

## POST-DANCE

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**MDT** CULLBERGBALETTEN



## **Contents**

**Acknowledgement**

9

**Danjel Andersson**

*I Had a Dream*

13

**Mårten Spångberg**

**Introduction**

18

**Alice Chauchat**

**Generative Fictions, or How Dance May Teach Us Ethics**

29

**Ana Vujanović**

**A Late Night Theory of Post-Dance, a selfinterview**

44

**André Lepecki**

**Choreography and Pornography**

67

**Jonathan Burrows**

**Keynote address for the Postdance Conference in Stockholm**

83

**Bojana Cvejić**

**Credo In Artem Imaginandi**

101

**Bojana Kunst**

**Some Thoughts on the Labour of a Dancer**

**116**

**Charlotte Szász**

**Intersubjective Fidelity**

**135**

**Josefine Wikström**

**Notes on Post-dance**

**146**

**Ofelia Jarl Ortega**

**Fragments Of an Artistic Queer-Femme-nist Strategy To Be**

**157**

**Samlingen: Amanda Apetrea, Nadja Hjorton,  
Stina Nyberg, Halla Ólafsdóttir and Zoë Poluch  
Manuscript for Post-Dance Publication**

**163**

**Valeria Graziano**

**Towards a Theory Of Prefigurative Practices**

**176**

**Samira Elagoz**

**What I Saw and How I Lied**

**204**

**Mette Edvardsen**

**The Picture of a Stone**

**216**



Ellen Söderhult  
What Will Dance Do?

222

Edgar Schmitz  
9 Or So Motifs

270

Manuel Scheiwiller  
Cruising on Contemporary Topics

276

Alina Popa  
The Artworld and The Artworld

284

Antonia Rohwetter & Max Wallenhorst  
I'm Gonna Look For My Body Yeah  
– Somatic Fictions of Reparative Post-Porn

313

Danjel Andersson  
But They Are Not Dancing?

341

Mårten Spångberg  
Post-dance, An Advocacy

349



# Acknowledgement

A book such as this one has many reasons to celebrate. First and foremost because it has become actual, it stepped out of the potential and the possible and here it is—unbelievable. A conference happened in Stockholm in October 2015. We totally want to applaud all of us that were there, in whatever position; all of us that are in the book, and those that are not but supported and didn't anyway, never mind the conferences, shows, conversations, conflicts, OMG, intimacies, institutionalities and so on that will happen in the future, some of which will have some thing to do with this publication.

We, or let's skip the we and give agency to the book itself—considering that those who put this together are just companions of the book supporting it with some movements over the keyboard.

The book wants to express deep gratitude to Danjel Andersson, André Lepecki and Gabriel Smeets, representing MDT, Stockholm University of the Arts, respectively Cullbergbaletten for their initiative to make Post-dance the conference, happen, for inviting a peculiarly

mixed crowd and making something impossible remain impossible. Because, evidently, if it didn't stay impossible this book wouldn't be needed.

We also want to celebrate the staff and people at MDT for their incredible work before, during, and after the conference. The technical staff that stood up and cleaned up after three days.

The book is also thankful to all the institutions, foundations, organizations and people that supported the event in whatever currency. Without you, history wouldn't have changed.

The most important however, the audience. You were there and you stayed cool, attended and put the speakers and contributors up against the wall, but always with a forgiving sense of urgency. You made this book important and now we want to pass it back to you, several copies, and all over the place. This book is not somebody's but ours together, we made it happen, and here it is, making the world and that of dance a little bit richer.

We wish to acknowledge all the contributors of the conference: Adrian Heathfield, Mette Ingvarsten, Mårten Spångberg, Bojana Kunst, André Lepecki, Samlingen; Amanda Apetrea, Nadja Hjorton, Stina Nyberg, Halla Ólafsdóttir and Zoë Poluch, Jesta van Dinther, Florentina Holzinger, Jens Östberg, Ivana Müller, Mette Edvardsen, Francois Chaignaud, Manuel Pelmus, Cecilia

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Thank you all, we made it and now let's get this party started. Time to celebrate.



Post-dance was a conference in MDT in Stockholm 14–16 of October 2015 created by Danjel Andersson, André Lepecki and Gabriel Smeets. The conference was a collaboration between MDT, Cullbergbaletten.

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# I Had a Dream

Danjel Andersson

This is a book. We are all quite surprised it has become a book. Before the conference even took place, the thought was to make a book out of it, but had not planned it ahead. Directly after, Mårten Spångberg was so enthusiastic and inspired and impressed by the response that we immediately started to collect texts. And in the project based dance world, we are all too busy. We are all working too hard. If it's not this, it's that. But still, we put a small editorial team together.

Postdance or Post-dance or POSTDANCE is an open source concept. We reversed a normal conference. Instead of saying what Postdance is, we invited a wide range of thinkers to fill the concept with us. To let it be open, and a bit weird, and by doing that keeping it urgent. And now post-dance is a book. The three of us, all active at the conference Mette Edvardsen, Mårten Spångberg and me, Danjel Andersson, have acted as a precarious editorial board. We simply invited more

thinkers to fill the open container. Some of the texts and thoughts come directly from the conference and some are added thinking.

The whole thing started in a dream. I had been in my awake state, trying to think of a topic for a conference. I was looking for something that could help us at MDT to define the works the artists make. I wanted this to be a conference that would support the community around MDT and help the critics that are writing on the pieces to define what it is the choreographers are doing. These thoughts were spinning in my head when I went to bed that night.

I dreamt that there was a conference in Frankfurt. Mousonturm was arranging a symposium called Postdance. In the dream I thought: "Damn, why didn't I think of that."

When I woke up, I had a feeling that I was not able to think of as good a topic as the one in Mousonturm. Waking up I realized it was a dream. So I went to the website of the venue in Frankfurt. I googled "Postdance conference" and only "Postdance". All I found was "post dance videos". Which literally means to post a dance video on to a social media.

I started to think around this concept. What is it? What could it mean? Why is it that it seems so familiar?

I began to try the word on people. Some laughed. Some saw a potential. It is a clumsier concept than the Post-dramatic Theater of Hans Thies Lehmann. But



on the other hand, it has openness. On the one hand it is clear what it means. Post, after, dance. It's also the post of postmodernism—well knowing that postmodern dance is over. When the Judson church community of choreographers in the 60s questioned the notion of dance as being movements Post-dance began.

We presenters are mediators between boards, critics, audiences, funding bodies, and the artists and art. We have to explain this gap between the conventional notion of dance and what they will end up seeing/experiencing/funding. A new tendency is to split the two notions: Dance and Choreography. This helps the thinking process a lot. The expanded notion of choreography is a great tool for artists to use. Post-dance explains this in one word. It marks a belonging to a longer tradition. But it is also a clumsy concept; you might get a sense that something is missing: post...something...dance. It's hard to just buy it. Or follow it. It's not a leader. It's a container. It needs to be filled.

To make the conference happen, I first contacted the new director of The Cullberg Ballet: Gabriel Smeets. He came from the position of being the director of SNDO in Amsterdam. I had never met him. My idea was that I would collect the new arrivals to Stockholm, the potential updaters of dance, the people that could benefit from a conference like this one. So I asked the newly appointed professor at the University of the Arts (SKH) André Lepecki if he would want to be a part of it. It was,

I have to admit, not without nervousness that I invited one of the strongest theorists in the field of dance to dinner, proposing him to join in a conversation about a concept that had come to an, for him, unknown theater director, in a dream. He got excited and the core group was formed.

My goal was to form a community around the concept, and little did I know how fruitful this idea would prove to be.

Together the three of us created what the conference would turn out to be. We decided to keep it clean. No performances, but we were more than open to other interventions than the conventional ones, we asked for anything. We made up lists of people we wanted to get input from. We made and remade these lists, but we always tried to cover a broad area of voices, representing different points of view. We ended up with rather narrow thematics on each panel discussion to help the participants to think, since the core concept was way more open. And between these longer panel discussions we asked six speakers or constellations to prepare more open input. These six were: Jonathan Borrows, Mette Ingvarsten, Adrian Heathfield, Samlingen (collective of choreographers: Amanda Apetrea, Nadja Hjorton, Stina Nyberg, Halla Ólafsdóttir and Zoë Poluch), Bojana Kunst and Mårten Spångberg. We decided to keep the conference compact enough for people to be able to travel to it if they wanted to. And we wanted it to be

dense, but rather short so the nights could be spent discussing among each other. None of us organizers knew what the conference would end up being. At a certain point it became a machine running by itself. A fourth person entered the process. The producer: Tove Dahlblom. She helped make it happen. She worked with us as a project manager and as a dramaturge, adding, and suggesting participants and practical changes.

We were totally blown away by the response to this thing. We ended up with a sold out conference and guests from all over. Complete dance companies, free lancers, and thinkers from different parts of the world. The streaming that we kept up for a month was seen by thousands of people. And for a brief moment in 2015. MDT was the place to be.

# Introduction

Mårten Spångberg

Sometimes it's necessary to make tangible what you do, without authorization and without good advice. Here it is, now we know. Right here.

Sometimes it is necessary to figure out what was, to write history. To get it right and the world's a stage control circumstances. Connect things that seemed far fetched or make what was evident foreign again. Perhaps we never the less write history to understand the here and now, realizing as we move forward that here and now is never exactly where we are.

Sometimes it is urgent to understand what we haven't yet done. Put our bodies and minds together and prefigure what is to come. Not in order to know in advance or project, on the contrary to labor for a future that remains to be shaped, to change how things change.

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* published in 1969, Michel Foucault writes – we imagine in a Paris bubbling of student revolt and the event at the Theatre Odeon – something like: We have experienced a change from what is

being said in what is being said, to what is being said here and now and only here and now. Foucault identifies a shift in society, politics and life towards performativity; a world without fixed values, one where the notion the world's a stage takes on new meaning, as meaning no longer has foundation but is nothing more than interlaced processes. Is it possible that our problem today is that we can't even know where here and now is, as here and now always only is here and now, or?

When we project into the future, here and now, life, history, art implies an undoing of the specificity of the then, but when, if it is at all possible, we instead allow the future to be not our future, not the future, but just future, without our support. We can offer something different, something that is not docile, malleable or performative, but a real, actual problem. We give the future agency, exactly by not giving it anything at all but letting it be. A problem, or perhaps just a sensation, that is not from here and now, but instead changes the circumstances of here and now.

Is perhaps this the responsibility of art, to change the circumstances of here and now, not just to change something but to change how things change. In order to do so, however, we can but inquire and write that to come that we can not even imagine imagining.

Exactly, what we can imagine is not good enough, precisely because we can imagine it and what we can imagine is always already something we can, however

uncomfortable, deal with, do something about and live with.

Imagination never changes us and is always projective. It makes us able to navigate but that's all. Arts job on the contrary is to exceed, to overrule the boundaries of imagination, but to do so it needs to confront the world differently, because what is needed is to transform not just what we can or not imagine but the forms of determination that governs how we think, arts responsibility is to unground or disrupt causality. Or said differently: undo how shit relates, connects, and stick together.

This might be things, idea, opportunities or insurances, but it might also be Europe, white people, heteronormativity, gender, care, intimacy, violence, consent and evidently art and dance. There are many ways of living better, still keeping up with or submitting to forms of determination and causality that are well known, coagulated and there to enable power to be conducted, but only very few opportunities are offered to life to prominently change, i.e. in kind what we are and do—some say philosophy, science and art. Perhaps we can conclude that without the last one the two previous are worth nothing, and we might just add love.

Art, and with that dance, is today, since a while and at least in the near future, facing a rather intricate dilemma being entangled in neoliberal governance, at the

same time struggling with its autonomy and its possible political impact, its independence and simultaneously its opportunity to care and install safe-spaces, knowing very well that neoliberal capitalism can and will instrumentalize everything, transform anything into a financial asset. There are many options and it is up to us to consider carefully the consequences of an understanding of art and aesthetics as an integrated part and active participant in our society, thus making an effort to provide increased qualities of life, or if art perhaps needs to consider itself as something that must turn its back to society and refrain from projecting in favor of the production of the possibility of futures that are non-projective.

To make art, to think about art, buy, sell, program, curate, organize, reflect on and discuss art are activities in the world and as we do these things we are humans in the world carrying morals, ethics, politics or simply values of different kinds. But art, in itself, is not an activity, neither is the experience of art, which however doesn't say that the artist is automatically released from responsibility, nor are theatres, museums or any other context where art is experienced, but art is responsible for itself and only itself, because if it was responsible for the world it could only be for the world of art, not our world, the human world. And further more, if it was responsible for the world, as in our world, under

what conditions should art be authorized or not, and by whom?

In October 2015 the conference Post-dance took place at MDT in Stockholm. At first it appeared rather unorganized, strangely put together and the program pointed in many and in weird directions. There were a lack of conference sharks, there were no stars around – at least none of those that can afford to be arrogant and make a homerun with a bunch of personal anecdotes. There were no performances in the evening nor anything juicy for programmers. Weird, but as the house filled up for the first morning session, and people showed up from all kinds of places, it slowly became evident that this was not supposed to be an ordinary conference. It wasn't academic, nor a succession of artist's talks, it wasn't artistic research or a promotion session for MDT in order to validate their political capital for the local art council. It was not a conference for programmers or organizers, but also not for artists or the audience, researchers or educators. But for who? It was a conference for dance, or perhaps dance and choreography, but not in respect of a reactionary gesture holding on to good old values but instead through an attitude of everything is possible, everything. We were 300 people, from all kinds of and ages of dance that had come together in order to create the future of dance. To extract from it all that belongs to the future



and will make its futures amazing. Nobody had any idea, not even the organizers and that was exactly what made Post-dance such a refreshing (yes, it's a weird word) experience, such a turbulent moment, that kind of crises that makes you feel like laughing.

Post-dance was a conference that refrained from any pampering gesture, it didn't guide its audience or contributors. It didn't ask questions about how to make life more bearable, it didn't set up moments to share, no working groups, it didn't imagine anything better or alternative and it didn't attempt to bring education out of its dark ages of hierarchy, it didn't ask for transparency, fiction or participation. It wasn't even nice. And that was exactly why Post-dance was terrific. It was as if it wanted more darkness, corruption, a sense of being out of focus, not getting to the point and constantly being interrupted by an awkward question. All this made us even more keen to inquire but since there was no authority, nobody accountable, we had to do it on our own, individually or in groups, but we nevertheless had to do it. Post-dance gave us no solace—there wasn't even a backstage area, no VIP corner where the important could celebrate each other, it was all centre court—instead it made us go home with a lot of sensations, emotions and thoughts but none of them was peace, peace of mind or peace in our bodies, instead, peace was exchanged for a kind of productive anxiousness.

Recalling Post-dance, we didn't go home with answers but neither with questions. Instead we went home with a deep sensation that in order not to suffocate, new questions needed to be asked, new answers needed to be given to worn out questions, but most of all, new answers needed to be constructed, answers to which we had no questions. Yet.

Because Post-dance was what it was, not about fact and truth nor academic, but rather a conference that made that Foucaultian move from what is being said in what is being said to what can be said here and now and only here and now, it was a performative conference. A conference that performed conference—as one of the contributors proposed—and as much as it was, it was also something entirely different. It was this conference and not just a conference.

Because Post-dance was what it was it could also not generate a conventional publication. We tried but failed we tried a bit more and failed, luckily not better. We couldn't set up a book documenting and consolidating what we had done, what we had accomplished. The book needed to be something else, a trampoline into the future, it needed to disconnect from here and now, forget about history, forget about self-pleaseness, about fairness and perhaps even decency. It needed to be a starting point, or exactly that which I don't know before it starts and still exactly that that makes it impossible

not to go on. It needed to be precisely it, it was just that we just had no idea what it was.

We made some approximations, talked about what we thought was relevant, wrote a proposal and it came out all wrong, or all right, but definitely not alright because what is in this anthology, its content if you like, is so not comfort zone or Mr. Nice Guy, it's troubling and deeply irritating, deliberately messy and doesn't at all deliver. It's not academic but full of footnotes, it's not artistic however self-obsessed, it's not journalism and not poetry. It's inquiry and it's not unpacking (thank God).

The texts circulate dance in respect of three opportunities, post-dance, sexuality/porn and institutional policy, but to our happiness none of the contributors took us seriously or tried to nail anything at all but instead brought in perspectives and vantage points we were not aware of.

These pages are there for you, start from the middle, use them and misuse them, pretend it's a book by Deleuze and Guattari (just kidding), stand on it, give it to an enemy, just don't use it to confirm us, or anything in it. To spend time with this book is, for us, not a matter of harvesting knowledge and get the picture, it is having a problem, and not just a problem but this problem, to which there is only its solution. Not yet. It is not a matter of getting the picture but producing it.

For a few years, voices have been raised around critique and the decline of dance writing. Critique has lost its potentiality and newspapers don't publish writing on dance any more, or pay so bad that nobody can afford it except the already situated and they are not necessarily good writers. There have been attempts to educate and make it happen, start magazines and webpages. All which are great efforts.

With this book we have decided to take another route. Instead of trying harder with formats that are already available, we decided to attempt the production of a new format. Not a newspaper with occasional dance reviews—so boring, nor a magazine that I have to pay way too much for and never manages specificity—yet another article about the Russian ballet or an unusual Swan Lake (save me), nor a book that is even more expensive, most of which is proof read to the extent that we feel nothing, answers to judges that are mummified, or celebrates choreographers and dance that are retro, and subsequently considered cool.

It's all great but where is the writing, the publications we need to bring with us to tomorrow?

We have no answers, we pose no questions, but we have worked it and a whole lot of people have contributed. It is amazing, and feels very important, there are so many people out there writing and writing great stuff, stuff that has difficulties to find its place. People

contribute from dance: artists, academics, performers, scholars, activists, hobby scholars and a few professors. Together, as if the book was a conversation in a kitchen. Contributing in their own and specific ways, next to each other, giving dance agency, post-dance being a celebration of our art-form to come. We had almost nothing in common except one thing, and that we had a lot of and passionately, dance.

Now it is not ready—the book—but it is bringing us a little bit closer to that beginning we will never reach.



# Generative Fictions, or How Dance May Teach Us Ethics

Alice Chauchat

In her article from 1987 “Dancer and the Dance”, Susan Sontag conflates the dancer and the dance as they engage in a transcendental relationship to choreography. I would like to posit dancing as the relationship between dance and dancer. Choreography frames, composes and in-forms the dancer’s actions, but dance exceeds those actions. Dance is an expression, and it is not the same as its medium, the dancer. Dance and dancer are autonomous, although dance only appears when the dancer dances. Dancing, then, is the relationship at work between the dancer and the dance. Positing a separation between dance and dancer turns dancing into the space between these two. It demands that we experiment with and choose modes of relating, beyond logics of representation (of which dance as self-expression would be the more obvious case, where the dance represents the dancer). Through these poetic and experimental relationships to dance, we may develop ethical relationships to everything we are a part of, as implicated or entangled subjects.

Dancing is as much a close encounter (between dancer and dance) as it contains an unbridgeable distance, an incongruity at its very heart. In this text I will present a series of choreographic scores, which all enact the proposed tension between intimacy and distance. A commitment to what may not be known.

Each score frames and motorizes dance as an autonomous entity, which is alien to the dancer and towards which the dancer performs a particular relationship; a mindset informing her activity. They ask that the dancer acknowledge and honor the share of strangeness—of unknown and unknowable—within this intimate activity. By scrutinizing the demands that each score places on the dancer, I want to propose that dancing might be a privileged terrain for practicing ethical relationship. The fact that these are improvisation scores makes the work of dissociation between the dancer and the dance all the more crucial.

The past century has been permeated with the search for individual expression and emancipation. As best exemplified by the practice of Authentic Movement<sup>1</sup>, improvised dance promised an alignment between inner life and kinetic expression. Refuting the spontaneity of movement as a marker of individual expression opens up the puzzling question of the dance's origin. If dance is an expression, then what does it express?

My working hypothesis is that magic and mystery, whether actual or fictional, can hold the space previous-



ly occupied by notions of authenticity and interiority. Charged with mystery, dance can become our teacher in matters of ethics. Charging dance with magic and mystery might help us understand alterity within our own bodies, so that we can dance ourselves out of our selves and into the world.

I myself have danced the proposed scores. They were developed in the past ten years by dance artists who know each other and who have worked together in various contexts. Therefore these scores might appear as the manifestation of collective research<sup>2</sup>. An important context for cross-pollination has been the yearly TTT/Teachback<sup>3</sup> in Vienna, designed by Jennifer Lacey as a space to doubt and un-do whatever knowledge we (artists who teach) may have acquired regarding dance and pedagogy. TTT/Teachback acted as a catalyst for many shared concerns and curiosities to take new forms. I am writing about these forms from a so-called middle, addressing their conceptual/ethical stakes, and the work and experience they entail, from an implicated perspective.

In our globalized age, our entanglements reach way beyond what we perceive. Every act results from more than one can know, and bears consequences upon more than one knows. In such a situation, what relationship (to ourselves and to the world) can we choose to elaborate on, rehearse, and perform by dancing?

Karen Barad's theory of agential realism, grounded in the study of quantum field theory, proposes that phenomena are "the ontological inseparability of intra-acting agencies". Following this idea, dancing is also an inseparability, whose distinct and entangled agencies would be the dancer and the dance. Can we dance our intra-actions? Can we dedicate our attention—sensorial, kinetic, intellectual, emotional—and train ourselves to perceive the events we are part of but can not entirely comprehend? Can we practice what Barad calls response-ability<sup>4</sup> towards that which we do not grasp? On the base of my examples, I posit dancing as an ethical practice of encounter with alterity: dedicating ourselves to the acknowledgement of otherness within our own existence; committing to apprehend otherness without encroaching on its integrity, without trying to estimate or measure it; engaging in something unqualified that will always exceed whatever we can know of it.

What can it mean, both ethically and practically, to be taken by dance, to attend to dance, to observe/analyze/be interested in dance, as an expression for which we are the medium? Which concrete set-ups can turn dancing into an opportunity to cater to the other in and outside of ourselves, to develop an intimacy with alterity as constitutive of our subjectivity?

**Generative fictions: pretending,  
make(oneself) believe, magic**

The examples I'm about to present share a sense of fictionality. They are stories dancers tell themselves in order to in-form their own sensory-motor activity, imposing imagined and speculated parameters to their activity, creating demands which they must respond to in order to sustain the fiction. These stories tell of meanings hidden from their messengers or their recipients, of telepathy and companionship, of devotion and mystery. They set the conditions for dancers to contemplate and intra-act dance's autonomy, its exteriority and the dancer's capacity to sense this exteriority. Because dance always exceeds dancers' comprehension, these fictional propositions also challenge dancers' capacity to be absorbed or taken by, without merging with, an entity that stays alien to them.

The reason for using fiction is not to show that one is pretending, or to display the fakeness in a revelatory gesture. The aim is to transform oneself and our capacity to perceive, with the help of fiction. If one pretends well enough, to the point of convincing oneself that the fiction is experienced, one is effectively transformed.

**Anarchic instructions:  
Le Feedback des Assistantes**

MANIFEST(O):

To not choose form on principle

To hang morality

To shake the matter enough but not so much as to  
free the dogs

FUNCTION:

To feel oneself as solid, important or “statu(t)e to-  
wards beauty”

INITIATION FABLE:

the bipolar flea moves in on the crocodile

returning from a hunting party, taken over by dizzi-  
ness

you climb the swordfish

the angle is against it, despair pricks you

but patience, light-footed, a thousand offerings to the  
north east

*(feedbacks from dancers to their colleagues in Les  
Assistantes, a performance by Jennifer Lacey & Nadia Lauro  
(2008)*

In Jennifer Lacey's *Les Assistantes* (2008), the performers<sup>5</sup> took turns dancing solos and giving each other feedback of the most tangential kind. It was a role-play of teachers and student, pretending that one should correct the other, and assigning to these cryptic comments

an authority that needs not to prove its own worth. The quotes above hint at the work of interpretation the “students” would need to accomplish: what are the improvements suggested by such a political manifesto? Which moral does the fable give us, acting as guideline for our further dancing? We practiced this ritual every day during the creation periods, accumulating hints for how to dance and practicing dancing with these hints as support and framework. Our dances grew, gaining layer after layer of complexity without any oversee-able master plan. The strategy was to turn on our good will and apply all feedback to the dance, even though parameters of quality were somewhat impossible to point out, given the incoherent and somewhat absurd perspectives given on the same dance by its various viewers. We committed to the incomprehensible and embraced the quasi-absurd (yet not entirely absurd, for the feedback did stem from our observation of the dance!) as an initiation into depth and mystery. Through this sustained commitment to digest in movement every feedback received, our dancing accumulated filters of poetry: semantic fields, narrative motifs, syntactical tactics and rhythmic qualities. Shortcutting a coherent logic was a strategy to open more dimensions to the relationship that is our dancing.

## **Hidden meanings: Oracle Dance and Rebus Dance**

Soon after she created *Les Assistantes*, Lacey launched TTT. The project grew and transformed through practices, issues and ideas brought up by each year's participants. In 2013, questions of reading and interpretation became especially important as many of the persons present brought in their practice of reading theory, tarot, and other interpretive systems<sup>6</sup>. Following up on these investigations, *The Oracle Dance* was developed in 2014<sup>7</sup>. One person poses a question to an interpreter. Several dancers dance the oracle (a cryptic message that demands interpretation) from which the interpreter finds the clues to answer the question in real time. The dancers, ignorant of the question, dance with the awareness that their dance is being read, that it holds a meaning which they do not know themselves. This brings them to strive for an undetermined precision and clarity; to facilitate the projection of a semiotic value onto the dance, without wilfully directing its content. The fact that it is a group dance also shifts the dancers' apprehension of one another, subsequently shifting their communal composition. For the message to remain unknown to the oracle dancers, they must avoid logics of representation, conventions that may be too strongly charged with pre-determined meanings. And still they must attend the dance that is being composed as something "significant" and readable. It is

a work of dis-owning and honoring at the same time.

A similar interest in dance's relationship to readability and opacity drove Alix Eynaudi in the creation of her piece *Edelweiss* (2015). Together with her dancers<sup>8</sup>, Eynaudi created rebus-like dances, or dances that pretended to be rebus, as part of a work in which every element and the overall composition was conceived as one. A rebus is a visual riddle. It is composed of distinct elements, and each element represents an object whose name sounds like a part of the final message. In order to dance like a rebus, we had to create a syntax that would valorize shorter units of movement, treating them as disconnected but distinct gestures. We were working with the taste, or feel, of signification. Whereas the oracle dance relies on the process of interpretation, the rebus dance is a lure for the audience to engage with the feeling of meaningfulness. It resists reading, and maintains open that gap between sensation and content, as a space for unresolved mystery<sup>9</sup>.

Similar to the *Oracle Dance*, the dancer's intention in the rebus dance is geared towards the possibility of meaning, rather than on its verification. One must blur one's own sense of the dance, and dedicate oneself exactly to that which is defined as an absence, as the ungraspable. Precision shifts from the exactitude of a predefined form to the exactness of attention to every passing form, independently from its (dis)similarity to recognizable patterns.

## Hosting the Other in Oneself: Telepathic Dance

During and after the 2014 Teachback, I began developing an idea of unmediated transmission through what I first called *puppeteering*, before changing the name to *Telepathic Dance* so as to evacuate misleading considerations about power dynamics. The principle is that the people watching the dance are transmitting the dance that is being danced by the dancer(s). This is a conceptual fiction, a proposal meant to stimulate a sensorial and relational imaginary. Taking it as a fact, both dancers and watchers go through a process of (dis-)identification. The watchers appropriate the dance as an expression stemming from themselves, and the dancers dis-own the movement impulses as belonging to someone else. Technically, the dancer's attention is very similar to the one practiced in *Authentic Movement* in terms of openness and spontaneity. The difference is conceptual, assigning impulses to exteriority rather than interiority. Whereas *Authentic Movement* posits kinesthesia as a privileged mode of perceiving one's authentic self (Schug, 2010), the *Telepathic Dance* considers movement as an alien expression that traverses the dancer, and kinesthesia as a mode of perceiving otherness. In both practices, impulses vary from thoughts, to sensations, to image, to memory in the form of habits or pattern, or yet uncategorized somethings. No thought, sensation, image or memory is wholly one person's, and



the dancer's response to them, like any phenomenon, is the "inseparability of intra-acting agencies". Paying attention and responding to the impulses that traverse us, allowing them to move us, is a practice in response-ability. Paying attention and accepting authorship for the dance we're watching also means being response-able for what is happening, as a committed actor of the event. It means that we are responsible for that, together, and we will have to bear the consequences together, without being able to calculate each individual share.

**Sensing distance & intimacy within oneself  
and with others: Dance of Companionship**

Parallel to the *Telepathic Dance*, I've also been dancing the Dance of Companionship, both on and offstage, but mostly in studios together with other dancers. The basic premise is to dance in order to keep oneself company and to keep the dance company. Inspired by the ancient work of lady's companions, it is a practice of separating and attending. Observing the companionship between dance and the dancer's sensations (tactile, kinetic, visual, auditory), between dance and the dancer's thoughts, between dance and the movement's form, the score gradually undoes the coherence between dance and every element one knows as being part of dance, or part of the experience of dancing. It opens a series of questions: if dance is not what I perceive, not the way

I move, not what I imagine with my body, then what is dance? This process increases the dancer's attention to the various impressions constituting her activity, at the same time as it establishes distance between these and the dance. As she focuses with ever more detail on her experience, dance as companion of that experience continuously moves away as that which exceeds the dancer's own doings<sup>10</sup>. Dance is a horizon and a companion; a partner that remains unknown, whose unknowability obliges and displaces.

Interspersed with the list of actions/perceptions that keep company to the dance, when I guide the *Dance of Companionship* I describe narrative figures like lady's companion, nurse, toddlers, or hikers, as a support to speculate on the quality of the relationship between dance and these elements. These figures hint at companionship as a skill, at quasi-equality, readiness and availability—atmospheric presence rather than direct interaction—and at falling in- and out-of sync while treading different grounds. Across these, companionship appears as an unobtrusive co-presence, whereby each companion is self-determined yet attentive to the other, acknowledging and allowing the other to change oneself in a subterranean way. It is a chance to value and contemplate reciprocal transformation, intra-action, without trying to measure it. To posit it as a mystery we can honor.

## Conclusion

The assistant's feedback, the oracle letting itself be read without reading itself, the rebus exhaling the smell of meaning without delivering any, the telepath being traversed by a foreign dance, the companion attending to an entity with which she can't identify: all these scores establish intruders as characters in their fiction, demanding that the dancers welcome an alien entity into their own activity, as a constitutive part of it. What is not known is as important as what is known, and otherness is as much a part of ourselves as that with which we usually identify. The strangeness of these tasks calls for a leap of faith. Dancers need to accept that they do not quite know. On the other hand they must also believe that there is something to understand, regardless of its ambiguity. The tone of mystery these fictions entail, making space for the unrecognized, turns their performance into a sensorial and conceptual speculation. They demand that the dancer develops other solutions than control, rationalization and separation in sealed categories. Rather engaging with commitment, curiosity, consideration and empathy, as well as the humorous acceptance to be stupid without letting go of inquisitiveness. Fictions invite pretending as a trigger of intuition, calling in skills we might not know we have. As poetic proposals, they transport a complex of information for social, or relational, sensation<sup>11</sup> insofar as the

dancer considers herself both part of and in relation to something other (the dance, the group, another dancer, a thought etc.). These fictions in-form the quality of these relationships, and hence, the dancer himself. Finally, these scores situate dance as a symptom, an emanation, of more than we can know: of alive, dynamic and engaged entanglements.

### Notes

1. Authentic Movement is a form created in the 1950s by Mary Whitehouse and developed since then by many of her followers. A person moves with her eyes closed in the presence of a witness, attempting to follow every impulse that emerges, in order to come in touch with her "authentic self". Originally a therapeutic practice, Authentic Movement is a favourite of dancers who have been using and abusing it for decades (see Yvonne Meier's work for example).

2. Isabelle Stengers explains very well how sciences are collective endeavours; by gathering and writing across these examples, I wish to show how dance as an artistic and conceptual practice is also such a collective process, even though the field might be structured around notions of authorship and originality.

3. TTT was hosted by Jennifer Lacey 2009–12 and under the name Teachback, by Lacey and myself 2013–15, as a pocket of inefficiency and hesitation in the context of ImPulsTanz Festival Vienna, where "More than 120 internationally renowned teachers and choreographers are heading more than 200 workshops open to beginners, intermediate and professional dancers"

4. Barad, Karen. "Touching is a matter of response. Each of 'us' is constituted in response-ability. Each of 'us' is constituted as responsible for the other, as the other." *On Touching – The Inhuman That Therefore I Am differences* (2012) 23(3): p.215

5. Alice Chauchat, DD Dorvillier, Audrey Gaisan, Jennifer Lacey, Barbara Manzetti, Sofia Neves

6. Teachback participants in 2013 were Paula Caspao, Alice Chauchat, Valentina Desideri, Alix Eynaudi, Denise Ferreira da Silva, Keith Hennessy, Jennifer Lacey, Rasmus Ölme and Angela Schubot

7. Teachback participants in 2014 were Alice Chauchat, Valentina Desideri, Alix Eynaudi, Keith Hennessy, Anne Juren, Jennifer Lacey, Mark Lorimer, Raimundas Malašauskas, Philippe Riéra and Mårten Spångberg

8. Cécile Tonizzo, Mark Lorimer and myself

9. “meaningful” might in fact point towards value and importance, rather than to its dis-abled linguistic function.

10. In “action in Perception” (2004), Alva Noë presents perception as an act. I follow here his proposition to include sensation and thoughts as part of the dancer’s actions.

11. Joan Skinner developed an elaborate use of poetic images as conveyors of information in dance class, replacing analytical descriptions of body and movement: “... in Skinner Releasing Technique the image serves as the carrier of a patterned whole of information—a metaphor for kinesthetic knowledge—which “formulates a new conception for our direct imaginative grasp,” and this metaphor is apprehended intuitively rather than analytically.”

# A Late Night Theory of Post-Dance, a selfinterview

Ana Vujanović

It was around 10 P.M. when I arrived. I found her in one of her temporary apartments. A spacious living and dining room, almost empty, with wooden floors and big windows, curtains wide open. It was in a small, three story building facing Westerpark, in Amsterdam. She made tea and at first looked willing to talk, but when she sat at the table she briefly glanced at the computer screen and then turned her head and looked towards the glass door of the balcony... I saw her withdrawing into herself like a candle in the dark... She sucked the whole energy of the room. Soon after that thought – or was it a feeling? – had arisen, I saw it leave me, and before it was immersed in the energy flow, the feeling-thought turned back, grabbed me by the hand and took me outside of myself. Now externalized, I was observing that wild woman with clear thoughts, who has been ready to abandon them whenever she was asked the right question. I hovered between her and myself. The screen lightened her profile. It didn't say much. She was perfectly calm and only her eyes were moving

rapidly as if she were reading or dreaming. I was under the impression she had forgotten that I was there, and it was not easy to break the silence in which she apparently felt comfortable. But I promised Mårten Spångberg that I would write 15 pages about post-dance and I knew I couldn't do it without her. So... well, fuck it.

AV: It's very late for an interview but I was told you wouldn't mind.

AV: In fact, I prefer it this way. Now I'm a little tired after the whole day of teaching, and it's similar to being drunk or drugged: borders dissolve.

As she started speaking the whole atmosphere changed. When she looked across the room at a big mirror hanging on the wall behind me—or maybe she looked at me?—we both quickly turned back to our common positions within ourselves. Instantaneously, I regained confidence and clarity of mind.

AV: Maybe it's a fruitful ground to open up the cognition to all that which doesn't belong to rational thinking.

AV: It may be.

AV: I find it similar to what you do in your post-dance performances as well. Am I right?

AV: You are. I just wouldn't call it post-dance if it wasn't for Mårten. He wrote to me that post-dance

comes on stage when knowledge is incorporated and so on... I also think it's the moment when think-dance completed its historical role. Epistemically or chronologically, it doesn't really matter. But it was a successful completion.

AV: What then did it leave us with?

AV: With post-dance I guess—the dance which incorporates the knowledge of dance elaborated in think-dance. It is also the dance that doesn't need to confirm all the time that it is smart. ... Maybe we can say that first we have super smart think-dance to ask questions about dance, create problems, and even offer some solutions. We call it *exhausted dance*. Then comes post-dance, which is always-already an exhausted dance but doesn't care about it any longer and explores what else it can be once it... Does it make sense?

AV: Probably... If we compare Xavier Le Roy's *Product of Circumstances*, *Project or Mouvements für Lachenmann* with *Four Choreographic Portraits* by Christine de Smedt, Mårten Spångberg's *Natten* or maybe also Doris Uhlich's *More than Naked*... or... or *Schönheitsabend* by Florentina Holzinger and Vincent Riebeek I think, yes, we see that migration of dance knowledge...

AV: Hm... Does it make post-dance fugitive? Fugitive from knowledge?

AV: Now, when referring to your own work, what would you say?

AV: I would need some time to ponder that.



AV: No problem... I'll make more tea. You want tea?

Ana overheard the question. She stood up and approached the window that looked onto the street. It was snowing, had been for a long time. The late night landscape wasn't changing, except for one scarcely perceptible detail—the layer of the snow lying down on the ground was growing thicker every minute. “We are going to be snowed up!” she suddenly thought. The moment the idea crossed her mind it filled her with horror. Something like in the movies. Something cutting you off from the regular course of life, from all that you know, for an uncertain period of time. Food reserves, water supply, cans, you see!, eating snow?, not having electricity, torches, you see?, blankets! You see? You see!? As her brain pilled up to-be-snowed-up words her body unexpectedly relaxed. As if it ceased to fight and simply surrendered to the burden of the invincible horror to come... Ana sunk into a pleasure of giving in and giving up. She was brought back to post-dance.

