



'Is she? Or, a little detour, dragged by the ear'

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ABSTRACT – 'Is she? Or, a little detour, dragged by the ear' – This article starts from an account of the process of commissioning, composing, and performing Mansoor Hosseini's *Casss...andra* (2015), a solo work for flute collaboratively composed. By invoking the mythic figure of Cassandra, following her transformations through centuries of Western Art and her transformations through the researcher's own body, this article invites the reader for possible ways of escaping the exoticification of Cassandra as the mad sorceress, the female stranger. By weaving together artistic research, creative practices, and personal narrative, the entanglement of Cassandra, with *Casss...andra*, with the song of the flute, reframe and reclaim the auditory dimension of Cassandra's gift.

Keywords: **Artistic Research. Collaborative Processes. Cassandra.**

RÉSUMÉ – 'Ira-t-elle ? Ou, un petit détour, traînée par l'oreille' – Cet article départ d'un récit du processus de commande, création et performance de *Casss...andra* (2015) de Mansoor Hosseini, une pièce pour flûte seule composée en collaboration. En invoquant la figure mythique de Cassandra, suivant ses transformations à travers des siècles d'art occidental et ses transformations à travers du propre corps de la chercheuse, sont présentés ici des moyens possibles d'échapper à l'exotification de Cassandra en tant que sorcière folle, la femme étrangère. En reliant recherche artistique, pratiques créatives et récit personnel, l'entrelacement de Cassandra, avec *Casss...andra*, avec chant de la flûte, retravaille et réclame la dimension auditive du don de la prophétie.

Mots-clés: **Recherche artistique. Processus collaboratifs. Cassandra.**

RESUMO – 'Ela irá? Ou, um pequeno desvio, arrastada pelo ouvido' – O presente artigo parte de um relato do processo de encomenda, composição e performance de *Casss...andra* (2015), de Mansoor Hosseini, uma peça para flauta solo composta em colaboração. Ao invocar a figura mítica de Cassandra, seguindo suas transformações através dos séculos da arte ocidental e suas transformações através do corpo da própria pesquisadora, são apresentadas neste trabalho possíveis maneiras de escapar da exotificação de Cassandra como a feiticeira louca, a mulher estranha. Ao tecer em conjunto pesquisa artística, práticas criativas e narrativas pessoais, o entrelaçamento de Cassandra, com *Casss...andra*, com o cantar da flauta, reelabora e reivindica a dimensão auditiva do dom da profecia.

Palavras-chave: **Pesquisa Artística. Processos Colaborativos. Cassandra.**

[...] He refused to play the flute, holding it to be an ignoble and illiberal thing (Plutarch, *Alcibiades*, 2.4, apud Van Keer, 2004, p. 22).

Indeed, it is the supreme paralysis. This order, as the harmonious, right joining of ideas that are grasped by a simultaneous vision, in fact corresponds to the logos that is the dream of what we were calling major metaphysics. There are no more flutes, nor voice, nor sounds; only a perfect noetic ecstasy (Cavarero, 2005, p. 73).

How Cassandra came into question

Cassandra is a Trojan princess known for her immeasurable beauty.

Either she was born a prophetess.

Either she was given her gift by Apollo, god of light and reason.

Either Apollo gave himself the gift of prophecy in exchange of the promise of a cosmic marriage.

Either his snakes licked her ears, opening her listening.

Either she broke her promise.

Either she has never promised anything.

There is no either: she refused the deity, she refused marriage.

In revenge Apollo spat in her mouth: there is no either either.

His spit removed her ability to persuade, cursing her true prophecies never to be believed.

Either we believe.

Either we do not believe.

From that spit a life of violences, from saliva to saliva through the centuries: fragmentation, silencing, fatalism, war, incarceration, rape, kidnapping, enslavement, madness, murder.

Either she is the one cursed.

Either she is not.

