

INTERNATIONAL VISUAL THEATRE (IVT): AMONGST DEAF IDENTITY REPAIR PROCESSES AND EMANCIPATORY IMPULSE

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ABSTRACT:

The IVT was created in Paris in 1977 by a North American Deaf actor, Alfredo Corrado, and Jean Grémion, a French theater director. The then hegemonic biomedical paradigm of deafness presented it as a malfunction and deaf people as subjects to be repaired. The idea that sign language could be a medium of artistic creation was unthinkable, including for Deaf people. We will start with analyzing the first two creations of the IVT: [] (1978) and][(1979). These enigmatic titles delimit a territory where the community could express, in the case of the first creation, and an external openness, in the case of the creation. Revealing how self-repair and the relation to others are put at work, these titles invite us to discover what emptiness causes in terms of aesthetic and political challenges. The project of the IVT resulted as an outlet from "hurt identities" (Pollak 1984), a place where one could heal not from a malfunction, but from the damages caused amongst the Deaf by the impulse to repair them. Finally, we will show the leading role of IVT in the emancipatory impetus that will drive the French Deaf political combats in the following decades.

KEYWORDS: Deaf; sign language; theater; repair; emancipation

1. Introduction

Based on the analysis of archival documents and actors' accounts (biographical and interviews) of the first two pieces created by the International Visual Theatre (IVT), a theatre created in Vincennes, France, at the end of the 1970s, we will show that the IVT project was first and foremost an outlet for "wounded identities" (Pollak 1984). The experience of the very first IVT troupe of deaf¹ actors shows that the theatre operated as a place of reparation of the flaws that the reparative gaze of deafness had provoked in the Deaf, not of deafness that had been considered defective until then. We suggest that the process of identity repair initiated in this founding moment of the IVT is a key to understanding the role played by the theatre in the emancipatory impulse that will carry the political struggles of the French Deaf in the following decades. In this perspective, the notion of reparation discharges itself from the normalizing injunction of the deaf bodies, imposed by a certain type of discourse and medical practice longly analysed and criticized by Deaf Studies. This article proposes, on the contrary, to question the status of the notion of reparation when it is mobilized by the Deaf themselves when they try to give back, through art, another meaning to the questioned body. What are the restorative effects of the theatrical experience on the identity of the people concerned? If the normalising aim of repairing bodies remains a policy contested by Deaf communities worldwide and by Deaf Studies, exploring the emancipatory effects of repair work on individuals and collectives seems to us to be lacking in Deaf Studies at the moment. This article therefore proposes to remedy this, by adopting a philosophical and anthropological approach to reparation, in order to understand what effect the theatrical work may have had on the deaf actors of the IVT in its origins. To do so, we start from an interrogation of what repairing means in the field of deaf and sign language studies and on the reparative dimension of art

¹ Following the suggestion of researcher James Woodward (1975), it is customary in the literature of the humanities and social sciences to capitalise the word Deaf to indicate that individuals belong to a culture and a linguistic community. The lower case is reserved to refer to the audiological status of the person. Thus, every Deaf person is deaf, but not vice versa. There are deaf people who do not necessarily identify with the identity markers of deaf communities. However, this distinction is not used in the same way. For more on the issues involved, see the article Pudans-Smith, K., K., Cue, K. R., Wolsey, J. A., & Clark, M. D. (2019). To Deaf or not to deaf: That is the Question. *Psychology*, 10, 2091-2114. <https://doi.org/10.4236/psych.2019.1015135>. In this paragraph we introduce this distinction because at the beginning of the IVT theatrical experience, the deaf people involved had not yet perceived themselves as belonging to a linguistic and cultural minority.

and its emancipatory power. Our aim is to show that repairing bodies is the project of a "politics of normalization of the body and mind of the deaf" (Benvenuto 2009, 196) that runs through different aspects of the lives of deaf people; these people have found in theatrical practice a form of self-repair allowing them to get rid of the deficient vision of their bodies, opening the way to the discovery of the perceptive and positive potential of the "Deaf bodies" (Schetrit 2021).

