *Abeceda* is not just a register, but a translation: not into another language, because it still stays within a plastic space of form and colour, but into another time sphere. A translation between history, memory and invention. And this translation — a strange foreign text that is made legible and familiar for us — puts to the test the hypothesis of the legibility of the body, its capacity for conversion, for emitting statements that are legible over time and repertoires of gestuality specific to each culture. All that is needed is a good translator, loyal to the spirit of the text, of its poetics, but traitorous to its appearance, to its concrete forms. This translation/betrayal signifies the possibility of continuing to enunciate its text against the barrier of time, against the barrier of languages, against the barrier of subjective expression and, finally, against the barrier of disappearance imposed by oblivion.

Through the re-evaluation of an avant-garde experiment, Mabi Revuelta has set out to get close to the echo of the bodies that spoke, making them resound once more, strike up conversations, dialogues of arms and legs, texts of flesh and bone rescued from a darkened tunnel. We use the expression “body language” in a general sense of the semiotics of gesture and of movement, but what *Abeceda* proposes is to make it speak *literally*, letter by letter, trace by trace, signs of interrogation, parenthesis and ellipsis included, in a form of calligraphic and poetic transcription onto the body of the dancers, a literality that surprises and may even in some cases arouse mistrust: the body talks, but not necessarily like the vertical shaft of a P or the horizontal bar of a T. Mistrust of the enunciative literality of the body, in spite of the highly elaborate codifications to which it has been subjected since time immemorial. Mistrust because perhaps we only admit that the body insinuates or suggests, or even, on another plane of sexual order, seduces, but do not accept that it speaks openly — loud and clear — although its message be of a metaphorical nature. And nevertheless, the other way around, language never ceases to refer to the body and its parts in common expressions, but how could this not be so, since speaking itself is generated within the body and even, as Tristan Tzara wrote, “thought is produced in the mouth”. The expressions are many and run through all the languages of the world: to put one’s foot in it, be tight-arsed, be up to your neck in work, wear your heart on your sleeve or poke your nose in... the whole body is *spoken* by language as a short cut or a concentrate of day-to-day expressions, of defects and virtues, of situations and feelings that are summed up in an organ.



## To leave a trace

*To leave a trace,  
a print of the body,  
language before language,  
the language of the body*<sup>10</sup>

It might be possible to express it in a more extensive or detailed fashion, but not with greater precision: in these four lines of text by Anthony Gormley the destinies of the traveller, the poet, the artist and the dancer converge. Eternity is assured or at least promised for them all: the traveller in the journey covered, the poet on the paper left, and the artist in images... only the dancer seems condemned to leave no trace of his step, perhaps because of the supreme aspiration, as dreamed by Heinrich Von Kleist's marionette or the pilot of Vladimir Tatlin's *Letatlin*, is not to touch the ground, but also because on stage there is no mud or grass on which to leave one's footprint. But when that trace is taken in, stored or treasured —Mabi Revuelta has done that in this piece— it leaves a perceptible sign, a mark. Electronic in this case: *Abeceda. Triadic Ballet*, a collection of vestiges that return, that refuse to disappear. Gormley's text is accompanied by two drawings, among others, that specify the capacity the body has for vocal enunciation through its physical deployment: walking, talking, crouching, whispering, raising the arms... an alphabet of arms and legs, of torso and of groin, from the head to the feet. Language before language is precisely the speech of the body, the murmur of steps, the roar of the leap into the air, when the dancer hangs suspended for ever at the highest peak of her beauty. The sequence of these two drawings shows a mythical archaeology of human culture: in the first, the figure walking in space inundates it with his identity —literally, leaving his *print*—, expands in the act of walking and transmits humanity to the world, whilst in the second, focussed on the head, maybe as a sign of a subsequent state of culture, it is the vibration of speech that creates space and identity, the print, in this case of sound.

## Abeceda Bilbao

The bodies of the women dancers evolve around a reticle formed by nine reference points that organise a space that is not homogeneous and hierarchise it as the structural grille of a typographic letter and, simultaneously, from a general perspective of the stage, as patterns of squared paper. Evidently this is where the custom of referring to the size of typographic font as “body” comes from. Both in this general

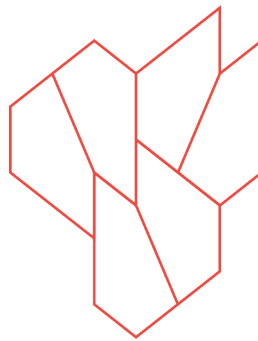
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10 “Dejar rastro, / una huella del cuerpo, / lenguaje antes del lenguaje, / el lenguaje del cuerpo”, Anthony Gormley, *Workbooks I. 1977-1992*, Centro Galego de Arte Contemporáneo, Santiago de Compostela, 2002, s.p.

view of the page-stage, and in the peculiarity of the letter-body, what is stressed is the language component of the dancers' postures and movements. Firstly from a first typographic *definition* —a posture, a figure, a form— to the trajectories taken later by the dancers throughout the function, we witness the *typography* move as formal definition, as a canon of measure and organisation, to the *calligraphy* of the bodies that connect the writing and develop the tale in parallel to that of the woman narrator, situated as a voice offstage. In second place, from the theoretical definition of the type, through a kind of general *language*, to the *speech* of the calligraphy, in which the language has become concrete narrative. The decisive point, however, does not lie in this definition, but in its development: in Bilbao, the dancers did not move on the stage to define a language, but to discover a concrete text, to give body to a particular narrative, associated with the brief poems by Nezval, but also with the modern stage directions introduced by Mabi Revuelta: a tale that dates back to the 1920s, with a certain beauty and power, but which crystallises in the present with the melancholic and disturbing version offered by this Bilbao artist. It is a melancholy that emerges both from experience of the contemporary world, and from experience accumulated during the whole of the last century, from the original *Abeceda*, placing Mabi Revuelta's interpretation within an indefinable space. Hence the recurrent appearance of the skeletons, below ground level, subterranean, along with the great white balloons, higher up, in the air. In the centre the performance, as a game, pastime or riddle —crossword— and, above all, the constitution, at the end of the event, of the stage as a real space, when the audience are invited to leave their seats in the stalls and climb on to it —transformed all of a sudden into an art gallery— to appreciate from close up the various props employed in the dance, which in this case have now become sculptures. While the body of the dancers has produced a story on the stage, the audience leaving their seats, which highlights and takes over the theatre space, form a kind of background noise, an ambient murmur within which the scenic narrative is framed. The action, which involves the stage and the stalls, does not follow the classical directionality of theatre but inverts it, also underlining the theatrical nature of the whole and making the spectator an interlocutor of the scenic narrative. When the audience go up on stage and observe the objects of performance from close to, it is as if they receive a *knock from reality* as they are suddenly expelled from the representation before returning to the streets again. It is my fancy that Mabi Revuelta has used this device as a decompression chamber of the symbolic so that, after being hit by reality in this way, the spectators find themselves in the right circumstances to be able to nurture memories of the fiction —the dancers writing on the stage— as if it had all been a dream whose intensity has made it physical.

*(...) and when I awoket  
there were scratches  
on my knees.  
And never again  
will vision be so acute  
that dreams could  
produce blood.*

Patti Smith, *Birds of Irak*, 2005<sup>11</sup>



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11 Patti Smith, *Birds of Irak*, in *Auguries of Innocence: Poems*. Ecco Press, USA, 2005.