AV: I am not sure if it is really about being a fugitive from knowledge. It is more about being a fugitive from only one type of knowledge, the one that results from analytical observation and rational thinking. If cognition should be considered in a much broader sense than the one we commonly hold, then the field of knowledge as a repository of cognitive practices has to be revisited

and broadened as well. Following this line of thought, post-dance isn't about escaping the whole field of knowledge.

AV: Can you say more about the types of cognition you are interested in within your poetics? You said you don't accept that rational thinking is the only way of cognizing the world, right?

AV: Yes, but it's very simple what I mean. I in fact think that apart from rational thinking, which is totally great and we need it more than we do it, humans are capable of creativity, affectivity, intuition, bodily sensation, spiritual insight, etc. These are the ways to perceive the world, to know it and to live in it. ...Already Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela wrote about living as embodied cognition. For them every little and unremarkable living organism that is capable of growing and self-producing, embodies cognition; and when put in an environment, that little worm or even ameba perceives its environment and adjusts to its changes in a super intelligent way without having any mind to analytically observe and direct the process of living.

AV: Interesting. And what is the super intelligent way in which an ameba adjusts to its environment?

AV: It's... like when the environment influences living organisms they undergo numerous internal structural changes, which compensate these perturbations. You see, the changes happen in the structure of the living organism, whereas it manages to preserve its consti-

tutive relations and thereby continues reproducing its identity!

AV: And post-dance...? Is it also about embodying cognition?

AV: Ok, take for instance my *Train journey* (Choreographic étude no. 1). Its elements are very simple and minimal: an excerpt from Robert Musil's *The Perfecting of a Love*, DJ Fleischmann's composition *Take Your Time* and the voice of Alice Chauchat as narrator.

AV: Basically, only audio stimuli...

AV: Almost. You can see Alice sitting on a chair in dimmed violet light, but it's a way weaker stimulus than the audio. In any case, I use all these elements just to choreographically set the conditions for dance to appear. And then dance appears. Not on stage, not in the bodies of dancers, not in front or around audience, but directly in their imagination.

AV: Does it go beyond the kinesthetic experience and back?

AV: I don't really understand the question... Maybe its spatial element confuses me? What I hope for in *Train journey* is not that the audience summon up delicate Claudine traveling in the compartment with a stranger, nor that they depict by a mental brush the pictures of the countryside as they superimpose one over another as the train runs. I hope what starts stirring in their imagination are pitches in Alice's voice, a shivering of Claudine's body, spiritual moments of pouring oneself

over the borders of the private self, flashes of bodily pleasure. That is why there is not much text nor is the music particularly suggestive. All the elements I use are weak, as I see them as triggers for a dance that opens up for not-only-rational cognition.

AV: This all sounds really well planned.

AV: I see where you are going, but it's not a contradiction. It is well planned. It is an artwork, something I want to share with others, something which appears on the public stage and which costs money. However, planning in art cannot protect us from the contingency of processing experience, which undermines existing representational concepts. And that is exactly where I see a need to cultivate other, all other types and ways of cognition. Or, the other way around, to set the conditions for that imaginary dance, which we can now call post-dance, since we have that word.

AV: When did it all start?

AV: Long ago... but I cannot say exactly when. I was certainly deeply impressed by *Four Choreographic Portraits* and... For instance, I remember when I organized a lecture performance and invited Doris Uhlich to retell on stage, in detail her performance *More than naked*. How really to retell it? That was an interesting experiment. How to describe these 20 naked bodies moving, jumping, dancing in 20 different, and even within itself changeable, manners? And how to describe the techno music? Doris Uhlich was sitting half-naked in

front of the audience and struggling to find the right words. She was good but eventually didn't find them. Exactly! She didn't find them because words are not here to describe music but to describe thoughts. That is why we are so good when it comes to thinking and so miserable when we turn to emotions, feelings, spirituality...

AV: You don't think it is the other way around—that affects cannot find their matches in words and we need to try harder?

AV: No, it is the words that were never meant to be a means for any other cognition but rational thinking.

AV: I see. How indeed to describe a color, a taste, a feeling or a tune with words?

AV: Genau! And when I became interested in setting choreographic conditions for a different dance to appear, I realized that for that venture I didn't need dancers. I needed weak indications, loose anchors of perception, provisional stimuli, and words that offer resonance of their sound rather than meaning...

AV: But still, *Train journey* is not a whatever-it-means; it's eventually a feminist piece.

AV: Maybe eventually. But it's a long journey to that last instance, and many audience members never even come to that point. That is also all right, though a pity.

AV: You know, listening to how you describe it now, maybe your post-dance works are all feminist because that is how you understand post-dance itself.

AV: Um... you mean because of escaping western, male, white, hetero rationality?

AV: Yes!

AV: Then yes, for me post-dance is a feminist venture. It's still a very wide horizon, but yes...

I was afraid she would leave me again. Her eyelids lowered and I saw her entering the veery wwwwiide horizon as if she were enchanted. I reacted by raising my voice:

AV: Think about other examples – *Karagöz, The Black Eye* (Choreographic étude no. 3) for instance. What we have on stage are Elena Ferrante's story of two dolls – from *My Brilliant Friend* I think – soundtracks from Italian neorealist movies – I don't know which ones – and two narrators: Christine de Smedt and Bojana Cvejić.

AV: Yes, and we see their black silhouettes on a translucent screen, like in the shadow play. In Ottoman Empire it was called 'Karagöz theatre', after the name of one of its protagonists. Anyway, I don't expect the audience to be familiar with the history of the Ottoman Empire's theatre so that they can identify Christine and Bojana or Elena and Lila as Karagöz and Hacivat. It is of course exciting to have that trigger as well, but it's not crucial. I wanted the audience, which is mostly European, to chew that word, 'Karagöz', especially because of the transition from 'g' to 'ö'.

AV: And dance in this piece appears mostly in the dialogue between Christine and Bojana.

AV: Um... yes, but it is never a metaphor for thought. For me, dance emerges from the pauses in their dialogue. Otherwise, the story is well-thought and self-contained: two girlfriends, Elena and Lila play with their dolls in a workers' suburb of Naples and throw the dolls, one after another into the cellar of the local loan-shark Don Achille. There is nothing to be thought further about the story, whilst it can open the audience's black eye to a number of digressions, futures, pasts... Maybe it's naïve, but I want the pauses in the narrative to work like scissors that cut out an empty space in the spectators' and listeners' selves, which is of the shape of the pauses. And then the audience can fill that hollow with imaginaries, which are sometimes thought, but more often sensed, intuited, felt...

AV: What for instance?

AV: Something like walking through ourselves, populated with others.

She made a gesture towards *The Street Window*. I was sitting across her and while my gaze was following her hand and I was murmuring: "Whoever leads a solitary life and yet now and then wants to attach himself somewhere, whoever, according to changes in the time of day, the weather, the state of his business and the like, suddenly wishes to see any arm at all to which he might cling – he will not be able to manage for long without a window looking on to the street. And if he is in the

mood to not desire anything and only goes to his window sill a tired man, with eyes turning from his public to heaven and back again, not wanting to look out and having thrown his head up a little, even then the horses below will draw him down into their train of wagons and tumult, and so at last into the human harmony.”, the new geometry of the interview became evident: a line was running from her to me, from me, with a sharp angle, it turned to the balcony door, it hit the glass and in a slower pace went back toward her, slightly curving, it tackled her gently and proceeded toward the window, where it vanished.

AV: ...In that piece I worked with two experiences. One is the sensation of a summer afternoon on the Croatian Adriatic coast. Imagine someone alone in a big bed, daydreaming after a nap. But one is never alone. The window is open, and from the street something like sounds of an open food market enter and thrill her body. She feels small prickles. It's a tingling sensation of light disturbances by others—sewing needles!—and at the same time a feeling of belonging to them.

AV: An in-between experience?

AV: It could be... It points to two streams, almost opposite, which act simultaneously upon one's body. One stream tends to close in on itself and protect the individual body from others, while the other ultimately opens the body to an irresistible belonging to everybody. ...It's not that one hears the sounds of food



market, rather what she perceives right behind her shoulder, almost touching her skin can 'be described' as a multitude of female voices, where some high peaks of Italian or Dalmatian from time to time distinguish themselves from the generic noise.

AV: This is what you see as a post-dance?

AV: Yes, the rhythm of peaks and noise. The peaks go high and the noise spreads horizontally. The competing sounds... And on an ontological level—which I see as existential as it is social—post-dance happens in the divergent streams that I mentioned before, when one is on the verge of being alone, unique, private and already being another.

AV: But again, one doesn't hear that sound by the ear—the sound the audience hears comes from the soundtrack—nor does she see the food market. The experience you describe resides in the empty space of oneself, which takes the shape of the pauses in the dialogue, right?

AV: I imagine it that way. And of course I am far from being certain about what is happening in the audience while attending *Karagöz, The Black Eye*. The pauses may trigger very different feelings, associations and sensations, and they can well fail in cutting out its double in the selves of the spectators and listeners. But that was the experience I worked on, trying to choreograph the sensorial conditions for it to appear.

...I imagined a very long sewing machine with hundreds of needles, orderly arranged in a row. Needle, needle, needle, Needle... They work according to a clear pattern: every third needle goes up, two in between go down. And that is how a wave travels along the needle row. The whole machine is turned over, like a beetle turned on its back. The female voices from the food market are stuck on the tips of the needles, which resemble beetle's legs, sewing nothing. Just struggling for life. Or dancing: 1, pause, pause, 4, pause, pause, 7...

AV: And what was the other experience you worked on?

AV: Hm, it's even harder to put into words...

AV: Is it again a physical sensation?

AV: A kind of... maybe an experience of pressure and friction at the same time... With some soft material. No, wait, soft on surface and hard inside...

AV: Like rubber?

AV: Um... yes, a quite hard rubber. And then there are two massive things, which press hard against each other. But since both move, rotate around their axes, they produce a lot of friction...

AV: And the body is in-between these two things?

AV: Well, no... The body is these two things moving together. It is an inside movement. Very warm and slow since the pressure is strong, preventing these things from rotating fast. So they put a lot of energy in ro-

tating, while struggling against the energy exerted on them.

AV: Can we imagine that movement as something happening between two circular whetstones?

AV: Ha, interesting! But they are covered with rubber instead of flint... And they rotate in opposite directions.

AV: I see. And they have no purpose, like sharpening knives or similar...

AV: No, what is happening is just that, putting hard pressure on each other, because of their great weights and trying to rotate resisting the pressure and its own rubbery surface.

AV: Why is this experience important for you? Why do you want to share it in a performance?

AV: Because... You know, these two sensations marked my entire childhood. It's not something we usually speak about. But they were indeed the strongest experiences of living I had at the time. They would come out of the blue and stay there with me, usually when my mind was not occupied by anything special. I had to endure them. Enduring them was an intensification of living for which I didn't have words or ideas to express or analyze. Later, as I grew up, around the age of ten I became capable of describing them with the words I use tonight as well. These metaphors didn't progress, and I have never been able to say more. And even back then I knew that what I felt was not what I described as a multitude of female voices at a food market or two circular

whetstones rotating and pressing each other; they were mere metaphors.

AV: But you liked the feeling of domesticating these sensations with metaphors?

AV: Certainly, because that was the moment when my indistinguishable existence got some personal contours. And look, soon after I had managed to describe these sensations I was able to recall them when I wanted.

AV: How? By imagining these metaphors?

AV: Yes, I would slow down my breathing, imagine these metaphors and the sensations would come. It was especially important since they appeared more and more rarely as I grew up...

AV: It was childish...

AV: Childish or not, I felt an urge to preserve them, somewhere, in the realm that never belonged to me but where I was always able to enter as if I bore it inside.

AV: And now, do you still have these sensations?

AV: They don't appear by themselves and I rarely manage to recall them through metaphors. That is why I wanted to explore them by other means and share them on stage.

AV: And what does it have to do with post-dance?

AV: I would firstly like to return to your comment that it was a childish experience of existence. I'd agree that probably it has to do with developmental phases of cognition in children. We first have sensations, then start thinking a bit, then communicate our thoughts, then

recognize them as ours etc. But what I am interested in now is to explore these sensations *after* the audience members and I, as adult humans, have cultivated our capacity to think rationally.

AV: Again, that 'after' can be either chronological or epistemic...

AV: It doesn't matter since I don't deal with history, and in my work the synchronic composition of the field of cognition has priority over its diachronic development. And exactly in these synchronic interstices of cognition I see post-dance. To be clear, it is not a pre-modern dance; it is not a return to the nature, the origin, the roots, the pre-rational authenticity of the body... Far from that. Once again: it is what comes after the dance performed its capacity to think.

The last words stayed with me. They invoked images of dance I had seen in old photos, books, videos, on stage, in the street, in movies... Plenty of them. Laban's movement choir, Zulu war dance, a widening gulf of time in Eszter Salamon's NVSBL, Judson Church public showings, two young men doing contact improvisation, Sasha Waltz saying dance is a universal language, Maga Magazinović's studio in Belgrade, ballet dancers in tutus and pointe shoes, Wigman's expressionist dance, Jérôme Bel sitting on stage across Frédéric Seguet, a variete, a lecture of Dorothea von Hantelmann speaking about the experiential turn in art as opposed to

performativity, Pina Bausch smoking at a rehearsal, a Polish Movement Institute's performance with office clerks... It was a mess. And when these images became three-dimensional they started behaving like dying fish on a boat deck, moving, fidgeting, jerking, sliding along each other's slimy bodies, jumping rapidly to catch the last breath, distorted with convulsions, and multiplying endlessly. They filled me and I felt mucous inside... It was long after when I heard Ana saying:

AV: ...witch dance for instance.

AV: Witch?

AV: I mean that sort of embodied knowledge.

AV: And one question that intrigues me: Do you think post-dance cannot be danced on stage? Can it only happen in audience's imaginary?

AV: It's a good question, but I am not sure I can give a satisfying answer at the moment. In my performances most of the dance results from the work of imagination. What we see on stage are choreographic conditions. Sets of elements in certain relations that trigger, associate, call, evoke or invoke certain movements of human cognition, a vast variety. And as far as I understand the term, we can call it post-dance. But on the other hand, we cannot speak about post-dance without mentioning *Four Choreographic Portraits*. In these performances Christine de Smedt, the author and performer, certainly moves and her movements can be called 'dance' in an unorthodox sense of the word. But if we let ourselves be

devoured by her dance, from that speculative position, an 'indance' position all that could be seen as setting conditions for a virtual dance to appear in the audience members themselves.

AV: What exactly? Can you be more specific?

AV: I can read an excerpt from my writing on that performance, so that it becomes clearer:

...Besides that choreographic configuration, I must mention here de Smedt's performing mode. In how she performs those authors there is a superimposition between the figures of four investigated authors and Christine de Smedt's figure. In that constant negotiation, which takes place in the body, she is neither a neutral painter of these portraits nor does she paint her self-portrait by referring to them. Her body is not transparent, as it would be in realistic theatre; it is opaque in its heavy materiality. However, as such it incorporates elements of the four choreographers' figures whilst inscribing its own parts in those figures and oeuvres. The incorporated elements of others' range from concerns to sensibilities, exposing the private, characteristic set ups, dance materials etc., while de Smedt gives them back the specificities of her body, the way of speaking in public as well as her creative construction of the four figures. In that way, she creates a vibrant interplay of between herself and themselves, which in performing exceeds each and all individuals at play here.

AV: Ok, I kind of see now. De Smedt's performing body is a dance or even post-dance body since it contains the knowledge of dance, it's constituted by it, but it also fosters us to change the focus and see it as a frame for a virtual post-dance to appear out of it. Like we cannot really see the process of exchanging corporeality, but we can sense it while observing her body work on stage.

AV: Something like that. But it is hard to achieve. What fascinates me with Christine de Smedt is that she manages to maintain both cognitive realities of dance, the actual and the virtual.

AV: My impression is that they separate from each other, while emanating from the same body.

AV: Yes, but with one important remark: In my view there is neither ontological nor epistemic need for the virtual cognitive reality of dance to be virtual. Therefore, post-dance is not necessarily virtual. It is virtual only because we still need to nurture a variety of cognitive capacities and practices, and then, at one point we will be able to actualize them in a communicative, intelligible way. Christine de Smedt went far with that and as a result, in *Four Choreographic Portraits*, dance appears both on stage and in the imaginary, while in my performances it takes place only in the imaginary, still as a larva, an immature free-living form.

When I heard 'larva', I shuddered. Just for a moment.



AV: Namely, you don't know how to insert it into a physical body.

AV: I don't. I know it's about metamorphosis, since the larva never resembles its parents, but I still don't know how to carry it out. I'm afraid of becoming either too illustrative or too mystical...

AV: When observing *Four Choreographic Portraits* through your post-dance lens, I'd say that in these four performances, taken separate, we see how a certain author-figure or poetics is being shaped, on which premises and through which processes. But if we look at all of the performances together, we can follow how the general choreographic intellect travels from author to author, how it fluctuates between them. For instance, Eszter Salamon's frontal monologue has its match in Xavier Le Roy's dialogical after-talk and Jonathan Burrows narration of his childhood memories, and the same aspiration comes again, from the back, with Alain Platel as a mute subject of others' perceptions of him.

AV: I like the way you said it. And for me, those fluctuations have a post-dance quality.

AV: Shall we try to give them some socio-historical outline?

AV: I wouldn't be able... or maybe it contradicts the thrust toward not cognizing everything with rationality. But the choreographic gesture of initiating the fluctuation for sure has socio-historical contours. Maybe it's all about some other, new, unknown modes of living to-

gether. About showing not only how these authors differ among themselves, but also how they contribute to what we today see as contemporary European choreography. It's their common achievement. That choreography is not the one that existed before them: it changed common premises of dance and left them, charged with open potentials for new dance poetics and practices, like post-dance for instance.

AV: Here we see why the collective shouldn't be demonized as what contests singularity; it can indeed strengthen it. Namely, these authors and their poetics don't eventually lose their characteristics in the fluctuation; they appear within *Four choreographic portraits* indispensable both in how they actualize the choreographic general intellect and in how they invest in the creation of contemporary European choreography.

AV: Yes, for Lila it would be about 'dissolving borders' while Bojana and I would call it 'transindividuality', but I am still somewhat reserved toward outlining it in socio-historical terms.

AV: At the end we can mention your *Choreographic étude no. 2: A Coffeehouse*. You made that work together with Bojana Cvejić and Marta Popivoda, right?

AV: I'd rather speak about Spångberg's *Natten*... But it's really too late... and I think we have enough pages.

AV: Oh, it's already 1.30 A.M.! Ok then, let me check... check... check... No, we have 13 pages.

AV: Then add spaces.

AV: Errrrr... Pfff... No, let's finish it like a regular interview! Especially since we didn't have time to talk about Etude no. 2, tell me where one can see your post-dance performances.

AV: I told you everything—one cannot see them.

AV: Ok, I got it: where can one see the choreographic conditions for dance you set on stage?

AV: No, really, these performances exist only in our imagination. Or they don't.

AV: Oh! ...Don't you love the theatre, the illusion of the stage?

AV: Claudine said... or it was Alice: "What I value in art is the subtlety of the right ending, which consoles us from the humdrum of everyday life. Life is disappointing, so often depriving us of the effect on which the curtain should fall. If we were to leave it at that, wouldn't it mean accepting the bleak matter-of-factness of things?"

I turned to reading the notes I had just made. Letters on the screen somehow drew a little closer to one another and the interview shrank to 12 and a half pages. Damn! Who would believe that?

Ana went to the bedroom as if she was not a freelance writer whose workday never ends.

Ha, she thought she would be able to fall asleep while

I was working. ...However, soon after she realized she needed me to be her dumb pillow:

AV: You really can't come?

AV: Quite impossible, you know. I must try to get this job finished as fast as I can.

AV: But I would be so pleased.

AV: I know. Oh, I know...

I tiptoed to the bedroom. When she saw me in the doorway fluffy like a pillow, she simply said: Turn off the light please.

# Choreography and Pornography<sup>1</sup> (working notes for an essay to come)

André Lepecki

## A)

In her book *Pornography, the Theory* (which is tellingly subtitled, “What Utilitarianism Did to Action”) literary theorist Frances Ferguson advances the main reason why pornography is a key entryway into the rationality that produced modernity and its corporeal realities: “**pornography raised issues for modernity that were not being addressed**” by other disciplines or practices.

For Fergusson, one of the main issues that pornography raised, is that when “**talking about pornography**” one is **also and inevitably and always talking** about those “**basic techniques developed by utilitarian philosophers** [such as David Hume and Samuel Bentham] and practitioners that were **designed to capture actions and give them extreme perceptibility.**” (p. ix).

Now, I could not think of a better definition of **choreography**, which indeed can be described as a “technique designed to capture actions and give them extreme

perceptibility.” A technique moreover, whose history, as a body discipline of extreme kinetic perceptibility, parallels **exactly** the rise of pornography as a repurposed genre in European modernity.

[Insert here **note** on how pornography re-emerges in the 17th century >> **Foucault** in his 1978 lecture *Governmentality* sees the rise of governing and governance endure sustained rationalization as emerging “from the middle of the 16th to the late 18th century.” **“Government as a general problem seems to me to explode in the 16th century”** (Foucault.) Note how Arbeau’s *Orchesographie*, 1589 is published in French (not Latin), following in a very interesting way the 1539 **Ordinance of Villers-Cotterêts** that made French the official language for all **legal** publications (Note also how *Orchseography* is a dialogue between a JUDGE and a LAWYER on this new technology for the first time fusing “movement” and its “writing”; Note also Feuillet’s *Choreographie*, 1700. Under the direct force of Louis XIV]

## B)

So, what happens when we approach the invention of these **two new early technologies of action-capturing** [a third technology would be **cinema**, which fuses both choreography’s and pornography’s

nature as **apparatuses of capture**, thus completing photologically and photo-kineto-choregraphically the scopic project of utilitarian actionism.

Interestingly, as Linda Williams has shown in her classic book *Hard Core*, the invention of cinema is deeply bound to “**an unprecedented conjunction of pleasure and power [which] ‘implants’ a cinematic perversion of fetishism in the prototypical cinema’s first halting steps towards narrative**” p. 39].

What happens, when we see choreography and pornography as **necessary co-developments of a whole new understanding of the function of the body within the biopolitical logic of governmentality** starting to shape the body’s governance and the governance of actions—including the actions of desire, the motilities and arrangements of those actions into sexual encounters—from the 16th throughout the 18th century; i.e. throughout the formative years of choreography and of pornography as we understand these 2 forms of **writing bodies, of writing on bodies** [“**pornography**”: etymologically “**writing on the bodies of whores**”], today?

As far as pornography is concerned, Ferguson gives us a clear answer to this question:

“The revival of **pornography** in the late 18th century

(...) **involved biopolitics** in a fuller sense than that we have usually appreciated in adopting Foucault's use of the term **because pornography was not routing its claims through beliefs**—however affectively intense—but rather through descriptions of actions.”

And, she continues: “**pornography does not merely recommend particular sexual experiences, as if to have its actors say ‘try this, you’ll like it.’ It also, as is most intensely clear in de Sade’s writings, arranges its participants.**”

It is in this double sense, **as intense description and as prescribed arrangement of bodies in action** (that may or may not be sexual action) that pornography constitutionally operates always in a double field of affects and effects:

1) on one hand, **pornography** participates in a **generalized policing and disciplining of the body**, by turning “the impalpability of action itself” into a visible, measurable, describable, and repeatable set of conduct (which can be turned into a new repertoire of sexual chore-techniques);

2) on the other hand, **pornography** plunges so intensely into its project of hyper-description for the sake of explicit “extreme perceptibility,” that it finds itself inevita-



bly drowning in **delirium**: not necessarily the delirium of sex, or the delirium of flesh and fluids mingling in uncountable pleasures, but rather, the **delirium of kinetic rationality**: that mode of **reasoning governance** that understands every single human action as something that can be subjected to optic capture, accurate description, proper archiving, and eventual **reproduction** or **repression** as action—depending on whether that action is sanctioned or censored.

But as **pornography** resurfaces as a new genre (literary and behavioral; sexual and imaginative; kinetic and critical) along with what we could call **bio-choreo-political power**, some unexpected epiphenomena start to leak out of its relations to political utilitarianism. Namely, pornography's **virtual** (since we are talking here about writing) **sexual kineticism** reveals its capacity to undo biopower. It does so by bringing to the perceptual surface counter-techniques of pleasures and micro-perceptual repertoires of actions that threaten the very project of biopolitical disciplinarian control of conduct. This is particularly clear in the writings of de Sade.

NOTE: De Sade's writings are central to 2 projects I would like to analyze in depth in the essay to come: Mette Ingvarsten's "To Come" (2005) and Ralph Lemon's "The Graphic Reading Room" (2015), particularly Lemon's invitation of Yvonne Rainer to read out

loud from Sade's 120 Days of Sodom before an audience for one hour.

As **Pierre Klosowski** wrote in his 1947 book on de Sade: "Sade, liquidating the norms of reason, pursues the disintegration of man"; He "wishes to free thought from all pre-established normative reason".

Meanwhile, **choreography** had already learned that its normative impulse was also being put under threat by those very entities it wanted to govern: a) bodies in interaction, b) bodies in intramotion, and c) the "autonomies of affect" (Massumi, 2003). In the age of bio-choreo-power, **choreography** learned that to render actions hyper-visible through methodical engagement of language and image was, simply, an impossible task: since actions, language, and motions keep escaping total description, keep eluding apparatuses of capture.

NOTE: PIERRE RAMEAU. How throughout "The Dancing Master" (1725) Rameau continuously expresses his **anxiety** regarding his capacities to linguistically express and to draw that which is essentially un-capturable: movement (Deleuze; Bergson).

The rise of **choreography** at the same time as **pornography** is the outcome of a **new materialism** (new for the 17th and 18th century) that starts to justify the

principles governing individual action according to a new logic of cosmo-theo-anthropo-political consequences: “what Michel Foucault identifies as the “invention of Man”: that is, by the Renaissance humanists’ epochal re-description of the human outside the terms of the then theocentric, “sinful by nature” conception/“descriptive statement” of the human, on whose basis the hegemony of the Church/clergy over the lay world of Latin-Christian Europe had been supernaturally legitimated (Chorover, 1979). While, if this re-description was effected by the lay world’s invention of Man as the political subject of the state, in the transumed and reoccupied place of its earlier matrix identity Christian, the performative enactment of this new “descriptive statement” and its master code of symbolic life and death, as the first secular or “degodded” (if, at the time, still only partly so) mode of being human” (Sylvia Wynter). This new autokinetic invention, modern Man, is the invention of a principle of motor autonomy (the “auto-mobile” [Sloterdijk]), which thus necessitates **policing, governance**, upon this motor- autonomy of the individual social/sexual actor-mover. No wonder the SUN-KING must be a DANCING KING, but also a CHOREOGRAPHER. No wonder Sade places the actions of 120 days of Sodom on the last days of Louis XIV reign, i.e., post the publication of Feuillet’s *Choreographie*.

Again, Pierre Klosowski finds in de Sade the principles of this **impersonal kinetic logic**, grounded in the “materialist philosophy” of La Mettrie, Helvetius, but also

with strong influences from Spinoza (which de Sade's Juliette reads, at a certain point) being both made explicit and critiqued from within by taking the choreo-sexual-political logic of it to the very limits of its un-reasonability. Klosowski summarizes: "To admit matter in the state of perpetual motion as the one and only universal agent is equivalent to consenting to live as an individual in a state of perpetual motion."

We can see the dangers of this perpetual capacity for motion if set free from biopower.

### C)

In short: both **choreography** and **pornography** do have normative drives, and scopic-utilitarian genealogies; HOWEVER—once those drives are taken to their absolute limit, rationally and somatically, discursively and sexually, imaginatively and fleshly, they start to dangerously undermine governmentality, through that very **excess** that **founds** the **body** as perpetual uncapturable sets of movement.

Indeed, as **pornographers** starts to minutely and closely **describe**, or as readers start to attentively **introject** pornographic descriptions, its convoluted actions, motions, gestures, noises, the enfleshed assemblages that compose the pornographic rhetorical arrangement of

sexual intercourses eventually lead both pornographer and reader to face the fact that any rational hope for objective, rational, “indifference” is nothing but “fruitless” – to use **Linda William’s** felicitous expression [in *Hard Core*] describing the total **epistemological collapse** that inevitably derives from those inescapable **affective surges** (surges of excitement, surges of outrage, surges of boredom, surges of laughter, surges of lust, etc.) that pornography occasions—even on the most analytical/neutral/objective-inclined of minds.

~~Introduce Graphic Reading Room (Fall 2015, The Kitchen)~~

~~Yvonne Rainer: If the 18th century initiates polizeiwirtschaft de Sade sees at the kernel of power the violence of anarchy, but which the State disavows, even though practicing it. In this sense, de Sade is prescient and so is Y-Rainer: minute 34:19.~~

D)

To write and to read **pornography** is to dilute analytical mind, even if momentarily, in deliria of flesh, meat, words, images, imaginations, and more or less voluntary more or less involuntary motions. In **pornographic description**, very particular “autonomies of affect” take over the body of the reader, of the viewer, of the cartog-

rapher of bodies in sexual inter-action: quantitatively, **hearts** accelerate, **blood** rushes outwards, **arteries** contract, **organs** intumesce, **minds** spin, **mouths** salivate, **fingertips** tingle, spasms ripple the **flesh**, the whole body fuses with imagination in an **amalgam of affects and motions** taken up by **fever**—be it **lust** fever or **disgust** fever. Taken over by that very thing that pornography wants to capture (i.e., by the hyper-mobility of the infinite kinetic and affective inter-actions that make sex remake bodies), it is the whole project of biopolitical rationality that falls apart. As the pornographer describes with ever more detail the “perceptible (sexual) body for an otherwise impalpable abstraction,” we sense how **abstraction** can also be deeply palpable, **palatable**, and moving. ~~since its name is pleasure, which, unleashed cuts across the disciplinarian/utilitarian project, as the pornographer (whether writer or reader) drops paper and pen, is taken over by the delirious force contained in every detailed corporeal description and surrenders to masturbation, or a plunge into inconfessable fantasies—those even more impalpable, even more invisible, even more uncontrollable, truly autonomous, actions of the lustful mind.~~

E)

From de Sade: “The salon shall be heated to an unusual temperature, and illuminated by chandeliers. All present shall

be naked: storytellers, wives, little girls, little boys, elders, fuckers, friends, everything shall be pell-mell, everyone shall be sprawled on the floor and, after the example of animals, shall change, shall comingle, entwine, couple incestuously, adulterously, sodomistically, deflowerings being at all times banned, the company shall give itself over to every excess and to every debauch which may best warm the mind.”

(Note on “pell-mell,” from Old French pelle-melle, mixture of skins.)

The orgiastic disintegration of man through the **animal-like** mixtures of bare skins and a-rational **minds boiling** to the point of undoing governmental rationality is particularly clear in de Sade, where, as Pierre Klosowski notes, pornography is the genre that allows de Sade to create a powerful “critique of normative reason,” which, at its outmost limit, ends up “liquidating the laws of reason, as it pursues the disintegration of man.” (p. 5 [1947]).

Paradoxically, it is the **choreographic nature at the core of pornography** (the arrangement of bodies, the making bodies hyper-visible for the sake of describable inter-actions) that undermines from within the utilitarian/disciplinarian dream of making the entire social field visible, to arrange that visibility according to predetermined motions, and to regulate **sexual motion** as kind of **social engineering**.

Jacobs: “Both the pornographic literature and the philosophical treatises of the new science postulate a private space where nothing matters but the force of projectiles, the compulsive pushing and pulling of bodies”.

This is also one of the points that **Simone de Beauvoir** makes in her essay “Must We Burn Sade?” (1955)—but she takes that further to find in that compulsion the very source for a critique of the kinetic-violent nature at the heart of the (ir)rationality that fuels the compulsion to power in the era of governmentality. But, perhaps, at this point, we could give the word to a choreographer, to expand on this point:

[QUOTE: Yvonne Rainer reading in TGRR, minute 9.19 //

Minute 34.14]

## F)

Explain why de Sade’s *120 days of Sodom* is the intertext to make this text to come. Two main reasons. **First**, because de Sade has emerged explicitly in a recent choreo-pornographic project by American choreographer **Ralph Lemon**, titled *The Graphic Reading Room* (2015), where Judson choreographer and feminist



film-maker **Yvonne Rainer** was asked by Lemon to read from *120 days...* [Comment on Rainer's several remarks throughout her one hour long reading of mostly **Simone de Beauvoir's** "Must we burn Sade?" on the critical-political impetus in Sade's writings, particularly his anarchy, and on the irrationality of the rationality behind State power/violence.]

[NOTE: The complete line up of books/readers for Lemon's The Graphic Reading Room was:

1. Lynn Tillman: *Weird Fucks* (2015): read by Lynn Tillman
2. Chris Krause: *I Love Dick* (1997): read by Tim Griffin
3. Dennis Cooper: *Frisk* (1992): read by Matthew Lyons
4. David Wojnarowicz: *Close To The Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration* (1991): read by Miguel Gutterez
5. Kathy Acker: *Rip Off Red, Girl Detective* (1973), *Empire of the Senseless* (1988), *In Memoriam of Identity* (1990): read by April Matthis
6. Samuel R. Delany: *Equinox* (1973): read by Okwui Okpokwasili
7. Charles Platt: *The Gas* (1970)
8. Iceberg Slim: *Pimp* (1967): read by Fred Moten
9. Mary McCarthy: *My Confession* (1954): read by Gary Indiana
10. Marquis de Sade: *120 Days of Sodom* (1785), Simone

de Beauvoir: Must We Burn Sade (1953) read by  
Yvonne Rainer

**Secondly**, because de Sade situates the action of 120 days taking place in the last years of Louis xiv reign (1643–1715) – again the relation to **Feuillet** is crucial.

There is a kind of maximal micro-cartography of power in de Sade, particularly the power of Liberal Reason, and the kind of sovereignty it affirmed as the new juridical-political ground for human existence. It is telling that historian **Margret C. Jacobs**, in her essay “The Materialist World of Pornography,” reminds us that **“during the reign of Louis xiv (1643–1715), the pornographic and the obscene began to battle with the authorities of the church and state”**.

This is important for the history of choreography not only because Louis XIV was a dancer-king, not only was he the founder of the first Academy of Dance (1661), but it was under his direct sponsorship that the first book bearing the word “Choreography” was published – heralding thus the first appearance of this new science of movement discipline, this technology of action-visibility, this new way to graphically and discursively manage body discipline, in 1700. [NOTE: must include here discussion of **Mark Franko’s** essay on engravings and paintings depicting Louis XIV and Franko’s political readings of the rhetoric of power in the prominent display of the

**king's legs** as being in itself a theater of power over kinetic principles of sovereignty (link to my essay on "choreopolicing".]

It is interesting to see the conflation in **Ralph Lemon's** work between choreography and pornography through literature. In his recent project titled *The Graphic Reading Room*, which accompanied the exhibition of his visual art works and the opening of a new performance piece at **The Kitchen** in NYC (Fall 2015), Lemon invited Yvonne Rainer to read *120 days of Sodom*.

### G)

**Pornography** is to **sex** what **choreography** is to dance. Sex **does** to dance what pornography **does** for choreography.

[Link Mette Ingvarstsen's blue bodies in the first part of "To Come" with Margaret Jacobs' insight on how **materialist philosophy's kinetic rationality** is akin to **pornography**:

"The universe of the bedroom created by the materialist pornographers stands as the analogue to the physical universe of the mechanical philosophers. In both, bodies were stripped of their texture, color and smell, of their qualities, and encapsulated as entities in mo-

tion, who's very being is defined by that motion."

Link the voicing of previously taped orgasms in "To Come" with Rainer's observation on minute 32 of her reading from Sade and Beauvoir: "I am curious. **Are you here for de Sade, or for me?**"]

#### Notes

1. These notes for a text to come were the base for a brief talk I delivered at the symposium "Experiments in Sex" held at NYU's Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality. I am grateful to Ann Pellegrini, CSGS's director, for her invitation. I am also thankful to the postgraduate students who took my seminar "Choreography and Pornography" at NYU in the Spring of 2016. These ideas were developed alongside them. Thanks also to Mårten Spangberg for his invitation to contribute to this volume and to his relentless capacity to insist.

# Keynote address for the Postdance Conference in Stockholm

Jonathan Burrows

Good morning and welcome.

Andre Lepecki suggested to me that this Postdance  
Conference

was an opportunity to find time and space

(and he underlined time and space)

to reflect on the developments and forces that have  
shaped choreographic imagination

from the 1960s up to today,

and when I saw the underlining of time and space

I felt the terrible weight of the choreographic

and the task ahead of us.

How do we talk about this recent history of dance?

How can we recognise the present?

Or imagine what might happen next?

What do you want to hear?

What could I possibly say?

History is a straight line but my body disagrees,

there's stuff in my motor memory still thinks it's 1978  
and my body isn't good with dates,  
or aesthetic arguments,  
or what's in or out of fashion.

I'm trying to work out how to approach this  
without academic certainty  
and at the same time without nostalgia,  
but I need the thought of the academy to keep me  
steady because my body can't be trusted,  
and nostalgia comes and goes  
as always.

This talk is pretty much subjective for want of a clear  
picture,  
and to see what my body might think about history, in  
relation to future, if I risked to ask it.

And it turns out I have a lot of steps in me going way  
back  
and some of them are in fashion and some of them are  
very suspect,  
but my body is remarkably unprejudiced against these  
patterns  
and throws them up old against new with a steely logic  
that I try not to trust.

And it turns out the nostalgia gets swallowed up in

movement

and everything seems equal when you dance.

