

A Magic Identification with Forms: Philippe Grandrieux in the Night of Artaud

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Abstract

Since the 1970s up to his most recent feature film, *Malgré la nuit* (2015), French artist Philippe Grandrieux's prodigious work in cinema, video, television, installation and writing has wrestled with the tension between plasticity and narration. In this journey, Grandrieux has called upon the inspiration of Antonin Artaud. This essay retraces the path of Grandrieux's driving impulse as an artist operating in the "night of Artaud" – on what he calls the "insane horizon" of cinema suggested to him by Artaud's "delirious", savage theorising. For Grandrieux, cinema is a matter of emotional *intensities*, and these intensities create both form and content.

Résumé

Depuis les années 1970 jusqu'à son dernier long métrage, *Malgré la nuit* (2015), le prodigieux travail de l'artiste français Philippe Grandrieux dans le cinéma, la vidéo, la télévision, l'installation et l'écriture se caractérise par une tension entre plasticité et narration. Dans ce travail, Grandrieux a fait appel à l'inspiration d'Antonin Artaud. Cet essai retrace le chemin de la première impulsion de Grandrieux comme artiste opérant dans la «nuit du Artaud» à ce qu'il appelle «l'horizon insensé» du cinéma suggéré par la «théorisation sauvage» et délirante d'Artaud. Pour Grandrieux, le cinéma est une question d'intensité émotionnelle, et ces intensités créent la forme et le contenu.

keywords

Philippe Grandrieux, Antonin Artaud, plasticity, form, intensity

If we really look at the origin of every great ethical reform we find a little physiological mystery, a dissatisfaction of the flesh, an unease, an anomaly.

– André Gide, 1923 (qtd in Pinar 2009, 142)

I remember Moses and Aaron (1975) by Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet: that was a blow, an aesthetic and political shock. I still recall it today. Suddenly – cinema. And what came through bodies, fragmented bodies, legs, the extremely flat earth, the sunlight at its zenith, the brutality of the shots. All of that struck me.

– Philippe Grandrieux, 2002 (qtd in Brenez, 2003)

The spirit is moved, whatever the representation.

– Antonin Artaud, 1928 (qtd in Hammond 2000, 103)

In a very brief and largely dismissive review of Philippe Grandrieux's most recent feature film, *Malgré la nuit* (*Despite the Night*, completed late 2014 but only commercially released in France mid 2016), Florence Maillard, a regular contributor among the current *Cahiers du cinéma* team, writes:

It's difficult to take seriously – as seriously as Philippe Grandrieux himself does – these passionate, jealous loves of a handful of errant characters, wandering through fragments of the everyday riddled with ellipses, without ever once convincing us that something relatable [*partageable*] is happening here. (Maillard 2016, 61)

As is often the case in commentaries on this director's work, his skill as a *plasticien* – coming first from the world of experimental, abstract television in the late 1970s and, later, art gallery video installation – is grudgingly praised, in passing, by Maillard:

Where, however, Grandrieux does interest us, despite everything [*malgré tout*], is at a point as far as possible from these unattainable figures shouting at each other within a drama with its affected, literary excess: the drift of this fever in the proximity of bodies, faces, clinches, in the material of the image, in exacerbated sensoriality – all that adds up to an invitation to be washed over by a wave. (Maillard 2016, 61)

The final word in this reviewer's balance-sheet, however, returns to the bottom line of narrative craft: "Such reverie is momentarily allowed, but the whole remains too crudely shaped to withstand two hours and thirty minutes" (Maillard 2016, 61). Is it any wonder that – in an uncanny presentiment of the reviews, such as Maillard's, he would receive – Grandrieux mused in his shooting diary for *Malgré la nuit*:

This line opposing emotion and sensation is also the line defining the greatest force and greatest weakness of the film. These are the two extreme points, these two irreconcilable tensions, opposing plasticity and narration, through which cinema must pass. (Grandrieux 2016, 22)

