

ELISA FANTOZZI
— at the *Periscope*, Nîmes, 23rd April 05 —

Programmed at the l' «espace pluriel» of the *Périscope* 4 rue de la Vierge à Nîmes on Saturday 23rd April 2005 at 8.30 pm, the show, — a theatrical and sculptural performance — by Elisa Fantozzi surprised us. We first enter a room

where a woman is cooking a meal while refined and relaxing images move across a TV screen, the floor is carpeted with newspaper adverts, the stage setting puts us in touch with everyday reality whereas the video is in counterpoint (the body is omnipresent) to the anaesthetising repetitive movements of the woman cooking.

The theatre curtain goes up to reveal chairs on which we are invited to sit down, after quite lengthy preparations, which did not at all prepare us for what was going to happen. A voice over of her words is heard again before Lili enters the stage, walking and balancing precariously on soles under which eggs made of resin are stuck. The sophisticated images of fingers and the writing on the screen indicate a high degree of artistic cultivation. Kneading of the dough and absence of existential dough come out of the mixing bowl in which Lili's fingers knead the « cake dough » as well as the big screen on which the icon fingers move through the uneasiness of everyday appearances. The plasticity of the covered hands, and the illusion of three-dimensionality in the icons, traces of intimate and indirect states.

Through us not living our lives, they take shape in shapelessness. So it says on the radio news. A high point of the show comes from the from the tension created by the parody of the radio news into which the actress launches on a constant and surreal monotone, the news items of the day full of references to the succession of stories that end up cancelling each other out, making the absurdity fed to us on certain stations comical. This sequence communicates the burden of a demeaning daily existence, a false dimension that can invade our senses just like the smells of the cakes being prepared.

The videos play the least disquieting part, having nothing in common with the cooking or the

information meltdown. The sofa on stage serves the purpose of other frolics that stand out from the anaesthetising daily life portrayed. Dreams come from elsewhere, poetry being read aloud by members of the audience, languid feminine curves and slightly kitsch voices of the actresses. Even before the 'mise en abyme' by Fred Perimon who gets the audience to participate in these imaginative games, there is, at the heart of this performance, a moving sequence which will remain etched in our memory : as images on the big screen advance along shows miles of motorway, Lili starts jogging «to the point of exhaustion» as if she absolutely had to catch up what is lost forever (I lost- yes, of course). « Grieving » is impossible. That is why the artists are there after all, spitting out their creations in the face of materialism. They die, the miserable creatures, working through their nights, and no (almost) one cares. The eating up of motorway miles and the sweat reach their climax of exhaustion. It all amounts to a sad ending and the screens carry us through the mirror : the look on Lili Fantozzi's face remains. Kneading and running, she goes beyond sense (physical, theatrical, artistic performance, what a lot!) and shows with her sequence of tableaux, sometimes aided by two other protagonists of everyday life, adapting their dance to the fetishism of old-fashioned lingerie until the moment the « sugary-females » circulate among the audience offering us their cakes which turn out to contain short messages.

The poetic and mischievous quality is the result of flavoursome and carefully prepared scene setting at the outset. An unforgettable performance, fanciful and baroque, reminding us from the depths of an unhappy and unfulfilled existence, of the words of Calderon : « Life is a dream, and dreams remain dreams. » The whole staging of the show highlights the ambivalence of the word « dream », through a dynamic performance in which artistic and theatrical space, the decor, bodies, clothes and utensils converge in a deep and subtle coherence.

Xavier Company