It's a hard-hearted art form when it comes down to it,  
and you think of the time it takes to figure anything out  
and the speed it takes to date itself shortly after,  
and then thinking how far ahead that dated stuff will sit  
in your muscles,

and you're on your death bed and your legs are still  
thinking about sub-Cunningham dance routines.

Judson for my generation

was contact and release techniques,

the women's movement and improvisation

and back then nobody talked much about Trio A.

To watch Trio A you had to wait in line at the New York  
Public Library

and be passed a U-matic videotape through a hole in the  
wall,

which you watched with headphones on

in front of a TV set in a crowded public room.

It was so exotic.

Meanwhile a lot of what passed into our bodies came  
through a kind of osmosis

that flowed from dancer to dancer,

and everything seemed possible and unburdened by

historical proof.

I went to the Dartington Festival in England in 1980 or  
1981

(as I said before, my body's not so good with dates)  
and I ended up by accident in a recreation Steve Paxton  
made of Satisfyin Lover  
and it never occurred to any of us we were walking  
through an icon,  
it was just something we shared in a workshop festival,  
and he liked the ones who laughed  
because embarrassed laughter seemed a more  
straightforward response  
and afterwards there was a disco.

And when Ramsay Burt showed me his collection of  
Judson films  
I said 'But this looks more modern than postmodern'  
and I thought of Merce Cunningham,  
and I wondered about the moment after Judson  
when all that soft intelligence emerged in the 70s which  
we thought was Judson but wasn't quite,  
though we based our idea of Judson on it,  
mainly because it was the same people  
ten years after and into something richer and stranger,  
which looked and felt postmodern and somehow fed  
everything,  
and is in danger now of being eclipsed by the juggernaut



of iconic, archival Judson in grainy black and white.

And I can understand that a younger person might think Trio A was always visible, up there on YouTube, but at the time we had to take Sally Banes' word for it.

And it seems like she and others called Judson post-modern partly because it came 'after modern dance', and on the other hand the expression got caught up with the actual philosophical term which confused things for years, and afterwards anything vaguely pedestrian got called postmodern, and then to confuse things more we eventually started to read postmodernism and it was easy to think then that what we were doing had always been actually postmodern and maybe it was.

I've no idea really, I can't remember what I thought I was doing or watching or what anyone else thought they were doing.

I heard there was a reunion at Judson a while back and Simone Forti said the problem was that nobody had ever rejected Judson, and I have to say in some ways it does look weirdly like Judson is still the future,

and it's hard to work out what the consequences of that might be.

In the 80s Judson was just the recent past that had opened a gate  
and the future hadn't yet been pinned to any kind of historical past perfect moment.

Because our bodymind doesn't work like that,  
it's a more anarchic thing really and won't be held down by hierarchies of knowledge.

We're more like the movement equivalent of those TV programmes about people who hoard junk  
and mostly we don't want the mess tidied,  
and even if we did there's no disentangling Trisha Brown from a Michael Jackson video,  
because our motor memory sorts according to movement similarities,  
which is a curse and a blessing and the source of our work.

And Ramsay Burt talks about 'the disinterested mode of performance'  
which he says is the dominant mode,  
and I know what he means and what it feels like,  
and I got to noticing recently when I use it and when I don't  
and I use it mostly when I feel I should be more

contemporary.

As in 'contemporary dance',  
which has been contemporary for the last 50 years,  
which makes it slightly hard for us to locate the present,  
let alone the past,  
or the opportunities ahead.

And at the same time my performing-self recalls other  
ways to engage  
and suggests them to me with quiet resolution,  
and as an act of resistance,  
against the idea that the contemporary could be so  
easily represented  
by a particular kind of walk,  
or a pair of plimpsolls.

Because all the time dance is busy  
stripping away and then reclaiming the messiness of  
everything the body might throw up and indulge,  
in which battleground the queer, the folk, the pop, the  
trash, the burlesque, the black, the kitsch, the street and  
the vaudeville  
are constant casualties and occasionally triumphant  
victors,  
and long may they also thrive  
regardless of that construct called the contemporary,  
because the future contains all of it.

Or as Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker said to an early group  
of P.A.R.T.S. students,  
'Why would you want less?'

This is subjective,  
this is a mess,  
because that's how the last 50 years felt on a cellular  
level,  
which is our great strength and a blessing,  
however hard it might be to figure out what's really  
going on.

Robert Cohan, dancer with Martha Graham and founder  
of London's first modern dance company,  
came to watch a rehearsal of his old dancers and as he  
left he turned to me and said,  
'Jonathan, this is a room full of people who still think  
dance has meaning',  
and I looked and he was right and I wasn't quite sure  
what to make of all that.

And the possibility that dance might have meaning still  
hovers,  
at cellular level,  
or at least one might say that many of us experience an  
occasional moment of guilty expression,  
that rises like a ghost and must be contextualised.

And the location of the meaning has shifted  
from the body to the theatre to the spectator  
but it feels the same when you feel it  
which is why most of us like to dance.

went to Boris Charmatz' Musée de la Danse at Tate  
Modern

and I thought 'These are my people',  
and I thought 'I don't care where they do this but a  
gallery is as good as any other place so long as they keep  
on doing it',  
and it made me wonder what it was they were doing and  
whether it was old or new,  
and it seemed to defy exact placement and I thought  
maybe that is what we're doing,  
to somehow keep occupying these spaces that can't be  
easily identified but live in the body  
and can be activated anywhere,  
and as much as we worry that we should be more  
popular,  
nevertheless we enjoy this place of privileged deviancy  
that pulls people in,  
and has nothing to do with history but is about defiant  
and intelligent becoming.

And I don't believe in 'in the moment'  
but I'd hate to see the cult of archiving sit down like an  
elephant on our pragmatic forgetfulness.

And I'd hate to see the machine of Facebook  
make us stupidly forgetful,  
so we can only tolerate what happens in a day  
and must throw everything else immediately away,  
including ourselves,  
and our friends,  
and the work that we love,  
and need.

So I started writing a list of all the dance artists still  
alive  
and still making work,  
whose work I love,  
and need,  
and it got longer and longer and I kept writing  
and I was going to read it out to you,  
and I was going to end the list with the ones I missed  
saying you, and you, and you, and you,  
and you, and you, and you.

And some of them were making work 50 years ago  
but they don't feel like history,  
not at a cellular level.

The problem is we keep staring at the past 50 years  
to try and reassure ourselves what we're doing is new,  
and we forget we have this thing called a body  
which hasn't changed much in the last 150,000 years,

which is a pretty special place from which to resist all this,

And anyway the cult of the new drives uncontrolled consumerism

which is one thing we should and can be resisting.

And everything is new at the point of performance if you want it to be.

We keep staring at the past 50 years to reassure ourselves what we're doing is new

but as the artist Grayson Perry said about painting, since there is no new you end up searching for a nuance, a tiny variation you can make your own, and most of the nuances are already taken.

50 years ago there weren't many of us and we all knew everyone

but there are thousands of us now and we're all searching for a nuance, and the market loves a niche product but it all feels a bit unsustainable.

And it's up to us not to bow to this destructive machine driven by networks of producers

at the mercy of a marketised cultural scene, but rather to cherish what we pass through and what

passes through us  
and to create our own agenda for the next 50 years,  
which honours the history in our bodies  
and leaves room for the mess that emerges  
and the humanity,  
reinvented with each generation  
and looking nothing like the past.

This is the start of the Postdance Conference,  
which is a special challenge thrown out that gets to the  
heart of the matter,  
meaning at the end of this 50 years we find ourselves a  
little unsure whether we want to dance at all anymore.

Which doesn't mean we don't like to dance,  
just that we're not sure quite where to go with it.

And we've invented the term 'post choreographic field',  
and we're all camped out there under the stars  
while we work out what it means,  
which is tricky.

And Hans-Thies Lehmann and Helene Varopoulou  
wrote a fantasy letter to Brecht  
for Tom Plischke and Kattrin Defeuert's 'New Epic  
Theatre' event,  
and the letter said we should resist the 'temptations of  
the neo-Baroque',



and I thought ah, but this baroque describes exactly that  
ornamentation which is fundamental to dancing,  
and contains all our rhythmic detail felt intensely at  
cellular level  
that opens worlds and worlds and changes everything.

And I thought how do we refuse this Sun King thing  
so rightly critiqued here,  
and how do we assert and reclaim again that radical and  
necessary joy we feel  
when we juggle our synapses in a play of detail that  
circumnavigates all concrete meaning  
and yet makes the most sense?

Because as Deborah Hay pointed out  
to dance is always a political act.

And here in Stockholm 14 years ago,  
Mårten Spånberg's Panacea Festival  
seemed like the birth of something new we now call  
conceptual,  
which was a thinking mess  
and only afterwards became history,  
which mess we might seize and celebrate  
and not call conceptual  
or post-post conceptual,  
but rather some kind of a new way to deal with how we  
see and what we see and what matters,

whether dancing or not,  
for which the term dramaturgy is somewhat inadequate  
and professorial,  
and which shift of perception is the real revolution.

That we got smart to re-contextualise all the mess the  
body overwhelms us with,  
and overwhelms the audience with,  
and so stepped lightly aside from the usual heavy  
handed attempts to solve this art form called dancing  
that most of us would rather get up and do.

And meanwhile the university dance departments  
proliferated  
alongside the spread of choreographic studies,  
which are a curse and a blessing,  
and universities profit from the courses and poke at  
them to become more billable  
and to turn out the employable  
which is an ongoing battle,  
and as I said before things got more crowded,  
but a lot of us have also found shelter there,  
and time and space  
and a culture to sustain us,  
and the boundaries are getting more fluid  
and the old fence is falling.

And the passing of Pina Bausch has left us the question

What might tanztheater be in the 21st century?

What the passing of Merce Cunningham has left us the  
question

What chance for abstract dance in the 21st century?

What the Atlantic Ocean stayed where it was  
and people made work either side of it  
and remained somewhat sceptical of each other  
and a little nervous around questions of origination.

What hip hop turned virtuosity into a political act  
and crossed all the continents  
and found its way slowly into our collective motor  
memory.

What rave culture set the world alight with dancing  
and the media and the politicians thought it was to do  
with drugs  
but it was a folk dance gone global.

What women artists have continued the fight to be  
visible  
and black artists have continued the fight to be visible  
and disabled artists have continued the fight to be  
visible  
and older artists have continued the fight to try and stay  
visible.

And artists with so-called disability  
have shown us exactly how limited our idea of ability is

And as Jérôme Bel says,  
YouTube has become our first library,  
which changes everything but we don't really know how  
yet.

And the future is virtual and also not virtual.

And we fight to survive  
the death of the author  
and the rise of the curator  
and her friend the spectator  
hiding at the back  
to avoid becoming a somewhat reluctant participator,  
and the outside eye paid by the producer,  
and the onward march of marketing and markets  
and that asset stripping exercise called a funding  
application.

And all the economic consequences we must also  
discuss,  
and digest,  
and conquer.

And a younger generation has arrived out of all this  
and invented their own means of distribution,

collectively, below the market, beyond consensus,  
socially active,  
intelligent with institutions,  
refusing the iconic  
and post-nothing at all but only present,  
because they had to.

All of which has not gone unnoticed by art galleries  
who've made beautiful virtue of those qualities in our  
art form we've always been ashamed of,  
like the flimsy, forgettable nothingness of it all,  
which is nice so long as we resist them telling us their  
spaces are the best  
and then marginalising half of what we do  
(because why would you want less?).

Or lending us Biennale models  
that can marginalise people after a five year career  
and we all lose out  
to the old hyper-capitalist chasing of the new.

Because history goes sideways in the body  
and overlaps itself  
and more or less ignores fashion  
or the official timeline.

And as I said before, all this is 150,000 years old at a  
conservative estimate

so there's no real rush.

This is a ramble in the woods  
with a guide who can't see the wood for the trees,  
and every tree is always almost somewhere  
which is the best place to be.

We're always almost somewhere and the best pieces  
never quite arrive  
leaving us thinking ahead to what might happen next.

Leaving us thinking ahead to what might happen next  
and never more than in a 4 hour performance,  
or a 24 hour performance  
(because why would you want less?),  
or a 24 minute performance.

And we're always almost somewhere slowly  
and the best pieces never quite arrive  
but remain imminent,  
which is where I'll leave you,  
just here,  
beautifully critical but passing through,  
here today and gone tomorrow.

Thank you.

With grateful thanks to Ramsay Burt, Katy Coe, Mette Edvardsen, Sue  
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# Credo In Artem Imaginandi

Bojana Cvejić

reckoning that I am probably not the only one grappling with *post-dance*, I decided to not ask anybody for clarification but make sense of the term by myself and take it as an indication of a paradigm shift. Or, to be more modest in our expectations, a sign that an age is bygone without our acknowledgement; has run its course or is about to expire. We don't worry about what is coming next as the present has caught us in a predicament without warning. It might be a little chancy to pronounce an end or an overcoming without the prospect of a new beginning, but we can be certain of one thing: we take note of a fading position of faith in choreography. Oh, how urgent it was to insist on its separation from dance! How many courses and self-interviews, books and conferences we have dedicated to hailing its departure from a modernist definition of dance, rooted in a subjectification of the body through movement or objectification of movement by the instrument of the body! Originally, an emancipatory move of indeterminacy, the apology of an *expanded* or *extended* notion of

choreography has given more power to the middle managers than to choreographers and dancers. The latter had hoped for a break from allegiance to a disciplinary apparatus of dance training and masterpiece culture, but instead, most of the profit went to museums and academies. The moment we could tell that choreography arrived is when it became an instrument of numbers: more museum visitors whose participation is choreographed, more MA and PhD programs in choreography and dance.

Though my summary may seem cynical, I do believe a lot has been gained by recognizing choreography's capacity to structure processes other than dance. For one thing, we have become more aware of the social choreography of procedures in neoliberalism: the score we master, before we try to cover up their instrumental reason in improvisation. (I'm thinking here of scores of networking, methods of collaboration, techniques of the self, and of so many formats and activities that have kept artists at work when there was no good reason for it; but also of security procedures, democratic decision-making processes, algorithms, manuals for everything, multitasking to do lists, and so forth). And another thing, the conquest of choreography in an expanded sense earns choreographers and dance practitioners their long overdue respect from other art disciplines. Once choreography's takeover of performing arts



has been done with more or less success, what remains of dance? In an attempt to answer this question, I will wander from a few cues of intuition, with the aid of a few vignettes.

### **The corporeal**

*My body doesn't belong to me.* There couldn't be a more blasphemous or counterintuitive statement. In a society that champions physical proofs of one's own being (= being alive), the body is the site in which the self and the person must coincide. For that reason, the truth games of our day revolve around the techniques of how, not what to produce, but how. In which manner and to which degree of intensity do I dance, live, shop, change and so on? A person venturing into extreme sports will undergo an ordeal with nature, a businessman will hack his body to extend his working hours. A dancer will turn their attention inward, into somatics, trusting that everything is already there; a body to scan for sensations and a map to move from, a proprioceptive consciousness of belonging to no place other than *themselves*, the body. They goes for gender fluidity of the tattooed indigo bodies spinning in personalized desire. Of course, I'm describing here a limited image of a youth of Western provenance, but for that matter a no less globally desired habitus. How do I feel in my body? How can I stop thinking about whether a movement is beautiful or

right, and accept that this is just how I feel like moving today? How do I give myself permission to feel pleasure in my movements? What will I dance next? A dancer asks themselves and closes their eyes as they sink into the floor.

If this body—the substrate of the self—has never been more reified than today, and there have never been more of those so-you-think-you-can-dance icons popping up on our screens, dance may relax its grip on the corporeal. A few words about the corporeal here. There are two sides to it that I'm interested in. First, a broader corporeality whose ethos is close to an aestheticized lifestyle: it is the somaticized body I have recounted above. A body that believes its somatic awareness is enough to dance whatever as-such or just be more intensely wherever it is. The deskilled grandchild of the *hired body* in the 1990s, originally a derogatory phrase that an authoritative dance scholar coined to refer to dancers who no longer specialize in one style and technique, carrying the label of, say, Graham, Cunningham, Cullberg ballet or Forsythe. In her prude assessment, hired bodies were promiscuously versatile and flexible, disloyal and superficial subjects. This somaticized body, once dubbed *hired* and now hailed *independent*, survived the automation of work when human labor and intelligence become less needed in production. At a not-so-remote point in the future, when art will

have transformed into culture on demand, the body's currency will be gauged against machine-learning, its valued assets situated in movement, human touch, and contact. As there won't be many theaters showing dance, and even less subsidy for independent dance projects than today, the body's knowledge will be redirected to therapy, care-taking and sex-work, those things that machines aren't so good at.<sup>1</sup>

The second kind of corporeality is endemic to the historically appraised discipline of dancing. It entails a particular regime of work enabled by the money that can pay for repetitions. Only companies that combine high-skill craftsmanship with factory-like production invest in repetitive training and maintenance of a repertoire of dance performances in a Quixotic battle for preserving dance. Thanks to few surviving companies that have means for such a regime of production or to rare individuals, who in spite of their precarity, choose an organic diet of slow growth, once in a while virtuosity flashes up on stage. Against the credo in the pedestrian, the radically average democracy's body I've been inculcated in, I secretly let myself relish that moment. Not for technical brilliance or attractive looks, but for a certain nonchalance that that dance bespeaks, an effortless gesture beside its own shoes. The way that that dance reveals itself to me is like the sound of an old instrument, tuned in the pre-revolutionary period;

an aristocrat from Ancien régime with their antiquated attitude of casual excellence and feel for form.

### **A Year without dance**

#### **And see whether we miss it or not**

A friend proposed it for a period of three months. I guess a year is the minimum duration we have to impose, in order to see the results of the experiment. The proposition as it is, is even too nice. Why should it be limited to dance if we can enlarge it to all kinds of artistic productions. This year could be the opportunity for every single artist to look back at what has been done and to question the reason why one is doing what one is doing. Is it for the gratifying artist status or does one actually have something to say?

*Cyriaque Villemaux Proposals Catalogue 2012*

### **The Incorporeal**

A sentence is ringing in my memory that someone once told me: "Leave dance to dancers." I can't settle for that! The right to dance or the right to refuse to dance isn't reserved for dancers exclusively. Moreover, dancers are leaving dance as we know it, not to change their profession, but to take dance somewhere else, into a text, onto a screen, into a time that lies besides and in between bodies, objects and words, the stillness and waiting that wouldn't be recognized as dance. Or

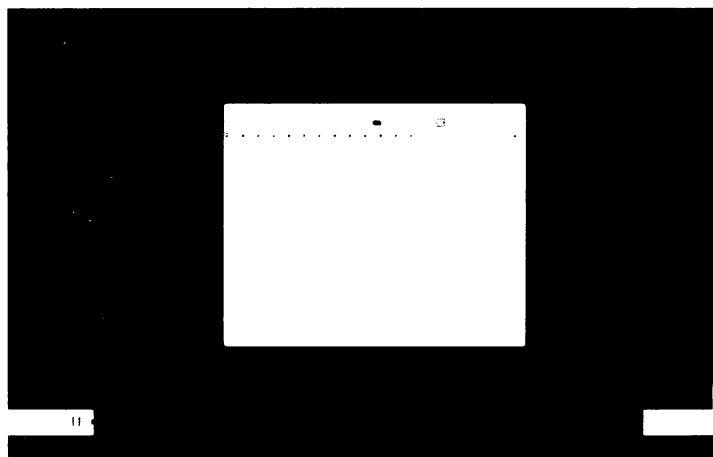
simply, like in the proposal quoted above, dance is counteractualized in a condition prior to dancing in flesh and bones. In fact, text might be an instance of immateriality in a new guise, an avenue for incorporeal dance. We must take heed of characterizing this retreat into text as immaterial. Immateriality might only mean cheap production: giving up the hire of physical space and bodies, whose time and wear-and-tear needs monetary compensation.

I am thinking here of Bryana Fritz's work: poetry, conceived and presented as dance, on the screen of her laptop. The material situation of her piece *Indispensible Blue*: a dancer, consistently employed, spends most of her time on tour with the only material possession and most accessible means of production—her computer. Bryana is not only a dancer, but also a poet. The words take form on a series of screens, the experience of which is nothing like leafing through pages. The screens on her desktop are more like skins—sentient surfaces that move, rub into each other, change color, sound of home-made music or distorted voices, or fantastically open and close in a *mise-en-abyme* of interfaces, all at the minimal manipulation of her fingertips. Her presence in the performance guarantees the minimum of liveness, reduced to the technical launching of a dance on her screen projected into the room. Depth remains the effect of the surface, the names of files and docu-

ments form the syntax of a poem, literally embodying the opaque thickness of words.

EMPTY... THE SKIES... OF ITS... HORIZONTAL  
LINES.

The movement of the cursor stitches words into strips of significance, cutting them out in a form that dances before our eyes.



Still from the video of *Indispensible Blue* (offline) by  
Bryana Fritz.

“If you are to ask me what I am interested in, I think it is using forms and formats to destabilize myself. A letter as a form, a paragraph as a form, description as a form, and I try getting into them, enjoying their non-genuine

and artificial cloak. I fall into form, weep into form, love into form, and fuck into form. We, form and I, bring in some kind of misshapen knife to cut whatever kind of substance, subject, or shape is there floating.”

Bryana Fritz, “Blue,” in *Relentless*, ed. by Tom Engels. Brussels: Bâtard Festival, 2016.

“More urgent than the right to be seen is the right to be hidden, to dissimulate, to have secrets,” a feminist told me. I turn to another dancer and poet who refuses to choreograph her dance. Instead, she presents five dancers with a poem: a score with no tasks and instructions, only a length that rhythms their reading of the poem. The poem is composed of triggers of imagining movement without clear mimetic referents. In *Escape and Transformation* (2015), Janne-Camilla Lyster writes of the body and movement in a catachresis, a semantic error or a necessary misuse of language that entails crossing categorical boundaries with words, because there would otherwise be no “proper” expression. Most common instances of catachresis in everyday language conjoin an animate corporal element to an inanimate thing: leg of the table, wing of the airplane, laptop, and so forth.

In a circle dance, in a changing circle dance. in a circle dance of changing directions. the traces you leave in the air do not resemble the human side of you. the imprints you leave in the air in the room do not resemble what's human about you. you dispel all doubts, rid yourself of them, rid yourself, you're a riddle written in birdsong. you are his last words. you are comfortably clean and warm. you are just as before. A meek chronology of bones in their proper places. a meek symphony of bones in their proper places. you are the surfaces that glide against each other: the light and the sound of light. the light and sound you perceive in the light. the greyish light from the birch forest and the sound it evokes in you. the sound it reminds you of. you are surfaces sliding against each other: the light and the sounds the light evokes in you. you are surfaces that slide against each other: the greyish light and sounds it awakens from within you.

Excerpt from Janne-Camilla Lyster, *Escape and Imagination*, 2015, manuscript, courtesy of the artist.

What kind of image does imagination produce through the engaged sensorial imagination of words? One in which the imaginer is part of it, enveloped in; an enviroing image. To visualize what remains unseen is to come closer to conception and conceivability: in thinking oneself as seeing something that I don't perceive, I include my seeing in what I visualize (it's not about a self-reflective mirroring image, seeing myself in the image, or being part of it, but embedding my own gaze or listening perspective within the image as I see and hear it). A certain thickness of environment, which threatens to grow into a whole, suggests a world that arises beyond the positivity of what is present.



Tout et rien d'autre (Jean-Luc Godard), everything and nothing else, or more precisely, all and not something in particular, no less than a world, but one made of things weak in their appearance, still there, opaque and thick yet not vying for our attention. Mårten Spångberg's *La Substance* (but in English) and *Natten* open up two different worlds, each one going one step further in privation. In *La Substance*, a high backdrop delimits the three-sided stage like a patchwork of shiny fabrics, where the glitter mixes emblems of brands; Chanel, Gucci, Louis Vuitton and the scream like mute flags of smashed shopping-mall memories with the silver, gold, crimson and other richly deep colored patches, curtains, space blankets, or quilts. The backdrop continues onto the ground, a similarly gleaming surface full of colorful objects, party toys and other seemingly useless cheap plastic devices of instant pleasure. On the left side there is a white, makeshift wall covered in a vivid drawing of patterns, shapes, and lines. The great many colors in acrylic tubes with brushes line up under this white wall as tools for those who wish to color the drawing. No longer a matter of children's leisure, coloring books have recently gained popularity among adults suffering from idle nervousness. Time can be endured by spatialization, in the illusion of making yourself useful by coloring in blank spaces. You can't be self-expressive, personal or creative here, the drawing is made such that whatever color is applied, it will be beautiful,

or psychedelic. Like and amidst the colorful objects, as if they chameleonicly share the same habitat, are seven dancers, overdressed in multiple layers of incongruous garments, a wild dissonant mixture of cheap, glossy, tacky, mainstream fashion items. The dancers are changing them ceaselessly and slowly, so that the clothes never have the aim of identifying any character whatsoever. The clothes act like soft tattoos, overwriting the bodies in the same vein as the heavy make-up that masks the faces. They form an aesthetic environment that appears effortless, uncaused, without meaning and value, and indifferent, like nature. And so do dances emerge out of nothing, yet in meticulously articulated steps, gestures, and phrases with the music, sometimes in frontal disposition, as in a video clip, or within a self-directed group. Dancing never indulges in a gleeful party that the spectators would be envious of. Like party toys that die out once they pop a little spectacle, the dancing also implodes. It withdraws into its own form, like a disinterested ornament before it is picked out and framed as something worthy of special attention. When the music stops, dancers continue a slow-paced walk in a large loop, as if they are striding in a religious procession, narrated in a frieze of a Greek vase. Their zombified march is accompanied with the sound of distant jingling in the wind, evoking the image of ornamental bells hanging in the gate of a sanctuary.

“The dance creates an image of nameless and even bodiless Powers filling a complete, autonomous realm, a ‘world.’ It is the first presentation of the world as a realm of mystic forces... The substance of such dance creation is the same Power that enchanted ancient caves and forests, but today we invoke it with full knowledge of its illusory status, and therefore with wholly artistic intent.”

Susanne Langer, *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art Developed from Philosophy in a New Key*. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1953.

In the little book *Natten*, Mårten writes: “Dance exists without us. Moving towards or away from us indifferent. The non-directional harbors horror and the night, nigredo, is not performative. It moves without subject, its dreadfulness is mirrored in its indifference, its absolute potentiality.” The potential to not-perform is to under-perform without a negative prefix. Action and perception are not annihilated, like the darkness that is not the absence of light, but an experience of potentiality in relation to one’s incapacity to see. I haven’t seen *Natten* yet, the performance has been out of my reach; however, its words haunt my imagination. *Natten* begins to have the status of *Einstein on the Beach*—my imagining and thinking about it, along with the testimonies of friends who have seen it, texts written about it, and its booklet, turns it into a piece of prefigurative significance.

Can criticism prefigure, not just imagine beforehand, but also indicate or anticipate an early stage of something yet to emerge? I hope so. My sense of Zeitgeist while watching dance and writing about it moves me outside of the present. If making art nowadays requires the entrepreneurial stamina of an achievement-subject whose promise of value is convincing, we might as well begin to exercise imagination and invest in works of dance and performance that we don't yet know how to produce. Most probably, we retreat to text, words and fantasy. For a long time we have been obsessing over how to make past dances retrievable after their recession, mainly in the form of a written choreography. Doubtless, this has given rise to a lot of good scholarly work that manages to strengthen dance's mode of existence and transmission beyond evanescence. Against the fear of dance's defiance of historicization, we might use the weakness of dance, its lack of a strong definition that has made it into a prey of poetic and philosophical metaphors, for another, more oblique aesthetic reality. I will call it the numinous: a reality whose source is not in the subject, yet it invades and abandons the subject as an apparition, with a phantom-like power. Don't get me wrong, I am not advocating for occult dreams, it is a perfectly rational thing I invoke here prefiguratively. My credo of the future of post-dance is dance that preserves a certain opacity: stubborn inefficiency of appearance with a certain degree of will and intensity that renders

it a strangely underperformed being amidst a well-organized world of persuasive self-performances.

#### Notes

1. To think further on the utility of the dancing body in the age of automated work I was prompted by Austin Gross in a workshop on BDSM, held at PAF in February 2017. He suggested that apart from affective work, bodies will be needed for clinical trials.

# Some Thoughts on the Labour of a Dancer

Bojana Kunst

For some time I have been exploring the relationships and proximity between the kinaesthetic and sensory qualities of capitalist production and those of aesthetic interventions, especially how the rhythms, temporalities, processes of imagination and speculation in contemporary labour can be turned around, challenged and twisted through the artistic processes of work. I am curious if artistic work can resist the modes of commodification, organisation and appropriation of labour, especially since the labour of the artist is often strongly in tune with the ways that we are generally working today – with flexible hours, no distinction between private life and work life, a high personal investment and an emphasis on the value of collaboration, etc. – we could perhaps even say that nowadays almost everybody is working like an artist. Artistic labour has always been in an ambivalent position concerning its value in capitalism, and this position is radicalised through the unbridgeable difference between the speculative art market in which art works function as a valuable asset

inside the flows of financial capitalism on the one side, in contrast to the artistic precariat on the other. The members of this artistic precariat are creating value mainly through their subjectivity and through the ways in which they live their dynamic, flexible, always creative, collaborative and communicative lives.

But there is another interesting feature occurring when we approach the proximity between artistic labour and capitalism today. The work of the artist, especially throughout the twentieth century, often resisted the immediate link between value and labour, turning itself into an abundance of leftovers, an overflow of activity, circulating around unworthy processes and the production of waste. Artistic labour was often celebrated as a negative excess of production, in the sense that this production became a residue of passivity and lesser action; the redundancy of work discloses itself as a special force of productivity. In the last century such an understanding of work was present in many avant-garde proposals and reformulations of what it means to be an artist; it is still deeply changing the ways we nowadays approach the issue of the “productivity” of artists. The abundance of wastefulness always strongly empowers the processes of life and affirms creation alongside the capitalistic processes of valorisation and social relationships established through the value of the work.

However, the very same quality—the production of waste—no longer seems so special, considering that nowadays there is more and more labour that can be described as superfluous, unnecessary, stupid work (David Graeber). Not only has contemporary capitalism created masses of redundant labourers as a result of automation and the disproportion between the means of production and value, but it also depends upon redundant labour. Production today is mostly flourishing because of the creation of stupid, unnecessary, ludicrous jobs, jobs with no relationship to any social or material valorisation of work. Such useless work is at the core of production today, like, for example, the proliferation of various evaluators and consultants, who are perpetuating the evaluation of other evaluators, adding value to the speculative managerial chain of consulting, and with that, pushing the value of commodities and goods on the contemporary market even higher. Because a lot forms of work are becoming stupid, there is an even stronger wish to reform the institutions where the work full of waste and redundancy still flourishes, such as in universities, art institutions, social services, etc. The wish to install new forms of control, the obsessive measurement of productivity and processes of transparency in every step of production, springs from this irrational and murky core of capitalist production. In its core, this production is actually just about spending and producing even more waste, which has to continuously



be concealed with the obsessive production and instrumentalised with its value.

The artist is not becoming a model for the contemporary worker because of her or his creativity, precarious position and diminishing of life/work relation, but because something else in this proximity is at stake. The proximity is originating from the very special quality of artistic labour, from its sensory, material and rhythmic aspect, and from the redundancy of spending and wasting on a grand scale which is at the core of the artistic process; the artistic work is unnecessary labour. The labour of the artist has become an issue under attack and shaped by the multiple procedures of control, especially because there is so much stupid, idiotic, wasteful, repetitive and passive work all around. David Graeber writes about how capitalism creates a lot of pointless jobs, jobs which are just for the sake of keeping us working, to which belong a lot of managerial, clerical and service work. These jobs are invented not only for the perpetuation of speculation and marketing organisation, but also because of the ethical and moral reasons to conceal the danger that actually in contemporary capitalism it is possible to work less and have more free time, the development of the means of production could enable that. Today we continuously have to produce, even with the most meaningless and useless labouring gestures, to sustain the illusion of growth and conceal the redun-

dancy of labour in general. The pointless jobs remind us of the labour of the artist, both are forms of labour that does not produce value. However, at the same time, each type has a different role in the current system of production – first one conceals the fact that it is in current capitalism actually possible to do less, and the second, artistic labour, reveals this fact; that is why it must be controlled and accused of laziness and senseless spending.

For this reason it is important to focus on the labour of the artist, since the value of contemporary commodities is created exactly with the radical dis-evaluation of labour, work is not only divided from its potentiality, but it is also, as Stefano Harney claims, continuously deconstructed. In this sense, work is never finished. As workers, we are plunged into the endless, always divided work, which is sustained through managerial control and the decentralised circulation of work. To that extent, all the material traces of production are disappearing: work is no longer an effort, it has no enduring temporal dimension (except a highly frenetic, projective one), no singularity, no material sense, work is not a narrative and does not have a common history beside the scattered enumeration of projects, nor does it belong to a place. Work is regulated under the spell of transparency, it has to be visible, performative, organised perpetually and disseminated in fragments, ena-

bled through continuous networks and fragmentation of our attention. In the middle of other workers, the artist as a precarious subject—who works through her or his projects, continuously shifting between modes of organisation and juggling the logistics of her or his own adventure—is all too similar to the ways that we generally work today and form our subjectivity. However, due to the proximity between artistic work and other modes of productive labour today, there could also appear a chance to disclose the contemporary production for what it actually is: the production of enormous amounts of waste. This waste, to maintain the role in the contemporary production, has to be continuously controlled, it has to be regulated to become valuable. The work of the artist can disclose the neurotic kernel of contemporary production: namely, it can show to us the difference between two different kinds of economies of waste. One is the product of senseless spending that is opening the complexity of the poetic being in the world; the other is spending that is continuously controlled and regulated, so that profit can be generated from it. Artistic practice can provide insight into the paradoxical process of economic production: “What an economy rejects, we call garbage; what it distributes, we call value” (Lisa Robertson). The speculation about the life and work of the artist happens simultaneously with her or his criminalisation, because the artistic work is radically the same as any other work producing profit today, but at

the same time it stubbornly resists discipline and fails to control its useless spending. Artists offer a mirror to the ambivalent and paradoxical role of waste in the core of contemporary production.

But how much does this line of thought have to do with dance? In which way is dance related to contemporary labour? How can we describe the connection of dance to spending and waste, to disobedience and the repulsion of control? Is not dance actually an example of disciplined labour, which today stays as an anachronistic remainder inside the new abstract and communicative forms of working? In the recent decades, especially from the end of gothies on, it seems that dancers have actually abandoned the labour done with their bodies. Not only have they refused the beauty and virtuosity of movement, but also the effort which is needed to produce it, the labour which has to be invested in the movement itself. In that sense, many qualities of dancing labour have been critiqued, deconstructed, turned into anachronism: composite choreographies, virtuosic spectacles of ordering and disordering, dancey costumes, expositions of physicality, kinaesthetic empathy, assembling and disassembling, acceleration and energy, the hardness of the floor and the lightness of the flow. Such a refusal of the dancing labour and the virtuosity originating from strain and effort produced many idle, passive and neutral dancers. These redundant dancers

appeared in ragged training suits, as lazy stand-ups and tarrying subjectivities between one unfinished movement and another one; as the dancers and dances which cannot yet start and bodies full of possibilities which never actualise; as failed collaborative assemblies and visible working processes; as a sum of half-made, redundant, superfluous acts. In this way, we can observe how the field of contemporary dance was shattered through the abandonment of labour and with the establishment of a very peculiar idle subjectivity. The dancer as labourer actually became redundant; at the same time this opened dance to new processes of creation and generation of material. The old hierarchies and ideologies organised around the strenuous labour of the dancer were also abandoned and changed the ways that dance is institutionally and aesthetically organised and disseminated.

Yet, this change cannot be understood as an actual abandonment of labour. It is more a transition between different labouring processes, where new skills (often also under the appearance of non-skills) have appeared and changed the working processes. With its dispersion of traditional hierarchies and modes of training, dance established new flows of organisation and production of work; in this case, more horizontal, open, process-oriented and shared, dance took on many characteristics of communicative work. This is why dance has become

more and more related to the exploration of performativity, to researching the dispositif of the choreographic staging and the formation of its public, to dealing with the organisation and logistics of collaboration and perception, to the circulation of friendship and debt to one another; dance has become tightly linked with the broader exploration of how performance is organised, signed, authored, disseminated and institutionalised. The positive aspect of this shift is certainly the shattering of the institutional, aesthetic and collaborative hierarchies as well as the disclosure of the deeply seated discourses forming the efforts and strains of the physicality of dancers and the whole history of the embodied work in dance. However, as is well known, the hierarchies can quickly return, because institutional progress is never self-evident and should never be approached as a lasting achievement. The shift in the virtuosity of a dancer is therefore a twofold process, in which the control of dancing movement and the invention of resistance are tightly interwoven. First, we have to observe the new manners and new norms produced with this shift and how they influence the position and the formation of a dancer today. Second, we have to examine the inventive possibilities of this shift in the labour of the dancer and open insight into the material nature and quality of dancing labour, where dance opens itself as a poetic and sensual force of movement.