In his personal struggle with the tension opposing plasticity and narration in audio-visual media, now waged over many years and many works, Grandrieux has called upon the inspiration of (among others) Antonin Artaud, especially the 1928 essay “Sorcery and Cinema” (Hammond 2000), and passages from Artaud’s collection of essays – published in 1938 – titled *The Theatre and its Double* (Artaud 1958), and the 1947 radio play *To Have Done with the Judgement of God*. In this essay, I seek to retrace the path not of the director’s career, but his driving *impulse* as an artist operating, as it were, in the “night of Artaud” – or on what he himself calls the “insane (*insensé*) horizon” of cinema suggested to him by Artaud’s “delirious”, savage theorising (Grandrieux 2000). Without wishing to make the egregious (if easily tempting) scholarly mistake of a too-literal application of, or mere illustration by, one artist (Grandrieux) in relation to the other (Artaud), it is nonetheless richly suggestive that, in a more appreciative review of *Malgré la nuit* on the website *Critikat*, Marie Gueden evokes the “astounding beauty of each shot, but a beauty that contains, as its reverse side, a terrible theatre of cruelty” (Gueden 2016).

Philippe Grandrieux occupies a paradoxical place in the landscape of contemporary cinema production; the only truly comparable figure (whose work is, nonetheless, entirely different in its configuration) is another French filmmaker who is even less well known on the world stage, François-Jacques Ossang (*Dharma Guns*, 2011). Grandrieux, like Ossang, is not easily assimilable to any specific market category which his work, nonetheless, touches upon: art cinema, minimalist cinema, extreme cinema, underground cinema. His work is highly aesthetic (with very elaborate reference to, for example, the history of painting) – and yet it is also frequently brutal, dealing with matters such as serial rape-and-murder (*Sombre*, 1998), sex trafficking in Eastern Europe (*La vie nouvelle / A New Life*, 2002), and the clandestine making of pornographic snuff movies (*Malgré la nuit*). On the level of manifest content, this is the first evident affinity between Grandrieux and Artaud:

And that is why all the great Myths are dark, so that one cannot imagine, save in an atmosphere of carnage, torture, and bloodshed, all the magnificent Fables which recount to the multitudes the first sexual division and the first carnage of essences that appeared in creation. The theatre, like the plague, is in the image of this carnage and this essential separation. It releases conflicts, disengages powers, liberates possibilities, and if these possibilities and these powers are dark, it is the fault not of the plague nor of the theatre, but of life. (Artaud 1958, 31)

By the same token, many aficionados of “extreme cinema” – especially those associated with the various Underground Film Festivals around the world – tend to consider Grandrieux difficult and esoteric in comparison to, say, Gaspar Noé (e.g. *Enter the Void*, 2009) or Nicolas Winding Refn (e.g. *The Neon Demon*, 2016). One indication of the oddness of Grandrieux’s “market position” is the fact that, while *La Vie nouvelle* became available in 2005 as a DVD bonus included in the scholarly volume *La Vie nouvelle/nouvelle vision* edited by Nicole Brenez, *Sombre* was distributed on DVD in France by a small company called Film Office in a series named “Cinéma Extrême.” Meanwhile, on British television, *Sombre* was presented (by Mark Kermode)

within a regular evening spot devoted to horror cinema, but criticised during this introduction for featuring post-punk music (by Bauhaus and Alan Vega) considered by this hyper-taste-conscious “cult film” expert as “naïf” (e.g., lame, kitsch, chosen in naïve, bad taste). Then, when the filmmaker seemingly changed gears and made *Un lac* (2008), a film almost entirely without overt or graphic sexual and violent elements, it found commercial distribution almost nowhere in the world, and is today relatively difficult to obtain in any digital format. Grandrieux’s work might thus lead us to ponder the intriguing cultural questions of what constitutes “extreme” cinema, for whom and why – and when extreme becomes too extreme (or not extreme enough) for a particular niche market to bear (see Martin 2007).¹