2. Questioning the notion of reparation to think about emancipation: a displaced point of view on the deaf question

According to the current definition, the notion of repair is understood as the restoration of what has been damaged (objects, individuals, bodies, morale) or the fact of recovering, returning to a normal state. It presents itself as a multiform phenomenon, whose usage and diverse context application make it difficult to identify it within a specific field of knowledge. It is used for banal things in everyday life, for example, to talk about a broken object that needs an intervention to restore it to working order. Nevertheless, the material repair of an object is not comparable to, for example, the emotional weight that the object may have for its owner. It is also possible to speak about repair when there is material damage caused by natural phenomena. Climate change and its consequences on the destruction of biodiversity, for which humans have an undeniable responsibility, lead to an ethical and political reflection on the possibilities and limits of repairing nature and therefore the world (Pelluchon 2020). The two world wars played a major role in the emergence of the field of reparation and its entry into the legal domain. Whether it is to question the possibilities of responding to the damage caused by the acts of war², or to question what is irreparable in certain historical facts such as slavery (Bessone 2019), or to reinterrogate the horizon of expectations of victims of medical accidents (Barbot and Dodier 2021), or the various ways of mobilising reparation in literature (Gefen 2107), the notion of reparation questions the vulnerability of the human condition. As the philosopher Johann Michel (2021) asserts, not everything is reparable. And even if reparation may be made of an object

² The first law on compensation for damages caused by acts of war was voted in France on 17 April 1919. It marks the recognition of an obligation of the State towards the victims.

or an expectation caused to an individual by a social injunction, the enterprise of reparation always leaves a trace, a mark, a share of the irreparable.

Thus, based on various fields of study (natural disasters, health crises, political violence and many others), the social and human sciences seek to grasp the ways in which people live and develop reparation paths whether or not they consider themselves victims. These paths, sometimes experienced as reconstruction processes that encourage people to move forward, question the state of the world and the ways of living in it.

These routes also question the way in which Deaf Studies *have* seized this notion. First of all, their emergence on the discourse on the deaf is not new. We will not dwell on deaf history but just recall that the technical-institutional invention of deafness has its roots in the nineteenth century, when the field of observation, clinical experimentation and definition of medical statements about deafness developed more in educational institutions for deaf children than in hospitals, giving birth to modern otology in the hands of Dr Jean-Marc Gaspard Itard (1774-1838) (Legent 2004). Throughout the nineteenth century, medicine tried to analyse, categorise and frame the population from an individual biological perspective. This power of the social norm over life, which Michel Foucault (1994) calls biopower, was expressed in the case of the deaf through the etiological analysis of deafness and the search for remedial techniques and medical care. The norm, according to this discourse, was to hear. Throughout the nineteenth century, oralist ideology developed a process of "pathologisation of deafness" (Séguillon 1998, 2017) initiated by Dr Itard, the first chief physician of the Paris Institute for the Deaf and Dumb, and of "orthopaedisation of the education of deaf children" (Séguillon 1998, 2017). The educable deaf child of the eighteenth century became, at the end of the nineteenth century, a child to be cared for and repaired (Benvenuto 2009).

This link between the Deaf body (and particularly its ears) and medical policies aimed at repairing hearing to regain a certain "normality" has run through the history of the deaf and continues, even today, to renew the effects of what Tom Humphries (1975) has conceptualised as "audism", i.e. the multiple forms that discrimination can take with regard to deaf people based on the assumption that the hearing trait defines the "normal" state of being. Forms of discrimination do not stop at socially established norms, but are internalised in the individuals who experience such discrimination. Like King (1991) who speaks of "dysconscious

racism" as a form of internalised and integrated racism, Genie Gertz (2008) proposes the notion of "dysconscious audism" to signify the internalization by Deaf people of the norms imposed by a dominant hearing culture, which relegates the Deaf to a place in society. Repairing, from an audist perspective, then means restoring a function that is considered to be failing. By focusing on opposing deafness repair mechanisms, and by developing a critical discourse around their normalising stakes and the values that define the initial state of what is considered to be repairable, the notion of repair has remained strongly associated with the medical sciences and has not been much questioned by Deaf Studies³. And if the legal field, in order to ask for reparation for the harm suffered by certain individuals when they feel that their rights have been violated, is the most frequent field in mobilisations around health issues, it remains under mobilised as a "weapon" (Israel 2009) in the repertoire of French Deaf mobilisations.