First, dancing labour has to be discussed inside the complex proximity to social and economical processes of contemporary capitalism: the release from the strenuous labour and virtuosity of movement namely caused the subordination to the new modes of virtuosic control. These new modes are part of the processes of creating dances today. They are also forming the ways that institutions are disseminating and producing dance (together with their transformation into project centres), how they are influencing the dance education (especially with the so-called discursive turn turn, a notion which has recently been explored by Constanze Schellow). The new virtuosic control can be detected, for example, in the visibility of the labour of the dancer, which demands a public genealogical critique of his or her labour and permanent exposition of the methods of work, processes and approaches to movement. The labour of the dancer is closely related to the experimentation with subjectivity which can be understood as the exploration of the personal, professional and political history, with the opening up of the working processes and formulation of the work-in-progress. The value of dancing labour has shifted to the value of the presence of the dancer herself, to her capacity to be, to hang around, to sometimes say something to us, to gaze at us, to do something to us, to persist, and to challenge us. However, such hanging around is never empty, but loaded with fragments and information

about the specific biographic, artistic, political, collaborative and institutional history. It is true that these procedures open and challenge many self-constructed truths about dance, for example, that a dancer dances without a context and without a history, however, this exposed context of a dancer very rarely challenges his or her labouring position. Parallel to this change in the labour of the dancer, choreographers also started to often invite other well-known choreographers and fellow artists to hang around for/with them. Many dancers, especially young ones, who in the last years participated and invested with their presence into the growing participatory works and dance exhibitions, suffered the consequences of such a shift: their work is precarious, barely paid, cheap and mostly gets its value through the collaborative networks, the fancy venues where it can be performed, from the contact with other famous dancers and artists, the value is then related to the social capital dancers receive through these events. This transposition of value into the collaborative and communicative network of precarious work has, of course, a lot to do with other general shifts in value production. The main mode of production, as Lazzarato states, is namely today the production of subjectivity, inside which the position of the artist is especially interesting. It could be described as a combination of fetishisation and hate, as an ambivalent position between the admiration of the flexible capacity to work and at the same time despis-



ing this very capacity because of its inefficiency and stubborn attempts to always wrench from the processes of evaluation and control. Many dance performances created from the end of the 1990s on can be linked with such ambivalent production of subjectivity, where exactly through the fetishisation of her affective and imaginative skills, such subjectivity was at the same time de-evaluated: the subjectivity is there on the display, exhibited as flexible, continuously transformative, capable of cunning thoughts, always present and alert in its overall neutrality, but at the same time, precarious, exhausted, isolated, lonely, marginal, etc.

New dancing skills appeared in parallel with the expansion of communicative and affective labour, mirroring the centrality of the production of subjectivity in contemporary capitalism today. The fact that dancers talk and dance with dramaturgs, continuously show open processes and discuss unfinished work, construct sharing networks of methods, focus on process and method instead on the product and at the same time resist perfection and emphatic perception of the spectacle, can be related to the shifts in the modes of virtuosity, which focused on the linguistic and collaborative capacities. Even if it would be interesting to further observe the parallels between the post-Fordist work in which a lot of physical work became redundant (or invisible) and the ways that labour in contemporary dance became re-

dundant, at the same time, such immediate connection to post-Fordist virtuosity is a bit too short. The problem is that the similarity originates from the wrongly understood divisions of labour inside post-Fordism itself, which also causes many incorrectly grounded lamentations about the sorrows of post-Fordism, because manual and material work is becoming abstracted and superfluous. One of the main criteria about how we approach new forms of virtuosity becomes namely the division between immaterial and material work, the very same division which has been already challenged by the ones who conceptually invented it (like Lazzarato). This division is problematic because it actually perpetuates other divisions, between body and thinking, body and language, or in the field of dance, between dancing and talking, dance and choreography, dancing and discourse etc. The immaterial labour originates from abstract, emotional and speculative choreographic working processes, and material labour stays in the domain of the body and dance. There is a kind of presupposition that the virtuosity of the body is diminished because of the rise in communicative and discursive skills. But this is a metaphysical presupposition and somehow repeats, if only in a flash of light, the metaphysical difference between the body and the soul. From this perspective, the problematic notion of conceptual dance on the one side and the dancey dance, real dance or just dance on the other originates in this old split, which follows

contemporary dance as a shadow throughout its professional history. Instead of this differentiation between materiality and immateriality, it is much more efficient to analyse how the value of labour has actually shifted and how specific forms of working have become redundant but not non-existing (like manual labour of today which is invisible and often belongs to illegal contexts and grey economies). In this transposition of value new modes of exploitation are appearing and a new organisation of labour is arising; precarious labour is continuously and almost frenetically shifting between different modes of production, the production of abundance and waste. It seems as if dance has this capacity to somehow decelerate this very maniac process of evaluation and de-evaluation, to somehow persist in redundancy, because it is such a strenuous and glittering, yet nonetheless wasteful and superfluous work.

That is why in conclusion I would like to examine the second characteristic of the shift in the labour of the dancer, which because of redundancy also has the power to expand and imagine dance in a truly inventive way. From that perspective, I would also like to approach the curious notion of *postdance*. This notion is used here mostly as a challenge to think and dance beyond the metaphysical distinction of language and body, beyond the theoretical turn in dance and its consequences for the labour of the body. At the same time, however, it

also persists within the critical and reflective stance towards new forms of communicative and performative virtuosity and new hierarchies appearing in the field of dance. One decisive outcome of dance experimentation in the last decades is not the opening of dance to language, the criticality of dance and the expansion of dance into thinking, but the deconstruction of the metaphysical and ideological hierarchies and their opening to the broader and wider notion of what dance could become: the disclosure of the potentiality of dance.

Dance is a strenuous labour, yes, an effort, of course, a deeply spatially- and temporally-bound process, sure, but at the same time, also exactly because of being that materialistic and deeply embodied, it is a practical force: dance is also an imaginative and speculative machine, which is never bound to the presuppositions about what dance should be. In this sense, what must be done when we wish to shatter this illusion of abstraction when dealing with the production of subjectivity, is to do the dance. The doing of dance depends on the temporal, physical and economic condition of its production; every communicative, imaginative or movement gesture also depends on the combustion of energy, an exchange of rhythms, on the exhaustion of power. Movement is namely situated, there is no dance which is at the same time not affected by objects, situations, spatial arrangements, temporal inclinations. The the body of course is not the only source of movement. That does not mean,

however, that because of that critique of the body there arises the subjectivity of the dancer onstage. Rather, the body is the labouring force among many other forces and in this way also challenges the economic and cultural idea of abstract social logistics. In the social logistics nowadays, movement is mostly exploited as the perfection of the circulation of commodities and radical access to human bodies, and the rhythms, temporalities and spatialities of the movement are organised around the continuous flow of money. I believe that dance has the power to challenge the contemporary fetishisation of immateriality and twist the processes of abstraction in advanced capitalism with its weight and material quality. But this cannot be done through the connection between dance and healing, between dance and embodied knowledge, which is mostly a popular marketing attitude about how to approach the value of good dancing labour. Dance has namely also the capacity to produce a material abstraction, it is a speculation deeply dependent on the temporal, spatial and embodied economy. This is actually the productive capacity of dance, which is deeply imaginative and poetic, it is an abundant spending of energy and effort through wasteful and utterly ludicrous work.

Historically, contemporary dance was intertwined with the autonomy of the dancing body, which was also the main emancipatory concept in dance from the

beginning of the twentieth century. When approached from the perspective of dancing labour, the concept of autonomy has to be brought in connection with another autonomous machine, the factory machine of Fordism. The Fordist factory demanded a total internalisation of its movement to enable efficient productivity. However, a strange coincidence is at work between the autonomous rhythm of the factory and the liberating autonomous rhythm of the body: in both there was an illusion of a labouring process that would be done without remainder, an utter productivity in the factory was parallel to the absolute expressiveness of the liberated body. Today, in advanced capitalism, the production process is not autonomous at all, but overall social, heteronomous, ingrained into all the spheres of life, without visible borders between work and life, deeply defining the temporality of subjectivity. At the same time, it does not mean that the labour has actually become more abstract. The Fordist organisation and the dependence on production machines are forming the rhythms and modulations of everyday life and are deeply internalised today. Contemporary capitalism has a tendency for abstraction, for the privileging of movement as the abstract flow of money and goods, for the development of logistics as the abstract mode of social organisation to control the bodies at work, for the disclosure of subjectivity as the self-reflexive machine of transformation and constant progressiveness. However, such abstrac-

tion is only possible because of the tightened modes of control of the bodies and the radical exploitation of the working power, because of the impossibility of the immobility of many bodies and the expansion of illegal, invisible labour. Since dance cannot be thought separately from the question of labour, the dancer has the capacity to open up and explore the aesthetic and kinaesthetic aspects of the contemporary procedures of abstraction and actually de-autonomise the problematic autonomy of a dancing body. The dancer dances in a constant dependence on the world in which the dance is being made. Exactly this kind of dependence is also an abundance, shifting the work from subjectivity and an embodied source of work into a flow of production which cannot be captured, structured, organised and immediately evaluated, production which is always less than it could be. When thinking about postdance, we have to move then from a discussion which is still somehow characterised by the false differentiation between the body and language, and show how the disclosure of the wider capacities of what the body can do, the exploration of movement in general, does not necessarily bring dance back to the problematic notions of authenticity and pure dancing, to the "rather doing than talking". It does exactly the opposite: dance discloses itself as a generative force, a capacity of the different bodies (not necessarily human) which can deeply challenge our notions of the organisation, perception and dissem-

ination of movement. I am especially interested in the formative strength dance has in a time when movement stays in the centre of management and the production of value. A dancer, beside being professionally available for various types of performances and exhibitions today, also has an inventive power. As a speculative machine she or he can resist control through modes of abstraction and at the same time always experiment with her or his material ground, with the matter of abstraction. In this sense it is a continuous production, a physical, labouring, strenuous production of an abundance of waste, which exactly because of its redundancy opens insight into the very poetics of labour.

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# Intersubjective Fidelity

Charlotte Szász

Being and disappearing, coming together and separating again. This movement is an important characteristic of every dance choreography. It also plays an important role in fidelity and trust, as essential characteristics of intimacy. Now more than ever, dance appears discursively as an appropriate place of negotiation in particular to thoughts on differentiated sexuality, sex and sensuality by exploring intimacy, body politics and the social engagement of being together. Dance shows an interestingly new path to erasing the structure of Two as the main place of sexual intimacy.

In Alain Badiou's text '§6: Dance as a Metaphor for Thought', the French Philosopher argues for a special connection between dance and thinking to which the initial spark comes from Nietzsche's Zarathustra where dance is "the image [sic!] of a thought subtracted from every spirit of heaviness" (p.57). Badiou is significantly and explicitly influenced by Stéphane Mallarmé's two texts "Ballet" (1886) and "Another Dance Study" (1897) as he formulates six principles in which philosophy

conceptually harbors dance. Philosophy explicates six universal characteristics of dance. In these universal, atemporal and non-empiric characteristics, dance is equal to thought in relation to truth. Already without philosophy as their birthplace of comparison, dance and thought have an inexplicit connection. Dance forms form and content that is similar but different to thinking. The principles fill the connection between thought and dance with explications about dance in its very own discourse which resting bodies' thinking lacks—even though, both are transmitting, and are connecting to, universality. The principles are: 1. The obligation of space, 2. The anonymity of the body, 3. The effaced omnipresence of the sexes, 4. The subtraction from self, 5. Nakedness, and 6. The absolute gaze. According to Badiou, this of course can't discursively do justice to the history and technique of dance practice. This is to be written elsewhere.

In their initial, shared character trait of being “active”, dance performs gestures in movement and practice by which “a unique affirmative interiority is released” (p. 59). Dance is an intensification of thought's capacity to intensify upon itself by working in a situation. Different to thought, dance rests in this affirmative action of interiority. This interiority is classified as ‘not getting outside of itself’. The movement resting in its interiority is not able to project it on something outside. It is for Badiou eternally that which has not taken place. A

unique relation between dance and time. It is in the moment—but never takes place as an event.

The *atemporal interiority* in dance concerns the relation dance potentially has to all three temporalities: past, present and future. Concerning the future, for Badiou: “Dance would mimic a thought that had remained undecided, something like a native (or unfixed thought. Yes, in dance, we would find the metaphor for the unfixed” (p. 61). Dance shows the restraint of every movement. Without transformation, it sustains the restraint. It never comes out of itself as something different than a movement illustrating restraint. In dance, its gestures will not take place outside of itself—as an event in time. The atemporal interiority is also consequential to the present of dance: “In Dance, there is therefore something that is prior to time, something pretemporal” (p. 62). The affirmative interiority in gesture is fixed on its connection to a universal significance, not sourced in its empirical production methods. Consequently, one must conclude that the ‘atemporality’ concerns also the past that becomes present in dance. The exclusion of history and technique as influential on dance, not only in this investigation but also systematically regarding the characteristics of dance in Badiou, excludes the physical history of the dancer’s body and the content forming techniques that are brought into the dance. Which means: (1) according to Badiou, the dancer’s body is a virgin’s body. And (2) it needs a space that is so freed of obedi-

ence and external constraint to express its interiority that only an institution that offers a (closed) free space can fulfill such a responsibility. Dance today is rapidly exceeding the institutionalization of dance. One way in which dance currently explores intimacy, body politics and the social engagement of 'being together' is in being institutionally post-dance. Significantly, sexuality, sex and sensuality is negotiated through the history of bodies, gestures and formats of dance.

How does Badiou, within his universalist characteristics, regard the negotiation of sexuality in dance? Concerning the sexuated position of dancer, Badiou says dance essentially erases the concept of two sexual positions by 'disjunction' and 'conjunction': "Dance is entirely composed of the conjunction and disjunction of sexed positions" (p. 65). For him, the kiss as a disjunction of two sexed positions is the very heart of every dance. There is 'coming together' and 'parting again' as the main movement to every choreography. With the kiss, Badiou embeds the dancer as a sexed subject in an axiomatic of love. Badiou writes in the chapter 'Philosophy and Love' of *Conditions* (1992): "Love is not that which from a Two taken as structurally given creates the One of ecstasy" (p. 181). The kiss is emblematic for the dis- and conjunction of lovers, there are structurally Two positions which do not dialectically form into a united One. Here, disjunction is a fixed position. It is the structural knowledge which in love is not observ-

able: “Everything is presented in such a way that no coincidence can be attested between what affects one position and what affects the other. I will call this state of things a disjunction. Sexed positions are disjunctive as regards experience in general” (p. 183). In love, there is no observing third position allowed, a position which could potentially recognize disjunctive subjects: “We must carefully distinguish love from the ‘couple’. The couple is what, of love, is visible to a third. The couple is therefore a two counted in a situation where there is a third.” (p. 187) A scene of Two is only the appearance of the two in love, but always rests hypothetically postulated by a third—and this does not concern the being of the two. This solely is an interior—it is “work, a process” (p. 188) for the disjunctive subjects.

For dance however, Badiou speaks of *legible* performances. Remember that for Badiou the dancer’s body does not express some particular thing, nor does it imitate. There is no subject, no role to be played, but interiority is intensified. Within such a context, the role of the audience becomes a particular one. The audience of dance is different from the observing role of a theatre goer: “Indeed if someone watches dance, he inevitably turns into its voyeur” (p. 67). The audience of dance does not need to “invest the scene with his own desire”. It does not need to observe the subject of dance but rather the interiority in restraint—a universal address and the nakedness of concepts. There is no search for an

object of one's own desires in dance because "that would refer us back to an ornamental or fetishistic nakedness" (p.67). Therefore: "The gaze of the spectator of dance must apprehend the relation of being to disappearing—it can never be satisfied with a mere spectacle" (p. 67). Being and disappearing erase sexed positions.

The erasing of sexed positions by the movement of disjunction and conjunction particular to dance is therefore different to the static disjunctive position of the sexed subject in Badiou's philosophy of love. Different from the scene of the Two in love—in which we have structural knowledge concerning solely the disjunctiveness of the subjects—in dance 'disjunction and conjugation' form an interplay. What significance then can this interplay have to sexed positions? What could this movement of meeting and separation mean not only to the sexed position but also to sexuality and intimacy? Staying in an 'axiomatic of love', Emmanuel Lévinas analyses how desire is at work here. In the chapter titled 'Enjoyment and Separation' in *Totality and Infinity*, Lévinas opens up sexuality precisely in this movement of juncture and separation—different to the static 'disjunction' in Badiou: "Separation comes to pass as the positive work of this engagement" (*Totality and Infinity*, p. 147). Separation as the disjunctive movement following a conjunction is enjoyment. Further: "The interiority of enjoyment as separation in itself, is the mode according to which such an event as separation can be produced in the economy of being."

(p. 147). The enjoyment is generated in the separated being—by the Other. It is not that the autonomy of the separated being generates enjoyment in separation. It is in the relation to the Other that the separation can bring enjoyment. Separation is a positive work, the positive progress of an engagement, emblematic in the kiss. The dependence upon the movement of disjunction and conjunction produces enjoyment and more importantly fidelity to the engagement.

Considering being and separating as important movement in choreography produces multiple beings and separations between dancers. The trust and fidelity put in every emblematic kiss is a gesture of intimacy. The Two as static is erased. Dance antagonizes social arrangements concerning sex, sensuality and sexuality. Disjunction and conjunction produces intersubjective fidelity in movement, more 'active' than any 'static' discourse about sex, sensuality and sexuality could produce. Interiority is negotiated, but not—in opposition to Badiou—disconnected from temporality but rather gesturally very much connected to history and technique which does not weaken the power of dance to antagonize dissatisfying structures. There is no non-discursive body language in the playroom. The problem that every *safe space* and laboratory exploration that antagonizes given structures has, is the motionlessness of the static order to which it is in opposition. Even for intimate objects like intersubjective fidelity, this is the economic

and social structure. How is this a *restrain* on the impact that dance can have as an important place of negotiation around body politics and the social engagement?

For the Russian bolshevist author Alexander Bogdanov the economic and social structure is *always* at play regarding questions of intimacy, sex and sexuality. Here we can take a literary example to illustrate where the problem of intersubjective fidelity is further located. Bogdanov writes about the relationship between the protagonist of his socialist sci-fi novel *Red Star* and Anna Nikolaevna, his girlfriend, in 1908:

Our views on our relationship differed even more sharply. She thought that love implied certain obligations—concession, sacrifices, and, above all, fidelity for the duration of the union. In actual fact I had no intention whatever of entering into another liaison, but I was unable to recognize fidelity as an obligation. I even believed that polygamy was in principle superior to monogamy, since it provided for both a richer private life and a greater variety of genetic combinations. In my opinion, it was only the contradictions of the bourgeois order which for the time being made polygamy either simply unfeasible or merely the privilege of the exploiters and parasites, who were all befouled by their own decadent psychology. Here too the future would bring a radical transformation. (Red Star, p. 25).



Leonid and Anna's discursive thoughts on their relationship conclude in Leonid's analysis of the position in which external restraint becomes visible: A meeting between systematic rules and form dictating circumstances within economic and social conditions, and the reasoning of the disjunctive subjects of a couple in a relationship in their interiority. Although the protagonist imagines preferring the mere possibility of infidelity in his relationship, he excludes this option due to the problematized result from the position of the problem. A better form is imaginable for him but he restricts the realization of infidelity as he recognizes its consequential actions to his psychology: greediness as the necessary emotional response of a detached subject in a polygamous relationship in corrupt times. Accepting a polygamous relationship is foreseen not to be caused by what is *being done*, but under which conditions the couple socially and economically exists. Polygamy, in our economic circumstances, necessarily detaches the subjects from their partner due to social conditions. One bond is supportable, more is a privilege of the exploiters, a privilege of the wealthy who can economically and socially function with decadent morals. Bogdanov seems to be saying that a change in the economic and social structure that implements these conditions are not only to be negotiated in the private relationship.

Leonid does not exclude the possibility of infidelity because of Anna's wish for fidelity. This is very sim-

ilar to the argumentation in Badiou's *Philosophy and Love* when he speaks of the disjunctive subjects of the Two. Badiou rejects that love is a sacrifice, "prostrating the Same before the alter of the Other". He excludes it on the terms of love as an "experience of the world under the postevental condition that there are Two" (*Conditions*, p. 181) to which I'm adding, is never without social and economic conditioning of the subjects. A 'transformation that the future brings' then, is in certain ways independent of active subjects. Even if the two would try, they would fail on another level.

Intimacy and sexuality is not only in one domain. Creating safespaces as laboratories is only one side of change. It is to be negotiated in the disjunction and conjunction that structures the engagement. It is also to be negotiated on a theoretical level. Debates and theoretical willingness in discourse is the other side of change. They urgently need to meet—whereby Bogdanov lays the emphasis on the external conditions needing change in order for psychological and emotional implementation. The two intertwine in their common restraint of the social and economic conditions that condition the positions of the subjects in the Two. The consequence for Bogdanov is: the outside of conditions under which the newly erased sexuated positions exist will dominate the interiority under which they have been erased. If truth in sex, sensuality and sexuality is not in their essence universally linked to the social and

economic conditions that dominate them, it is certainly restrained by them for which nonetheless dance is a vital place of showing us 'how to'.

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# Notes on Post-dance

Josefine Wikström

In the early 2000s, French curator Nicholas Bourriaud's book *Relational Aesthetics* was published in English. The term, which he coined in 1995, quickly gained momentum within the contemporary art world. In this book, Bourriaud presents a way to theorize and systematize a new generation of artists, whose practices were characterized as both performative and situational. Since the launch of the book, the term has received much critique including whether the reasons for introducing such a term were critical, curatorial or purely economic; it is difficult to discern because Bourriaud worked as a critic curator as well as a consultant to Russian collectors at the time. Today, almost two decades later, from the perspective of art theory, it is less clear what the term actually contributed.<sup>1</sup> What is certain is that it tried to say something about a set of contemporary art practices at a particular moment in time and that it is still one of the most discussed and used theoretical terms within the field of art.

Like the term relational aesthetics, “post-dance” also came out of a curatorial context. Artistic director of MDT Danjel Andersson coined the term, by using it as the title of an international conference held at MDT in 2015. Similar to the way in which Bourriaud launched relational aesthetics, “post-dance” might be understood as a strategy to collectivize and theorize a particular moment in contemporary dance and choreography. But in contrast to Bourriaud’s developed theorization of relational aesthetics (first in a number of articles published in French, then combined into a book) neither the Post-Dance Conference nor the accompanying program problematized the term or hinted at why it was used as the main title. The only clue given was that the conference wanted to offer an opportunity to *really find time and space to reflect on the developments and forces that have shaped choreographic imagination from the 1960s up to today*. The conference was organised by Andersson in collaboration with the artistic director of the Swedish Cullberg Ballet, Gabriel Smeets and professor in Performance Studies André Lepecki. Invited, were mainly European based choreographers and theoreticians that have either performed at MDT or have some other connection to it. The term is broad yet specific. While “post-dance” can hold infinite possible meanings—also indicated in the program description by including all dance from the 1960s to today, taking the broadest historical starting point possible—the organi-

zation of the conference seemed to point to something more local and specific.

So how might it be possible to offer “post-dance” as a term? Can it simply be imagined, as stated in the program notes, as a space to reflect upon all dance and choreography from the 1960s and onwards, but particularly within the context of Stockholm? Or is it a more open invitation than that? Was it launched to trigger thinking about the present moment within the field of dance and choreography from the perspective of what Marx once referred to as “self-criticism”?<sup>2</sup> What strikes me, is that less than two years later, the term, a bit like relational aesthetics, seems out of date. Why is that, and is it necessarily a problem? Could it instead be understood as an indicator of its contemporaneity? On a more detailed level, what does the “post” stand for here? How does “post-dance” relate to other famous “posts” in the history of art, dance, and critical theory? And what might those “posts” say about the status of post-dance?

### **Post-modernism and post-capitalism**

Although the prefix “post” is supposed to indicate something that takes place *after* in time or order and as a break from what was previous, when used in art theory and philosophy, it has often proved to mean the opposite. Take the term “postmodern” for example: one of the most well known usages of the prefix “post”.

Jean-Francois Lyotard used it in his canonical book, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* published in French at the end of the 1970s. The popularization of the term came with Frederic Jameson's *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* written ten years later.<sup>3</sup> While Lyotard mainly focuses on the transformation of knowledge production within a new economy beginning in the late 1950s, Jameson's magnum opus takes a broader approach and considers cultural as well as economic changes, within the same timeframe. Both make their arguments by leaning on another term with the word post in it: "post-industrialism" or in Jameson's case, "late capitalism". For these two thinkers, "post-industrialism" and "late" or "post-capitalism" refer to the idea that capitalism, as a specifically historical economic system, had come to an endpoint or was at least beginning to move towards its endpoint after the Second World War. According to Lyotard and Jameson, this had to do with changes in the production and organization of labor that became apparent in the new ways in which commodities were produced and circulated. Lyotard points to the computerization of knowledge in fields such as cybernetics and informatics to explain his working hypothesis that "the status of knowledge is altered as societies enter what is known as the post-industrial age and cultures enter what is known as the postmodern age." Jameson, in his turn, relates the changes in production – which we might describe as a shift from

the factory to the design office—to aesthetics in general. “Aesthetic production today”, he wrote, “has become integrated into commodity production generally: the frantic economic urgency of producing fresh waves of ever more novel-seeming goods [...] now assigns an increasingly essential structural function and position to aesthetic innovation and experimentation.”

So why is it that both Lyotard’s postmodern condition and Jameson’s postmodernism and late capitalism are out of date? As Jameson points out “late capitalism” was already used in 1972 by Ernest Mandel in his book *Late Capitalism*. But Werner Sombart, in *Modern Capitalism*, coined the term as early as 1902. It is not however the extended use of the term “post-capitalism”, however ironic it may be, that puts this term on its head.

Only a decade after Lyotard’s *Postmodern Condition* was published the Berlin wall went down. In 1991 with the fall of the Soviet Union, the communist dream, as Franco Berardi recently articulated in a symposium, collapsed once and for all. Since then, globalization and the increased capitalization, has accelerated to previously unthought-of levels to which movements such as Occupy in 2011 responded. Berardi, paraphrasing Marx, succinctly stated that we live through and through the abstract capital labor relations of capitalist society. To speak of a late or a post-capitalist phase seems here only to affirm capitalism as the main system through which all social relations are reproduced. Here, “post” im-



plies an affirmation rather than a break with the word that comes after: namely capitalism. Super- instead of post-capitalism perhaps?

### **Post-modernism and post-modern dance**

The term “post-modernism”, as it has been used within the field of art, can be disentangled in a similar way as “late” or “post-capitalism”. It should above all be traced back to those American artists in the 1960s, who have retrospectively been named conceptual-, land-, performance-, sound- and minimalist artists, and who rejected the American art critic Clement Greenberg’s definition of the modern artwork: “It is primarily in opposition to Greenberg’s conception of modernism that the idea of post-modernism has evolved in the visual arts.”<sup>4</sup> For Greenberg the modernist artwork was characterized by medium-specificity and self-reference. Painting, sculpture and dance should, in Greenberg’s theorization, work towards their own specific characteristics. This meant that painting should strive towards the two-dimensional surface and that dance should aim for the purification of movement. By rejecting Greenberg’s stylistic conception of modernism, the term post-modernism, amongst young 1960s artists, came to represent a style that broke from such aesthetic associations.

The problem however, is firstly that Greenberg’s notion of modernism was based on an idea of style, instead

of, as the term “modern” implies, something much more complex. If modern is thought of as “modernity” instead of as “modernism” it has nothing to do with styles. The modern paradigm, as Walter Benjamin and Charles Baudelaire have shown in their writings, has nothing to do with Greenberg’s self-referential aesthetic or any other particular look. For them, “modern” instead indicates a new historical period, which doesn’t simply break with previous periods in history, but breaks with the idea of history itself. Implied in their conception of the modern we find a new subject formation inseparable from the introduction of capitalism on a global scale; the notion of autonomous art no longer tied to the church or state and an all together new idea of time. Since modernism, or modern art, refers to this shift, rather than to a specific style, terms such as “post-modernism” – if thought of stylistically – become obsolete.

The term “post-modern” was also used within the context of dance. Yvonne Rainer employed it to describe her work in the early 1960s as a chronological marker to indicate that her work came after the work of modern choreographers. Later she replaced it with the terms “task-like activity” and “dance”. Post-modern dance has mainly been theorized and written about by dance historian Sally Banes. Like advocates of post-modern art, Banes uses “post-modern dance” to describe dance works that evolved in the 1960s and that rejected Greenberg’s self-referential idea about the medium-spe-

cific artwork. Banes argues that choreographers tied to Judson Church, such as Rainer, Simone Forti, Steve Paxton and Trisha Brown, broke with the “aesthetic” of modern dance. Her description of these artists’ works are detailed, and give a good account of the main choreographic strategies used such as tasks and found movements. But like “postmodernism”, “post-modern dance” is deemed a useless term as it relies on a narrow and purely formal category of the modern. Although canonical works like Rainer’s *Trio A* or Brown’s *Accumulation* are fundamentally different from Graham’s *Lamentation* or Wigman’s *Hexentanz*, all four dances belong to the modern paradigm described above. (Didn’t it for example strike Banes that the use of found movements refers to a strategy used by Duchamp, the most modern artist ever recognized?) Instead of post-modern dance, we might instead want to talk about these works as ultra-modern?

### **Post-dance: a moment of self-reflection?**

Now, how does the rather newly invented term “post-dance” stand in relation to these other famous “posts”? Does it indicate *after* something or the affirmation of something? And what, more precisely, is the dance?

One way of understanding “post-dance” is to see it as the re-introduction of the term dance, and as a negation of what might be called the *choreographic turn* in the field of Western dance, which can be traced to the mid 1990s.

Foregrounded by choreographers such as Xavier Le Roy and Vera Mantero, this type of dance has been described as the rejection of modern dance's ontology: its inseparability from movement and in particular the modern subject with the capacity to move itself.<sup>5</sup> If post-dance is thought of as a negation of choreography in this sense, it might perhaps also imply an affirmation of dance in its modern (rather than modernist) sense: as autonomous. Is "post-dance" then, like "postmodern", "post-modernism", "postmodern dance" and "post-capitalism" an affirmation of dance in its modern sense: as an art of autonomy?

Another interrelated way of thinking of the term "post-dance" is to understand it as the negation of dance as a medium, in the way that Greenberg, after Gotthold Lessing, argued that each specific art form is on a quest for its essence. The choreographers of the 1960s, whose entire practices rejected dance as a medium-specific discipline and instead saw dance as art, already did this. For them, everyone was an artist. Following this line of thought, "post-dance" might be seen as the institutionalisation of a process begun sixty years ago but not institutionally established until now.

A final and perhaps most simple way of thinking about "post-dance" would be to understand it similarly to the heavily contaminated term, "post-Internet art". Introduced in the mid 2000 it is often referred to as a set of art practices—with artists like AIDS-3D, Ryan

Trecartin and Amalia Ulman at the forefront—that explicitly thematise the use of Internet in their work. It has also been used to describe artists who are Internet-native, and at other times to account for all artists working after the Internet. The post of dance is different from the post of the Internet. But what is particularly interesting is that both of these terms demonstrate a desire to exercise a form of self-critique in the present. Both are too open and too narrow at the same time to say much about anything. The meaning of them is less important than the urge of wanting to objectify the present moment that they exist within. Seen from this perspective, “post-dance” can follow two possible routes. Either it stays in a curatorial framework where it might enter the risk of becoming an empty term for marketing. Or it is used as a springboard and an imperative for action to think about the present in dance in an act of self-criticism. If one does the latter, then post-dance can be used productively to argue for a dance inseparable from the thinking of that same dance.

#### Notes

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See also Stewart Martin’s critique of Bourriaud. “Critique of Relational Aesthetics.” *Third Text* 21/4 (2009): 369–386.

2. See the introduction to the *Grundrisse* where Marx speaks about the self-criticism of political economy. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of*

*Political Economy (Rough Draft)*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (London and New York: Penguin Books 1973).

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# Fragments Of an Artistic Queer- Femme-nist Strategy To Be

Ofelia Jarl Ortega

I talk to a man. He wonders if I'm familiar with the notion of a "cash slave". He wants to send me the key to his chastity belt and give me access to his personal bank account. He wants me to take complete control over him, physically and financially, to dominate him on as many levels as possible. It is perhaps the most humiliating thing for him, to be financially dominated; the most degrading form of domination in a capitalist world. I let go of my persona, because I, Ofelia, get interested in the phenomenon. I research and use his story. Mean maybe—since he is for real, but I also give him a real answer. I am interested.

*Let us look at all Insta selfies and say they are deliberate queer-femme-nist practices...*

In Tiqquns manifesto *Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young-Girl*, the young girl is a product of capitalism and patriarchy. "She" is not gendered and exists in various ages (and everywhere). She is described as a tool

and not her own, thin as the back of a magazine, a living currency, a self-valuing creature, passive, unhappy, narcissistic and unable to love without consuming or being consumed.

However, ungendered, "she" is still described as a she, and so I read different kinds of femininities, how the young femininity is something desirable but actually totally powerless, because there is also something in that young femininity that touches us, that we desire and need and want to be a part of. And maybe it is not only problematic but also generative. The text is from 1999, after came more Internet with Instagram and FB, and so on, and the young femininity is perhaps more in our face now than ever.

Gender researcher Ulrika Dahl describes femininity in her 2011 essay titled *Ytspänningar* (surface tensions) as seemingly superficial. She talks about a surface tension. Dahl discloses a tension between readings of femininities. A tension which on the one hand is the classical deep female, mysterious and introverted femininity, and on the other with the (female) body as a place for projection, susceptible to external influences.

I see young femininity as a kind of tension. Many dancers carry and represent these features of young femininity. Even where this is not made explicit, they still exist within a field where the physically work of their bodies displays them for others, and to some ex-



ment objectifies them. Young femininity is desirable, and it is being portrayed all the time, everywhere.

The surface creates tension ... the surface is also the largest sensory organ, how we are read most rapidly, it tells us what is there and not. The superficial tells us whether we are this or that.

The surface has always been linked to the female and feminine, passive.

We must let the surface be able to talk about other things, no matter how it looks, whether or not it is feminine.

Perhaps the young girl is not only that calcified figuration that Tiquun talks about. At the surface layer there is in fact something that chafes. Instead of changing the young girls we should change the system around her that makes her unhappy. Perhaps it is through her and what she is doing that we can change. By relying on what she has to say, even if it is from the surface.

We see a dance performance that addresses sexuality, working with explicit sexual and erotic references, making them live on stage. Some see only a good-looking girl and her ass. "I shouldn't like this but I do" is an annoying thought, but maybe for a change we can go away from it and give room to that ass, give it a voice. A sort of subjective process to the voluntary object. Trust

all girls on Instagram, rely on those performing young femininity, trust all teens' vlogs and stop saving ourselves from the remorse we get from liking what we see.

The role of the victim is given by the viewer. If it is not received, it is (not) because she has learned to want to be a victim, to be objectified, to be desirable.

It isn't difficult to criticize the use of erotic aesthetics in performances, but perhaps hard for the critique to reach those it wants to affect. Working with erotic material, one expects to be objectified, criticized, judged, stared at. Also liked, desired... despite the fact that people think it is annoying, and also because people think it is annoying. It's about how one chooses. On whose terms. As a performer, with the body as one's tool, one is aware of being viewed in different ways. It's objectification and vulnerability on their own premises. It's the interest in the practices that leads to the choice to do them.

Young femininity, the young girl, which I rather think we should understand as a subject that chafes and scuffs—is a queer subject that in the meeting with the gaze is rendered qualified and organized. The young femininity forms an ulcerous surface tension, an uncomfortable place to be, at times a political place, a vector of potentiality precisely because it creates discord, and above all, confusion. Vulnerability is not an obstacle here; it is rather the opportunity for this position. For

what would it be if not a game, a role play? Albeit sometimes a painful, ulcerated one, other times affirming and enjoyable...

We must admit that there are satisfactory parts in objectification. We like it because the young femininity is coveted and elevated. Vulnerability thus becomes a shield. It becomes impenetrable because it is a voluntary choice to show something as vulnerable. Objectification can be used in the same way, as a weapon – an enjoyable weapon that can be projected onto others and inversely to be projected upon.

So where does the role play start? Besides the obvious that we always perform ourselves, capitalism also creates us, sometimes as young and good-looking objects. I wonder if we can use the very weapons directed against us, instead of attempting disassociation. Making use of objectification and vulnerability as a weapon, on one's own terms; to control a gaze, an audience. With such agency, one can provide different depths beneath the surface. We can highlight the problematic sides, but without focusing on just that. (It's too boring).

I objectify myself. Let them objectify me on my terms as a way of playing with fiction in reality.

As young gir(r)ls we know this, but even so, we choose it. To be the surface where one can project. We don't really care about the gaze, people looking. Their voices. It's enough with the confirmation, some likes on FB. But we don't care about who likes, who is

watching, just the fact that someone does it is enough.

The experience has its own agency. A narcissism and surface that dies with its own reflection, but in that case we die together. Because by recognizing the superficiality we play by the rules that we said we would not follow you can never go back to your dry place by the lake.

We are already playing on different premises. By deliberately choosing the hyper-sexual, we have decided to engage with objectification and to become vulnerable within it. In the midst arises a clash, too close for comfort, requiring your engagement; it will be difficult for you in the same way that it will be difficult for us. A shared vulnerability. An interaction.

It is in our bodies and on our surfaces that the negotiation takes place. It stops being just a surface and becomes something beyond a safe, distanced irony (or ironic fiction). You will be perverts who watch pretty girls because we want you to be there. Our fiction can be the place where vulnerable young girls, with failure, cracks and wounds omit other light.

# Manuscript for Post-Dance Publication

Samlingen: Amanda Apetrea,  
Nadja Hjorton, Stina Nyberg, Halla  
Ólafsdóttir & Zoë Poluch

We think the dance scene lacks knowledge about its own history. About stories, traditions, and experiences. It lacks knowledge about the people who made the history, not only about those who wrote it. Every now and then I hear someone describe the dance scene as a “minor” art scene, like one of the small arts. Smaller than theatre. Smaller than visual art. Smaller than literature. I think that this is a self-fulfilling prophecy that keeps us small by repeating our tinyness all the time. To bring up the long, rich, embodied knowledge of dance history makes us bigger and reminds us of all the good stuff that people have made.