My concerns in this essay adhere more to the aesthetic and philosophical questions raised by Grandrieux’s work. Here again, paradox rules. Grandrieux is an erudite reader and an accomplished writer, speaker and teacher, but (as I once discovered in person) he militantly declines to read any academic analysis of his work and prefers, like many artists, to place his deepest trust in intuition and emotion. He seems, to many observers, to naturally belong to an avant-garde tradition of experimentation, yet he doggedly sticks (despite increasingly onerous problems of raising the necessary finance) to his goal of making feature-length films for cinema release featuring actors, recognisable locations (such as the Paris of *Malgré la nuit*), and story-lines that he arrives at in collaboration with a number of scriptwriting partners.²

However, once Grandrieux inhabits the terrain of narrative – or, as he prefers to call it, *narration*, meaning the visible process of conjuring a *possible* world, speculative characters, and a phantasy-ridden plot – his “radical will” (to use Susan Sontag’s term, 1970) and his artistic impulses immediately place him (as we have just seen in the case of *Cahiers du cinéma*’s dismissal) well beyond any conventional mode of storytelling “relatability” – a term often encountered today in mainstream, Hollywood industry discourse.

It is equally difficult to cleanly align Grandrieux with any of the various strands of contemporary political or “resistant” cinema, however one defines this tendency. In the second of my prefatory epigraphs, Grandrieux expresses his love for the work of the ultra-leftist team of Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet in characteristically sensory and sensual terms: “fragmented bodies, legs, the extremely flat earth, the sunlight at its zenith, the brutality of the shots” (qtd in Brenez 2003). Likewise, as much as he admires the work of Asian masters such as Hou Hsiao-hsien and Apichatpong Weerasethakul, he does not make films that, in any way, resemble theirs. In all these cases, comparison yields a clear and crucial difference in “ethical aesthetics”: their films have usually rigorously refused the shock tactics of sensory assault, or the kind of explicit content (of sex or violence) that counts for them as a vulgar, desensitising aspect of the cinema of spectacle (to adapt Guy Debord’s famous terminology). Grandrieux’s work is not anti-spectacular and thus more in the tradition of the aesthetic *monumentality* of Stanley Kubrick, Miklós Jancsó or Krzysztof Kieslowski than purified, minimalistic cinema in a post-Bressonian tradition (Sohrab Shahid Saless, Darezhan Omirbaev, Pedro Costa, etc). In fact, it would be more appropriate to describe Grandrieux’s films, in terms of their sensory impact, as *maximalist*.

Aesthetically, Grandrieux’s work evokes a swirl of very different associations from the full span of cinema history and its modes: the lyrical abstraction of Stan Brakhage, but within a (pulverised) narrative format; the

1 See also Nikolaj Lübecker’s claim that many of the films classified under the rubric of the ‘Feel-Bad Film’ have little graphic sex or violence even compared to mainstream films, *The Feel-Bad Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 11.

2 Some of these collaborators have themselves become noted novelists or filmmakers (or both): Rebecca Zlotowski, Éric Vuillard, Bertrand Schefer, and Sophie Fillières.

serene, visionary qualities of F.W. Murnau, but with a deliberately confronting portrait of human degradation; an urgent engagement with representation and narration, but aligned with an equally passionate taste for de-figuration and destruction worthy of the Lettristes of the 1940s, or the painting of Francis Bacon (see Hainge 2017);³ a plastic mastery (of colour, rhythm, texture, sound design) reminiscent of Andrei Tarkovsky, but within an approach often devoted to sensory assault, to disorientation of the spectator.