In this article, we will not return to the central question of repairing the bodies of the deaf with a normalizing intent. In order to explore other uses and to measure the significance of the concept, other than already mentioned in the field, we will tackle the reflexive side of the verb "to repair". We ask ourselves what effects the work of self-repair, through artistic creation, can provoke when it unloads its normalising value (Benvenuto and Schetrit 2019; Schetrit 2021), opening the way to the expression of its own normativity. By normativity we refer to the meaning given by G. Canguilhem (1943) to biological normativity, i.e. the capacity of an organism to confront the environment or to resist it through the creation of its own norms. We can thus speak of the "normativity of deafness" (Benvenuto 2009, 2011), since the singular perceptive configuration of a deaf individual produces equally singular ways of living and communicating, without this being defined by values attributed by an imposed social norm.

By adopting an ethnographic perspective on the theatrical work carried out at the very beginning of the IVT, and in particular on the first two productions, we would like to look back at the experiences of these first IVT actors and the meanings that the actors gave to this experience. It was also a time when contemporary

³ To broaden the reflexive horizon around this notion, we have dedicated our research seminar, since 2017, at the *École des hautes études en sciences sociales* de Paris, to these questions: 'Deafness and sign language: political, philosophical and sociolinguistic analysers. Forms of protest and politics of reparation'. Scientific director: Andrea Benvenuto. Co-hosted, depending on the year, with co-author, Soline Vennetier, Olivier Schetrit or Fabrice Bertin.

theatre, critical of the social and moral order, was proposing new forms of political engagement with a view to transformation⁴. The arts, and theatre in particular, offer a privileged terrain for observing what happens individually and collectively when individuals are no longer subjected to the effects of the stigmas they have suffered, but, on the contrary, are invited to rid themselves of them. This path can be measured in the appropriation that artists experiment with through theatrical performance, between the body experienced and the body "felt" (Ancet 2019). And between what the life stories of deaf people who have experienced the oppression of oralism *vis-à-vis* deaf language and culture might have in common in the plays that the troupe was going to stage. Initially, the staging focused on work on oneself, on the experiences of the actors and on ways of breaking free from the bonds of oppression, and secondly, by staging the source of this oppression: medical power⁵.

3. The International Visual Theatre: a field of experimentation and self-experimentation

The International Visual Theatre (IVT) was created in 1976 at the Château de Vincennes, under the impetus of Alfredo Corrado, a North American Deaf artist, and Jean Grémion, a French philosopher and theatre-maker who is hearing, both of whom met at the Festival de Nancy⁶, a world theatre centre founded in 1963 by Jack Lang⁷. On 21 February 1976, at 6.30 p.m., a decisive meeting took place on the third floor of the Tour du Village at the Château de Vincennes: a small group of participants who, around Alfredo Corrado and Jean Grémion, would begin, little by little, to shed the "colonisation" (Grémion 2017, 134) they had experienced until then.

⁴ We are thinking of the contributions of theorists and directors such as Auguste Boal in Brazil and Dario Fo in Italy.

⁵ The theatre of the oppressed as conceived by Auguste Boal certainly influenced the staging of these two plays. The seminal work, published in Brazil in 1975, was not translated into French until 1996. A. Boal (1996). *Théâtre de l'opprimé*. Paris: La Découverte.

⁶ It was at this festival that Auguste Boal was discovered in France. In Nancy, other great names from the world theatre scene were presented, sometimes for the first time: the theatre of Tadeusz Kantor, Jerzy Grotowski, Dario Fo and Bob Wilson with his play "Le regard de sourd". Presented in France in 1971, inspired by his deaf adopted son, Raymond Andrews, who performed it, this play caused a minor revolution with its 4-hour performance, in a visual theatre that questioned, among other things, the supremacy of the text over that of the body and the meticulousness of gestures.

⁷ French theatre-maker and politician, several times Minister of Education and notably Minister of Culture. To gauge the political and not just artistic significance of this festival, see Jean-Pierre Thibaudat (2017). *Le festival mondial du Théâtre de Nancy. Une utopie théâtrale (1963-1983)*. Bensaçon: Les Solitaires intempestifs.

The cultural and linguistic context of the 1970s in France was not favourable to deaf sign language speakers. This language was absent from the public space, in particular from the education of deaf children, no official recognition or public policy of accessibility favoured the daily life of the deaf, and sign language remained confined to a private use, "between oneself", "hidden" by the deaf themselves under the influence of its social stigmatisation (Mottez 1975).