Also, history tends to be written by men with rational minds and an expensive pen, sitting by their desk whilst a woman prepares dinner. The dancer is not known as a history writer, but she kind of is. History writing is also made body to body, mouth to ear, and mouth to mouth. This is not to say that dancers do not talk or write. On the contrary, dancers are great talkers and writers. It is

rather, an attempt to combine two feminist strategies on history writing: one that highlights the physical knowledge, the experience and knowledge transferred body to body, orally and otherwise, and one that insists that we, we being everyone that has been excluded from the history books (because of having a vagina, practising the wrong kind of sex, using feet to write with, being silenced as a housekeeper, or as the subject of any kind of racist, ableist or sexist behaviour), that we need to write ourselves into that big book of history.

Samlingen is a collection of past, present and future related dance stuff. We are five choreographers working as a collective and dispersing authorship. The choreographic work is about how we relate to history, how we think about working together, the hierarchies between work roles—who gets to be the boss and who should be the boss, the whiteness of the black box, the money, the sick leave and parental leave, it's about working only with people you want to sleep with, about stealing ideas, about feeling like you will never become anything and everyone already knows that. These things, the major dilemmas of living in relationship with dance, are brought up in Samlingen.

We will state things that for some of you will be stating the obvious, because the risk is that it will otherwise not be said at all. So, if you have heard this before, bear with us.

We believe that there is no apolitical space. This room:

is not apolitical. This conference is of course not. There is no apolitical choreographer, no apolitical chair, no apolitical dance. We find it important to re-politicize bodies and spaces. We are doing our best to be politically correct, failing constantly of course. It is a way of meeting our prejudices and trying to confront them. It is a tool for thinking about stuff acknowledging how fucking complex it is. When can we get past the notion that some of us will always carry the weight of identity politics, that some bodies always carry a story, while others simply pass as neutral?

As five white people we are accomplices to the racist European dance community. By being here, talking about our experiences, we are actively taking space away from those that have been told repeatedly that they do not belong—a number of whom have incredible things to share within the field. As five normatively abled persons talking at this conference, we are accomplices to the ableist dance community, one that also conceals eating disorders, glorifies particular techniques, and assumes that only certain able bodied people can engage in dance otherwise exotifying the other. It is critical that choreography is inclusive, adhering to marginalized groups that have been displaced by hegemonic structures of power. It is equally as important that the rest of the choreographic community feature these performances in their reviews, their academic research, their programs, their festivals, their European money

networks, their affiliated blogs, their critiques, and their conversations.

It's a perfect time to paraphrase Courtney Trouble, the queer porn icon, both a producer and performer.

Hire a trans woman as your personal trainer, hire a woman of color as your editor, hire a sex worker as your boss, hire a dancer with cognitive difficulties in your show, hire each other to look at how we do things. Or just put yourself at the service of others instead of making one more uninclusive work. And you know that no matter what dance school you go to they will call you chubby, and fat and worse words. All under the thin veil of your own best, your way to perfection, you becoming a great dancer. Fat activism is part of the feminist movement. Go home and google it.

You can also google this, her keynote speech at the 2014 Feminist Porn Awards, it's on YouTube.

*“Hej Agnieszka, Aja, Alexandra, Allyson, Alma, Ambra, Anja, Anja, Anna, Anna, Anna, Anna, Anna, Anna, Anna, Anna, Anne, Camilla, Carina, Caroline, Catharina, Cecilia, Charlotta, Chrysa, Cilla, Cilla, Cristina, Dalija, Dorte, Efva, Eliisa, Emelie, Emma, Emma, Eva, Eva, Fay, Francoise, Gunilla, Helena, Imenella, Ina, Ingrid, Jeanette, Jeanette,*



Jennie, Julia, Kajsa, Kajsa, Kajsa, Kajsa, Karina, Katarina, Kathleen, Katja, Katrine, Kristiina, Lena, Linda, Linda, Linda, Linnea, Lisa, Lisa, Lisen, Louise, Louise, Malin, Malin, Margareta, Margaretha, Marie, Maryam, Melina, Minna, Minna, Nicki, Nina, Ofelia, Rani, Rebecka, Rebecka, Salka, Sandra, Sandra, Sara, Sara, Sepidar, Sharon, Siv, Sophie, Stina, Stina, Susanna, Susanne, Susanne, Tove, Tove, Tove, Tove, Tyra, Ulrika, Virpi, Åsa, Åsa,

We want to meet you and write dance history!

We, the choreographers Amanda Apetrea, Nadja Hjorton, Stina Nyberg, Halla Ólafsdóttir and Zoë Poluch work together under the name Samlingen. Earlier we did a collaboration with Cullberg ballet where we researched Cullberg ballet's history through an exhibition at the Dance Museum. This 11th of April we want to meet you at Kulturhuset Stadsteatern to together fantasize around and create a timeline from 1974 (Kulturhuset's opening) until today. We imagine that we write dance history from personal memories, anecdotes and historical facts but that there is also place for forgotten, hidden or dismissed history that relates to the past 41 years.

The time line will then be our departure point for a 4 day long public activity in the foyer of Hörsalen during the beginning of September.

The timeline is physically made in a studio at Kulturhuset, the 11th of April between 17–19. We will provide snacks that are needed to make the historical memory juicy -wine, coffee, cake, popcorn.

We are grateful if you can answer as soon as possible.

With soft hands,  
Amanda, Halla, Nadja, Stina och Zoë”

I would like to talk about the magic act of naming, an act that reveals two sharp sides of the same knife depending on who's using it. We need to be able to call ourselves woman when the category of woman is useful in order to organize, emphasize, and emancipate. We also need to know when it is not useful, and when to commit to other titles such as friend, choreographer, boss, and bus driver, without being girl friend, female choreographer, female boss and female bus driver. There are moments when naming is a fruitful strategy, when such an endeavour can lead to increased agency and emancipation. Naming is always political.

We bring the YES association into the room.

We often hear that the deconstruction of essentialized identities, which results from an acknowledgement of the contingency and ambiguity of identity itself, renders feminist political action impossible. Many feminists believe that, without the existence of woman as a coherent category, we cannot imagine the possibility of a feminist political movement in which women could unite as women in order to formulate and pursue specific feminist aims. On the contrary, we argue, the deconstruction of essential identities is

a necessary starting point for those feminists who are committed to a radical democratic politics, because it highlights the variety of social relations to which the principles of liberty and equality should apply. Let's demand that we locate our political identity between what we have inherited and what is not yet born, between what we can only imagine and the histories that constrain and shape that imagination.

Is it important that we are women?

Could we, for instance, ask all men to leave the room, like right now?

Could we ask for all the cis men to leave the room?

What would it stir? Would it be worth it? Don't worry, we aren't gonna throw men out but instead throw into the room a strategy that we have used in one of our more recent projects, that of the strategically separatist room.

In the spring, prior to our residence at Kulturhuset in September, we had four gatherings to which we invited female identified practitioners to join us in creating a timeline of Kulturhuset, spanning from its opening in 1974 until today. We gathered groups of 10–15 people and asked each guest to bring and share a memory related to dance and choreography. The memory could be as subjective or general as they wanted. Our way of

sharing was the “Swedish” circle, executed by sitting in a circle and talking one by one without being interrupted. Afterward, we wrote everything that was said onto the timeline.

It was obvious from the start that this object, the timeline, was not at all important, but rather that significance lay in the gathering and the conversations. The fact that these gatherings took place in a separatist room allowed us all to talk from the position of being a women working within the field of dance. There were some themes or topics that came up in every meeting, themes that have also been repeatedly mentioned in this conference: institution, feminism, work, school. These themes were then integrated into our four days at Kulturhuset Stadsteatern, informing our daily activities in various ways. We did a dance together with our guests—a speculative and clairvoyant dance to forecast the future that was then compiled on a future timeline that also occupied a wall in the space. We did a restaging of the Samling, the circle and memory sharing that was then notated on the main timeline. And we partook in a round-table discussion, a conversation with knowledgeable practitioners that was broadcasted on the radio.

We refer here to history and the writing of a canon, trying to make a kind of counter-canon of dance, written by women only, while at the same time overflowing this canon, gathering too much information for it to actually happen. Thus, the dates are not always right. A

lot of people tell the same story in different ways and things are often written on the timeline that are potentially true or not. They are all subjective stories—emotional, oral and personal stories about ones subjective understanding of how history unfolds. These gatherings brought our attention to the stories that never got told and were never written down: everyone who did not come, that we did not know we should have invited, what and who we included and excluded in the contemporary dance scene, who the invited people chose to talk about, etc. A lot of people that are perpetually kept out of history were clearly still being underrepresented or all together invisible. These realizations deeply informed this very discussion.

We are a group of good friends, a friendship that started in dance school and in choreography school. We want to make public these conversations among friends. We share a friendship with each other, but we also have a shared friendship with certain issues. It's like we have a shared friend that brings us together, and her name is dance. As we spend time being friends with each other we learn to think together, but we also escape work, collectively becoming more than workers.

What we have in common:

We are white cis women

We are feminists

We are bisexual, heterosexual and well-educated

We are dancers  
We have been sexually harassed one or several times  
before the age of 13  
We are joyful and naive  
We are good looking  
We like to dance  
We want people to feel welcome  
We want people to feel included  
We are critical  
We spent far too long preparing this talk  
We are in our thirties  
We are emotional (most of us)  
We are aware of our weaknesses  
We are nervous  
We have never done a key-note speech before  
We live in Stockholm  
We talk with our vaginas  
We like to talk  
We often finish each others sentences  
We mostly wear pants  
We mostly wear black clothes  
We talk about fisting  
We are kill joys  
We know a lot of people  
We have some money  
We have parents that are still alive  
We are invited to institutions  
We have anal sex

We say "Hi, how are you? What are you doing now?  
What are you working on? Nice to see you."  
We talk about what we are interested in  
We know people that live in Brussels  
We care about the Swedish dance community  
We take care  
We talk about failure  
We talk about  
We love each other  
We constantly interrupt each other  
We are very good friends  
We are good in creating a relaxed atmosphere with a  
do it yourself aesthetic  
We want you to stand up  
We want you to stay touching the object or body that's  
touching you if it's already touching you  
We want you to close your eyes  
We want you to feel the weight of your entire body,  
from the top of your head to the tips of your toes  
We want you to feel that weight move through your  
hip bones into your heels  
We want you to feel this weight transfer from one side  
to the other  
We want you to sway slowly from side to side....

Post-dance is a five-headed glob with the eyes of an eagle and the ears of a bat. Post-dance is very caring of her young and will play for hours, performing all kinds

of acrobatics. She lives on land, but always has her home near water. She is always on the move and is very curious. This joyful little creature is adventurous and will not start a fight unless she is attacked first. She assumes that all other creatures are friendly and lesbian until proven otherwise.

Post-dance practices sisterhood, aiming to enjoy and share the good fortune of others. She will, for example, offer her partner as a lover to her lonely sister to keep her from drying up and to assist in her creative urges. If however Post-Dance is provoked, she can be horribly vicious, and can attack with powerful aggression. The very thought of happening upon Post-Dance in a dark ally during her moments of rage, makes others run for cover. Her hissing fangs will tear less aggressive opponents to shreds.

Post-Dance loves dancing rituals, dancing just for the sake of dancing, and especially dancing together. Her dance longs to analyze ways of moving through the world, how she sees herself in the act of locomotion and what kind of reaction is created with the energy of movement. Post-Dance also searches for words in order to describe the process of moving through material and spiritual realms, dancing into her potential.

She loves to share and make up stories of the past, present, future, and the in between. Post-Dance sees herself as a swimming library. She is clairaudient, able to tap into very low and very high frequencies. She is



also psychically developed and fairly telepathic.

Post-Dance practices various types of polygamy usually with members of all sexes, being more or less promiscuous. At times she exhibits monogamous pair formations, lasting through the breeding season. On rare occasions Post-Dance leaves her natural habitat and wanders into big institutions. In such situations she pretends to be an outsider—crawling on the ground looking for the understory, the subtext, the overlooked, and the downright unfair, ultimately exposing them.

# Towards a Theory Of Prefigurative Practices\*

Valeria Graziano

I would like to begin by positioning my intervention as a reflection on the possible points of collaboration between artistic and political praxis, or to put it differently, these notes address the question “how can the cultural and artistic realm be sites where collaboration assumes a political significance?”. This is an ambitious question and an age old one, but as a preliminary disclaimer I shall specify that I’m not going to focus on the broader problem of the crisis of art and politics at large, as a speculative philosophical problem, but I want to approach the matter by looking more specifically at the points of contact between artistic practice and political militancy, understood as a mode of political action that is not confined to the professional sphere, nor it is limited to critical discourse in its modality of intervention. While addressing the relation between art and politics at large remains an important area of enquiry, I believe that often the problem of the ‘political’ is mobilized as an all-encompassing keyword to address the import of artistic contributions, thus ceasing to be very

useful from the perspective of practice. By focusing on the matter of militancy and the arts, instead, I suggest that it might be possible to trace the contours of more specific issues faced by artistic practitioners and audiences alike, as the majority of the political and structures that underpinned cultural activities in the name of 'autonomy' of the arts are increasingly subjected to being dismantled or becoming more intensively instrumentalised. What I'd like to consider here is how, speaking from an European context, the figure of the artist as citizen, acting in alliance or in continuity with liberal ideas of public sphere and social democracy, might not be sustainable in the current historical juncture, after a few decades of metastability, and it might need to be replaced with a figure of the artist as partisan.

Of course it can be argued that art and militancy pertain to two ontologically different modes of action and therefore they each bring their own untranslatable plane of consistency with them; however, to stop there would mean to ignore that one of the most crucial notions used to conceptualize artistic endeavors throughout modernity, that of the 'avant-garde', has been borrowed directly from the realm of militancy. The idea of the avant-garde itself dates back to military strategies first developed in antiquity. But it was only at the beginning of the 19th century, that the French philosopher Olinde Rodrigues applied this notion to

the context of cultural production in the essay "The artist, The Scientist and The Industrialist" (1825), where he prescribed that artists should "serve as [the people's] avant-garde" and where he identified the "power of the arts" as being "the most immediate and fastest way" to a social and political revolution. More recently, another French philosopher, Jacques Rancière, who has been extremely influential in recent art discourse, could write that "the political militant and the actor are alike", since "an actor, like a political militant, aims to show what cannot be seen" (Rancière, 2006: 150). His proposition seems consistent with Rodrigues claim, that is, the connection between art and militancy seems to still be linked to an idea of avant-gardism as the main reference for understanding militancy, and through that, artistic value. Would it be possible however to think of militancy in different terms? This task seems important given that the avant-garde remains a quintessentially modern idea, thus it carries with it a number of implications that might not be useful to orientate practices in the current juncture: it presupposes a class of people oppressed in similar ways, in need to be somehow rescued from the toxic effects of their own alienated condition as a mass. It implies an idea of truth to be unveiled, in politics, through effective propaganda and organizing, in art, via aesthetically shocking gestures that could jilter audiences out of their anesthetized conditions. Moreover, the avant-garde hints to a mod-

ern conception of historical time as dialectical progress. Furthermore, the avant-garde had the organic intellectual as its protagonist, often a bourgeois who betrayed his own class. I am aware that what I'm offering here is an absolutely minimal outline of avant-gardism, nonetheless even through such sketch is possible to understand how, when it is applied to artistic and cultural production, the avant-garde could express a political potential only as a component of a wider revolutionary programme with a clear strategy in place.

Before moving to discuss how militancy could be thought in alternative terms, let me say that that I am aware that discussions of vanguardism are not at the forefront of how cultural production is discussed today. This subject is often confined to first year curricula that teach students about the importance of the historical avant-gardes—and the term 'historical' is key here—while for speaking of present practices the most important qualifier has become the 'contemporary'. But 'contemporaneity' can hardly become a generative notion to think about the political. In fact, I would argue that it is precisely the seeming neutrality of this idea that made it so operable throughout the last decades, as it allowed to defer the question of the political in art to an unidentified future. Tellingly, when the online journal *e-flux* attempted to understand the actual meaning of 'contemporary' arts by asking a broad number of practitioners and theorists to define what

this term means for them (2009), the editorial team concluded that this was an impossible task. As Boris Groys commented in one of the essays of the special issue, the 'contemporary' quality of art risks to express a lowering of expectations for the future: "yes, it is a good project but at the moment we have no money, no time, no energy, and so forth, to realize it..."; "yes it is a nice utopia, but...". Thus, the emergence of the contemporary to replace the avant-garde leaves us in a situation of stasis, an impasse rooted in symbolic and aesthetic violence that prevents the formation of effective imaginal relations with the codes at our disposal (Bernard Stiegler, 2014).

In what follows therefore, I'd like to propose the concept of 'prefiguration' as a promising conceptual candidate for attempting an alternative reflection on the contemporary politics of arts, and this for two main reasons. First, because the notion of prefiguration, like the one of the avant-garde, is borrowed directly from political theory to discuss the mode of action of militants, and thus it could similarly serve as a fertile terrain where to develop a theory of art practices vis-a-vis the political turmoil characterizing the present times. Secondly, because this notion powerfully intersects with current debates around radical social imaginary (Castoriadis, 1997) and constituent powers (Negri, 1999) that theoretically inform much of today's autonomous political organizing. Moreover, the two components of

the term prefiguration speak of a temporality of futurity (“pre-”) and of a skill pertaining to the imaginal (“figuration”), thus intersecting meaningfully also with today’s cultural and artistic practices.

### **Ideas of prefiguration in political organizing**

The notion of prefiguration first appeared to discuss the distinct way of doing politics invented by social justice movements in the 1960s and 1970s. It described the ways in which their everyday practices, including modes of organizing their sociality and reproduction, as well as the way they conceived direct actions, all appeared infused by an effort to embody the broader political goals that these movements wanted to achieve. This ethos of seeking congruence between the means and the ends of political action might be summarized clearly in famous expression “be the change you want to see”. Applied to collective scenarios then, prefiguration or prefigurative politics (the two terms have often been used interchangeably by commentators) has appeared as a pragmatic principle of organizing social relations either alongside or during political protests.

André Gorz has been credited to be one of the first social theorists to use this concept in 1968, which he used to make sense of the way in which, during the course of a revolutionary process, “manual, technical, scientific, artistic, cultural and other workers” must articu-

late their “specific aspirations” while at the same time “transcend” them in view of a fully transformed society (Gorz, 1968: 60–62). This idea was further elaborated and made popular by Carl Boggs, an American sociologist writing about the style of action of 1970s revolutionary movements in North America and Europe. Boggs’ definition of prefiguration reads: “the embodiment within the ongoing political practice of the movement, of those forms of social relations, decision making, culture, and human experience that are the ultimate goal” (Boggs, 1977:100). For the political theorists that subsequently adopted this term (including Sheila Rowbotham, Wini Breines, and John L. Hammond, among others), prefiguration was able to detect an important shift introduced by social justice movements, that is, that the plane of the political was no longer confined to the realm of production, but it expanded to include every aspect of social existence. More specifically, prefiguration gained traction as an antidote to political vanguardism, to describe “political projects or protest styles apart from Trotskyism and Leninism, where an organisation or vanguard is considered necessary to bring about revolution ‘from the outside’, deferring communism for an unspecified period of readjustment” (Yates, 2015:2). In other words, prefiguration suggests a different theory of the relation between organization, practice and expression, away from an antagonistic conception of conflict and towards a compositional one.



Within political theory, it has been useful to address two fundamental historical shifts that were rendering the notion of the avant-garde increasingly inoperable. First, it expressed the practical consequences of the changed status of the intellectual class. In the words of Franco Berardi Bifo, in the second half of the 20th century, intellectuals were no longer “a class independent of production; no longer were they free individuals who took upon themselves the task of a purely ethical and freely cognitive choice; instead, the intellectual became a mass social subject that tended to become an integral part of the general productive process” (Berardi, 2007: 136). Instead of intellectuals and engaged artists, the new subjectivity of the cognitariat was in the making. The second problematic that prefiguration allowed to frame differently is the question of the temporality of the revolution. In practice, this meant the rejection, within social justice movements, of the traditional organizational forms of working class struggles that acted in the light of a distant event horizon. In the 1970s, social movements were rejecting the hierarchical, patriarchal and bureaucratic procedures of communist parties and unions, described as temporarily necessary, as well as the theoretical ideal that underpinned these rigid structures, framing them as necessary: the seizure of state power as the first goal of revolution praxis. Instead, the new prefigurative politics of the movements understood power as a diffused force ubiqui-

tously present in social formations, and were therefore much more attentive to creating and sustaining forms of direct democracy, consensus building and diffused self-organization. Rather than the conquest of the state it foregrounded the necessity of a deeper change in all kinds of social relations, while also offering another useful point of demarcation to differentiate the activities of social movements from another classic 'danger' of political praxis, namely, the tendency for self-organized egalitarian communities to conceive of themselves as utopian spaces removed from society, and thus ultimately unable to affect change.

### **Prefiguration in the 2000s**

The term prefiguration has recently resurfaced in discussions of the alter-globalization movements of the 2000s (Maeckelbergh, 2011), and it became an especially significant point of debate in the aftermath of the wave of global unrests gathered together under the name of encampment movements, a name taken here to refer to a variety of international protests that took as their primary form of manifestation the permanent occupation of public spaces or squares. These would include, among others, the *idignados* in Spain; the Arab Spring in countries such as Egypt and Tunisia; Gezi Park protests in Turkey; the Umbrella Revolution in Hong Kong; as well as the various iterations of Occupy in North America.

At the time of writing, this mode of organizing is being re-ignited again in the Nuit Debout strikes taking place across France. Why is prefiguration being re-discussed so much in conjunction to these movements now? And how has this concept been taken up in the present? A passage from a letter written by a group of occupants of Tahrir Square in Cairo to the activists of Occupy Wall Street captures how this notion has been revived in recent movement:

*So we stand with you not just in your attempts to bring down the old but to experiment within the new. We are not protesting. Who is there to protest to? What could we ask them for that they could grant? We are occupying. We are reclaiming those same spaces of public practice that have been commodified, privatised and locked into the hands of faceless bureaucracy, real estate portfolios and police protection [...] What you do in these spaces is neither grandiose and abstract nor as quotidian as real democracy [...] the nascent forms of praxis and social engagement being made in the occupations avoid the empty ideals and stale parliamentarism that the term democracy has come to represent. (Schlembach 2012, 241–2)*

In the occupied squares, various new forms of collective practice have been invented, such as the “people’s mic”, a way of relaying the message from a speaker to a broader audience by collectively repeating each sentence, a useful technique to counter the absence of amplifiers due

to electricity cuts (Raunig, 2013) or the mass purchase of medical debt undertaken by the Rolling Jubilee campaign (Mirzoeff, 2012). Other knowledges have instead been re-actualized from older traditions in anarchism and community organizing, re-activating the potential of neglected legacies such as the consensus signaling, common kitchens and open libraries, to name but a few. In this context, prefiguration has been used extensively to describe what these diverse movements have in common. It points to a sort of aesthetic (in the sense of pertaining to the senses) care for the way in which the organizational forms used in structuring and animating the encampments play a role in sustaining and communicating the movement's messages and goals.

If the term prefiguration has been consistently used by commentators to understand the ethos animating such collective practices, however, it is striking to note that this very prefigurative quality is for some the mark of failure of the wave of encampment movements, while for others it constitutes its most promising feature. Much of the disagreement among different commentaries produced in the aftermath of this recent wave of social protests stems from different interpretations of what prefiguration stands to indicate. Anthropologist David Graeber is amongst the most enthusiastic proponents of prefigurative politics when he writes:

When protesters in Seattle chanted 'this is what democracy

looks like', they meant to be taken literally. In the best tradition of direct action, they not only confronted a certain form of power, exposing its mechanisms and attempting literally to stop it in its tracks: they did it in a way which demonstrated why the kind of social relations on which it is based were unnecessary. (Graeber, 2002: 84)

In North America especially, this is a movement about re-inventing democracy. It is not opposed to organization. It is about creating new forms of organization. It is not lacking in ideology. Those new forms of organization are its ideology. (Graeber, 2002: 70).

Here, Graeber is pointing out that seemingly incoherent activities that emerge in the occupations are actually understandable as complex acts of transversal composition and decentralised organizing, rather than simply spontaneous cacophonies they can be read as the implementation of a political strategy that rather than aiming at convergence, points to the importance of an ongoing proliferation of difference.

Other accounts of the same events however, conversely criticised prefigurative politics on the account of their lack of effectiveness. For instance, one commentator writes:

Having recourse to assemblies of citizens and bodily experiences is a way to make 'the people', i.e. the invisible sovereign

*of modern democracies, visible and tangible. [...] Yet, while the democracy of the many can work in social movements it cannot serve as a model for a democracy at a larger scale. At the worst, prefiguration can even prevent fruitful social analysis and effective political struggle. (Rohgalf, 2013: 151).*

The point of contention of this and similar critique of prefiguration blame this mode of action for the difficulties of the various occupations to scale up away from these centres of mobilisation, understanding this as an effect of their insistence upon horizontality, which is equated here with structurelessness. The point of contention for the critics of the prefigurative efforts of the squares do not however reject this practice as such, but distinguish between prefiguration as a mode of organizing direct action or building alternative institutions. As put by one Occupy activist, “the encampments did not actualize an alternative, but rather symbolized one. In the end, they were symbolic political spaces rather than a serious challenge to existing institutions” (Murray, 2014: my emphasis). This narration however risks to reintroduce too stark a dualism between the different sites and temporalities of political action. In practice, there have been many instances where the experiences of the occupations did inform radical changes within existing institutions, such as promoting new open and democratic processes to run political parties, and also gave rise to new instituent processes in their neighbourhood and

beyond, such for instance of Occupy Sandy and Occupy Debt in the USA, the struggle of PAH against evictions in Spain, or the solidarity movement in Greece, to name but a few. Nonetheless, there is here an element of critique that merits further attending to, especially in relation to the question of a cultural politics for the present: the laments for a lack of outcomes from the squares express a preoccupation that is slightly different from the ones informing the discussion in the 1970s, as the present situation exposes the vulnerability of prefiguration as a performative mode of political action as a danger of collapsing back into the generalised spectacle, described by Guy Debord as the dominant mode of social relation in capitalism, where “everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation” (Debord, 1995: thesis 1). Chiara Bottici (2014) noted how Debord’s notion of the spectacle echoes the famous position of Jean-Jacques Rousseau who, in the famous letter to d’Alembert, defended the conviviality of street festivals against theatres by saying “people think they come together in the spectacle, and it is here that they are isolated” (cited in Bottici, 2014: 106).

Thus, many of the critiques of prefigurative politics fail to engage with it as a strategic proposal in its own right, corresponding to an organizational orientation that strives to make the arrangement of the now somewhat politically accountable to the future and to an elsewhere. Moreover, such approaches reduce the

micropolitical proposal of prefiguration to a matter of quotidian and small scale arrangements, rather than fully engage with the proposition put forward by prefiguration that modes of action must account for the links between the imaginary and the social-real realms of experience and its material conditions. As Marianne Maeckelbergh (2011) put it, modelling ones' actions this way already mobilizes a certain kind of strategic thinking, understanding this as matter of situated concern, to do with available resources, power, desires, etc., rather than solely as a matter of generally applicable ideological principles. In other words, prefiguration can be described as a very specific way of understanding the question of strategy as a field of tensions and slippages between different strata of political experience. Central to this emergent take on prefigurative politics is a novel understanding of prefiguration as a *performative* idea. As Luke Yates proposed, prefiguration involves “combining the imaginative construction of ‘alternatives’, within either mobilisation-related or everyday activities, with some strategic attempt to ensure their future political relevance” (Yates, 2015: 20). In his view, political action becomes prefigurative when “it fulfils certain conditions in the way in which it is performed” (emphasis mine). Yates account is particularly useful, as he sidesteps the means versus ends distinction, showing it to be a false problem here, by describing prefigurative practice precisely as a mode of navigating the tension between



the requirements of different aspects of life in common. In this account, prefiguration is understood as a performative concept that stands in opposition to and as a corrective of more simple processes of collective identity building, bonding rituals, and counter-cultural expressions found in all moments of insurgency.

The specific performativity of prefiguration indicates a modality of giving care and attention not only to the production of new knowledges and forms of life, but also to how these new repertoires, fruit of collective experimentations and intense processes of politicization, can become diffused and can persist beyond the event that generated them. This entails a double accountability to a beyond, both understood as a spatial concept, the necessity to reach out and propagate its messages and ethos further than its immediate surroundings and away from a localist perspective; but also a beyond understood as a temporal dimension of practice, as a necessity to one's inheritance for future generations. The spatial beyond of prefiguration can be readily traced in the special attention granted by social movements to the quality of the images they produce, as they are aware of the way in which their actions enter the social imaginary via global media. In her *Imaginal Politics*, Chiara Bottici proposed that within the virtual semiotic flux of semiocapitalism, images have become "processes in need of a perpetual maintenance" (Bottici, 2014: 2), and their role in contemporary politics "is such that they no

longer simply mediate our doing politics, but now they risk doing politics in our stead” (Ibid., 11). For this reason too, performative, aesthetic and poetic dimensions play such an important role in prefigurative practices, as they are the vectors along which such initiatives can become translocal and disrupt the capitalist circulation of commodified symbols.

We can think of the second temporal *beyond* of prefiguration as a regime of practice attentiveness to what is not present. Borrowing from Edmund Husserl’s theory of imagination, we can thus identify three different forms of ‘presentification,’ that is, to make manifest in practice that which is missing: the first deals with what is absent because it has already been, that is, it indicates forms of remembrance; the second is concerned with what is not yet there, corresponding to regimes of expectation; and finally, the third corresponds to modes of relating to what is merely present as a possibility, that is, to engage in imaginal activities (involving fantasy, speculative thought, fiction, play, etc.) (Bottici, 2014: 42; Elliot, 2004: 37).

In sum, the aspects of prefiguration described above highlight the role of the performative and the imaginal in contemporary movement politics. Performing social acts of imagining appears as a crucial way for connecting to what is missing (remembrance, expectation, fantasy), as much as a way for consciously elaborating, in common, the habituated patterns of feeling and concep-

tual schema through which we are socially (re)produce. Rather than ordering all these different functions according to fixed hierarchies of needs and priorities, prefigurative approaches to politics implies a much more creative endeavour of inventing new modes of carrying out different tasks and making them co-exist in original, situated and shifting formations. Moreover, it means to orient these constellations of practice towards a processes that takes them from the realm of organizing to that of instituting, that is, to contributing to social formations that can survive and spread beyond those who initiated them. This last aspect, as we shall see later on, is particularly important as we attempt to use prefiguration to navigate the politics of art and culture. Before we can attend to this, there is one more aspect of prefiguration as discussed in relation to militant practice that needs to be unpacked: this relates to the way in which it casts a new role for social reproduction.

### **Prefiguration as convivial social reproduction**

Alongside a critique of revolutionary praxis as coming from the 'outside' and as a 'future' absolute historical event horizon, prefiguration also emerged as a new term needed to express a third shift emerging at the time. While the semantics of the avant-garde grounded it vocabulary into a military vision of the political, prefig-

uration is concerned with elaborating and performing different organizational proposals primarily concerned with social reproduction. The prefix *pre-* in fact can be seen as describing not only a temporal relation of anticipation, but can be seen as directly challenging received notions that separate what counts as political from the *pre-political*. Writing in 2011, in the aftermath of the occupation of Tahrir square in Egypt, and during the unfolding of many more protests globally, Judith Butler tried to make sense of the politics of those bodies in alliance taking the streets. Building on, and at the same time criticizing, Hanna Arendt's formulation of politics as a 'space of appearance' (Arendt, 1958), Butler offered that to characterize the peculiar form of the occupation of space as a simple matter of coming together "to make a claim in public space" would somewhat miss the point, as this "formulation presumes that public space is given, that it is already public, and recognized as such" (Butler, 2011).

Instead, Butler suggests, with Arendt, that while the public space does not *pre-exist* but is produced in *between* those protesting bodies in co-presence, at the same the demarcation of a public space is never spontaneous or *pre-given*, as it also depends upon all kinds of systems of support to come into existence and regenerate itself in time. The myth of Greek polis, presented to us by Arendt and others as the exemplary democratic society, was actually based upon the exclusion of all

those implicated in the social reproduction activities that made it possible. Hence, for Butler, one of the most significant political aspects of the recent occupations would be the way in which they challenged the received, naturalized partition between political action and reproductive labour, or put differently, between public and private realms:

*The social form of the resistance began to incorporate principles of equality that governed not only how and when people spoke and acted for the media and against the régime, but how people cared for their various quarters within the square, the beds on pavement, the makeshift medical stations and bathrooms, the places where people ate, and the places where people were exposed to violence from the outside. These actions were all political in the simple sense that they were breaking down a conventional distinction between public and private in order to establish relations of equality; in this sense, they were incorporating into the very social form of resistance the principles for which they were struggling on the street. (Butler, 2011)*

The organization of the squares was prefigurative insofar as it modelled political action as in a continuum with the necessities of social reproduction, casting freedom to participate in politics as clearly depended upon a different sharing of the burdens of reciprocal care. Moreover, the encampments not only claimed the re-

organization of social reproduction as part of their idea of politics, but they also emphasised how many of these activities, usually conducted in private, in isolation, within the family, or through services, when re-organized as a common are also transformed in occasions of conviviality, thus challenging the classical idea of public free speech as the only, or privileged, mode of political deed.

### **Towards a theory of prefigurative practices**

Building on the discussions around prefiguration within contemporary political theory described thus far, it is now possible to more fully articulate my initial suggestion that prefigurative practices could represent a promising concept to give new traction to a set of old problematics facing the responsibilities of cultural and artistic activities vis-a-vis the political.

Prefigurative practices can thus be located in the vicinity of the theory of instituent practices developed in a conversation across various European organizations and collectives loosely connected with the online journal *Transversal*, by the European Institute for Progressive Cultural Politics (eipcp). This debate theorized that the role of the cultural sector in the current socio-political scenario might be that of generating new kinds of institutions. This instituent capacity is also discussed as a third wave of the institutional critique that has characterized politically engaged arts since the 1960s. While

the first wave concentrated on attacking art and cultural institutions, and the second focused on creating alternative and autonomous cultural spaces, the third wave wants to transversally reclaim both the visibility and resources of major cultural institutions, and the self-organizing, critical and horizontal capacities of alternative spaces. Theorized in Spain as “monster institutions” and in the Italian context as “institutions of the common,” this interpretation reasserted since the early 2000s the political significance of artistic production, pushing for the collective re-appropriation of public cultural provisions and the proliferation of autonomous initiatives (institution-making as a form of art practice). The aim here should not be understood as a kind of reformism, but as an occupation of the means of production of imaginaries and subjectivities. While the vocabulary of ‘instituting’ was able to develop an important focus for reclaiming many critical and politicised contemporary projects as part of an important legacy of institutional critique, it offered a less textured commentary to qualify the modes of practice that could contribute to this institutional fabrication, which is something that I believe the emergent discourse around prefiguration allow us to do.

First, prefiguration dramatizes the importance of developing an imaginal politics within practices, given that we must consciously treat images as both processes in

need of constant commitment and active agents within our own political participation (or withdrawal). As the etymo of the word itself suggests—figuration derives from Latin, describing the act of giving tangible form or appearance to something. As such, pre-figurative practices strive to support imaginal processes that, as Chiara Bottici theorized, are situated at the intersection of the individual faculty of imagination and the collective production of social imaginary. Who participates in these practices of figuration, and how are these facilitated, how often, etc., all become relevant questions in this context. Second, as suggested by the previous unpacking of the suffix pre-, prefigurative practices attend to that which is missing, that which is not present, paying respect to the specific ways in which this absence is configured—processes of remembrance, anticipation and fantasy all play a specific role in this sense. Third, prefigurative practices strive to take reproductive activities out of the privatized ghettos under which are places in capitalist societies—nuclear families or service sector—and into the common fold. In doing this, they discover how these activities can shift from an economy of scarcity and fatigue to one of abundance and conviviality, and thus participate in the generation of different social relations alongside those sustained by artistic practices proper. Fourth, in virtue of their performative character that creatively keeps in play different aspects of the political (rejecting a fixed hierarchy of priorities),



prefigurative practices can be antidotes to the becoming spectacle of actions, avoiding a flattening onto the symbolic plane, as they invite a constant ethical openness to the situation. These four points are an initial formulation that calls for further theorization and more importantly, experimentation. Nonetheless, I present it here as a work in progress, as an attempt to reformulating the politics of arts as something that is supported through mutual interdependencies with other clusters of preoccupation. The politics of culture appear located not within the artistic realm as such, but possibly at its edges, in what surrounds a practice, in what sustains it and propagates it, in the transversal connections it feeds. In this sense prefiguration is, indeed, a performative process, insofar as it indicates a specific style of linking, and making sense of, different strategic priorities that are in tension with each other. In the times depleted of futurity in which we live, the role of prefigurative practices stands to become a vital ingredient to any ambitious political project that wants to stay clear of vanguardism.

In conclusion, the thoughts presented in this article want to advocate for artistic networks and institution to become more proactive in fostering prefigurative practices. What is at stake is the understanding that infrastructures, institutions and collectivities are not located outside of the self, but they express its differ-

ent dimensions, and thus situate a practice's capacity for scale-making, away from the sterile temporality of the event-horizon of the 'project' as the modular but not scalable formatting of artistic practice (Bojana Kunst, 2014). This approach would imply a critique of what Janna Graham correctly identifies as 'the problem with platforms' (2016), that is, of those ambiances who celebrated the inclusion of discourse within cultural and artistic production as inherently emancipatory and as a sufficient remedy to the inefficacy of representation. However, as she noted, the production of such discourse, and indeed the proliferation of conversational opportunities across a spectrum of institutionally sanctioned events, cannot produce politically meaningful change insofar as it remains predicated upon a blind-spot for the very conditions of its own production, which remain unaddressed as a supposedly neutral theatre of operations. Conversely, a theory of prefigurative practices point towards a different model of public engagement, one that substitutes the perceived neutrality, transparency and modularity of 'contemporary' platforms with persistent experimentations with modes of implication that can remain open to the complexities and ambivalences of desire. For Felix Guattari, to hold space for this process of ongoing analysis of conditions and blind-spots within practices was a crucial way of taking care of the dimension of "group phantasy," which for him is "not the same as individual phantasy, or

any sum of individual phantasies, or the phantasy of a particular group”, but it marks the point when phantasy becomes a “kind of collective currency” (Guattari 1984, 38). While often such “basic” phantasies solidify in institutional objects that are never questioned (roles, aims, modalities, economies, temporalities, etc.), from the perspective of prefiguration attending to these dimensions is at the core of the militancy of cultural practices.