It was Mansoor Hosseini (Iran/Sweden), composer and percussionist, who brought Cassandra over here. My encounter with him started with an invitation for a composer-performer collaboration. If at the present moment the words *mutual contamination* pulsate in my mouth, at that time I asked him for a piece for flute in combination with percussive and theatrical elements. I was in search of collaborative processes that would provoke a mixture of my practice as a flutist with other art forms, as a way of dribbling a dominant characteristic of Western musical practice: what I call a fragmented specialization or a specialized fragmentation¹.

Hosseini's practices as a composer aroused in me a hunger, an admiration: a mixture of music with martial arts, contemporary dance, and theatre. He composes by teasing out the body of the musician in its relation with the body of the instrument. He reads a musician in search of a particu-

lar gesture, a face, a trace, a feeling. He uses body language as compositional material. He works with stories, with characters.

The first idea that came up in our conversation was the possibility of *disassembling* the flute. I remember musical compositions that tear the flute apart: *Emergency Solos* by Christina Kubish, *Chambered Music* by Simon Steen-Andersen, *Pearls* by Zoltán Gyöngyössi, *...I Touch the Mountains and They Smoke...* by Justyna Kowalska-Lasoń, *6 Studii per flauto solo* by István Matuz.

In our first encounter, Hosseini imagined a futuristic flutist-cyborg in a mechanical dance with different parts of the flute attached to different parts of the flutist. In a second encounter, two weeks later, he brought me, instead, the idea of a Cassandra-musician. He imagined *Casss...andra*: a female character – a bit scary, a bit funny, a bit mad – invoking the mythic prophetess Cassandra. He added a singularity to her story: she would know how to play the flute.

A few weeks later², *Casss...andra* became a solo work for flute, collaboratively composed, which entails dance, theatre, the use of percussion instruments and extramusical objects, the sounds of human breath and bodily movement as its primary mediums. On a dark stage, the flutist is placed hiding and breathing behind a box filled with objects to be thrown at two gongs positioned symmetrically by her side, with flute headjoints attached to her arms and legs. Suspense is generated through the presence of the unplayed flute: an alto flute is hidden at the bottom of the box and revealed only at the end of the piece (Figure 1).

Already in the play within the title, *Casss...andra* evokes the sibylline air that sibilates...*sss: the body-breathing of the flutist as the main compositional material*, a bridge between objects, box, headjoints, gongs and alto flute. The breathing universe, the air in and out, its variation of timbres and speed, are shaped and constantly transformed through breathing cavities: throat, tongue, mouth, nose, lips, pieces of flutes attached to the body of the flutist.

Casss...andra breathes in between collaboration and co-creation. Creative roles and tasks were divided. Mansoor invoked Cassandra, I gave her my body-breathing. The open nature of its notation, an action-notated score, with drawings, action descriptions, few intervallic and rhythmic materi-

al, handwritten, messy: much is left to be deciphered and created. The performer becomes a co-creator through the organization of air-gestures, through the preparation of the box, through the placing of headjoints on different parts of her body. From unheard softness to the loudness of confusion and rage, the dynamic contrasts are left to be created by the body-breathing of the flutist³.



Figure 1 – *A collage of performances of Cass...andra* by Marina Cyrino and Nathan Clydesdale.

Source: Personal archive.

Hiding behind a box, another body-flutist appears

In *Cass...andra*, the flutist starts playing a box, not an established musical instrument⁴. The box came to Hosseini after invoking a Cassandra locked up in a spooky place, a dungeon, a prison, or her mind. *Cass...andra's* box is at the centre: it hides, it writes, it theatricalises. It became a tool to hide the musician, objects, prophecies, secrecies. The box becomes notation: whatever is placed inside changes timbral, durational, visual, symbolic aspects of the piece. The two gongs, placed symmetrically next to the box, work as sound extensions of the box's objects, which are thrown in their direction during most part of the piece, sometimes hitting them, sometimes not, creating a strong contrast in terms of dynamic range.