Artistic practices have been part of the cultural environment of the Deaf for a long time (Mirzoeff 1995), by being part of the power of the *Réveil Sourd*, which emerges in France in the years 1970-1980, a movement carried by the fight for the recognition of the local sign language. The association *Deux langues pour une éducation* (2LPE) and the *Académie de la langue des signes* (ASLF) were both created in 1979 and, along with the IVT, became leading associations of the *Réveil Sourd*. We will not go back and explore the history of this movement, as others have already done so (Kerbourc'h 2006, 2012; Minguy 2009). We will only underline that this movement has allowed French Deaf people to reinvest in the public space and has given way to a reversal of the stigma caused by the then common "hearing impairment" label, through the valorisation of the Deaf people's language and culture, and this, within the community itself. To illustrate how powerful this movement was, Marie-Thérèse L'Huillier (2010), one of the first actresses of the IVT, gives us a highly revealing metaphor:

Deep down I was revolting, angry, very angry, and I couldn't calm down. And this anger helped me a lot to show something; and that's how I became part of the IVT; for me it's a bit like a second world war, I'd like to say; it was really very strong: we wanted to change the world, that was our dream. (interview by Olivier Schetrit, Personal archives)

The Tour du Village at the *Château de Vincennes*, where the IVT was set up in those early days⁸, was to become first and foremost a place of experimentation and work on the self, at the crossroads of the discovery of a language, sign language, a "discovery" of the self, and as we shall see, a place of identity repair. In the back cover of his autobiography *A Key to the World*, actor Victor Abbou (2017), states:

⁸ For a history of the creation of the IVT, see Grémion (2017), Abbou (2017).

I spent my first thirty years wandering through life, wandering between family life, school and social life. I considered myself insignificant and did not imagine that I was rich in any value. My encounter with what were then called gestures did not really challenge this life, made of suffering and frustration. But the day came when my path led me to a door, that of the Village Tower. I dared to push open this heavy door, which led me to a new era: my eyes were filled, and my life was changed forever. (back cover)

The first work carried out under the direction of Alfredo Corrado with the first group of deaf people was a non-oral communication workshop inspired by the work of the North American deaf actor, Gil Eastman, one of the founders of the National Theatre of the Deaf (NTD), who developed the concept of "visual gestural communication" (VGC) for his theatrical work. By setting aside all speech and allowing their bodies to "tell and be told" (Schetrit 2021), gradually speech in sign could emerge free of the stigma attached to it. This workshop worked on two levels, that of giving free rein to bodily expression, based on work on breathing, concentration and movement. And that of deliverance, a space where each participant could let out his or her anger, frustrations and wounds. In an interview with Victor Abbou (2009)⁹, the actor talks about shame:

It took me two years to come to terms with the shame. I was not aware of expressing myself in a language. I signed because I had to communicate. But I was ashamed. Little by little I became aware of the pride in our language. Alfredo was a model for us to understand the deaf identity, our history, our culture. (Interview filmed by Olivier Schetrit on 20 July 2009)



Left photo: Evelyne Sebag, Michel Girod, Victor Abbou, Alfredo Corrado.
Right photo: Anne-Marie Girod, Marie-Thérèse L'Huillier, Jean-Louis Guet, Chantal Liennel.
Photos by François Cascales. IVT. 1978¹⁰

⁹ Interview filmed on 20 July 2009 by Olivier Schetrit (personal archive)

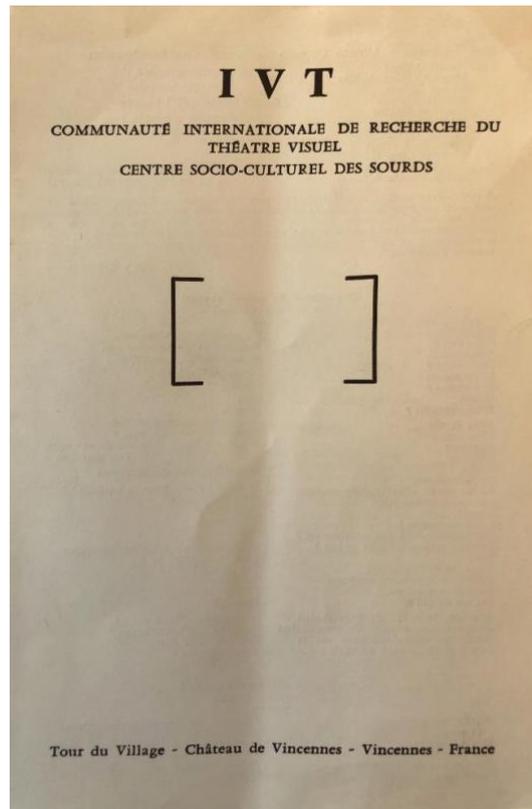
¹⁰ We thank Marie-Thérèse L'Huillier for making the original photos available.