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# What I Saw and How I Lied

Samira Elagoz

*You have to tell a lie to get the truth out*

(i. inversion)

*You have to tell the truth to get a lie out*

There are many false perceptions I, as a so-called documentarist-performer, have had to contend with, those the subject has, those the audience has and not the least of which are the ones I have of myself. However before I can address these things, I must give some sense of the work I'm engaged in.

I, not for lack of a better term but simply because I enjoy the abject vanity that this one seems to represent, am an interventionist documentary filmmaker, a fluid entity, defined and redefined by every context in which I appear.

A relevant thing to note when considering what that entails is that once I stepped in front of the camera I quickly found I could never quite be myself. Where the

camera could once be a shield I stood behind, it became a weapon of truth aimed at both me and my subject. Of course the real of the camera and the real of the situation are different. It's not that the film is showing us the truth, the film provokes its own kind of truth, a focussed truth. But the fact that I was no longer the observer, I was the observed, resulted in cognisance of my process. This leads to an unavoidable performative attitude, sometimes slight, sometimes overt, usually reflexive. I'd not appear as myself, rather as me playing a version of myself. One might argue that's all we ever do in new social situations, but the camera heightens self awareness, especially when also directing, to an almost poetic extent.

A little less than 3 years ago I placed an ad online, it asked to meet strangers at their home, one on one, there I'd film our first meeting. My attitude would adapt to each individual I visited in ways that felt, because of the camera's presence, much more than superficial, perhaps counter intuitively. It's there where the skewed perception of my self was born. I've been collecting intimate encounters with strangers ever since, committing these to film that strikes a delicate balance between fiction and reality.

## Self

*It's dark. Light became grey and from grey into darkness. I limit my space, able to fit in all directions at all times. I try to tie my threads to definitions, but can't find any. There's just floating loose information that simplifies my shades and iron: my details. I continue this process, which improves my economic situation in the real world, where romance is business and business is romance.*

My perception was initially tainted because of the inherent division of self that occurs once a filmmaker steps into her own film, I became both the matter and the maker, I played both subject and object. So the idea of a "self" split into two senses, one self is performing and one self is the performed. One is merely representational and as such should not be taken to be in any way real, but those things, like most things, become apparent only in hindsight. When you try to live in the moment, let instinct lead you, let the situation dictate response and action, a clear sense of self becomes blurred.

When I entered a subjects home with my camera, it didn't feel to me as if I was making a film, but rather stepping into one. It became this hyper-real situation where I'm starring in a real time taping. The knowledge it will be seen in the future gave a sense I was being watched already. So meeting in front of a camera heightened a lot of the interactions. Romance was



more romantic, excitement more exciting. Similarly awkwardness easily became tension, embarrassment could become humiliation. The will to represent myself adequately could lead to performing a better or worse version of myself. Because of a strong sense of empathy, I tend to emulate a persons emotional state and attitude, even mannerisms. If someone is reserved I will follow suit, if someone is confident it immediately inspires me to be. Because of the setup and my inclinations, my "self" is an ever shifting conglomerate of thoughts and motivations, only a small percentage of which is exhibited in a form that can be captured on film. My status as interventionist filmmaker is only at the forefront in the editing process, it is there I can truly assess the actions of my subjects, my reactions to them and vice versa.

I find the attitude I have when meeting these strangers best described as that of an undercover reporter. That is, I disguise my own identity to gain the trust of the subject, a simple but layered concept I adopt in order to learn as much information as I can. This may take the form of benign politeness, where I feign interest, or can be an outright deception where I make believe I am the type of person that engages in whatever activity I want to know more of. When I do direct them it sometimes undermines the feeling of reality and puts in question the relationship with my subjects. I do wonder if it's simply a part of my body reality to always be an active/passive manipulator when with a straight

man. In that sense the situations are about exploration a curiosity of what femininity provokes. Am I observing or manipulating? But then, they also direct me, to no small extent. So the feeling of who is being directed or exploited is shady.

### Subject

*It seems clear now, I am better at being worshipped than being a worshipper. Still, sometimes, but only sometimes, I feel I am a king without a kingdom. Not because I would have been usurped from power, but because it seems that in this moment in this world, there is no kingdom for me to rule.*

The subjects perception is laden with cognitive bias, undoubtedly because those that respond to my ad have exclusively been men. Expected, but not planned. The great majority of them had some form of sexual desire towards me. That's not to say each of them acted on it the same, or at all, but it always coloured in unknowns about me with shades of promiscuity. Their various expectations or obvious hopes are presumably justified by my body reality. I know the men that answer the ad must be lonely in some way, shape or form.

Something that quickly became apparent in the vetting process is that most responses to the ad would be sexual. For most it seemed a given there was some such aspect involved. A girl comes to your house with a cam-

era, what else would there occur except acts of sexual abasement, right? More often than not bargaining was a go to approach, no matter how I tried to convey what my project was actually about, or how absurd it was for them to message me with requests for sexual favours in exchange for being filmed. I was never particularly interested in why men are attracted to me and do not profess to pore over penile propensities, but evidently their perception portends I am first and foremost a woman to be persuaded, if not conquered. My own design and objective, no matter how clearly defined, are a distant second to the motives of their masculinity.

Before starting these meetings I had questions in mind I wanted to explore, and when selecting subjects I'd make unfounded, instinctual judgments on which stranger might provide an answer. Though my research was never an empowerment crusade, nor did I intend to comment on any obvious social climate, one of the big themes of my project had formed to be that of sexual dependency and independency. Rather than vilifying men, I depict the often laughable woman/man gender roles, the almost compulsory ways we tend to interact. Depending on their level of confidence they will steer the situation or conversation in a direction that is at least suggestive. Some have passively complied to things I propose, some display just hints of alpha assertiveness and others seize their opportunity a bit more crudely.

The man I'm with knows the setup, but other than

that proceedings are very much open to adjustment. I want the recording to be as naked as possible, let the situation unfold as it may. I don't tell them how long I will stay, or even what I'm looking for. They are encouraged to make their own assumptions, draw their own conclusions. I want to see what those are, I want to know how they want things to go, so I let them lead. This however does not necessarily mean I intend to follow. By not sharing my intent I maintain a sense of control, as I can suggest or even reprimand at any moment. Any direction I give is always momentary, a split second of course adjustment and I hand the reins back to the person I am with.

My status as the operator is a given, but my lack of planning allows the subject to become a collaborator, making grand decisions about what content we shoot. For the subject, the focus feels entirely on them, regardless of my presence or input. It promotes a film star complex. The spotlight adds to people's confidence, makes them aggrandise a story, become more expressive. This can translate to the aforementioned heightening of emotions, or to performing certain moments, like when they feign disinterest to appear suave, or assert control when in fear of it slipping.

Those moments have been most fascinating to capture, it is where I long to be, that place where a documentary subject can become an actor and the director can stumble in an abyss of her own design. It is in these

moments I actively make performers out of my subjects. As soon as I guide, and they follow, we become partners in the piece, we are each transformed into actors. We perform the dialogue, one we might have had naturally, for the camera. And as such each hold a stake in the outcome of the work. As a performative filmmaker, I concede, the documentary I make may at times have questionable authenticity.

### Audience

Carnival of social laws. I stepped forward and stared down the academy. I stood there naked under their judging eyes and held my ground. My moral was questionable, and in their eyes I might as well be a blind lunatic. "How wrong they are!" the voice whispered in my ear. "Tomorrow I will be worshipped and they will kill for my honour" the voice continued laughing and disappeared. I was left standing in the emptiness.

As far as my intentions towards those that see my works, my aim is to trigger, to have the viewer see themselves. Which they do, whether they recognise, despise, admire or otherwise judge, they get to know what they think about some extreme I have presented them with.

At a glance, one might speculate if I'm mocking men, however that would be an overly simplified way of looking at it. My camera is rarely unsparing, even when in a close up of those actions considered "foolish" or even

“ugly” by society. Still, I do not ridicule or judge. The subjects aren’t losers or weirdos. I show the audience real people in search of attention, validation or some form of intimacy. And although my subjects on occasion perform humiliating, even ludicrous acts for the camera, reveal intimate details of their private lives and sexual preferences, I don’t believe my work to be exploitative. The exhibitionism in my work is never staged or forced, it is framed by long-held shots where the subject is clearly speaking or presenting of their own volition, in a manner they find appropriate. They enjoy being in front of the camera, sharing their particular oddities, or simply expressing something about themselves. This indicates they are aware of the audiences gaze. It is this awareness, this conscious decision, of communicating not only with me, but with the faceless crowd they know will be watching them in the near future, that transforms the exploitative qualities. But perhaps that is just a flawed moral justification, as the exploitation can also exist in framing, in the context they are put in, even in the perception bending power of editing.

The focus of my pieces have always developed after the footage was captured, I’d set out with a simple premiss, one that I was ready and willing to reshape as my archive of individuals grew. Any framing happens long after I’ve filmed, as a result of the ways the subjects related to each other and myself. I wasn’t looking for desperate or lonely people, but for a multitude of

reasons that is more often than not what I seemed to capture on film. My eventual framing is nuanced, the men can in some cases appear unfavourable, but it is never a distortion of what they showed me.

I've intended to leave plenty unspoken and ambiguous in order to encourage a variety of interpretations and have the audience draw their own conclusions. But it seems unavoidable for the audience to feel the moral cockiness that comes with the omnipresence of documentary viewing. For me, the most satisfying discussion my work could generate would be about the audiences expectations, not about the contradictory opinions they have of those I depict or my attitude towards them.

One thing that has become evident is that my work can confront the audience with the power of femininity and the type of men it has power over. But rather than making something that was "exposing" men, and alienating them in the process, I wanted to make something that is inclusive. My focus is not on male or female gaze, or on making disparaging statements about them. By allowing my subjects to take the camera and turn it around, I approach them with respect, empower them and the whole project by shifting the gaze both ways. I am showing a female perspective with a documentarist gaze.

While I like the fact my work has appealed to men as well, it also makes me think of the women who might have trouble identifying with me, especially if they see

me as vulnerable. Which I can imagine, I place myself into situations that can appear exciting and interesting or unnecessarily dangerous and off-putting. When a woman feels an aversion to the subjects I visit, they might find me brave, but also foolish, they judge the men and by extension me for pursuing them. Which could make one unable to relate to what I do. This is also true for moments perceived as degrading, which was never the case for me. In the context my work creates I consider such views a projection of male gaze. My security and dignity are questioned, but doubtlessly the designation of debasement is debatable.

Another misconception has been that since my films are sexual, it's fair to assume I'd conduct myself similarly outside the films. When in fact for my personal experience the film is more like a fantasia, during which my interest is piqued and I'm invested in ways that almost immediately fade once there is no camera. Unknown to most men I encounter I would most likely not be more than a platonic acquaintance. The few times I am sexual on camera occur under quite controlled circumstances. When filming such scenes I am restrictive of the type of sexual intimacy permitted, even when edited to show otherwise. I perform this excessive sensuality, but utilise the camera as the timer on the intimacy, a public location to indicate how far we are able to go, and the feigned disappointment I'm always about to leave the house or eventually the country to let the men down for



reasons not relating to either of us. I do believe the fact those scenes are not driven by horniness allow me to portray sex better, from an almost outside perspective, as an aesthetic curiosity.

Ultimately, showing the film in the performance art scene, the main question of the audience remains “how performative is this documentary?”. An unanswerable question, because even if I would try to act like myself, the audience could never be sure to what extent that “self” is being performed, nor who I truly am or what my motives are. The view they have of proceedings, attitudes, even time, is narrow and focussed, purposely so. The audience is right to question if it is real, how much is feigned, where my boundaries lie. Though, I suspect their assumptions would be wrong on all counts.

# The Picture of a Stone

Mette Edvardsen

I don't take many pictures. Almost never. However, last summer when I was hiking in the mountains of Rondane in Norway with my family, I took some pictures. And one of the photos is a picture of a stone. Late I decided to use this picture as the image for my new piece. Not because it represents the work visually, like that it is about minerals or something, but when I took the picture I was thinking about the piece. So I connect the stone, this stone, or rather this image of that stone, to the piece. What are the criteria of choice for an appropriate image, photo or drawing to (re)present a piece or a work? Something that gives an idea of it, communicates, looks good? Or it could be an image that captures a moment, a detail, or an impression of the piece? Or like this, the image of the stone? My pieces are not very visual. Theoretically I could use one and the same image for almost all my pieces, a photo of me on an empty stage talking, or just an empty stage, and it could pretty much fit any of the pieces. Not entirely true, but a bit true. I mean, true that it could be depicting what I

am doing, but not true in that that's all. The image of a piece precedes the piece, but even if I care about how a work is communicated, also visually, the piece is indifferent to it.

I think dance is not primarily a visual art form. It is also about other senses, and how the senses are working together. Seeing, listening, feeling, but also remembering, imagining and thinking. I think of choreography as writing, which doesn't mean that it needs to be language, but also not an opposite to language, and maybe not as visual. In the piece I am working on at the moment I try to do as little as possible on stage. Not because I am lazy or tired, also not to provoke. It is not about my absence or about not doing, but it is about something else than my presence and what I am doing. And this 'something else' is what making a piece is about for me. What is this larger notion of the written? What is the space of reading? I am interested in this space of the imagination and how to access that, in what way we share that, what is present (however invisible), what we do, what we can do, how we are there, what we can name in language and what we cannot name but is there anyway.

I have worked with language in a series of pieces, and where I am alone in an empty space. However, I don't really think of these pieces as solo pieces, even if I am alone. There are certain expectations connected to the solo as format I feel uneasy about, and in the new

piece I am working on, I want to address some of these issues. I don't want to remove the performer from stage, to make a piece without performer. But I question the 'image' of the performer on stage as the one that holds the attention, the one that is in the centre, inevitably the one we look at, mediating the experience of the audience, trying to bring us in, keep us there, and that we admire or not. I also don't want to dissolve the space of the audience or make participatory work where it is the audience that does the piece. I think the collective experience where we are allowed to disappear into anonymity, in the dark or not in the dark, is an important place. When I am audience, the experience is mine and is singular, but at the same time I am part of a collective, which is what makes this kind of experience possible. But what can we share without wanting something from each other in return? How can the experience be engaging and generative, where we are interested for ourselves and not because we are told to be? How can we be in proximity with each other, and at the same time recognize the infinite distances that exist between us? Let's never fill this gap.

But why don't I dance? What does that mean – I mean, that I don't dance or that what I do could be or is not considered dance? When I am sitting or walking around in a library reciting a book by heart for a reader (audience), I don't insist on that this is dance. But it is also not theatre. I am a book in that moment (but, what

does that mean?) To memorize books is comparable to memorizing dances and movement, which has been interesting to discover and to think about. Learning prose or poetry by heart, like dance, is not about acquiring content or information. When I started to make my own work, it felt important to insist and remain within the field of dance and choreography, which was not yet so expanded. But there was an infatuation with the visual arts going on, and what I was doing 'looked like' it could be visual arts. I was handling objects in space, working with perspective, details, colours and simple actions. Sure, I could perform my pieces in galleries or museums, and I did. But it was important to me to not place my work within the visual arts, and like this to be defined as something else, and instead to widen the notion of what dance could be. What can we be? There has been a return to language in aesthetic practices over the last years, and also in dance and choreographic practices, language, text and writing has developed in various forms within our art form. But again, this interest in text and writing is not a shift towards another discipline or art form (theatre, literature), but within the field and practice of dance and choreography. What is text? Where does the text take place? What is this notion of the written, and how does it relate the body in time and space?

The other day I told a technician in the theatre where I was working that I am really curious if one day it will

happen to me that a piece is ready, say like two weeks before premiere. Then I continued saying something like, this is not the case with the piece I am working on at the moment, of course, almost reassuringly. And he confirmed that indeed, it's a good thing that there is still work left to do. But wait a minute, because that would be... bad, or? A piece is never finished. A writing neither, it goes on. Like this text, it will never be finished. What a daring thing to claim that my piece is ready, to say it's good now, two weeks before premiere! That would probably make us suspicious? Is it really that good? I mean, the end... and the part in the middle was a bit... and the transitions are not really smooth. No, when my piece will be done two week before premiere, I will have to keep quiet about it, pretend to be working (and instead write a text for a publication or something, which I thought there would be absolutely no time to do, but now there is because the piece is done.)

The main reason why I don't want to have a dog is because I have no time to walk it. But I have decided that I will not antagonize about the lack of time. Time passes, what else can it do, and it's a good thing essentially. I think there is something else to understand, something in me that must change (or the world around). When I was working for Les Ballets C. de la B. in my early years as a dancer, their creations would last from six to eight months. Who would have the time for that now? It is impossible to imagine such long rehearsal periods, even

if also back then that was quite exceptional. Certainly also knowing that these were creations with several dancers and a whole production apparatus around it. But more time doesn't guarantee better work, of course, there is no inherent quality in time—and I guess that was also not the point. But it says something about how we value the time for creation, then and now. Today it seems that the only places where there are still gaps and time (in a studio) which is not instrumental to production (product), is within artistic research and educational institutions. Let's take care of the gaps. The moment is so important in the performing arts, yet we spend so much time preparing it. But the time it takes is not normative—there is a limit to improvement—sometimes it is good to know when to stop. And maybe that is just a beginning.

# What Will Dance Do?

Ellen Söderhult

In 1976 Hélène Cixous wrote the essay *The Laugh of The Medusa*, about what women's writing will do in the future.<sup>1</sup> The following text is a speculation on what will dance do? I propose to think of the text as couple's therapy or series group therapy sessions for dance (as art) and the dancer. This speculation journeys back, addressing dance as embedded in history, and approaches a few possible ways of relating to the dancer while also hinting at some ways for the dance and the dancer to understand themselves.

I would like to do this because I think of therapy as a form of transformative conversation, applied to human individual bodies, situating responsibility and agency in those bodies. Some forms of coaching and therapy are used as means to adjust to or deal with reality, rather than changing reality or conditions. I propose to put both dance and the dancer in therapy, an attempt to think a therapy which takes into account our interdependency and how our agency is situated within conditions. A therapy that tries to fix the environment as



much as the subject, a therapy that questions its own goals and asks what it is and does, for whom and why. With this in mind, I share my thoughts.

I think of dance and the dancer both as comprised of heterogeneous forces, both acting on and being acted upon, impressing and being impressed. Dance is something we do or experience, but dancing or watching a dance can equally be understood as letting that dance shape you as you shape it, through taking it under consideration, through letting it transform and inscribe you. In that sense we are not only making dance, but dance is also making us. Dancing is a way of bodying, a doing, and therefore a becoming. My proposition is not to think of dance as or like a person, instead, I am curious about what and how dance can be understood as an immaterial body or a kind of inconsistent and encompassing group self constituted by dance history, dance present—or presence—and dance future or dance dreams and speculations.

Dance does not need us, nor does it have feelings, but dance is influential, and I believe thinking about it as such is worthwhile. Like a nation, many forces constitute dance, and like a nation dance is not like a person. But, like a person or a nation or humanity, is it possible that dance has responsibility? Dance is not like a nation but I am wondering if it can be that can be one of many helpful “approximations” or compar-

isons to do, to get to a more differentiated, specific and nuanced understanding of dance (and nation, and person)? From a first-person perspective, it is hard to understand collective responsibility and it is hard to situate individual responsibility “in light of its collective conditions.”<sup>2</sup> Can thinking of dance as an immaterial body in therapy with the dancer be a means to contest our understanding of responsibility and agency, thereby conditioning other ways of comprehending dance and the dancer?

This text aims at understanding dance, the dancer and their relationship to one another through recognizing other aspects of their history and their embeddedness in their environments. I will present a partial understanding of what could be considered as their environment while also proposing some ideas about the body. I believe that the aspects of art history and historical accounts of the body that I will momentarily describe, are implicit in ideas about dance and the dancer. They have been and are stillk informing dance’s sense of self. Similarly, I will give an account of self-help, attempting to describe a current ideological situation I feel implicit in, in order to explore how these might be related to dance as art. Through proposing an understanding of dance and the dancer as embedded in those historical accounts and present tendencies, maybe dance and the dancer can develop a different self-awareness. Hopefully, despite its disjointedness, it might also

propose or aid other understandings of self and body, of subject hood and environment, the biological and the social that point towards “the originary likeliness of the mind and the fossil, the inscription of naturality in thoughts and behaviours.”<sup>3</sup>

What might surface with dance and the dancer in couple’s therapy is that “it matters what ideas we use to think other ideas.”<sup>4</sup> In this case, particularly ideas about the body, about agency, responsibility and about subjectivity. Out of that insight: can we think of therapy as less correlated to adaptation, changing one’s attitude and therefore emotions about what is and about who I want to be, and more as a reciprocally transformative exchange and an orientation towards the question “what kind of life do I want to live with others?”<sup>5</sup> Can an ongoing negotiation or contestation of what needs treatment, curing or care be included in the notion of therapy? If therapy includes curing and healing can therapy be a means to improve bodies other than those of humans, whether material or immaterial?

I would like to avoid considering therapy, as well as dance, as an occasion for interpretation and instead think of it as a mapping of options, contextualizing a situation, contesting the available information and through this possibly even freeing oneself (dance as well as dancer) from history. So instead of following Freud and others in interpreting all behaviours in order to understand the latent content, the true meaning, the pro-

posed therapy will aim to follow Susan Sontag's proposal from *Against Interpretation*: "Interpretation must itself be evaluated, within a historical view of human consciousness."<sup>6</sup> Staying with Sontag, the function she designates to criticism might be useful for a therapist of dance and the dancer: "The function of criticism should be to show how it is what it is, even that it is what it is, rather than to show what it means."

Through my attempt at giving dance a therapy session, I would like to reorient and situate my understanding of dance, the dancer and therapy by taking on a different role—as therapist of dance. If I were to think of myself as a co-constituting force of the notion of dance, I'd say dance could be in therapy to find strategies for getting out of being obedient and well-adjusted (to the injustice of today's world).

My overall proposition for treatment is an attempt to translate a few feminist concepts into strategies for dance as art. As an un-certified but concerned therapist of dance I propose to look at the future of dance as a feminist project, which is not to say a project concerned only with the representation of gender roles (I hope the idea of gender as static and binary has had its time). Instead I propose a possible way out of the current situation which I argue is moulded by historical and contemporary power structures. I imagine feminist therapy coming to the rescue with constructive strategies, unleashing potential and freeing dance from its history,

in the same way Cixous proposed women's writing will free women from a restrictive past:

*The future must no longer be determined by the past. I do not deny that the effects of the past are still with us. But I refuse to strengthen them by repeating them, to confer upon them an irremovability the equivalent of destiny, to confuse the biological and the cultural. Anticipation is imperative.<sup>7</sup>*

In *The Laugh of the Medusa*, Cixous reclaims Medusa through refiguring how she has been represented and disrupts the order of things through making her laugh. She is also proposing a strategy of reinterpretation instead of assimilation. Reinterpretation and recontextualization are used by Cixous in a contestation of repressive history, turning the repressive heritage into a resource when possible. This strategy can hopefully work to free the present from the burden of the past, without strictly opposing or negating it, because negation often functions to strengthen its opposite or restrict imagination by validating the conditions, grounds, or accounts that something is presented through. A liberating reinterpretation, could be more like studying, exploring, and using one's response-ability to put historical heritage to other uses. With response-ability I mean responsibility as in the ability to respond, an action that doesn't have to do with ownership or with initiating more than with following or desisting from

something. Recontextualizations don't use the past as an excuse, nor do they take it for granted or mistake it for natural (through for example confusing biology with history). Recontextualization is a possible treatment for dance as well. It is a possible answer to the question: how do we make way for dance to participate in the construction of a world, unobstructed but possibly aided by the past?

As I sit here anxious about writing myself into something I will retroactively see the holes in the moment it is out of my hands, I cling onto the fact that everything is more than nothing. Even though I first heard it in a yoga class, I would like to mention it to dance and the dancer. Despite being on the edge of unbearably optimistic and pretentious, *everything is more than nothing* might work as a survival strategy or positive affirmation when everything seems hopeless or when confusion hits. I propose to think of it strategically in relation to all that partake in shaping the future. This statement refers to the power of what is first imperceptible and possibly work as an encouragement to (re-)consider the response-ability of agency. Can one stay with the overwhelming questions of how to create conditions for a different future or an unrestricted continuation and still find a practical reliance on *everything is more than nothing*? I propose it as a strategy in the imagined role of a confused megalomaniac and well-meaning healer of a wounded<sup>8</sup> art form, or as

a strategy for a couple's therapist too deeply dependent on placebo.

### **Part 1: Another Sense of Self?**

#### **Or Boundary Projects**

In her text *Situated Knowledges*<sup>9</sup>, Donna Haraway brings up Katie King's suggested term *literary apparatus* to make clear how literature is what it is because it emerges at the intersection of art, business and technology—literature is born out of that machine. Literature thus has an interdependent relationship to art, business, and technology, since we might imagine that literature also is forming or informing them, although the distribution of power may differ. If the factors constituting the apparatus change, literature will change. One could also think of literature as an activity like dance: a doing one can both form and be formed by, an immaterial body. Haraway writes:

*Like 'poems', which are sites of literary production where language too is an actor independent of intentions and authors, bodies as objects of knowledge are material-semiotic generative nodes. Their boundaries materialize in social interaction. Boundaries are drawn by mapping practices, 'objects' do not pre-exist as such. Objects are boundary projects. But boundaries shift from within, boundaries are very tricky. What boundaries provisionally contain remains generative, produc-*

tive of meanings and bodies. Siting (sighting) boundaries is a risky practice.<sup>10</sup>

Haraway argues that a situated knowledge requires that “the object of knowledge be pictured as an actor or agent, not as a screen or a ground or a resource, never finally as slave to the master that closes off the dialectic in his unique agency and his authorship of ‘objective’ knowledge.”<sup>11</sup> I wonder how a different account of a body and a self, will give a different account of dance and dancer, and possibly a more thorough account studied from more angles, through more senses and more heterogeneous notions. Any partial understanding of self and body could then be enriched with a plethora of differentiated accounts. I am further wondering if an understanding of dance through understanding it’s context can be a helpful way to create conditions for dance to continually transform and take on different expressions, inspired by motivations other than history, power and economy. Also, how similar do dance’s intersection look and what is specifically the role of the body in relation to science? Capital and producers? Educational institutions and funding bodies? Critics? Finally, how is the question of boundaries interesting in terms of self, therapy, healing and self-help.

Haraway interestingly points out that “bodies are not born, but made”, just as Simone de Beauvoir said: “one is not born, but rather becomes a woman.”<sup>12</sup> How is a



sense of self constructed, how are bodies made, and how do they relate to our notion of dance and its current situation?

**Part 2: Making Bodies, or How Patriarchy  
and a Body-Hostile Ideology Kept  
Dance Docile and in Place, or What Is  
Haunting Dance from The Past?**

In 1969 Mierle Laderman Ukeles wrote her *Manifesto for Maintenance Art*<sup>13</sup>, proposing the exhibition CARE. Under the heading IDEAS she included the following:

B. Two basic systems: Development and Maintenance. The sourball of every revolution: after the revolution, who's going to pick up the garbage on Monday morning?

Development: pure individual creation; the new; change; progress; advance; excitement; flight or fleeing.

Maintenance: keep the dust off the pure individual creation; preserve the new; sustain the change; protect progress; defend and prolong the advance; renew the excitement; repeat the flight;

Further along she continues: "The exhibition of Maintenance Art, CARE, would zero in on pure maintenance, exhibit it as contemporary art, and yield, by utter opposition, clarity of issues..."

The manifesto reads against the historically attended to idea of the individual (white, male) artist genius and the cult of the maker. It can also be seen as hinting towards a body hostile history in philosophy, economics and within capitalism at large, disclosing some more or less camouflaged players in art history: a capitalist and sociological devaluing of maintenance work, a modernist belief in progress and domination of nature, a glorification of making outside of the home, an idea of the universal subject as a white, norm-functioning male, an idea of objectivity as seeing as opposed to being situated within a body<sup>14</sup>, women as bound to bodies men as independent, rational and reasonable etc .

Through works like *Touch Sanitation* (1977–1980) and the proposed manifesto, Ukeles brought attention to the mind-body dualism and its deep correlation to the man-woman binary that is strong in art history as well as Western history in general. Dichotomous understandings like those mentioned, imply a hierarchical thinking with the two sides appearing as mutually exclusive. A paradigm equally as present alongside the road of dance history.

Dance is seemingly always associated with the less valued or *loosing* side: mind-body, reason-passion, culture-nature, man-woman, self-other, sense-sensibility, depth-surface, reality-appearance, psychology-physiology to mention a few, in which the aspect of domination is clear<sup>15</sup>. Many of those seem to be connected and inter-

related, thoroughly analysed by theorists like Elizabeth Grosz:

*These lateral associations provide whatever 'positive' characteristics the body may be accorded in systems where it is the subordinated counterpart of mind. These terms function implicitly to define the body in nonhistorical, naturalistic, organicist, passive, inert terms, seeing it as an intrusion on or interference with the operation of mind, a brute givenness which requires overcoming, a connection with animality and nature that needs transcendence.<sup>16</sup>*

Grosz argues that the alignment between male and mind, female and body marginalize or exclude considerations of the body in philosophy but also a lot more knowledge production. "As soon as knowledge is seen as purely conceptual, its relation to bodies, the corporeality of both knowers and text, and the ways these materialities interact, must become obscure."<sup>17</sup>

According to Silvia Federici, the power differential between women and men in capitalist society "should be interpreted as the effect of a social system of production that does not recognize the production and reproduction of the worker as a social-economic activity, and a source of capital accumulation, but mystifies it instead as a natural resource or a personal service, while profiting from the wageless condition of the labor involved."<sup>18</sup> The sexual division of labour and the man-woman bina-

ry is in that way connected to the exploitation of women but also to the primacy of making/production over care-taking; development over maintenance and even mind over body. Man-culture, woman-nature is probably at least as pertinent as male artist genius and female caretaking mother, culture as dominator of nature or (silent) passive and subordinate female (sex-)object and agential male subject.

How much does history still inform the present? What correlation can we find between a historically silent, obedient, docile dancer role, and the historical dualism of mind-body and its connection to reason-passion, sense-sensibility? How is the power relation between an artisan dancer or verbalizing choreographer connected to the analogy of the brain or soul as master or central control system of the mechanic body; a logocentric cultural history and contemporary culture? How does history inform the relations between theory and dance? Between experience and knowledge? How does the binary of self-other perpetuate the privileging of the right to own over the right to do, and the belief in intellectual authorship as holding higher ground than the understanding of innovation as collective? What correlation can we find between understanding technique as closer to craft than art, and the historical devaluing of maintenance, repetition and even the body? Let's pose this analysis as a superficial and simplified way of thinking of the history of ideas and dominating accounts of

the world and the body. Even as such, I wonder if what is lost—in terms of demarcation or expertise—can be gained in the rethinking of the boundary project of dance and dance history?

Let's consider dancing bodies as that which makes up the body of dance. The immaterial body of dance materializes in and conditions our acts in ways that are less visible if only narrated from the first-person perspective. In a similar way, it is hard or impossible for the individual to grasp that human, as a collective self or body of many, is a geological force. If one were to situate one's understanding differently, could that be therapeutic to dance? Could that enable an expanded understanding of underlying or conditioning attitudes and beliefs even when those beliefs have been made invisible through collective habit? To quote Yvonne Rainer: "You ask about the connection between therapy and dance. Directly, there is none, other than that in talking about dance, as about anything else, my basic attitudes to myself and the world are revealed, and they in turn, in being changed by therapy, will naturally affect my relation to dance." <sup>19</sup>

### **Part 3: Body-Paradigms**

In *Caliban and the Witch*, Silvia Federici focuses to an extent on body-paradigms in early capitalism, what Michel Foucault defines as the disciplining of the body.

She describes this as a shared attempt by church and state to, through multiple fields such as the stage, the pulpit, the political and philosophical imagination, turn the power of the individual into reliable and predictable labor-power. Every individual is now considered, through the multiple fields mentioned, a battle field where reason battles the passions of the body. Idleness for example is constructed as a low instinct of the body while prudence and self-control are considered forces of reason. Spontaneous enjoyment gets in the way of acquisition, as labor becomes commodity. In an attempt to remould the subject, the battle of the state—rulers trying to control rebellious subjects—becomes a metaphor for the individual self and the battle against the body. An internal battlefield with angels against demons or a soul trying to dominate a body. “In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the hatred for wage-labor was so intense that many proletarians preferred to risk the gallows, rather than to submit to the new conditions of work”<sup>20</sup>. Through an extreme intensification of penalties, the ruling classes not only punished and repressed unruly subjects (vagabonds and other groups considered transgressive) but also implemented a work ethic, a world-view and an idea of personhood. This was implemented through social legislation by, for example, closing taverns, prohibiting gambling, swearing, drinking, etc. Silvia Federici calls this process a social engineering that begins to shape a new concept of the body “as the container of labor-pow-

er, a means of production, the primary work-machine". Through medical science the body is understood exactly as—or simply degraded to—a machine, "it does not know, does not want, does not feel". Descartes' mechanistic image of the body and glorified, immortal image of the soul, is still represented in many philosophical, psychological and scientific contributions to the understanding of the world and the human.

This piece of history makes visible the impact of collective beliefs, social power and power structures on our understanding of ourselves. The point I would like to make is that the strangest and most brutally introduced ways of life can easily appear self-evident or as a law of nature, informing beliefs as well as thought and sensation, constituting a specific experience of being a body. It is also striking how a body-image that was needed in a time of very low technical development, when physical work by human bodies was the most productive resource, is still to this day tightly held onto.

In a text of this length, it is hard to give a comprehensive description of the major transitions of the church and state in relation to belief systems that prevailed before this new paradigm. Hopefully the text has already situated a sense of self, and the background against which we feel, the background against which social power is constructed; our collective, historical habits, as easily lost to us. They are lost in the sense of being naturalized, taken for granted and made invis-

ble. The way in which values and ways of life construct collective affective practices or constitute the backdrop against which thought and emotion takes place, seems to me to be elusive. Slavoj Žižek defines true freedom exactly as “looking into and questioning the presuppositions of everything that is given to us by our hegemonic ideology,”<sup>21</sup> the way we experience reality. We cannot perceive all the organisms and cells with agency within our bodies without advanced technologies, and it seems like we can’t perceive ideology, collective habits, or our interdependence in a larger time-scale either. Nor can we perceive our impact as a geological force, as humans

#### **Part 4: Adaptation and Response-ability**

In the geological era of the Anthropocene, where the human is understood as a geological force, the dualistic understanding of culture as dominating nature is turned upside down. In fact, the mere idea of object and subject are flipped. In other words, the boundary project has to start over. Catherine Malabou writes “man cannot appear to itself as a geological force, because being a geological force is a mode of disappearance.”<sup>22</sup> This implies an interruption of consciousness, since a geological force is not a subject, but a neutral power, an object rather than subject of history, incapable of self-reflection. Malabou brings to attention contemporary epigenetics and the capacity of an individual organism to



react to environmental changes through transforming its state, form, movement, or rate of activity. In other words, a reaction to the evolution of environmental conditions that do not include changes in DNA. What appears is a complex understanding of the *embedment* of the human brain, a term derived from “the fusion of the term ‘embodiment’ – referring to the intrinsic relationship between brain and body – and ‘embeddedness’ – describing the intrinsic relationship between the brain/body and environment.”<sup>23</sup> Embedment denotes an understanding of the brain and its relationship to the environment not only as a living, biological subject but also as the inorganic materiality. The environment in its turn takes on agential properties as it influences how the brain is realized. Malabou argues, through Daniel Lord Smail in *On Deep History and The Brain*, that adaption is a form of brain-chemistry modification. The “nature of humans” is more accurately understood as an ongoing brain-modification in relation to the environment. According to recent studies in neuroscience, adaptation is precisely the development of an addiction to an environment, constituted by social power or a society constructed by humans: “deep history reveals the profound interaction of nature and history through the mediation of the brain as a both a biological and cultural adaptor. Human practices alter or affect brain-body chemistry, and in turn, brain-body chemistry alter or affect human practices.”<sup>24</sup>

My understanding (which is superficial) is that attaching value to everything in relationship to what is or can be perceived already, appears as an enormous, collective you-loop; a spiral where values get reinforced and confirmed and truths more deeply ingrained. Understanding the human as a geological force effects my belief in the agency of a singular self and moves my understanding of self somewhere else. Where object and subject become a failed boundary project and the self becomes camouflaged in its environment. The distinction between self and environment loses clarity, despite a sensually immediate experience of separation. Such a reciprocity or interdependence is downplayed or made invisible in an individualist, neoliberal, competitive culture.

While the last and the coming parts of this text might be hard to read as dance and the dancer in therapy, I do think that what might appear as a detour is illuminating if one is to consider the embeddedness of dance and the dancer and how material and immaterial bodies are demarcated, lived and understood. However, it can also be read as an argumentation for why it is dance and not the dancer, or the notions of therapy and self-help, that should be in therapy.