Initially, Hosseini wanted a Cassandra from ancient time. Her box had to look old and be filled with stuff that was pretending to be old: sto-

nes, branches, leaves, fake fruits and flowers, a wooden spoon, a candle. But he left a crack in time by way of a piano string: one of the few objects notated on the score, meant to be played by rubbing it against the box, and something that could not be yet invented in Cassandra's ancient time. From that crack, I subverted Hosseini's idea of antiquity, letting the box travel in time, constantly adding and removing objects. I am definitely not in ancient times: the box had to fly with me when I performed *Casss...andra* abroad. With the difficulty of bringing a heavy wooden box onto airplanes, as the piece travelled, the wooden box became a cardboard box, sometimes, and the gongs became iron plates.

My inventory of *Casss...andra's* box, 23rd February 2018:

Plastic fruits, two oranges, three apples, a tomato, a lemon.

Plastic flowers, several. Tree twigs, several, pine cones, several, chestnuts, an ornament I cannot find a name for, a computer mouse, a paper cup, a wooden chandelier, a wooden spoon, a TV remote control, a feather, three squares of Styrofoam painted grey resembling bricks, five CDs, a pair of sunglasses, the lid of a pot, big round beads, small beads with butterfly shapes, a pencil, chess pawns, unidentifiable pieces of plastic, letters of a computer keyboard: B, S, fn, ' ` , F, a piano string, a postcard, a floppy disk, a bike reflector, small rocks (Figure 2).



Figure 2 – A collage of performances of *Casss...andra* by Marina Cyrino and Nathan Clydesdale.
Source: Personal archive.

Casss...andra was one of the first pieces that took me out of my flute-chair-or-standing: I crouched behind a box. Letting musicians out of their

chairs is not a new idea. I remember Haydn's *Farewell* Symphony (1772). I remember a tradition of composing through the theatricalization of music. I breathe voices "beginning with music, continuing otherwise": too extra-musical to be taken seriously in the established musical field and too recognisable as contemporary musical practice to be incorporated into other performing arts programming (Craenen, 2010, p. 5).

Each compositional practice operates in singular ways (adding, reducing, expanding, extending, unlearning, tasking, preparing, choreographing and so on) with singular names (music theatre, instrumental theatre, sound theatre, new discipline, *crypto conceptual science fiction anti-climax band*⁶, and so on), in search of ways for making musicians move beyond the body's confinement in Western/Westernized standardized musical practices.

No-one can quite agree – is it music? music theatre? performance? music with visual elements? visual music? opera? musical? instrumental theatre? live art? performance art? performative actions? physical actions? (Walshe, 2016, p. 1).

Cass...andra is a dance behind a box: of breath, of moods, of flying objects (Figure 3). First, I *move*: sounds come as a consequence of bodily gestures. Hosseini notates indicating "what to do rather than what should sound [...] turning the hierarchy between sound and its production upside down: An approach where composition is a kind of choreography for instrument and musician – with sound as its consequence" (Steen-Andersen, 2010, p. 56).



Image 3
A dance behind a box,
images from the video essay
Is She? (2018)

Figure 3 – *A dance behind a box*. A collage by Marina Cyrino and Nathan Clydesdale.
Source: Personal archive.

A Little Detour, Dragged by the Hair

When I asked how sibylline Cassandra appeared to Hosseini, he told me that he didn't really know. He says he was writing a piece for me: "– What can I use? Your long hair" (Hosseini, 2017). Hosseini read my hair, very long at that time. It seems there was something of Cassandra in my curls that might have entangled curses and prophecies. I had to follow Cassandra through the centuries in search of my own hair.

Cassandra, dragged by the hair, reached up to Heaven
Her unavailing hands [...]
(Ovid, 1955, p. 319).

Cassandra's prophecies wandered through the big mouths of Western culture: Homer, Ovid, Pindar, Arctinus, Aeschylus, Euripides, Lycophron, Virgil, Hector Berlioz, Friedrich Schiller, Jorge Luis Borges, Gaston Bachelard, Christa Wolf, Melanie Klein. Among others.