What is Grandrieux's project? For him, imbibing an orientation that we might broadly call Deleuzian, cinema is a matter of *intensities*, essentially emotional in nature. Yet, at the same time, these emotional intensities are not without form or orientation; as Gueden notes, "the aesthetic here is explicitly psychoanalytic, exploring the night-time of soul and mind" (Gueden 2016). Such intensities first of all arise from bodily sensations, which then reach deep into the churning drives and phantasms of the human psyche. This realm of sensation and psychic phantasm is given an archaic origin: the formless world of a child's first perceptions, and especially the drama of near-incestuous family-fusion with the mother or father (or even sibling) that inevitably leads to traumatic separation (latent as a theme in *Un lac*, this becomes extremely manifest in *Malgré la nuit*) – an echo of Artaud's invocation above of "the first sexual division." For Brenez, Grandrieux's cinema:

works to invest immanence, using every type of sensation, drive and affect. To make a film means descending, via the intermittent pathways of neuronal connection, down into the most shadowy depths of our sensory experiences, to the point of confronting the sheer terror of the death drive (*Sombre*), or the still more immense and bottomless terror of the unconscious, of total opacity (*La Vie nouvelle*). (Brenez 2003)

Grandrieux himself, in the same interview, speaks of his aesthetic ambition in related terms:

My dream is to create a completely "Spinoza-ist" film, built upon ethical categories: rage, joy, pride ... and essentially each of these categories would be a pure block of sensations, passing from one to the other with enormous suddenness. So the film would be a constant vibration of emotions and affects, and all that would reunite us, reinscribe us into the material in which we're formed: the perceptual material of our first years, our first moments, our childhood. Before speech. That's the impulse – the desire – which led to the film. (Brenez 2003)

Hence, the type of shocks which Grandrieux admired in *Moses and Aaron*, which can easily be related to his own vision of cinema as "a kind of vibrant, disturbed materiology" (Brenez 2003). We might see here a rehearsal, or reflection, of Deleuze's primordial division of cinema into "body" and "brain" tendencies – with John Cassavetes and Philippe Garrel in one camp and Hans Jürgen Syberberg and Harun Farocki in the other (see Deleuze 1989, 189-224); but examples such as Straub-Huillet, Chantal Akerman and indeed Grandrieux himself show that an intellectual cinema can equally be construed and experienced as a sensory one, and vice versa.

Grandrieux has become famous – notorious, to some – for his way of making films: operating the camera

³ Thanks to Greg Hainge for offering me access to a pre-published version of his book.

himself, and staying very close to the bodies of the actors, he attempts, by all possible means, to register the “vibration” of the event unfolding around him, even to the point of filming with his eyes closed, or in total darkness, and thus losing any normal photographic lens focus. He offers an extreme version of the ideal of *immersion* in cinema – both the immersion of the filmmaker in his or her material, and of the viewer in the final result. Raymond Bellour sums up the project in this complicated but accurate formulation: “the quest for sensation as lived in the immediate present of the experience of filming in improvisation” (Bellour 2016, 14). According to Bellour, Grandrieux is “driven by the hope that the film will ultimately carry in itself the trace of this experience” of filming, and the director’s own feverish declarations in his published diary extract bear this out exactly:

The film is here, in these faces, these voices [...] There’s a truth in the rushes, a terrible truth. It’s right there. That’s what has hooked onto the weight of things, the heaviness of the camera, each person’s fatigue, everyone’s agony, the fear that animates us. (Grandrieux 2016, 20)

It is inevitable that champions and critics alike of Grandrieux’s cinema will wonder, at some point, about the precise connection between his choice of graphic subject matter, and his evocation of a “cinema of childhood”, or (in relation to *Un lac* and *Malgré la nuit* especially) a “cinema of love.” The filmmaker himself is unable to give an entirely rational justification for it:

When one asks Philippe Grandrieux why his films turn so obsessively upon the sex and violence they depict, he responds with disarming gentleness: that’s just how it is, he’s unable to do anything else, and his desire to make cinema depends on such images. (Bellour 2016, 12)

Bellour’s own answer to the question recalls Artaud’s comment cited above that “if these possibilities and these powers are dark, it is the fault ... of life” (Artaud 1958, 31). For Bellour, *Malgré la nuit*, pushing the implicit principles underlying Grandrieux’s cinema still further, “would thus be an attempt to bring into an obscure light, despite the night, images that would be images of childhood” (Bellour 2016, 12). The “night”, in this formulation, is the fog of the social, of widespread exploitation, pornography, sexual abuse: we have to tunnel back, violently, tear away all the thoroughly mediated images, in order to recover anything that resembles innocence – including an innocently polymorphous sexuality, and a childlike enjoyment of violent, graphic sensations of the kind that the filmmaker immortalised in the opening sequence of kids screaming in terror and delight before a Punch and Judy puppet show in *Sombre*.