### **Part 5: A Sense of Self**

In his book *The Burnout Society*, Byung-Chul Han writes about neuronal disorders such as depression, burnout,

and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder as characteristics of today's neoliberal, western, capitalist societies, due to an excess of positivity.<sup>25</sup> I understand that positivity as connected to a pressure to make something extraordinary out of oneself or to seize the opportunity. I relate it to expressions like you can do it and success is the only option. I understand its cohesion to a capitalist system where profitability is often central to the collective understanding of value. While there is probably a time and place for such a mentality, it is also problematic as it reinforces a belief in the individual as the only agential and responsible force. It also reinforces the false idea that we live in a meritocratic society with endless social mobility.

The expressions above can be seen as contributing to a romanticization of self-realization, self-fulfilment, and what I understand as an exaggerated belief in self-esteem. All of it fits into a competitive, individualistic and even narcissistic project and paradigm. The consequences can be a lot of self-help but no unions, loneliness and isolation, further accumulation of capital, shaming laziness and mental illness, blaming individuals for structural problems, and a pressure to completely commit to wage work, flexibility, and the idealization of such a lifestyle.

The correlating dream is to acquire a specific position within society rather than changing society and the way

we live together, altogether. Dreams become about being something else in the same order of things. Dreams like that are embedded in an idea of social mobility, where a good society is a society where merit decides what one's life will be like and competition is good. Social mobility is a way of organizing society which unlike for example strict class societies instances, allow for vertical social mobility through for example free education. This means that the class in which you are born does not decide your entire destiny. However, one could argue that it in combination with a strong individualism and neoliberalism, social mobility as the idea of an equal and good society also shifts the dreams from "what kind of life do I want to live with others" to "who do I want to be". A dream which doesn't change how a society is organized, but only makes it possible for different groups of people to take on different roles on the social ladders that prevails. Such dreams can be understood as a form of what André Lepecki calls "a movement that by moving keeps everything in place."<sup>26</sup>

The other side of such dreams is a perpetual accumulation of capital, an enormous geopolitical inequality excused, and individuals trying to adapt to the world as it is. Individuals that are often enough self-absorbed to no attempt to change societal structures, or are too busy making a living to have the time for anything else. If a lot of the individualistic ideology is about self-improvement and self-fulfilment, questions arise such as,

what is improvement and who defines it? What ideas or beliefs orient us towards it? What is a self, and who or what needs help?

This can expand beyond the realm of therapy and self-help to inherited ideas of happiness, as argued by Sara Ahmed in *Killing Joy: Feminism and the History of Happiness*. Ahmed argues that feelings like happiness have been used as a mechanism of control, sustaining or reinforcing, for example, the oppression of women.

*The happy housewife is a fantasy figure that erases the signs of labor under the sign of happiness. The claim that women are happy and that this happiness is behind the work they do functions to justify gendered forms of labor not as products of nature, law or duty, but as expression of a collective wish and desire.*<sup>27</sup>

This is also uncomfortably applicable to the stereotype of the cultural worker in the creative industry but is also included in the mentality of the entrepreneur or the precariat in general. Equally as important, Ahmed brings to attention other strategies through which structures brought to attention in Ukeles', Grosz' and Federici's analyses are reproduced through social power and ideology. Through promises and expectations, feelings and mentalities are turned into means, to make individuals adjust to and fit into society. Expectation and promise, as forms of social power, can inform or co-constitute a

reality within or against which we experience emotions as well as ourselves. In this way, emotions are constructed through convention, and experienced through collective, affective practices or habits. To use one of Ahmed's examples: "your wedding day is going to be the happiest day in your life," as said to a bride about the day when her father will literally give her away, hand her over, to another man.

Sara Ahmed therefore urges us to question what is considered good and appealing – happy objects such as celebrity, wealth, talent, and marriage. This includes questioning what narratives, objects, or life-choices prescribe happiness and how they are connected to a social and historical idea of good through expectation and promise. The dancer could pay special attention to the happy objects inscribed in dance history and promoted in dance education. It could also be exciting for dance and the dancer to question the value of happiness as an end, in itself.

Ahmed explains that expectation of happiness can also create unhappiness. As in the unhappy queer, whose parents just want them to be happy, i.e. get married and have kids. This hints towards that even when ideas are clearly untrue, such as the belief that you are free to be whomever you want, their effects are real. The imagined idea of the self-made individual makes it hard to blame anything other than yourself if you don't make it or if you, for example, are unemployed, a non-white person,

born into a low socioeconomic class, don't reach your goal, end up in poverty, or get fired from your job.

It is very possible that the climate and conditions produced by a belief in the free market and an independent self, have created a need for self-preservation that sometimes takes the shape of self-help. In such a respect, self-help can be understood as a covering up of historical and reproduced structural violence, oppression, and exclusion. The belief that society is meritocratic is also a particularly effective way to make racism, patriarchy and heteronormativity look "natural" or at least a structural unavoidability. A lot of freedom to choose actually appears to be connected to accumulated capital, providing opportunities for really big corporations or very rich individuals, rich countries and privileged groups and continents. While big corporations are sometimes treated like persons in court, people are pushed to behave like corporations to survive the competition.

I believe that although therapy is of enormous value, it is also sometimes used as a means to make individuals function in a dysfunctional society. The improvement suggested in self-improvement, whilst it can be many things, is often aimed at success as defined by the market. It invites working hard to change oneself, not the world. It attributes success and wealth to individual achievement and make conditions, circumstances and social constructions invisible. It is tied to an idea of the

individual self as an isolated, independent entity. It also echoes the belief that we are responsible for ourselves and our possessions only, to the extent that much of the commons like air and water, as well as other things that are not easily commodified, are polluted without second thought, treated as infinite resources existing for the sole purpose of human use. Owning is also a reason to deplete and use, ignore sustainability and ecology to produce quick profit. The awareness of consequences seems restricted by the strong belief in the individual. An instrumental relationship to the rest of the planet can be seen as a consequence of trusting the market as defining value. In this environment, amongst those brain-body behaviours and addictions we find dance, as constituted and informed by its audience, practitioners, supporters, opponents and other immaterial bodies. Having visited some memories of dance, the dancer, the body and their self-images, have hopefully and to a certain extent illuminated how the audience, the practitioners and the dancer are doing, and how they understand themselves. It is now maybe time to bring up the relations to close relatives. How does their state influence dance and dance's sense of self?

### **Part 6: Ego-Depletion, or Escapism That Escapes the Self**

With an increased focus on the self and personal ful-



filment; within an individualistic, success-oriented Western culture, the pressure to not waste time and to seize the opportunity causes the self to become burdensome. According to Roy Baumeister, this is one reason why people flee from it, in an attempt to escape the self. In his now classic book *Escaping the self: Alcoholism, Spirituality, Masochism, and Other Flights from the Burden of Selfhood* (1991), Baumeister writes about the down-side of the cult of self-esteem and its connection to self-importance. He also writes about the unbearable pressure that comes with raised expectations and obligations (success at work, dieting, saying clever things... the decisive, competent, and virtuosic self), and the need to escape from performing (the self) or achieving unattainable goals.

Returning to art, I would like to diagnose dance in relation to an ideology asking for huge amounts of self-control. My prognosis is that there is a correlation between a wish for dance to be recognizable as dance—politically neutral as it does not shake consistent ideas of self, truth, reality, values or body—and an accelerated self-exploitation disguised as freedom and the need for self-control and self-management in late capitalistic, contemporary societies. Roy Baumeister has coined the term ego-depletion. His research supports an understanding of will-power, self-regulation, and other mental resources as a muscle, with finite strength, which can be fatigued but also strengthened.

Exercising restraint can lead to ego-depletion, which Baumeister explains as “the state of reduced willpower caused by prior exertion of self-control.”<sup>28</sup> According to Baumeister’s theory, will-power is dependent on mental energy, which can be depleted through different self-regulatory behaviours as well as different cognitive tasks. Self-regulation decreases by, for example, controlling one’s emotions, long-lasting or extreme stress, elongated concentration, or sleep deprivation. In such a state, it is exhausting to resist temptation, deal with unexpected situations, and make decisions. Consumerism is a potential cause of ego-depletion, an example where choice proliferates and one is faced with many decisions that requires mental energy. Especially since the consumer is often forced to resist temptations and impulsive behaviours resulting in repressed emotional responses to marketing strategies. The ego-depletion itself makes consumers more passive and more likely to make impulsive choices “that may not fall in line with their true values”. Ego-depletion has also been shown to hinder guilt and ones reflection on past action and behaviours, “ego-depletion will therefore reduce the good deeds that often result from a guilty conscience.”<sup>29</sup>

### **Part 7: Dispersing the Self: A Constant Crisis**

This hypothesis about the environment of dance focus on the state of the humans that dwell in it and so, are a

part of constituting it. The hypothesis is built on a suspected expectation of dance to be entertaining, recognizable and sharer of conventional "happy-objects". Situating the theory of ego-depletion together with a hypothesis that the alienation produced by the individualistic neoliberal ideology, transmitted through news and other social media, puts people in what I would consider a chronic sort of half-crisis. Constantly being bombarded with war stories, catastrophes, inequalities, etc., results in a desire to be distracted by easy entertainment rather than ungrounded by art. This desire is increased by the fact that globalization and precarization of work weakens social support systems and a sense of belonging. Can this create a sense of mourning, and urge one in the affirmation of one's worldview?

I am not at all saying that we are constantly mourning in the way we mourn the loss of a loved one. But I think that happiness-culture, the obsession with positivity, and an awareness of a globalized world in crisis is scaffolding for a sort of melancholia, a suppressed mourning.

If not a mourning crisis, the belief in the intact, strong, independent self, the belief in progress, profitability, development and the blurring of the line between life and work together with the accelerated, efficient, alienated existence can perhaps be seen as its own form of crisis? A crisis induced by an inability to perform the impossible idea of an independent self? Karin Lindquist

writes about sorrow and literature in *Dagens Nyheter*<sup>30</sup>. The crisis I am discerning is not in the kind of sorrow that she writes about, but the way she describes what happens to her when consuming art and literature is so on point I will anyways bring her writing and thoughts into this text.

Lindquist describes consumption literature functioning as the ideal company in the acute sadness after the loss of a loved one. She describes consumption literature as literature which swallows you but doesn't affect you. It doesn't change you, it leaves you intact. She describes the need for such literature as connected to the impact of grief on the self. She refers to Judith Butler proposing that "perhaps one mourns when one accepts that by the loss one undergoes one will be changed, possibly for ever." Lindquist adds: "To grieve is to allow the self to be dispersed"<sup>31</sup> Judith Butler's quote continues as follows:

*I do not think, for instance, that one can invoke the Protestant ethic when it comes to loss. One cannot say, 'Oh, I'll go through loss this way, and that will be the result, and I'll apply myself to the task, and I'll endeavour to achieve the resolution of grief that is before me.' I think one is hit by waves, and that one starts out the day with an aim, a project, a plan, and finds oneself foiled. One finds oneself fallen. One is exhausted but does not know why. Something is larger than one's own*

deliberate plan, one's own project, one's own knowing and choosing.

Butler continues writing about how the loss of someone loved shows how our ties to each other constitute who we are, that the bonds and ties compose us. It shows that an "I" never exists independently, and that the loss is also an "I" gone missing, because

When we lose some of these ties by which we are constituted, we do not know who we are or what to do", "Who "am" I, without you?". "What grief displays is the thrall in which our relations with others holds us, in ways that we cannot always recount or explain, in ways that often interrupt the self-conscious account of ourselves we might try to provide, in ways that challenge the very notion of ourselves as autonomous and in control. I might try to tell a story here, about what I am feeling, but it would have to be a story in which the very "I" who seeks to tell the story is stopped in the midst of the telling; the very "I" is called into question by its relation to the Other, a relation that does not precisely reduce me to speechlessness, but does nevertheless clutter my speech with signs of its undoing. I tell a story about the relations I choose, only to expose, somewhere along the way, the way I am gripped and undone by these very relations. My narrative falters, as it must.<sup>32</sup>

Lindquist continues by proposing that good literature,

theatre, music and art (and dance, I would add) work in the same way, and is therefore impossible to handle in the midst of grief or crisis; as “strong artistic experiences can erase a human’s contours and open her to the world.”<sup>33</sup> This would, according to Lindquist be the difference between consuming and experiencing culture: “consumption is without risk, there you are kept intact and closed, which is exactly what you need in a pressing crisis where the self is already floating and losing its form”<sup>34</sup> Lindquist argues that good literature is too much in the crisis, since the loss transforms the self. In the midst of the crisis consumption is what the self can handle. But she also argues that good literature, is of the same nature but of a different kind. Ungrounding, it gives the self a new form, ready to be transformed again.

#### **Part 8: A Dedicated What If, or Dance of No Use, or Reality**

Consider dance, other art forms, and entertainment as part of the same continuum. Understanding them as consumption or distraction, could be one end. A restful part that has psychological functions. It can be argued that to a large extent, this consumption reproduces our beliefs, self-images, prejudices and seamlessly reinforces ideology. This consumption renders its objects (dance, other art forms, entertainment and literature) more as design<sup>35</sup> than as art: the primary function is to be consumed rather than to unground. On the other end, one

might place the art that requires a dispersion of the self, an ungrounding. This could be understood as a form of mindful dance, since it would not be as bound or conditioned by its history or its future. Instead of basing its understanding of itself on its previous experiences it could be a dance that asks “what if?”

According to Boris Groys, design has to do with making something more agreeable, seductive, attractive, and appealing, which means that to him all pre-modern art was design. At the same time, he implies a shift in the understanding of art since approximately the French Revolution, based on an aestheticization of objects, the result of which is a defunctionalizing effect. In other words, a transformation into “objects of no use but of pure contemplation... after the French Revolution, art emerged – as the death of design.”<sup>36</sup> What appears is autotelic art, art “complete in itself”, which stands for the belief in a value of art that is separated from any didactic, moral or utilitarian function.

Maybe similar to Groys, Mike Kelley claimed that art is fundamentally different from entertainment, even the opposite. Mike Kelley explains that the sole purpose of art is “to fuck things up.”<sup>37</sup> To fulfil its social function, it has to be “purposefully purposeless”. Entertainment on the other hand is according to Kelly a drug for the masses. It dilutes reality and does not change people’s minds. Art, reflects and scrambles, and “allows for power shifts over a slow time because people’s minds change.”

As much as I agree with Kelley about the value and importance of uselessness and the pure pleasure to fuck things up, I also think that it is a patriarchal heritage to think of “fucking things up” as more valuable than “caring about things” or involving consideration, and other soft value-notions as of equal artistic value.

I also think that even if art doesn't have a function or purpose in the world as is, to simply negate, oppose or destroy is too simple. For example, removing the notion of a singular standardized ideal of beauty, doesn't mean beauty is artistically meaningless and can only be used as a provocation. I also think entertainment influences a great deal, and that values internalized through entertainment are at least not always and forever bad. Only it often confirms or aligns rather than ungrounds or breaks with pre-conceived ideas and beliefs.

At this point, it might be useful to think again of adaptation as addicted brains and consider strategies for dispersing the self. What if dance would leave behind the conformist project of conserving ideals and dare to seriously ask “what if”, staying with the doing, not knowing what it will produce. What if one would watch a dance without looking for something recognizable? What if dance would stay involved with an intentional unknowing that makes the complicity of historical and social powers in the construction of truths more tangible, visible, and transformable? What if a dance is a way of getting more sensible, less stuck



in what one knows, more attentive to sensual information?

With the examples given so far, I argue that what I perceive as reality is constituted and shared by the collective history and present I am born into, as well as the accounts of the world and the different forms of knowledge that I am in contact with or have the opportunity of studying. Butler writes: "At the most intimate levels, we are social; we are comported towards a 'you'; we are outside ourselves, constituted in cultural norms that precede and exceed us, given over to a set of cultural norms and a field of power that condition us fundamentally."<sup>38</sup>

I am not free to choose history, social or economic structures that will shape my life and my perception of the world. But together with others, it is possible to re-orient oneself (a oneself that holds many), attend to other aspects and shape other accounts of the world. By following and participating in systems and beliefs we manifest and reproduce them. By contesting or transforming them, we create the possibility to manifest other ones or influence the existing. I do hear the romantic idealism but I remind you that *everything is more than nothing*. The dance and the dancer can be an indication towards a different imagination, if holding on to what is not (yet) considered purposeful or possible, in the confident, loyal, dedicated unknowing or reorientation that an embedded, transformative art practice can be.

**Part 9: A Possible Strategy: Be The Vessel of  
Another Dance, or Different Senses of Self,  
Team-spirit, Immersion and Non-separation**

I have a closet full of dancers that I can put on, do, bring out the closet. I – performed – have different affairs with different dancers. My identities cheat and sleep with each other. Together, as a collection, they interact with each other in a polygamous way, cross-polluting, feeding, informing and contrasting each other. The play of understanding “myself” as different identities that I do, perform, indicates an identity affair, adulterous to the idea of essence, self-expressiveness and consistency<sup>39</sup>

In *Cheating Discipline and Other Artistic Affairs*, Gry Tingskog proposes “the dancer” as a title to subscribe to and as something which is not static. “Whilst subscribing to the title the dancer, the project also unsubscribes, or multiple-subscribes to many titles simultaneously.”<sup>40</sup> The dancer is understood as a score, or something one does, rather than an identity, as in “I am”. I would like to engage with Tingskog’s proposition through relating it to the Anthropocene and other contemporary theory about our co-dependence, embeddedness and immersion in our environment. I am curious to what selves can be performed if such environmental factors are in focus, and if the dancer can be considered as a oneness that holds many; a team or a choir for example.

An interesting contribution to such a considera-

tion might be Roger Caillois' *Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia*<sup>41</sup>: "Among distinctions, there is assuredly none more clear-cut than that between the organism and its surroundings; at least there is none in which the tangible experience of separation is more immediate."<sup>39</sup> One of Caillois' points is that mimicry is useless and that camouflage rather can be understood as a psychosis: a loss of one's self, or the loss of the ability to distinguish between self and environment. What if one would instead consider the conventional sense of sovereign self a psychosis, and the de-personification through assimilation to space an insightful recognition of being a part of a geological force and embeddedness? If the dancer is a chameleon, can that dancer then camouflage into different bodies and environments, not only styles, techniques and emotions? Can one, whilst doing a dancer, do a body, or comprehend the dancer as a sense of self? I don't primarily refer to doing a different personality or bodily constitution, but rather a different (possibly immaterial) body as part of a boundary project or in relation to the environment and different senses of time. For example, the sense of time required to disappear into the being of a geological force. I think this can be thought of in many ways.

Related to the inspiring concept *leadingfollowing* as proposed by André Lepecki; can the participation in such a notion blur the idea of the self as the subject and isolated agential force? Instead of considering author-

itative leading as a heroic act, can a non-separation between leading and following be experienced as being a part of a body of movement or a group-self, whilst still being as accountable? If there is a non-separation between leading and following, can there be equal responsibility for the actions?

What if one widens the idea of self and body and thinks of immaterial forces as a body, or a team as a body (not that different from the number of organs and other body parts and materials that constitute a body)? It can be easy to dismiss the group body when the individual singular body becomes self-reflexive through experiences of pain, sickness, pleasure, fear, hunger, etc. But when considering myself as a group self, as a part of a team or choir, my priorities and my behaviour begins to shift and the altered behaviour directly influences my emotions. However naïve: different behaviours are efficient, successful and promoted in team sports and choirs as well as economic co-operatives, then in individual competition. What dancer and what dance appears if the dancer subscribes to the idea of human as a geological force? What if one instead subscribes to dance and offers one's body as a vessel or means for the dance?

Can such practices open for a mentality, an understanding of ourselves as inter-dependent and impressionable, can it renegotiate models and understandings of agency and sovereignty? Can it shift the question of

who do I want to be to what kind of life do I want to live with others? Can it make us experience dance and the body through a committed what if? Can it change how we think about dance and what expressions dance takes on? I further wonder what forms of therapy might appear if one would subscribe to the dancers and bodies other than those of humans? Forms less detached from sociology, geology, biology, archaeology, historicity?

Another way of thinking about the subscription to a dancer, would be to think of what dancer one might subscribe to if being *socio-historically convenient*. For example: a dancer “built on” unattainable ideals (it seems like ideals have been the means of dance as art for ages, when supported and controlled by church and state), ethno-centric values, a colonial heritage, conservative gender roles, and an implicit understanding of the universal subject as a white, norm-able, male subject. Most probably this dancer has a very constructed idea of natural; confusing social power with biology. It might be shaped by more or less camouflaged players through history like imperialism, religious power, philosophy’s fear of bodies, binaries between female-male, nature-culture, passion-reason as well as capital, technologies, sciences, producers and critics.

Can the idea of subscribing to a dancer include subscribing to a set of parameters to see where they take us, considering mindfulness as a way of experiencing

that doesn't start with recognition?<sup>42</sup> Mindfulness could include being mindful of the environmental impact in which we are embedded; a redirection of one's attention ever so slightly, every now and then. As a sort of ambitious day-dreaming or large scale positive affirmation, or as a more comprehensive sense of self or body. A planet body as a team-self maybe. Can this be a method to shift what is considered real, what can be perceived and which actions are possible within such circumstances?

Instead of approaching mindfulness as making a social/political problem individual, instead of it being a strategy for increased productivity and happiness as inherited, I propose mindfulness as a means to a different end, as a process oriented, attentiveness practice. A knowledge-producing, experience-generating, possibly artistic practicing that approximates situated truths. A practicing as in a repeating and a searching differentiation, a mode of experiencing, gathering and discerning information, maybe also formalizing practical experience into sharable accounts or knowledge. That could be a sensitive, sensory and attentive relationship between the dancer and dance, in which both are formed, informed and forming the other, not denying their impressionability. That would be a couple that realize that every time you put your foot in the river, you are touching different water, and neither bodies, truths, nor reality is a pond.<sup>43</sup> Neither the body of the dancer nor

the dance can be fully or definitely known, since it is not identical with itself across time. Therefore, we can assume that we cannot know fully the limits of the body or the limits of “what a body can do” as Spinoza proposed. There are reasons to keep asking “what if?”, and stay committed to the question.

### **Part 10: Dance as a Commons**

Apart from subscribing to a dancer, one can maybe also subscribe to ideas. For example, subscribing to the idea of dance as a doing and as a commons. This might invite one to subscribe to the dancer as a user and developer of dance. Which could mean that dance comes into being through being shared, used and developed or recycled (as in put to other uses, shifting form, transformed) through active participation, through variations, bastardizations, imitation, covers and versions. To understand and engage with dance in this way might require setting aside the ruling ideology’s priority of the right to own over the right to do. And if dance is subscribed to as a commons, responsibility for dance must be detached from ownership of dance. One could also subscribe to the idea of one dance by many as a singular thing, an entity constituted by the dance of many dancers’, a singular dance that is more than one person’s vision.

It would be interesting to know what forms of spend-

ing time with dance those ideas would or could invite and if it could be a means to enable different ways of thinking collectively, collective authorship and collaboration.

**Part 11: Yes To Dance, or  
Surf The Wave-dance**

When Ukeles wrote “everything I say is art, is art” in her Maintenance Art manifesto, it was an empowering act in relation to the history of the gendered idea of the independent artist, as well as the modernist ideas of progress. As a reactionary act, it was a powerful and important move. Besides “flushing up” the workings of a mother and an artist to the surface through proclaiming them to be and displaying them as art, proposing an exhibition with categories such as *Earth-maintenance*, *general-* and *personal-maintenance* puts maintenance in another perspective. It can be seen as a form of reinterpretation of the notion of art. A using and developing of art and an act of giving value to maintenance work. If I would subscribe to a Riot-girrl dancer (which I in some situations would), her dance would surf the wave of Ukeles’ Maintenance Manifesto.

Susan Sontag wrote that interpretation is the revenge of the intellect upon art, putting up the intellect against energy and sensual capability, calling for a more immediate experience of what we have. Sontag argues



that interpretation is a way of making art manageable and comfortable. One way of understanding (or interpreting) her, is to think of making art manageable as looking for purpose in art through judging it in relation to what is, squeezing it into relation to existing truths and ideas of the world. Experiencing it as being “like” something else as a way of subsuming it under what is already admitted into “reality”. I believe that to take the idea of art for art’s sake seriously today, is to recognise and make visible the relationship between truth and power, and actively work hard on refusing to strengthen existing truths through habit. It is to remind oneself of whatever response-ability that is implicit in agency. But also, to consider what it would mean for dance to unground and disperse. This could include signing up for constant reinterpretation, recontextualization and contestation of history and ideas rather than an assimilation to them. With Sontag’s words, this could be a liberating interpretation; interpretation as a “means of revising, transvaluing, [and] of escaping the dead past.”<sup>44</sup>

For Badiou, a creation through negation is something like a *revolt against, a negation of or an opposition to something*. A simplified understanding of Badiou’s concept of the heroic would be to propose something *a bit beyond the real*.<sup>45</sup> It is to create openings, new affirmations that change what is considered real, and change the possibilities for actions within.

The question of what dance will do is maybe a ques-

tion of how dance and the dancer can be heroic together, staying with what ifs and producing or performing other subjectivities, corporealities, bodily perceptions, and understandings. But also heroically proposing different ways of being a body and of moving around. Judith Butler writes about decentering the narrative “I” to expand our understanding to include the way we are implicated in the lives of others, in the hope that it will open different orders of responsibility. She writes about understanding history through another perspective than first person; to better understand that “conditions do not ‘act’ in the way that individual agents do, but no agent acts without them. They are presupposed in what we do, but it would be a mistake to personify them as if they acted in the place of us”. She continues:

*Our acts are not self-generated, but conditioned. We are at once acted upon and acting, and our ‘responsibility’ lies in the juncture between the two. What can I do with the conditions that form me? What do they constrain me to do? What can I do to transform them? Being acted upon is not fully continuous with acting and in this way the forces that act upon us are not finally responsible for what we do.<sup>46</sup>*

Asking how the conditions came about, seems like a good way of finding out how to transform, contravene and form conditions. How can we form the conditions that form us in turn? Can I let myself be formed by

something not restricted by what is? Can we rephrase questions such as, what can a body do or what is it to be a body/self, to include, what can a (group-)body do, a bit beyond the real? What can dance, as a body do, when not restricted by the past?

If proposing ideals, and being oppositional or instrumental to power, is left behind, can dance (physically) propose, study, speculate and prophesise? Can we ask, what can a body do, or be, without it being in relation to difficulty, or already defined and demarcated rules, systems, and categories? What is dance that appears exactly as before but is performed by a very different body, with a different aim, purpose and in a different environment? What expressions can dance take on when carried out by a group-self? What is dance when practiced as a team sport or choir? What is narrative dance when performed as non figurative? Can we ask the question what can a body do, not only in relation to an individual self, but also to a group-self, a planet-self, a human-as-geological force self or a cell-self? I think dance would then appear less as a self-expression, more as a self-altering practice. The strategy introduced in the beginning now becomes vital: while staying with overwhelming questions, can we still rely on that *everything is more than nothing*?

A reorientation of ourselves in the world arises, conditioning opportunities for other experiences that contribute to other accounts of the world. Along these lines, dance can be considered world-making, by staying in

and constructing new bodily technologies and practices that produces difference and bring something different into the world. Something which ungrounds us instead of confirms us. Such a break-up with ideals can include breaking-up with comparison and judgemental positioning, asking for efforts not only in delivery, but more importantly in processes of unfolding, diving in, and making propositions. Dance as a transformative experience is an ongoing negotiation between environment, history, sense of self, norms, desires, perception, and what is beyond our present real. Or: staying with a proposition and the what if until it shows what dance can, could, and will do.

Thank you Andrea Cownden, Chloe Chignell and Gry Tingskog for the help with this text!

#### Notes

1. Hélène Cixous, *The Laugh of the Medusa*, The University of Chicago Press, *Signs*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Summer, 1976), pp. 875–893.
2. Judith Butler, *Explanation and Exoneration, or What We Can Hear*, in *Precarious Life*, Verso 2004.
3. Catherine Malabou, *The brain of history or the mentality of the Anthropocene*. *South Atlantic Quarterly* 2016, <http://eprints.kingston.ac.uk/35328>.
4. Marilyn Strathern, 1992. The quote was brought to my attention by Danseatelier, a group of dance artists in Copenhagen.
5. Interview with Judith Butler (September 2014), by Sara Ahmed and Judith Butler, published in *Sexualities* 2016, Vol. 19(4) 482–492, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1363460716629607>.
6. Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation*, Farrar, Straus & Giroux 1966.
7. Hélène Cixous, *The Laugh of the Medusa*, The University of Chicago Press.

Signs, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Summer, 1976), pp. 875–893.

8. Maybe dance is not at all wounded, but then again, many people are in treatment for not being functional in a normative way, while it could be argued that the normative functionality needs treatment and is what is dysfunctional, rather than the individual. Who or what needs to be treated is often measured against a norm that is informed by for example a political or economic agenda.

9. Donna Haraway, *Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective*, *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 14, No 3 (Autumn, 1988).

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*

12. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Vintage Books 1973), 301.

13. Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *Manifesto for Maintenance Art*, 1969, [http://www.queensmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Ukeles\\_MANIFESTO.pdf](http://www.queensmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Ukeles_MANIFESTO.pdf).

14. Donna Haraway writes in *Situated knowledges*: “I am arguing for the view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring and structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity.” *Situated knowledges*, p. 58.

15. To avoid this very simplified way of thinking, I find this piece of advice I got from Chrysa Parkinson helpful: add a third thing. Thinking of it like a map or a 3D thing, the relations between appears to me as more “realistic” and less simplified. More nuanced.

16. Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*, Indiana University Press 1994, p. 4–5.

17. *Ibid.* p. 5.

18. Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, *Autonomedia* 2014, p. 8.

19. Yvonne Rainer, *Feelings are facts, a life*, MIT Press 2006. Thank you Maia Means for sharing it with me.

20. Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, *Autonomedia* 20014, p. 136.

21. Slavoj Žižek, *The Freedom of a Forced Choice*, lecture delivered at the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Porto, Nov 22nd 2014 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dB1pv4eFoxw>.

22. Catherine Malabou, *The Brain of History or the Mentality of the Anthropocene*, *South Atlantic Quarterly* 2016.

23. Mafouries 2010: 52 as quoted by Catherine Malabou in "The Brain of History of the Mentality of the Anthropocene".
24. Catherine Malabou, *The Brain of History or the Mentality of the Anthropocene* South Atlantic Quarterly 2016, p. 8.
25. Byung-Chul Han, *Fatigue Society*, Stanford Briefs 2015.
26. André Lepecki, *From partaking to initiating: Leadingfollowing as dance's (a-personal) political singularity*, Diaphnes 2013.
27. Sara Ahmed, *Killing Joy: Feminism and the History of Happiness*, The University of Chicago Press, *Signs*, Vol 35, No. 3 (Spring 2010), pp. 571–594.
28. Gina Putt, *Turning to media for stress reduction? Ego-depletion and entertainment*. Decoded Science, 2014-10, <http://www.decodedscience.org/turning-media-stress-reduction-ego-depletion-entertainment/48138>.
29. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ego\\_depletion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ego_depletion).
30. Katarina Lindquist, *Både sorgen och litteraturen löser upp våra konturer*, Dagens Nyheter 2016-11-04.
31. "Att ha sorg är att låta sig luckras upp". The quote from Judith Butler is from the book *Precarious Life: the powers of mourning and violence*, Verso 2004.
32. Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: the Powers of Mourning and Violence*, Verso, 2004.
33. Karin Lindquist translated by myself from: "Starka konstnärliga upplevelser kan helt enkelt sudda ut människans konturer och öppna upp henne mot världen."
34. Karin Lindquist translated by myself from: "konsumtionen är riskfri, där hålls du intakt och stängd, vilket är precis vad man behöver i ett akut krisläge där jaget redan flyter ut och tappar sin form."
35. Boris Groys, *On Art Activism*, e-flux journal 56, June 2014, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/56/60343/on-art-activism>.
36. <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/56/60343/on-art-activism>.
37. Mike Kelley in an interview curated by Gerry Fialka in 2014, filmed by Elliot Scott. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qYCY6VNSSd8>.
38. Judith Butler, *Violence, mourning, politics, Precarious Life*, in Verso 2014, p.45.
39. Gry Tingskog, *Cheating Discipline and Other Artistic Affairs*, Degree project, DOCH/Uniarts 2017.
40. Ibid.
41. Roger Caillois, *Mimicry and Legendary Psychastenia*, The MIT Press, October Vol. 31 (Winter, 1984), pp. 16–32.

42. This is derived from a quote by Mårten Spångberg; “dance requires another kind of seeing, which doesn’t start with recognition”.

43. From a quote by Anna Grip: “let your body be a river and not a pond” which I heard in dance class.

44. Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation*, Farrar, Straus & Giroux 1966.

45. Alain Badiou, *From Logic to Anthropology, or Affirmative Dialectics*, European Graduate School Video Lectures, 2012-09-03, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wxcfhXVYbxg>.

46. Judith Butler, *Explanation and Exoneration, Or What We Can Hear*, in *Precarious Life*, Verso 2014, p. 17

## 9 Or So Motifs

Edgar Schmitz

Some of the thoughts that have clustered around being asked out into this conversation, are non-dance. Not in a committed way—not as a stance of claiming or re-claiming or un-claiming territories and competencies. They are however connected to an attempt at thinking out of and away from (if that isn't already over-stating it) choreographies and the affective as well as legal and financial conditions of having been scripted.

(It is important to be clear here: this is not an attempt at escaping scripts or at insisting on whatever the opposite of the script might be, at evoking some form of other condition; rather this tries to conjure a different distribution of script, orientation, futurity and coerciveness from the ones that are conventionally available and imposed. This is the area where it touches upon thinking dance, or at least some of the things that have accumulated around it.)

At a point when slippage is not a spatial category any longer but is increasingly a matter of lateral and frontal movement in temporal extension, and a matter of



working out how orientations and speeds might have to be orchestrated in order to make them jar more—at this point it seems crucial to work out which modes and moves might suggest ways to inhabit the kind of radical contingency that exits orientation.

If the very invocation of orientation or indeed future, appears to inscribe the anticipated fulfillment of future conditions as making a retrospective claim on now, a sense of direction needs to be re-configured toward the almost-now of non-futures. Or, in other words: if future scripts are enforced as conditions of now through the reverse engineering of the indebted subject then into the docile protagonist now, then it might indeed be useful to re-consider how radical contingency relates to such future/scripts, and what kind of planning can be enacted from the extreme short-range.

Not in general terms, but in specific technologies of comportment and conduct that inhabit conditions of now before and beyond such consolidation. How do we inhabit such now, and how do we behave in it? If the horizon is not fixing the mess but dis-avowing its demands for order and resisting its calls for the alignment of present and future performance under the looming shadow of subjectivities as customised debt frameworks, what are the choreographies, materialities, temporalities, whatever, we can handle? Which ones are available to us, even at the price of renewed formalist demands, hyper-specialised protocols or sloppy appropriations?

One angle might be materialities, since what counts as material is being re-distributed elsewhere anyway and on a maximal scale. It may be worth testing those that could, just about, be sticky, syrupy, gloopy enough to resist the pull. And although that is still thinking in terms of space and resistances borrowed from once reliable physics, considering the speeds of stuffness in terms of resilience and stubborn qualities that melt into air differently, could still be worth the effort.

Or training camels as dancers could work, which is more than leading them to dance because it displaces both the animal and the subject in/under/of dance. Especially those that do not belong anywhere in particular in the first place, because they have always already been part of cinematic fabrication and fiction for far too long. Especially those that have been trained to be camels for camera in a desert populated by the remainders of Hollywood, might be worth turning into dancers.

Some of this is of course appropriation and largely declaration based, a prism that suspends coordinates and re-configures fields by re-naming them. But that is useful because what is at stake are not counter-choreographies but forms of doubling, re-takes and re-arrangements that affect the consistency of an unravelling, or might allow for an unravelling where it seems disavowed. When Niv Acosta choreographs from police violence, he is answerable to this as a subject claiming

their own, at a point when it is always somebody else's.

On a range of multiple scales and in view of the question as to how different realms not quite co-exist, this is also the stake of the silence-over, the abduction of sound from part of a scene as a material imposition that separates some of its protagonists from others. You have to be able to see that others can't hear in order to realise that a silence-over is being imposed, argues Toufic. (And that it needs to happen diegetically, that it cannot be dismissed as a formal filmic processing, that it needs to be accounted for as an occurrence).

Immobilisation produces something similar for space, or rather: for speed, and always occurs on a scale of realisation. There are devices that perform this direct linking of non-contiguous spaces-times. Auto-movement of rolling floors and shoes that keep on dancing with or without the dancers' support and to the point of their exhaustion, for instance, can be (made to be) the diegetic movement (and sound) of discontinuous realms, and are configured in relation to their not-coming-together as the kind of distance that remains irreconcilable no matter how close.

Toufic manages to think dance with an indifference if not contempt for performance or theatre that is only possible because he looks at it through films, but not as film. And that suspension in itself is useful as a starting point, too. If it is indeed a matter of inventing universes that do not fall apart after two days, then he always pro-

vides at least two of these, as well as their intersection, in an exercise of magic in the fullest sense. He conjures into being not so much the realms themselves as their compromised and mutually exclusive but overlapping qualities, and then articulates them around his main motif of a withdrawal he calls dance in this instance. [The way in which he claims to be fifteen years ahead of his dance, is another dimension of this mis-fit.]

The mirror that does not register or only partially, that features in the self constitution of the dancer only up to the point of dance, and ceases to recognise/be recognised at the point of entry to dance, is another such motif for the partial coincidence of temporal or spatial registers of belonging. For vampires, he suggests, the same applies in time rather than space: the mirror fails to reflect them because they occupy a different tempo. Elsewhere in his cosmogony, portraits perform this ontology of the unavailable, and often angels.