She moved from a secondary role to protagonism: a fixation on Cassandra during the twentieth century contrasts with the relative indifference toward her in previous centuries, except for her rape, abundantly pictured through Greek iconography. Reignited in Friedrich Schiller's ballade *Kassandra* (1803) and continuing through German Hellenophilia, Cassandra is transformed into a sentimental character governed by an existential pessimism (Gil, 2003). She is trapped inside a voice of extreme nationalism (Vinagre, 2013; Gil, 2000; 2003; 2007), transformed into a "socio-political-aesthetical icon", manifestation of an elitist heroism that was politically conservative and anthropologically pessimist (Gil, 2003, p. 271). Max Klinger (1893) turned her eyes into an apocalyptically bloody emptiness: a *femme fatale*. Hans Schwarz's *Kassandra* (1941), enforces her existential self-destruction: she commits suicide (Vinagre, 2013, p. 124). Cassandra becomes:

Hostage of a visionary nationalist Trojan image, determined by an ideological discourse that calls for the denial of individuality, its submission to the principle of the unique will of a charismatic leader and the tragic need of the community. Cassandra acts without individuality, bound to the tragic conditions of a mythical history and submitted to an ethnographically reductive and nationalistic conception. This figuration, close to the archaic image of the prophetess without self-will, represents the cultural imposition of the to-

talitarian order upon the feminine gaze (Gil, 2003, p. 278, author's translation)⁶.

Cassandra continues. She surfaces through the saliva of women. Her whispering bounces differently in women's ears. Cassandra allows Florence Nightingale (1979 [1852]) to shriek "aloud in her agony" (Woolf, 2007, p. 598).

See Cassandra... (see Wolf, 1984, p. 141).

More than simply a manifesto for women's rights, 'Cassandra' subverts the foundation upon which her culture bases female subjection: divine authority based on a patriarchal interpretation of the Word. By reclaiming such sacred power, Nightingale revises the fundamental narratives of Western culture to account for female experience and to enable alternative interpretations of the natural and supernatural worlds (Jenkins, 1994).

Christa Wolf emancipates Cassandra from the fascist voice and the "constrained bourgeois idyll which Schiller's Cassandra yearns for" (Wolf, 1984, p. 141). Women's voices gathered around her in contradiction: either hailed as a symbol of resistance, a female voice of counter-memory beyond the official discourses of history. Either decried for her lack of power for choosing death over other alternatives. Wolf's Cassandra haunts and troubles contemporary interpretation. I am drawn to Eva Ludwiga Szalay's voice, hearing Wolf's Cassandra whispering that "knowledge of the internalization of patriarchal social norms does not *in itself* free one from these norms, provide empowerment, or enable resistance to the very history and nation in which one's female body and feminine identity are constructed" (Szalay, 2000, p. 184).

Refusing a tradition of an inexorable destiny, Marion Zimmer Bradley in *The Fire Brand* (1987 [2009]) discredits Apollo's curse: Cassandra lives. Cassandra continues. Complexified and syndromized through Gaston Bachelard (1949 [1966]). A-Pop-calyipse: ABBA sing in the 1980s – *Sorry Cassandra I misunderstood / Now the last day is dawning / Some of us wanted but none of us would / Listen to words of warning*. Pieces of her reach Hollywood stars: *Minority Report* by Steven Spielberg (Gil, 2003), Woody Allen's *Cassandra's dream* (2007). She shows up in Netflix/BBC *Troy: Fall of a City* (2018) returning to a secondary role in her own life through the body of the actress Aimee Ffion Edwards who says "I already knew a bit about Cassandra; there are so many versions of the story that I felt it was important

not to be too influenced by these [...]”, she says, “my research focused more on her lack of social skills, her lack of social awareness, and how her treatment at the hands of her family and the uncertainty about her sanity would affect her”⁷.