Focus on the first two IVT creations: [] and][

IVT's first public production, [], directed by Alfredo Corrado, was presented at the Château de Vincennes on 21 March 1978. The troupe was composed of actors Daniel Abbou, Marie-Thérèse Abbou, Brigitte Bruno, Suzanne Dahan, Anne-Marie Girod, Michel Girod, Louis Guelt, Chantal Liennel, Joël Liennel and Denis Tettiravou. The artistic team included Guy Bouchauveau, François Cascales and two hearing people, Bill Moody, who interpreted, and Jean Grémion, who was responsible for general coordination. This is a collective creation based on the experiences expressed in the body expression workshops by the actors, all deaf. A place for the expression of the inner self, the suffering and the often painful experiences brought back by the actors, the play put on stage "the expressiveness of liberated bodies rather than suffering bodies"¹¹. Victor Abbou (2017) gives us an insight into this feeling:

We moved away from judgement, forgot about the insult that until then had cultivated frustration and therefore suffering in everyone, the impossibility of evolving as if someone was grabbing you by the collar to keep your head under water. This great freedom that was suddenly offered to us finally gave us the possibility to express what we needed to express. (74-75)

¹¹ Jean Grémion. Interview by Olivier Schetrit, 2009. Personal archive. All other quotes from J. Grémion are taken from the same interview.



Flyer, IVT 1978

The enigmatic title, symbolised by the closed square brackets, immediately signified its issues. On the one hand, the absence of the words of the vocal language to name it is a strong political gesture: in their space, the deaf free themselves from the language that has been imposed on them for over a century, the French language, even in its written form. And on the other hand, these closed brackets convey the visual space where the deaf found themselves, far from the world of the hearing which contributed so much to devaluing them. This closed visual space also signifies the work on oneself, within oneself, which is also occurring within a collective experience where consciousness will gradually reveal itself. This process is described by Victor Abbou (2017) as follows:

This was the beginning, without us really realising it, of one of the works we were to pursue together for months: a work of awareness of our collective status and of personal introspection. We set off together in search of our identities. (42-43)



Photos by François Cascales. IVT. 1978

The piece [] takes shape around a circle drawn on the floor with sand representing the earth and also drawing a sensitive reconfiguration of the deaf space¹². Sitting in a circle means being within visual and physical reach of one another, which in turn allows for sign language use as it needs visual interaction. This is the shared language, through which deaf people feel they are on equal terms with others, free to express oneself and to dialogue with others. The actors seated around a circle draw various graphic shapes on the sand and simultaneously use their own voices to make small sound effects. These interactions are visually conveyed by the circle arrangement. In another sequence, the actress Marie-Thérèse L'Huillier, placed in the centre of a circle, begins a "body song" (Grémion 2017, 146). Deaf voices, the voices of the deaf dancing around a circle that cradles them, that draws them in.

¹² With the concept of deaf space, we are referring to the perceptual and sensory accommodation that deaf people make in the physical and spatial environments in which they interact. We are referring to the DeafSpace (DSP) project that was created by architect Hansel Bauman and the ASL Deaf Studies Department at Gallaudet University. This project, which was set up almost twenty years ago, provides valuable information about the relationship between the senses, the way we construct the built environment and cultural identity.



Photos by François Cascales. IVT. 1978

Jean Grémion relates this scene, played and danced by Marie-Thérèse L'Hullier¹³:

The "listening" of the actors to each other is immediate and profound. United by the same movement in the coordination of their gestures, they take possession of their territory of expression. Marie-Thérèse Abbou places herself in the centre of a circle and begins a body song. Gliding across the floor like a mermaid, her chest arched, her bare arms seeming to call out to an invisible presence. Her wave of gestures is indescribably beautiful. Who does she evoke? A distant lover? A listener she cannot reach? An allegorical figure? She seems to float in another world. Her supple body glides through space, constantly changing shape. It twists and turns, spirals and untwists, in a game of fluid metamorphoses. How long does it travel like this, freeing itself from the laws of gravity? With each impulse of her neck, her hair rolls over her shoulders and unfolds into a corolla. Her hands are never at rest. They draw strange signs, of which only she, transfigured by an inner light, has a key. Tears accompany her secret drift. The audience holds its breath, hypnotised by the emotional intensity of this silent expression. In a last gasp, Marie-Thérèse arches her back with a silent cry, and collapses before the gaze of the audience. Immobile, she lies lifeless for a few moments, surrounded by the petrified circle of her family. (Grémion 2017, 146-147)

With these closed brackets, this piece shows an inward-looking community, a "deaf ghetto" we might say, reversing the meaning given to this term by oralist education. The idea that sign language enclosed the deaf in a ghetto and could be "contagious" to other deaf children is an argument that has supported oralist education policy since the late nineteenth century. In a letter from the Ministry of the Interior to the

¹³ L'Hullier is the name used today. In the quotation it is the married name that is mentioned (Abbou).