Grandrieux is candid about his intention to create work that is, above all else, *disquieting*. And it is in this dark light that he calls upon Artaud as one of his “masters” and sources of inspiration. In a reflective essay titled “On the ‘Insane Horizon’ of Cinema” published in *Cahiers du cinéma* (in a moment where the magazine was more welcoming of his work), Grandrieux spotlighted this passage from Artaud’s 1928 “Sorcery and Cinema”:

To use [cinema] to tell stories, a superficial series of deeds, is to deprive it of the finest of its resources, to disavow its most profound purpose. That’s why the cinema seems to me to be made, above all else, to express things of the mind, the inner life of consciousness, not so much through the play of images

as through something more imponderable that restores them to us with their matter intact, without intermediate forms, without representations. (qtd in Hammond 2000, 104)

Grandrieux seizes upon this “imponderable something” flagged by Artaud. He clearly identifies with Artaud as someone, like himself, not entirely rational, articulate or theoretical about his creative processes, but rather one who searches in the night. Here is how the filmmaker reacts to the text of “To Have Done with the Judgement of God”:

Artaud is delirious. Surely, but not only. [...] His paranoia is fully operational. Vision, inspiration. That is his pace. That’s what he’s made of. He throws out sentences. He whispers, screams, smashes. Under the pressure of his breath. (Grandrieux 2000, 91)

The theoretical claims underlying the short text of “Sorcery and Cinema” are not simple, and still remain to be fully excavated today, in connection with Artaud’s other, fragmentary writings on cinema (see Artaud 2010), as well as his involvement as a collaborator on Germaine Dulac’s avant-garde classic, *The Seashell and the Clergyman* (1927). My focus here will be narrower, connecting this 1928 essay with more general observations that Artaud made about form (and especially *mise en scène*) in various arts.

In “Sorcery and Cinema”, Artaud points to something in cinema – in the *essence* of cinema, something inherent to it as a machine, apparatus or medium – that he is unable to entirely locate or verbalise. He is adamant that it is not a matter of this or that applied (or contrived) technique: the magic is not in montage or superimposition. On this point, Artaud takes his implicit distance from both the Soviet montage artists before him, such as Sergei Eisenstein, and the filmic impressionists closer to home, such as Abel Gance – even though he admired both of these particular artists. But he seems to agree with Jean Epstein on one, major matter: cinema is surrealistic in that, whatever it films, it *transforms* or “transfigures” it, to use his own word. Artaud’s own version of this alchemical effect is not linked to the new, materialist sciences of the 20th century (the connection that Epstein was keen to make), but to something more mysterious and metaphysical, “whatever the representation”: there is “a virtue proper to the secret movement of images, to their matter.” This “secret movement” is all at once beyond “the value of the meaning of the images themselves” as well as “the thought they express” and “the symbol they constitute.” In a very Epsteinian formulation, Artaud muses on the “second life” or “quasi-animal life” with which objects are endowed once they are photographed by a movie camera (qtd in Hammond 2000, 103).

Artaud’s language is emotional, visceral: he notes the “physical intoxication of sorts that the rotation of the images communicates directly to the brain”, and the “virtual power” which ensures that our “spirit is moved”, a power which “goes rummaging in the depths of the mind for hitherto unused possibilities” (qtd in Hammond 2000, 104). It is on this point that the kinship with Grandrieux and his contemporary investment in what Brenez called the “pathways of neuronal connection” is clearest.