Cassandra continues...

Through *Casss...andra*

If *Casss...andra* turned out to be a flutist, that’s my responsibility. But *Casss...andra* is not the first Cassandra-flutist. Brian Ferneyhough reignited the figure of Cassandra for the Western flute world with his solo piece *Cassandra’s Dream Song* (1970), a piece glamourized from the start for its difficulty in decipherment and realization. “While inviting the performer to make fundamental creative choices, he has invented materials which are designed to thwart the flutist at every turn” (Waterman, 1994, p. 155).

Ellen Waterman, flutist, sees Ferneyhough’s Cassandra embedded in a paternalistic tradition. She creates her interpretation of *Cassandra’s Dream Song* from a literary feminist perspective, contaminating Ferneyhough with Christa Wolf. As Cassandra, she reveals her struggle to speak with her own voice. For her, to ignore the sexist implications of the piece would be to deny her voice in collaborative processes of interpretation. She recounts a conversation with the composer:

[...] one could see the material on the first page as relating to the god Apollo, and the material on the second page as relating to Cassandra’s prophecies. Ferneyhough seemed to be talking about the piece as a sort of erotic fantasy, in which the interplay of musical materials reflected the sadomasochistic relationship between Apollo and Cassandra. Was Ferneyhough paraphrasing Barthes, saying that the realm of musical pleasure is perversion? (Waterman, 1994, p. 156).

In my imaginary meeting with Ferneyhough or Waterman, I would ask: What can the flute do for Cassandra? And what does Cassandra do to and for us flutists?

What entangles Cassandra with my flutist-body-flute? – *Breathing*. A constant flux of rhythmical breathing connecting flute, flute parts and objects, through different qualities of air sounds. Lit by a small lamp placed behind the musician’s body, *Casss...andra*’s universe is created through the struggle of the flutist in breathing and playing crouched behind a box. But

the audience cannot see what she is doing: A bit of hair, a glimpse of the hands, flying objects. *Casss...andra's* body is hiding: Listen! *By hiding the standardized body of the flutist, another body appears*. I remember the licking of the snakes: *The auditory dimension of the gift*, the gift of prophecy as a hearing and a deciphering of the audible sensory surroundings.

Cassandra made Hosseini imagine a human that could speak through her whole body, not only through her mouth: “Like eight breathing arms, a little creature” (Hosseini, 2017). *Casss...andra* is the in-between of a woman and an animal, the air connecting to a foreign language. Hosseini is not the first to place Cassandra in the realm of the animal: In Lycophron’s *Alexandra-Cassandra* epic poem, Cassandra has the confusing hoot of a bird, uttering wild words, undecipherable (Barroso, 2004, p. 200). In Aeschylus’s *Agamemnon*, Cassandra is turned into an animal as abasement.

How to speak out of the exotification of bewitching prophetesses, bewitching flutes, bewitching female bodies? For Adriana Cavarero, a tragic confirmation: “In the large range of samples available within (Western) tradition, it is not possible to find a single female figure that meets the declared needs of female subjectivity” (Cavarero, 1995, p. 4). Cavarero acts by stealing. She steals female figures from their context “to relocate them suitably within the compositional canvas of a feminine symbolic order that is ready to embrace the free-flowing gestures of other female weavers” (Cavarero, 1995, p. 8).

If Cavarero steals and weaves and plays a hermeneutic game with words in order to provide a path out of such a tragedy, I breathe through *Casss...andra* a fleshly word, womanly, a breath-dance, the instrument of repetition of her suffering and the exorcism of the same: a body-flute, a *breathing-suffering*. Breathing connects the air-world with my voice. Breathing connects my voice with the flute. Breathing connects my flute with my flutist-being. Breathing connects my flutist-being with her gift. Breathing connects her gift with whoever dares to listen.