Director of the *Institut National de Sourds-muets de Paris* in June 1887¹⁴, the Ministry justified the demotion and then the termination of the duties of deaf teachers and the dismissal of pupils who had been educated in sign languages in order to avoid "contagion". The contagion argument, borrowed from medical discourse, meant that the linguistic, cultural and identity links between deaf peers had to be broken to prevent the "disease" from spreading (Benvenuto 2009). Sociologist Bernard Mottez (2006) points out that "this conception of deafness as contagious is, on the part of those who are least prepared to recognise it, the finest tribute to the existence of deaf culture" (79). It is this reversal of positions that we are referring to when we speak of a withdrawn community, a deaf ghetto. Preventing Deaf people from meeting each other had led to an interruption in the transmission of language and identity between peers. On the contrary, by recreating its spaces, the "ghetto" strengthens links. In this piece the closed brackets are intended to be a new territory for self-expression and exploration without oppressive otherness to judge what is said though body language. Victor Abbou (2017) expresses it with these words:

What fascinated me was our work on culture, language, our quest for identity, which quenched my immense thirst for knowledge and finally made me an actor in my life. This long-term work made me more and more daring, I was no longer afraid of ridicule, I dared to ask questions, I gained confidence. This was the beginning of an emancipation that would take years. I felt happier and happier. (77)

From deconstructing stigma to repairing the self

IVT's second creation, also directed by Alfredo Corrado, was entitled *J/*, and was first performed on 30 March 1979. It was performed by Victor Abbou, Brigitte Bruno, Mimi Girod, Michel Girod, Jean-Louis Guelt, Chantal Liennel, Joël Liennel, Denis Tettiravou. The artistic team was the same as for the first play.

This time, and by taking up the idea of a graphic rendering devoid of any linguistic sign to name the play, the deaf people open their territory, show their language and assert their identity as Deaf people. The staging uses masks over half

¹⁴ Letter from the Minister of the Interior to the Director of the Institut National de Sourds-muets de Paris (INSM) dated 24 June 1887. In Alexis Karacostas, "On liquide. L'institution de Paris après les décisions du Congrès de Milan", Coup d'oeil, Bernard Mottez and Harry Markowicz (eds.). Paris: Centre d'Études des Mouvements Sociaux, EHESS, n° 43, oct-nov-déc 1984, pp. 2-3.

the face, to signify the conflict crystallized around the vocal language and its imposition in the life of the deaf by the oralist ideology in its medical and educational side.



Photos by François Cascales. IVT. 1979

One of the actors in the play, Chantal Liennel, explains its symbolism as follows: "This play shows the medical dominance, the deaf actor masked in white symbolised speech and the doctor" (Chantal Liennel, interview by Olivier Schetrit, 2009. Personal archives). Whereas for Marie-Thérèse L'Huillier, the mask represents the ambiguity of the identity experienced by the deaf at the time: deaf, oralist and signer (interview with Olivier Schetrit and Andrea Benvenuto, 2023). But there is also voice and the actors used it to appropriate it, to repair their own self-image and their bodies. Jean Grémion tells us that the actress Brigitte Bruno shouted while showing her voice. "Everyone was struck and incredibly moved by what she did. Her voice visually showed the socio-cultural politics of the hearing world. It shows that the deaf have lived in a history of forced oralism, and shows their suffering" (Interview with J. Grémion by Olivier Schetrit, 2009).