By the time of *The Theatre and its Double*, Artaud’s relation to cinema – at least within the comparative terms set by his project for a Theatre of Cruelty – has cooled somewhat. It is the history of cinema itself, its regressive development into an ever greater recourse to narrative and traditional character psychology –

which he dubs a “premature old age” (Artaud 2010, 30) – that has disillusioned him, a few shining exceptions aside (such as the comedies of the Marx Brothers, which he eulogised in 1932 – see Artaud 1996). In the “First Manifesto” of his new vision of theatre, within the section labelled “Themes”, Artaud writes:

THE CINEMA: To the crude visualisation of what is, the theatre through poetry opposes images of what is not. However, from the point of view of action, one cannot compare a cinematic image which, however poetic it may be, is limited by the film, to a theatrical image which obeys all the exigencies of life. (Artaud 1958, 98-9)

Cinema as a “crude visualisation” that “limits” the poetic and utopian possibilities of the image: what Artaud earlier feared in 1928 would be the fate of the filmic medium (that it would detach itself from its proper realm of “the fantastic”) has come to pass, as surely as it has afflicted the other, more traditional art forms of “painting and poetry” (qtd in Hammond 2000, 104). Note here an intriguing torsion. A crucial differentiation between the approaches of Artaud and Grandrieux can be located in the fact that the former believes in rigorous physical training and rehearsal for actors (and presumably some manner of pre-existing “script”, text or plan, as in the case of his own 1935 production of *The Cenci* – although he was, later, increasingly drawn to the idea of banishing text altogether), while the latter embraces (like a number of Artaud’s theatrical descendants in the 1960s and beyond) the improvisation of “being in the moment.” And yet what counts as “ritual” in theatre – or at least the means for reaching and achieving a ritualistic effect – solidifies, for Artaud, into something too constraining, too fixed, too rigid in cinema. The “kind of magic” he saw displayed in the work of the Marx Brothers, for example, was, in his opinion, “not inherently bound up in cinema” (Artaud 1996). “Waves that are fixed are dead”, he wrote in 1933, and that is why for him, film is “hermetic, cut off from existence”, even if it initially drew its photographed material from reality (Artaud 2010, 30) – and this essential hermeticism, as he sees it, is both the medium’s surrealist blessing and its aesthetic curse. So we can only dream of what he would have made of such later cinematic experiments conceived and performed “in his spirit”, and setting out precisely to bring the cinematographically captured “waves” back to life, such as the wildly improvisatory *film-fleuve* that is Jacques Rivette’s 13 hour *Out 1* (shot 1970, completed 1990).

But is there a type of “proto-cinema” elsewhere in Artaud’s writing, haunting, as a virtual possibility, his speculations and dreams for other arts – even if he himself was unaware of it, or in denial of it? Here it is suggestive to revisit Artaud’s well-elaborated concept of theatrical *mise en scène*, for what it can feed into the cinematic usage and critical history of the term (see Martin 2014), as well as his occasional swerves into art criticism. The central question that needs to be ferreted out is the status of *form* (or *forms*, plural) within Artaud’s thinking. Near the beginning of *The Theatre and its Double*, Artaud asserts that the “forces latent in every form” cannot be released by mere “contemplation of the forms for themselves” (as in the Kantian model of “disinterested” art appreciation) but, rather, they spring to life through “magic identification with these forms” (Artaud 1958, 11). Grandrieux, it is certain, seeks such a direct “magic identification” through his *insensé* method of filmmaking.

In the intriguingly extended introduction to the chapter “Metaphysics and *Mise en Scène*” in *The Theatre and its Double* – any aside, excursus or passing, illustrative example tends to expand to gargantuan proportions in the energetic movement of his prose – Artaud conjures the play of forms in one of the paintings that

greatly took his fancy, Lucas van Leyden's *Lot and his Daughters* (c. 1521):⁴

Its emotion, in any case, is visible even from a distance; it affects the mind with an almost thunderous visual harmony, intensely active throughout the painting, yet to be gathered from a single glance. Even before you discern what is going on, you sense something tremendous happening in the painting, and the ear, one would say, is as moved by it as the eye. (Artaud 1958, 33)

The *kinaesthetic* aspect of this description is striking – it recalls David Lynch's famous testimony that, while executing a painting in his youth, he suddenly heard sounds and saw movement, both qualities seeming to be emanating from the canvas itself (qtd in Chion 1995, 10). But equally strong is the opposition, constant in Artaud, between a form that may remain inert if left enclosed within an artwork, and a *living* form that takes dynamic shape, ultimately, only when it is activated within the mind of a spectator.