[...] I will be strong as the soul of an animal and when I speak it will be words that are unthought and slow, not lightly felt, not so full of will of human existence, not the past eroding the future! What I say will sound fatal and whole (Lispector, 1998, p. 201, author’s translation)⁸.

A Small Reminder

Strange as it may seem, prior to the triumph of metaphysics, the Greeks were thus convinced that thinking was done with the lungs, not the brain (Cavarero, 2005, p. 63).

If Hosseini forgot Apollo, I have not. Cassandra has certainly not either. Apollo plays the cithara, likes to spit in women's mouths, is the god of light and reason and knowledge.

Cavarero also reminds us of Apollo (Cavarero, 2005). She breathes us back to Plato's portrait of Alcibiades, centred on the flute and flute players, in his *Symposium*. She reminds us of the myth of Marsyas, an *aulos* player, a flutist, who once challenged Apollo.

Marsyas was a satyr, a creature, a wonderful flutist, a champion.

When Athena was told that flute playing made her ugly, she tossed aside the flute, Marsyas took for him the cursed instrument.

Either he was arrogant.

Either he trusted his breathing too much and dared to call Apollo and his cithara to a contest.

Either he knew what happens to those who displease Apollo.

Either he did not believe it.

Marsyas was so certain that the flute was irresistible and better than any string instrument, that breath would prevail over reason.

Either he had something to give to a God.

Either he liked competition too much.

It is not so clear why the Muses chose Apollo.

Either because of Apollo's upside-down playing circus, either because he added his voice on top of the strings, either the Muses just chose a god-him.

Apollo is vengeful, we learned from Cassandra.

For punishment no spit this time: Marsyas' skin was torn off while his mouth, no longer blowing into the flute, was left voicing tremendous cries of pain.

From the cries of those who loved him, Marsyas: a river of tears remained.

Thus, Marsyas learned, at great expense, that one should not challenge the gods. But he also learned, that the wind instruments are prolongations of the mouth and they are too similar to the voice. Besides that, they swell the cheeks and deform the face, they require breath and thus impede the flutist from speaking. In other words, the flute lets itself, dangerously, represent the *phone* in the double sense of the term: voice and sound. Whoever plays it renounces speech and evokes a world which the acoustic sphere and ex-

pressions of corporeality predominate. [...] Nothing further from the video-centric comportment of the philosophical logos (Cavarero, 2005, p. 69).

The flutist is more tied to the construction of knowledge production in Western thinking than one might think: it is the other of a disembodied and voiceless *logos*. “Indeed, according to Plato, the flute represents the very worst of the musical sphere”, music leading to a loss of judgment, “[...] the enchanters, all the more if they are flute players, are punished. Plato is totally convinced of the justness of this punishment” (Cavarero, 2005, p. 71). Cavarero discloses that it is not simply “the triumph of the cithara over the flute, but rather the triumph of visionary reason over musical experience”, it is “the bodily ear replaced by the noetic eye” (Cavarero, 2005, p. 76).

Cass...andra might still be behind her box, but in me she continues: I bind her to Apollo whom I bind to Plato whom I bind to Nietzsche whom I bind to Cavarero whom I bind to the construction and deconstruction of Western metaphysical knowledge in its relation with flute-researching.

Nietzsche understands Apollo above all as the god of figurative art, and thus the eye and vision, of beautiful and luminous appearance, of form. The essential Platonism of philosophy has its roots precisely in this privileging of form, which organizes the video-centric logic of thought. Starting with an already Platonized Socrates who, rather than embodying the bewitching song of the flute, gets placed on the side of the cithara, philosophy announces itself as Apollonian contemplation of ideas and, at the same time, as dialectic. Video centrism and logocentrism coincide in metaphysical knowledge, which opposes itself to the enchanting flute playing of Dionysius (Cavarero, 2005, p. 75).

A flutist-researcher is right in the middle of centuries of never-ending disagreement between Apollo and Dionysius. If I dare to speak and play at the same time, I am caught in a competition. On a page born from a flutist searching, breath is being evaluated in a tradition in which *logos* lost not only its voice but its ability to blow, pant, puff, gasp, wheeze, sniff too.