Left photo: Brigitte Bruno. Right photo: Michel Girod with a gag on his jaw, undergoing speech rehabilitation by a doctor wearing a monkey mask. Photos by François Cascales. 1979

With this second piece, *J / I*, the bridge between the world of the deaf and the world of the hearing began to be established. It was necessary to work on oneself, where the expression of one's own sufferings allowed one to get rid of this "dysconscious audism" (Gertz 2008), which Victor Abbou (2017) illustrates so well:

The play presented a satirical view of hearing people by deaf people. It was a real discovery for the audience and for us a kind of revenge on our past: our sufferings, the mockery, the baseness, the oppression suffered until then were brought to light, with a touch of humour. (107)

The play of masks, voices, and tools from the medical world staged the confrontation of the two worlds in a space of experimentation, where deaf people appropriate them in order to better get rid of them, these repair techniques that they themselves have undergone in their own bodies. A theatrical scene that can be assimilated, to speak in Pratt's (1991) terms, as a "contact zone", that is, "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today" (34).

4. By way of conclusion. IVT between a process of identity repair and an emancipatory impulse

Based on the actors' accounts, recounting a founding artistic experience for the French deaf people of the IVT, we wanted to show that this creative experience was born not so much with the objective of repairing "wounded identities", to use M. Pollack's (1984) expression, but by being in itself a restorative experience from the moment it allowed the deaf people to free themselves from normative injunctions in a double movement. In a first moment, turned towards oneself with *[]* to discover the Deaf territory and identify with it. A protected territory, of the *entre soi*, whose preparatory work led each of us to get to know each other "in order to better reconstruct ourselves" (Abbou 2017, 45). In a second stage, by staging Deaf people's suffering, while distancing themselves from the past with a satirical theatrical form, *[]*, turns the stigma on its head. The "incapable" and "tongue-tied" deaf person displays himself and gives himself with the power of the body, finally finding his mode of expression and the reasons to feel proud of it.

This work of identity repair experienced by this very first troupe, some of whose members later became professional actors, led to an emancipatory impulse among the deaf people who were part of it, nourishing their struggle in the following decades in the "Deaf Awakening" movement. The name given to the movement gives an enlightening clue to what we have just stated. The movement allowed people to wake up to themselves at the same time as it awakened the desire to transform their everyday lives, as expressed by Marie-Thérèse L'Huillier (2010):

The arrival of Alfredo Corrado and Jean Grémion was a bit like a germination. Yes, there was dancing, folk dancing, we played cards, yes, but the IVT was a great upheaval. It was very disturbing [...] IVT opened this door for me, gave me all these answers I needed. I understood, I understood everything and my roots were that much stronger. And there I was really able to have a real base, I was no longer in submission as I was before. [...] It's 'like that' when you're deaf; there's no point in having a row with hearing people, you bend over backwards, it doesn't matter... IVT made me change, revolutionised me. [...] We had the gaze of others, but above all we had the gaze of ourselves, and the difference in others helped us, in relation to ourselves, I as a woman found my identity as a deaf person, my identity as a woman, my identity of rights, of the right to openness, I stopped considering myself only as deaf. Before, identity was not clear because of our history, and it was at IVT that I built my identity clearly, surely, and my identity did not close me off, it opened me up: I know where my tastes are, I assert my rights. (Olivier Schetrit, filmed interview, 2010, personal archive)

As the process of self-repair made it possible to go beyond stigma in favour of the exploration of a bodily and linguistic creativity that had been ignored until then, the

staging of these first two plays announces the emancipatory impetus that this troupe was able to instill into the movement: it did not remain locked up in a self-contained space but opened up to conquer other territories. It was not enough to stage domination, it had to be transformed. We echo the words of the philosopher Pierre Macherey (2009): "If art is an irreplaceable means of emancipation, it is because it stirs up the need to transform the world, instead of merely interpreting it" (79). The experience recounted by Victor Abbou is very enlightening in this regard. Getting rid of domination involved a radical transformation of his life:

I felt my shame atrophy, fade away in favour of a new feeling of pride. I began to think about the notion of identity. I understood that it was an important concept but it took me a while to really grasp its meaning. We were part of an oppressed people and had individually internalised a certain domination. (Abbou 2017, 48-49)

This also shows that asking the question of what one wants to repair when repairing something, first of all, means confronting values, experiences and points of view on what is being repaired. The process of repairing identity initiated at the IVT by this first group of actors required a radical, profound questioning of the repair of bodies to which the deaf had been exposed until then. We speak of repair because even if the theatrical practice was not explicitly guided by a repairing objective, it produced repairing effects as soon as it allowed the deaf to get rid of an identity damaged by the effects of stigma. Discharged from its sole normalising aim, this contribution invites you to an ethical, anthropological and political reflection on the emancipatory scope of reparation.

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