And it is in the realm of that mind – individual or collective – where we once more revisit Grandrieux's agony, cited above, over the "line opposing emotion and sensation" and the "two irreconcilable tensions, opposing plasticity and narration" in any necessarily "cruel" art. The cinema of Rainer Werner Fassbinder (a keen reader of Artaud) could, in a different way, provide another model for the working-through of this same tension. Artaud, for his part, hesitates between different formulations: sometimes the living power of a work occurs "beyond" or "without" the representations provided by an act of fictive narration; at other times, he will allow a generative relationship between what he elsewhere disparages as mere "meaning", "thought" or "symbol" (Artaud 2000, 103) and the productive work of form. This is what he finds to praise in van Leyden's painting:

There is ... an idea of Becoming which the various details of the landscape and the way they are painted – the way their planes and perspectives are blotted out or made to correspond – introduce into our minds with precisely the effect of a piece of music. [...] And there is an idea of Chaos, an idea of the Marvelous, an idea of Equilibrium; there are even one or two concerning the impotence of Speech whose uselessness this supremely material and anarchic painting seems to demonstrate. (Artaud 1958, 36-7).

Artaud abruptly terminates this exercise in art criticism with a characteristically polemical, rhetorical flourish that shunts him back, in an instant, to his main topic: "I say in any case that this painting is what theatre should be, if it knew how to speak the language that belongs to it" (Artaud 1958, 37). When it comes to describing what he takes to be the language of theatre as *mise en scène*, Artaud is more precise, scientific even: the various elements (gesture, costume, masks, lighting, sets) are inventoried, and their interrelation is spelt out. In his definition, *mise en scène*:

consists of everything that occupies the stage, everything that can be manifested and expressed mate-

4 Artaud, in fact, makes several errors of attribution that are carried over into the English translation: he cites 'The Daughters of Lot' by 'Lucas van den Leyden'. Accurate information on this painting can be consulted at [<http://www.artbible.info/art/large/806.html>].

rially on a stage that is addressed first of all to the senses instead of being addressed primarily to the mind as is the language of words. (Artaud 1958, 38)

Thus *mise en scène* is, for Artaud, a “poetry in space” (Artaud 1958, 38) – roughly similar to its cinematic definition as “bodies in space” (Martin 2014, 45). But how exactly can the proposals of *The Theatre and its Double* be related to cinematic *mise en scène*? This remains an open question, taken up by successive waves of practitioners who have ceaselessly crossed between the two forms, such as Carmelo Bene, Werner Schroeter and Peter Brook, as well as many multi-media performance artists including the team of Maria Klonaris & Katerina Thomadaki, and even such radical documentarians as Jean Rouch and Raymonde Carasco.

Would it be fair to say that Artaud conjured a marvellous “vision” of cinema without really figuring out a way into it – in the sense of how to make it, produce it? This is the step that Grandrieux has tried to take within the project of his own art.

Will fiction be embodied, carnal, made of blood and muscles? Is this the “*imponderable something*” of which Artaud dreams, through which we will access our interior consciousness without interruption, without representation – is this the transubstantiation of images in a body? Of course this is an hallucination but, beyond the improbability of such a development, Artaud’s delirium and [Pierre] Klossowski’s fable [in *Living Currency*] seem to sketch the destiny of cinema, of this cinema that I love, the one that connects us to the most archaic forces, to what’s most inherent and instinctive in each one of us, inextricably weaving image and body, the very stuff of our affective relationship to the world, by placing us under the threat of the astonishing emergence of what can neither be seen nor heard. (Grandrieux 2000, 95).

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