Cassandra-in-me

“*hyperventilation*”, “*almost speaking*”, “*hysterical*”, “*whistling*”, writes Hosseini on *Cass...andra*’s score. Am I trapped in interpretation? Does *Cass...andra* escape the exotification of Cassandra as the mad sorceress, the female stranger, fascinating and threatening?

[...] the prophetess Cassandra embodies, not only the paradigm of the ethnographic and sexual stranger, but also of the strange knowledge. Cassandra is the example of the penetration of an alternative reason in the Greek context. The barbarous woman from Troy has a self that manifests simultaneously as fascinating and threatening. Subsuming three marginal identity factors – woman, foreign, and enslaved–, is downgraded to the animal dimension [...] a marginal being in the order of power, history and reason (Gil, 2003, p. 263, author’s translation)⁹.

When Cassandra continues through my breath, her strange knowledge becomes the flute, my flutist-being. By hiding a flute at the bottom of the box and revealing it at the end, the whole piece is constructed on the basis of a tension created by an expectation:

Is she... [going to play the flute or not]?

Cassandra-in-me throws not only objects but questions. The flutist that enters a concert space with an unknowing or an alternative knowing – is she estranged, and how?

Rather than the stranger being anyone we do not recognise, *some bodies are recognised as strangers*, as bodies out of place (Ahmed, 2014, p. 221). [...] Strange bodies are produced through tactile encounters with other bodies: differences are not marked *on* the stranger’s body but come to materialise in the relationship of touch between bodies (Ahmed, 2014, p. 14).

When does the audience start listening? When I ululate a nonsensical breathing language or, finally, when I show my face and my skills as a flutist, an acceptable knowledge, an expected knowledge? Where is the truth, the knowledge, the prophecy? Is someone going to believe that I am a flutist, a musician? During most of the piece I am estranged from my knowledge as a flutist, from the usual flute-body-flutist relation, from the usual flutist-body-audience relation. I estrange the flute from myself by playing a disassembled instrument assembled through my body-breathing. The assembled flute, as a “complete” musical instrument, appears at the end, as a revelation, tying up *Casss...andra’s* story: Does anyone believe? The audience? The ‘I’ performing? Why did we not listen in the same way in the beginning, if we did not?

Cassandra-in-me takes the form of a double question, a double contamination. What can Cassandra do to my body-flutist? Through *Casss...andra*, I encounter ways of dribbling¹⁰ standardized forms of flute

playing, standardized forms of hearing a flutist on stage, and new forms of artistic presence. What can my body-flutist do to Cassandra? If *Casss...andra* retains aspects of the exotification of a tragic female silencing, I tangle and twist depictions of Cassandra, steal her out of her context. By speaking and playing at the same time, I mix Cassandra with *Casss...andra*, with the song of the flute, with the doing of academic research, in order to question the nature of her curse. In order to contaminate her tragic voice with breath, movement, suspension. In order to reclaim the auditory dimension of her gift.

Cassandra-in-me continues: *Listen, sound touches in between!*

But if Cassandra continues, I wonder if she is tired of following all sorts of agendas through the centuries; yet still I put into her breath my bewitching bitching song of flute-searching. If I could I would not need Cassandra to say: Will logocentric forms of knowledge keep spitting in order *not* to have to listen?

She, princess, priestess, woman, foreign, enslaved, animal, marginal in the order of power, history and reason, *who knows but cannot speak*. But her struggle to speak with her own voice cursed by Apollo's spit speaks to us now strongly: "One can (only) speak when one's voice is listened to" (Kilomba, 2010, p. 21). Grada Kilomba helps us understand the urgent nature of the curse: *Listening as the very act of authorization toward the speaker* (Kilomba, 2010, p. 21).

There is an apprehensive truth that if the colonial subject speaks, the colonizer will have to listen. She/he would be forced into an uncomfortable confrontation with 'Other' truths. Truths that have been denied, repressed and kept quiet as secrets [...] Once confronted with the collective secrets and the unpleasant truths of that *very dirty history*, the white subject commonly argues: 'not to know'..., 'not to understand...', 'not to remember', 'not to believe' [...] (Kilomba, 2010, p. 21; 28).

By withdrawing Cassandra's ability to persuade, Apollo withdraws *his own and others' ability to listen*. Apollo, smarty god of light and reason and knowledge that *cannot listen*. A "supreme paralysis"¹¹. A *logos* that has lost not only its voice but its sensitivity to a sonorous compound, to the ability to listen and decipher the audible sensorial.

Either she is the one cursed.

Either she is not.

If Cassandra continues, from here, through a voiceless knowledge production, I hope, a minimum.
I hope for a knowing-breathing.
We breath-thinkers are on Apollo's way, there is no either.
Apollo might stumble.
The Muses might decline.
But we also might be spitting.
Either we will be punished.
Either we will not.

Notas

- ¹ An in-depth account of my method of co-creating through “mutual contamination” and “mixture” can be found in my essay *Uma Fome Inexplicável* (Cyrino, 2017).
- ² The collaborative process of composing *Cass...andra* took place in Gothenburg, Sweden, from August to October 2015. First performance on November 9, 2015.
- ³ Here is an invitation for my video essay *Is she?*: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9HP9rmWTfro&feature=youtu.be>>. Accessed on: 31 July 2018.
- ⁴ Let's leave Pandora outside of the story, as for a long time she might not even have had a box. See: *Lost Goddesses of Early Greece* (Spretnak, 1978).
- ⁵ A reference to *Asparagus Piss Raindrop apud* Walshe (2016).
- ⁶ Original text: “[...] presa de uma imagem de visonária troiana nacionalista, determinada por um discurso ideológico que apostrofa a negação da individualidade, a sua submissão ao princípio da vontade única do líder carismático e à necessidade trágica da comunidade. Cassandra age sem individualidade, presa às condições trágicas da história mítica e submetida a uma concepção etnograficamente redutora e nacionalista. Esta figuração, próxima da imagem arcaica da vidente sem vontade própria, representa a imposição cultural da ordem totalitária sobre o olhar feminino”.
- ⁷ Available at: <<https://www.express.co.uk/showbiz/tv-radio/922891/troy-fall-of-a-city-cassandra-princess-cursed-greek-mythology-Aimee-Ffion-Edwards-bbc>>. Accessed on: 31 July 2018.
- ⁸ Original text: “[...] eu serei forte como a alma de um animal e quando eu falar serão palavras não pensadas e lentas, não levemente sentidas, não cheias de

vontade de humanidade, não o passado corroendo o futuro! O que eu disser soará fatal e inteiro”.

- ⁹ Original text: “[...] a profetisa Cassandra corporiza não só o paradigma do estranho etnográfico e sexual, mas também o conhecimento estranho. Cassandra é o exemplo da penetração de uma racionalidade alternativa no contexto grego. A mulher bárbara vinda de Tróia possui um Eu que se manifesta simultaneamente como fascinante e ameaçador. Subsumindo três factores identitários marginais, os de mulher, estrangeira e escrava, é rebaixada à dimensão animal [...] um ser marginal na ordem do poder, da história e da razão”.
- ¹⁰ Dribbling is used here in its sense of working-around, of circumventing. In Portuguese: *driblar*.
- ¹¹ Returning to the opening quote of this essay: “Indeed, it is the supreme paralysis [...] There are no more flutes, nor voice, nor sounds; only a perfect noetic ecstasy” (Cavarero, 2005, p. 73).

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This original, proofread by Ananyr Porto Fajardo, is also published in Portuguese in this issue of the journal.

Received on July 31, 2018

Accepted on December 29, 2018

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