Or maybe, somewhere and sometime else, glitter should be purchased and sprinkled in private areas of a home, maybe that is enough, under furniture, beneath rugs and in cupboards. Such that a very light sprinkling may also be made over general floor surfaces to designate a fragmented zone. It could also be mixed with vodka, could be silver and gold, and could be used to wash down an area in a preparation that is inevitably already its own aftermath. But the latter is optional.

Which forms of being-animated these afford, and

how they diverge from animation as coercive demand, is of course a question of inhabitation. The challenge is elsewhere and sometime else: it lies in the double task of identifying and deploying these device-possibilities, and the need to conjure them into being at a point when we have not really worked out yet what it might mean to collaborate with a competency. What might it be to not only play its language games but to collaborate with it, to co-produce in a way that is the opposite of innocent or licensed mutual benefit? And maybe we can even work out how we could afford the possibility of not having to ask the question anymore.

#### **Material**

niv Acosta, ClapBack, IMT Gallery, London, 1 Dec 2016

Philip K Dick, How to Build a Universe That Doesn't Fall Apart Two Days Later, 1978

Verina Gfader/Ruth Höflich, Echo Project. Future Posters, 2016

Liam Gillick, Discussion island: item a001, 1996

Liam Gillick, Discussion Island Preparation Zone, 1998

David Graeber, Debt. The First 5000 Years, 2011

Jack Halberstam, Introduction, in Harney/Moten, Undercommons, 2013

Stefano Harney/Fred Moten, Undercommons, 2013

Maurizio Lazzarato, The Making of the Indebted Man. An Essay on the Neoliberal Condition, 2012

Karthik Pandian/Andros Zins-Browne, Atlas/Inserts, 2014

Florian Schneider, Collaboration. The Dark Side of the Multitude, 2006

Jalal Toufic, The Dancer's Two Bodies, 2015

# Cruising on Contemporary Topics

Manuel Scheiwiller

## **Post Internet Performance, Lifestyle and Extended Dance**

To what extent does the notion of post-dance overlap with so called post-internet practices? It seems evident that internet or digital natives will create not only different kinds of dance performances but also transform the procedures through which dance is produced and disseminated as it traverses artistic, political and commercial domains, using online platforms and social networks to share work, expression, and lifestyle.

It appears that internet active artists today, in a new way but perhaps resembling Tehching Hsieh's one year long performances, are merging life and art/work, off- and onstage presence and representation, and public and private domains. Today the threshold between public and private life and lifestyle is, in many ways, becoming smaller, or perhaps this blurring is an illusion and what we are actually witnessing is the emergence of new public and private domains and spaces.

Instead of closing the leakage between domains, the

engagement with digital realms can be understood as an extension of one's work, as well as spaces of artistic representations. Through digital and online opportunities, the artist can reach a much larger audience, and fast, particularly because the curatorial protocol of the Internet seems to be quite open. The idea that anything goes certainly provokes new kinds of artistic production. Such a platform expands the workspace in respect of generating economy and producing rumors and myths, operating with utmost efficiency.

The Internet, not unlike offline spheres, offers its users the possibility to create different kinds of personas. These personas enable forms of collateral or agonistic relations. The artist's online presence can be integral to his or her work, just as much so if the artist takes active distance from the Internet. It would be naïve to consider that the artist isn't taking advantage of the Internet, whether it is through creation of persona, self-marketing, dissemination or self-denial, for various forms of research, or to generate work.

However, some dance, as much as any other art today, is produced with an actual influence from the Internet. There are also a number of choreographers and dance makers that have used the Internet as a tool for the dissemination of their work. Georges Jacotey, based in Athens, is an artist that merges life and work into a very personal Instagram and Youtube spectacle that questions online presence. Another example is the dance

duo FlucT, based in New York, whose live work and life merges online. It is evident that choreographers and performance makers also create work that generate high end and successful images, partially to adhere to such a vast audience.

Digital and internet related artistic work also appears to appropriate formats and modes of production used on the Internet. Instead of terminology such as process and product, today artists are using trial as a way of testing ideas. Instead of a major premiere, where a lot is at stake, the artist produces upgrades and versions. In fact, entire working process have taken on digital and online features. For dance the Internet today is something way bigger than promotions events on Facebook or a link with a password to where your documentation is stored.

With all this in mind, post-dance opens for a new paradigm that is aware and deeply embedded in Internet related strategies. Post-dance is definitely also a post-internet dance, but as we have seen, this doesn't mean *after* or *distance* but instead signifies a moment when dance is aware of the Internet. So we ask, what can we do when the Internet is omnipresent?

Some dance and performance artists that have taken on different kinds of post-internet related aesthetics and methods include: Tianzhuo Chen, Nils Amadeus Lange, Florentina Holzinger & Vincent Riebek, Marcel Alcalá, Anne Liv Young, Donna Huanca, Ryan McNamara, Georges Jacotey, FlucT, François Chaignaud



et Cecilia Bengolea, Chibi Cherry, Maria Metsalu, House of Drama and Boy Child.

### **Institutions**

The Internet has further rearranged the status and position of the institutions. Today institutions within the art sector can't exist without internet presence and we all know the magnitude of the impact of, for example, the business model such as e-flux. Size matters in a very different way, perhaps more important than size these days is speed and a correct target. While large institutions pour tons of energy and resources into gaining popular audience, small scale, marginalized institutions in Europe for example, can gain popularity through online tactics. With the right kind of online presence, expensive production can become trivial.

Engaging with, coming up against, and potentially bypassing the big dog institutions has never been an easy feat. However, the internet, as a platform for the dissemination of discourse and resistance makes it a worth while endeavor. There has, in recent years, been a major growth in new kinds of artist run initiatives that utilize different kinds of curatorial principles, presenting differently stable work that comments on the world in new ways. The Internet is after all pretty exciting as one can avoid storage problems and rent collectors.

The Internet also offers a totally different under-

standing of authorship and originality: perhaps those boundaries have totally collapsed. We can also see that trends within the arts are becoming faster and faster and staying in the margin is seemingly important. And yet, free-riding and so called venture capitalism is only a small entity in the vast ocean of artistic production.

History has shown a number of examples of initiatives that flipside elitism. From the art classes by Joseph Beuys to TMS by Piero Golia, from Judson Church to New Theatre Berlin. Today, such spaces have new features and show up in new places. It is incredible how well informed these temporary initiatives are in respect of organization and decision making.

Perhaps the most extreme and well planned of those initiatives are never actually recognized by the art world but are rather successful in the way they organize spaces that do not comply with the standards of such a world. Perhaps coming generations of creators will simply not be interested and locate their production somewhere else. A few experimental projects worth mentioning: The Tropical Biennial in Puerto Rico, New Scenario (a collective that produces experimental exhibitions), Young Girl Reading Group, Center of Style (exhibition space in Melbourne), Dis Magazine, New Theater Performance space in Berlin, MC Poem (series of Poetry performances at Mc Donald's) and many more.

## **Porn**

The term porn is in my opinion too dominated by the mainstream porn film market. I prefer to talk about sex. Sex positive is already a term that gives good guidelines and has gained momentum over the last few years.

Wikipedia proposes:

The sex-positive movement is a social movement which promotes and embraces sexuality with few limits beyond an emphasis on safe sex and the importance of consent. Sex positivity is “an attitude towards human sexuality that regards all consensual sexual activities as fundamentally healthy and pleasurable, and encourages sexual pleasure and experimentation. The sex-positive movement is a social and philosophical movement that advocates these attitudes. The sex-positive movement advocates sex education and safer sex as part of its campaign.” Part of its original use was in an effort to get rid of the frightening connotation that “positive” had during the height of the AIDS epidemic. The movement generally makes no moral distinctions among types of sexual activities, regarding these choices as matters of personal preference.

Today society offers a variety of entry points to sexuality, the surplus of sexual and sensual discourses, con-

cerning porn and other modes of representation offered largely by the Internet, evidently also contaminate or resonate with the film of dance and performance. It appears that the context of dance is currently experiencing an increased interest in sensual, somatic, and BDSM-related practices and techniques, to such an extent that these practices are being introduced into curriculum in higher dance education. It can not be denied that discourse surrounding identity politics, the re-invention of queer, post-colonial, LGBTQ, feminist and others, have influenced the dance and performance context. Can our context raise different voices around sexuality and its practices?

It is true that sex related practices might not only be interesting in respect of representation, not only as a means to display sexual practices and disseminate opinions and political positions. Dance and performance can also function as a safe space where individuals can be allowed to experience different kinds of pleasure, experiment with boundaries, and explore interests. Different interests that may perhaps blur the lines between off- and online, display and practice, public and private, process and production, individual and group, as we play in these new territories.

Can sex and sexuality challenge and utilize different modes of being together? Can sex gain new modes of excitement and pleasure by engaging with cameras and educational platforms that reproduce not only sex but

sex as ethical and political practices that actively produce how we live together?

Furthermore, can sexuality and its representations on “state” create new forms of pleasure that questions conventions, canons, and traditions concerning power, violence, objectification, couple relation, parenthood, sex-work, intimacy, spirituality, language, representation, etc. I do not propose this as a reaction or resistance but as a benevolent gesture towards an emancipated abundant sexual landscape to which all humans and other creatures are welcomes.

Edited by Mårten Spångberg

# The Artworld and The Artworld

Alina Popa

*Sometimes worlds exist under your eyes and you never see – This room might be filled with phantoms, you'd never know.*

Samuel Delany, *Babel* 17

*We are all philosophers here where I am, and we debate among many other things the question of where it is that we live. On that issue I am a liberal. I live in the interstice yes, but I live in both the city and the city.*

China Mieville, *The City and the City*

Walking through the Recoleta cemetery in Buenos Aires, a catholic garden of post-activity, we had the impression we were walking in a city within the city. The tombs were inside small houses, built in various architectural styles, in rows, with narrow streets between them. Stone-carved madonnas were projected on the blue fiberglass walls of the banks nearby, billboards advertising the latest yoga-tablets of the living world seemed to float above the silent crypts. When we sat on the stairs

of a dome-shaped mausoleum, the outside vanished. The change of scale transforms not only the perspective, but the horizon. It was only us in a stone city, among the dead and the alienated (tourists), the 12 p.m. sun up and pouring. The swift change of level, being suddenly small, made this place the only place, made the discipline of the dead the only discipline. Size removed all relative exteriority: the city was erased.

In this world of nonliving architecture and objects, we saw people strolling like in a museum. We imagined we were in a museum. And we were. The few tourists disappeared from sight. We exaggerated the sinister and the horror, just as that thought performs anyway if left alone to wander in the theater of interiority. Many times, when seeing dancers performing live near paintings and sculptures, I had the impression that the artworks were part of a ring contest, between the dead and the living, between the duration of dead things and the immediateness of subjective mirroring. And, of course, it gets more complicated with the emergence of the hybrids: the living dead, the dead living, etc. This miniature city of the nonliving, at the other geographical end of the living world I was coming from, became the best place to think contemporary art's recent obsession with liveness.

We were sitting, making ourselves into dwarfs, finding the correct proportion so as to fit the buildings around us that looked like undersized houses. Having

accomplished the rescale, we had our own virtual reality. Since thinking is related to territory, “thinking in the jungle is not the same as thinking in the desert and thinking in [Buenos Aires] is not the same as thinking in Paris”<sup>1</sup>, it becomes important to think on the spot. And because the alienation of this world from the world and from the art world was complete, it gave us space for translation, a gap to move, a rift to escape the structures that had previously legislated our judgments. The speculative getaways can only be patiently plotted by spatiotemporal gangsters.

Spatiotemporal gangsters.

World losers.

Medium smugglers.

We imagined that we would never leave this place. Imprisoned in space and time and with only our thoughts and some stone stairs to stumble upon, we wondered if long sterility and utmost limitation works as a structural change in individual perception, in the exercised social habits, which would then function as political liberation. Maybe the way to escape was not just to run out the door, but to slam the door and remain inside, like in J.G. Ballard’s *The Enormous Room*. We watched the limits of this space, the surrounding



walls. We realized that if we hadn't been capable of growing back to our own scale, standing, we wouldn't even perceive the border of this place as a border at all. Changing horizon, the now obvious concept of limit would disappear as well. We were only being there.

Now inside and outside, being small and being ourselves at the same time. We decided that the inside was the art world, and more specifically the museum. The outside was the rest, society, politics, technology, science, philosophy, contemporaneity on every level. Imprisoned in one of modernity's self-differentiated disciplines, the escape consists in a redefinition of escape. One mode of escape is the redefinition of the concept of the discipline itself, because of itself and because of the outside. This is like art's modern redefinition of its own concept. Along with its autonomization as a separate field at the end of the 18th century, as a specific mode of experience, art progressively reached a peak of oversaturation, first within its characteristic media, beginning with painting and the revolution of abstraction, which started within the confines of the rectangle (it is from Duchamp's confrontation with the limits of painting that the ready-made emerges), then with itself in general, along with the separation between art and aesthetics, and the transformation of many classical mediums into mere supports for other, more diffuse, more immaterial, post-mediums.

Under conditions of spatio-temporal oversatura-

tion, the frame, what we have until now delimited as context, undergoes a discontinuity, flaps its way out of itself, contingently. It is this discontinuity that allows a break, a crack, a rift, and welcomes escape, an escape into something that we don't yet know what it is. We are on the move. The concept of the frame meta-scrolls itself down, like the twitter feed, and shifts the frame of the concept of itself to the point that the frame dissolves and enters a gaseous state. The structure was too gravitational. Around us, the space was spatiotemporally saturated with tourists. We overheard someone speaking in one of the languages we could understand about the recent TV series *The OA*. In the *OA*, the main characters are kidnapped and imprisoned, and, in their dreams, they receive a dance phrase from "the other side". Is this formal dance coming from the realm of the dead enough to free them from captivity? If it is, it is not only because they are trapped, but because there is in fact another side. And if no outside is within reach, the outside must be constructed.

We can never quite imagine the history of art only from within, nor only from without. Thinking about the history of art or about recent practices in the arts is like taking two (or more) perspectives at the same time. Politics, social sciences, economics fall outside art and inside it at the same time. Like the billboard advertising the latest Huawei phones, above the border of the cemetery. Niklas Luhmann already put it sharply in

the 90's: art's autonomy is not autonomy from society but within society. From whichever of the perspectives we start, the other one will deviate the first. If we start from inside art, there is the outside looming. If we start from the outside, the demands of art as art and nothing else will be pressing. To make art requires the same, on a practical level. You need art's prison and the patience of working towards the escape, while at the same time knowing that the disciplinary border is relative, and there is only humanity to escape into (and, before extinction, "humanity as a whole is too stable a system, nothing upsets it."<sup>2</sup>). This is a form of self-hypnosis, like the one that occurs in Samuel Delany's *Babel 17*, when Rydra Wong, the poetess and deep translation maniac, finally learns the aliens' language (*Babel 17*). She doesn't know that she speaks it but speaking it makes her self-hack, self-troll, self-spy, have two divergent selves at the same time, without her realizing it.

### **The Artworld and The Outworld**

Fernando Zalamea explains in his lecture *A Contemporary Theory of Transgression*, how the intuitions of Alexander Grothendiek, the founder of category theory as a new branch of mathematics in the '50s, are useful for a general theory of field transgression. Grothendiek, a self-taught mathematician, "my ambition as a mathematician, or rather my passion and joy, has ever been

to uncover self-evident truths”<sup>3</sup>, was preoccupied with bridging fields of mathematics that were discontinuous and considered to be irreconcilable. He worked with arithmetic, the sciences of numbers, and therefore with discreteness, and geometry, the science of space, therefore with continuity. He invented a meta-disciplinary mathematics called category theory, a scientific method of transgressing and translating between mathematical languages. Bridging discontinuous local fields makes it possible to reveal new globalities, wherein the initial hybridity is imperceptible. Putting a new global into perspective makes the global a particular case of another more general global.

This transgression method is a practice of relative exteriority, a meta-disciplinary drive. Zalamea, following Grothendieck, explains that navigating between levels of understanding to reach a more generic plane that overcomes conceptual irreconcilable systems produces the effect of “rising sea”. Changing not perspectives but horizons is productive. The translation, the movement from one field to the other, restructures both. At a certain point, local contexts become saturated with their own procedure, they reach their limits. This limit becomes the driving force of reconfiguration, of a context’s self-hypnosis. For example, the oversaturation of the art system with its own protocols brought about its continuous redefinition as a meta-disciplinary field. Art, or more exactly the museum institution, set for itself

the ground of a more general or encompassing context, welcoming what would have otherwise remained at the fringes of dance, theatre, literature, cinema, and so on. This is a general affirmation, because being an insider to at least one of these disciplines makes things much more nuanced, as we shall see.

If the field of art itself has been open to escaping from its own definition, it is its material structures, the ones that despite having legitimized the post-medium and so-called immaterial practices, that have been more reluctant to change. The 90's final blow in market deregulation corresponded to the advent of relational aesthetics, another more or less contoured program of the art work's dissipation and immaterialization. The social structure itself became the primary medium, at least in theory, because aesthetics has always been connected to relations. But the event-like actions, the exhibitions that changed in time, the site-specific interventions, usually had to be transformed into more traditional mediums, as mnemonic supports for the work that was to be found elsewhere. The museum has always cultivated objects, material things, that act either in themselves, or schizoidly, partly invoking what cannot be materialized within the exhibition space. Even the schism of aesthetics and art, of idea and object, inflicted by the 70's conceptualism, has been limited by the necessity of material signs in the museum. Material signs that acted as reminders had to be as asubjective and neutral as

possible, since the work was supposed to be somewhere else. Artists, like Mike Kelley, have already analyzed the failure of neutrality in aesthetics, from the so-called intellectual look of conceptual artworks to their more spontaneous-looking snapshot style documentation.

### **The Artworld and The Liveworld**

The ultimate solution to preserve the much sought for liveness and immateriality (although this latter term is highly problematic from a philosophical point of view) has been found, along with the recontextualization of performance and dance, in the format of a traditional artwork, one that inhabits the museum throughout its visiting hours. Treating the museum as a context like any other as functioning in the regime of displayed objects, live art, at a superficial first glance, wins the popularity contest, because short-term the immediacy of experience always wins against the dead quality of something immobile and unchanging. This is especially obvious in speed-driven neoliberalism, whose silences are only hyper-excited states of “bare activity”, that is, action without any specific quality whatsoever, affective movement standing for itself only.

The medium of performance has in the last years become, with its full enter into museum exhibitions as live sculpture, immaterial art or shows of endurance, a vehicle of value in the so-called experience economy, a

contentless sign of feeling in the dictatorship of aesthetic events. As the labor market starts relinquishing its middle spectrum, which gives rise to the dominance of the manual, repetitive, unqualified jobs on the one hand, and the abstract, intellectual ones on the other, performance also oscillates between two poles. First, it relies on the endurance work of performers transformed into sensible robots of the art market, and second, this work is intellectually programmed by the artist/choreographer, setting in motion the swarm of immateriality in museums and public space. Surrounded by the cold walls of the white cube, warm-blooded, alive objects are pumping experience into the veins of visitors and surplus value into the dead objects.

In contrast to the standing and walking experience offered by this upgraded museum, the sitting experience of the theater's black box is often deemed (even doomed) to be conservative, locked in the theatrical convention of illusions. It is true that the temporal pact between the activity of the stage and the sitting or sleeping spectator, gives in to the temptation of following the traditional emotional order of the plot—one that corresponds to a social order long gone, and that endorses the same type of community, apparently homogeneous, thus representable as "general audience". The theatre is like the cover of Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*. On the cover there is a ruler, the absolute sovereign, who is in the center of the image, oversized, made from

a general mass of audience, from those bodies who have given up part of their autonomy, in feudal times even their right to life, for the sake of protection of their own life and private property. This highly centralized proto-form of representative politics translates into one type of plot order, one type of time that is traded between stage—the ruler, and audience—the people. Representative politics has failed, but dramaturgical time, however emancipated, still traps us in a limitation to conceive a community that can exist in contemporary society, with its complex and hybrid timeline. It is through the entering of the theater in the museum that a different temporality can be traded for a more randomly structured audience and a multiple stage, pluridirectionally.

In fact, it is the museum that, with the performance turn, took a travel back in time. The museum reverted to what Dan Graham described in a text written for the exhibition *Theatergarden Bestiary* in the late '90s as the garden of theaters of the absolutist times of Louis XIV, through which the high-ranked guests were walking, passing by different theatre stages where various pieces were being performed. Like in a museum visit, the guests could choose the pace and trajectories of the walk, each for herself, in the spirit of individualism. Having torn the dance carpet into pieces and having scattered it not only in the public space, on the big stages of the generalized spectacle, but also on the mu-



seum floor, visible or invisible, dance and theatre need to reconsider their positions, too. If a part of the dance field re-baptized itself “post-dance” during last year’s Stockholm conference, this happened after the spectacle became post-spectacle in the hybrid dance-contemporary-art scene in Romania, and all of these were bound to happen after art became post-medium altogether. It is within this broader practice of time-travelling (in all directions) within the arts that post-dance could be thought, and done. Post-dance may be something less and therefore also more than dance, not only post but also pre.<sup>4</sup>

If the museum becomes pre-museum, then is what was called post-dance a restructuring of dance and of the black box altogether? Entering the general field of art is tough because there is no way to stay special for too long a time, one needs to find some “universal” relevance of dance and performance practices. This is like a wake up call for those who were already on the fringes of the theatre production structure, being inside and outside dance and theater practices in general. But it is also a wake up call for curators in the expanded arts to understand the specificity of the performance medium beyond its exotic appeal. Because the discontinuous ground that contemporary arts wishes for itself, a context formed of meta-contexts, of the emancipated visual arts, dance, theatre, text, cinema, and in touch with contemporary reality, is not yet properly laid. And

what happens if the visual arts absorb all the practices questioning their own medium, all the dance that shifting the medium of work becomes *bad mood* and made for pets (Krōōt Juurak), that changes the work's format and turns into *political therapy* and *divination* (Valentina Desideri), *fake therapy*, *collapse yoga* and *meta-moods* (Florin Flueras), or *boxing* (Florentina Holzinger), and that embraces the quality of the work as the matter that moves, and becomes infinite sluggishness (Maria Hassabi) or darkness (Manuel Pelmus)? Can post-dance survive in the black box as what it needs to be?

In the '60s and '70, Judson Church had already blended dance with contemporary art, going beyond the theater—this history is sometimes forgotten in visual arts circles. It is also forgotten in the theater and the circuit of festivals, where the spectacle in its classical form is predominant, despite even more recent medium revolutions. The histories that shape the reception of a performance become at times divergent in the black box and the white cube. Germaine Kruijff went from theater to visual arts. In *A Possibility for an Abstraction: The Square* in 2014, she employed dervish dancers to whirl around and deviate their usual circular movement into a square in the Stedelijk museum, in the midst of the post-war abstract art collection. Even in an empty room, the virtual history recalled by this performance would be the same, visual abstract art blended with a hint of the history of black box practices. It was the same

entangled and bifurcated histories that were invoked when Lucinda Childs, part of the Judson Church era, was performing *Katema*, going two and fro on the same diagonal, following a complex algorithm of turns, steps and pivots, in the very same museum in 1978.

There have been many attempts at exhibiting living art in and outside the museum since the '60s, mixing theater and broader art practices. The Argentinian artist Alfredo Greco wrote the *Manifesto for a Living Art* and his exhibits were strangers on the street, whom he would randomly stop and trace a circle around their feet (the minimal stage) and then take a photo of the whole action in the already mentioned snapshot aesthetic (A. Greco, *First Exhibition of Live Art*, 1962). More recently, in the 2000s, David Levine made a "spectacle" out of the repetitive work of an actor working on and in his field. During this outdoors show, the actor entered his character's subjectivity by planting potatoes. The director's artwork is the actor's casual work, and the stage is still rectangular (D. Levine, *Peasants' Theatre*, 2007). Last year, a group of Italian actors (Valerio Sirna, Leonardo Delogu, Helene Gautier) dissipated the theatre stage into the urban landscape. *The Walking Man* is a theatre piece that walks through the landscape as through a museum. To see the show, the audience follows a man and the stage is moving: the fake and the staged become indistinguishable from the real and the random.

If the nature of dance is form of movement-in-gen-

eral and if the most immaterial form of theatre is the relationship between at least one performer and at least one spectator, standing, sitting, walking, or only the light into which things are cast, we should ask the question how the aesthetics of this movement of events, this moving spatiotemporality, is being exhibited; presented as a form in itself. How does the movement of the environment, as both spatial relation and temporal modulation, change the museum's opening times and the theater's expectation of spectacle? Who takes the challenge? How does this affect the silence of the objects—not in order to dismiss them but to reframe them in relationship to an audience which has been sensibly reprogrammed? This is Zalamea's rising sea, the flooding with productive doubt and the unknown of the black box of theatre and dance and the white cube, bigger or smaller, of visual art. This "thing" which we are talking about, if we unname it from post-dance into pre-x not knowing what x is, would be able to overlap the divergent histories and futures of the white cube, the black box and reality practices, so that x is art in general while remaining an idiosyncratic mode in itself.

### **The Artworld and The Cyberworld**

We were entering Tierra Santa, one of the first religious theme-parks in the world, a fiberglass Westworld with slow human machines, colorful plastic replicas of Old

and New Testament characters and indigenous-looking Argentinians dressed in Roman or fake Middle Eastern clothes as non-automated staff. A world within a world, past within future, pre within post. Unlike the SF Italian Renaissance religious painting that staged the biblical events in its own local landscape and fashion of the times, Tierra Santa was actually faithful to the Middle Eastern set. Climbing on Golgota you could gain some relative exteriority, peeking horizontally at the Outside: the sea, the city and a public swimming pool. An Outside already announced by looking up at the planes flying low above the plastic world, ready to land in the airport nearby. We saw people praying in front of fluorescent plastic Christs in cardboard churches, kneeling on Styrofoam plinths decorated with cotton flowers and lit by economizer light bulbs. We saw people whose belief was strengthened by seeing three human-shaped machines bowing over a plastic newborn, audience driven mad by the cold lit Putis hanging over the stage of the biblical birth scene—a robo-Nativity spectacle, in the aesthetics of late Mike Kelley.

I could imagine Michael Crichton (who wrote and directed the original *Westworld* from 1973) visiting this place, imagining the horror scenario of Jesus as machine gaining consciousness, making the human obsolete. Or indeed, if I think of the Duchamp exhibition I saw in Paris this winter, it may as well be that at the time of the full grown AI, the human will be turned into art

as ready-made. Duchamp practiced Zalamea's context shifts, moving the object from reality into the virtual space of art. All functional objects that become obsolete undergo a similar shift, moving from signification to the realm of non-signification, becoming dead media, or, more generally, garbage excreted by capitalist overproduction. In a fictional AI world, the human enters the garbage of signification: humanity becomes pure poetry. But isn't the garbage of signification exactly bodies trapped in zones where the body politic don't function, where one is relegated to the status of body as corpse, as object, irrelevant to any societal order, in zones of war, or there where all systems of power fail, like in the hard-to-tame geography of the Amazon's jungle? Failing to be a significant body throws you in-between worlds, where order is indifferent towards you. Between SF and real politics, there lies many scripted virtual worlds.

If with the entrance of live practices in the museum, the museum becomes pre-museum, a drama-based Luna Park, there are recent art practices that recast this historical space of exhibition as one of modernity's forms of hallucination, upgraded to a contemporary tech-based virtuality. It is not anymore the garden, the bestiary, the theater or the classical theme-park that are the primary modern modes of entering a virtual reality. Now it is the VR itself, video gaming, virtual communities, Tinder, the Twitterverse, Instagram, cosplaying networks, fan fiction websites etc. As Boris Groys

notices, the cyberspace has become more real than the real space, at least sometimes. Even gallery spaces have fallen into obsolescence with the rise of cyber portfolios and virtual exhibitions. This virtuality is no longer only an escapist consensual hallucination, though it definitely relies on a sort of fiction-hedonism to begin with. This virtual can have real effects. Your profile is more important than your car and your online portfolio more visible than your works in a material gallery, not to mention that Trump's election is said to have been boosted by the internet trolling of joke promoters such as altrighters or total political cynics, whose internet behavior does not let itself be easily represented. The so-called post-internet practices emerged online in almost-subcultural communities and ended up transforming the physical space of the white cube into a virtual VR, a VR that was maybe more real in the real virtual space, online.

There is hardly a delimitation between the anti-conceptual production of cyber-subcultures and post-internet art. The viral YouTube "rubber man" and the white trash weird fetishists wearing Nikes and diving indifferently, with their brand new sports suits on, in the Californian swimming pools<sup>5</sup> can be as intriguing as Amalia Ulman's Bob project, or as Jon Rafman's Kool-Aid man in Second Life. Intuition and nonlinearity, the hybrid aesthetics of gaming, manga, and SF dystopian films, are the rules that constitute eclectic web art.

There is an endless imagination put to work, scripting the automated future, as in the new, refined political program of the ex-accelerationists Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams, or imagining the AI to come, as in the drastic thought-program of Reza Negarestani who wants to emancipate philosophical reason into a full-blown human-less intelligence. The unknown worlds to come are populated by speculatively sexual and queer cyborgs (Shu Lea Cheang's I.K.U, 2000, and other similar practices are part of Auto Italia South East's artist-run production program), by characters as strange as Cecile B. Evans's memory living autonomously and outsurviving humanity (*What the Heart Wants*, 2016). They may be sinofuturist landscapes that, like China, are absolving society of all fetishization of cultural history (Lawrence Lek, *Sinofuturism*, 2016). The worlds released from the load of heavy histories will be the first to arrive in the future.

In the now turned-physical cyberspace of the gallery, resembling a daylight-lit backdrop from a fashion photography studio, people can become as virtual as the slick sculptures popping out as images from the white smoothness of the walls. Humans are becoming more and more holographic, especially as the Instagram culture and RuPaul's *Drag Race*'s last season, the health goth Portlanders, or some upper market couture, shapes the "immateriality" of the body. Some Chinese friends who at times move or express emotions copying WeChat



emojis inevitably come to my mind. The NY group DIS, who curated the controversial Berlin Biennial last year, working on the confusion between design, fashion and art, have organized a competition of people versus objects in an exhibition comprising works of several artists interested in the aesthetics of the internet. It is productive to look at this competition of art and people as images, while having in mind the race of the dead museum objects versus the live performers—the ring of fight is not the same.

In a time when the advertising professionals open their conferences with sentences like “cognition is the enemy of marketing”, many art practices turn away from conceptualism and its intellectual analog aesthetics (Hito Steyerl notoriously made this turn in her work). This coincides with the moment when theory turned away from critique as the only possible intellectual positioning (I remember the enthusiasm when the term “normcore” was introduced), when activism became aware that folk politics is not the only possibility, when institutional critique moved away from the obsession with friction, and went from pointing to specific agents to acting on the environment, infiltrating forms-of-life and animating the structures. Critique not as a thought, but as the only manifested form of thought, is just one option among many. There are many other positions and affects, and even the non-position can be meaningful in certain situations.

Capitalism had already moved away from coordinating determinations to modulating indeterminacy, along with the post 9/11 generalized-fear-inducing-politics. The left understood this a bit slower, or it seemed that it took more time for new positionings to be found. But the cyber culture has been in the avant-garde. The idea of hyperstition, fictions that make themselves real, was a product of the CCRU (Cybernetic Culture Research Unit) at the Warwick University, a group of experimental academics who were studying cybernetics and Deleuzian thought in the '90s, who were "doing" not only thinking. Theirs was the practice of developing efficient fictions that would curb and deviate the ruling post-truth of neoliberalism. The dark side of this practice materialized in alright's efficient fictions, Pepe the frog, the Church of Kek and meme magick following other, less specific, long-term cyber-practices of contingency-reasoning (that replaced logical inference), like the "rickrolling", a phenomenon last spotted in one of Melania Trump's recent speeches.

The modulation of indeterminacy and the practice of controlled contingencies are entering the aesthetics of recent art practices as well (Christian Falsnaes, Loretta Fahrenholz, Andrew Norman Wilson, etc.). It is interesting to follow the cyber-life of many of these artists, like the Twitter list of, for example, Ryan Trecartin. Many of the followed accounts are part of an unchartable category of Twitter users, generically called weird Twitter, who

practice intuitive tweeting, non-conceptual speech, and contingency modulation. In a speech full of cyber-slang combined with the latest speculative philosophical concept-engineering, the hybridity between classical intellectualism and contingent content, between signification and the refusal of signification is emerging as an ongoing aesthetic practice. This writing carries an affect rather than a message. The multitude of the weird tweets do not form any “general intellect”, as Paolo Virno named the community of immaterial workers, but an arbitrary environment as pure undifferentiated intelligence, one that can elect Trump and dump him altogether at the same time.

### **The Artworld and The Artworld**

I was walking in the city, a bit performing walking, when I overheard a patch of conversation. I pretended not to pay attention, continued walking, keeping a distance that only minimally impaired the hearing of the following dialogue:

“I love interactive exhibitions!”

(indistinguishable chatter)

“And then someone came to me and asked me: Are you a performer? And I said no. And I asked: are you a performer? And he said no.

So then I asked: but how can I know that you are not a performer? And he asked: how could I know that you

are not a performer? So we were both standing there and trying to figure out who is the performer.”

“The cool thing was that you could be both audience and performer. No one would care.”

(street noise)

“They were singing and dancing around you. And then they came to you and asked you something.”

“And then there was also this black room and when you entered you saw nothing but you would hear people singing and dancing around you. And suddenly you would start to distinguish people.”

“There were no artworks only performers.”

“So that was the enigma, who is the performer.”

“What was the name of the artist again?”

“Tino Sehgal.”

“French?”

“No.”

A few hours later, I was walking through Palais de Tokyo, a divergent self, like the alien-hacked mind of Delany’s Rydra Wong. I was audience and performer at the same time, since so many times I am more the social representation of me, and this time they didn’t know who I really was. In the museum emptied from objects, filled with people and a few environmental interventions; infiltrating the water pipes of the museum (Pierre Huyghe), the decor of the space (Daniel Buren, Felix Gonzalez-Torres), and the body of the spectator (James Coleman), the artworks were camouflaged in a scripted

or deviated environment. Even the off-script reality seemed choreographed. Or, I was prone to retro-scripting whatever randomly happened. It was the last day of the show, the Interpreters—as Sehgal calls his workers—almost liberated. In one of the rooms of the museum, the teenage girls who embodied Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno's purchased manga character AnnLee went totally off their assigned roles. They began jumping around in front of the last screening of *Anywhere Out of the World*, repeating together with the “real” AnnLee the lines of the video in a mesmerizingly giggly choir. Right before the film ended, the girls went to the screen, touched the video, caressing with crazy and innocent movements the image of AnnLee:

We love you AnnLee!

We love you AnnLee!

Exiting the museum under Buren's colorful ceiling, I remembered his other work, the green, and pink and blue panels that enclosed the whole architecture of Fondation Louis Vuitton. I was thinking about the transformation of friction into camouflage, of pointed critique into environmental scramble. The aesthetic material that became a museum carcass was either beautifying the institution (as a strange remnant of classical institutional critique) or symbolically signaling that the institution is our perception, our affects, and our abstract bodily response to the aesthetic modulations of current forms of power. Perhaps both, as I couldn't dis-

tinguish the real thing from my virtual reception of it. And maybe this esthetic coating was there in my mind to virtually signal that contemporary institutions can be formed by senses rather than by structure. If a system is usually defined by its structure, Massumi assures us that the contemporary authorities are gaseous. “The structure is too gravitational” for a power that feeds itself on the modulation of indeterminacy.<sup>6</sup> That work was like heavy makeup on the eyelids of power, I thought, and I sleep-walked home.

Reading China Mieville’s, *The City and the City*, the mystery of two places taking place at the same time, leads me to the hypothesis of two artworlds inhabiting the artworld, and the respective practice of “unseeing”, mentioned in the book. I see what my perceptual structures allow me to see, because perceptions are conceptually (culturally) and biologically legislated. I might be walking in a different city, depending on the conceptual frame of my experience. I am reminded that when a group of Amazonian Pirahãs were invited to walk through a city, they still walked “Indian file”, one after the other, as it is speculated that this is how the jungle obliges one to move. To shake and reconfigure primary structures, one needs to operate in the virtualities that act as preconditions of a certain reality’s configuration. This is an environmental task, not a critical task. It needs an indirect act on the individual and social level, from the particular to the general and

collective and back to the particular, from affect to signification and back. This demands an exercised living or walking in two cities or artworlds at the same time, at the cost of perhaps remaining more invisible in one of them.

I may be walking in a different city, in a different museum, in a different gallery, in a different theater. You may be reading a different text. The ambiguization of contexts is a practice that makes you doubt where you are. In "Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia", Roger Caillois, following Minkovsky, talks about the schizophrenic's dark space of self by illustrating it with the response to the question where are you? "I know where I am, but I do not feel as though I'm at the spot where I find myself." The dark mediums are the ones that leapt out of themselves, like a dance that ran from or with the dance linoleum. The dark environment leaves an ambiguous place for "you". Watching a choreographed army parade, a real one, on the dance carpet of the National Dance Center in Bucharest in 2010, one was not invited to criticism but to a shift of horizon: to watch this show as one would watch a dance piece. No comment, just believing it, and watching oneself believe indifferently, without irony. The dance, the performativity, was the movement of the context, the movement of it becoming meta-context, because of the contingency inflicted within its structure (the outside of the theater, the military reality, was injected into the "autonomous" theater

field). This was the *Military Performance*, a post-spectacle work. In post-spectacle, a trade was being made: the rolling further of the performance carpet outside of the theatre provoked the unrolling of the reality from outside the theatre onto the formal stage. And we were sitting in-between.

There are contemporary art practices that dive deep in medium-scramble-work and operate from within basic structures of perception, bottom-less up. From the camouflage in the space-time of the museum, which requires a traditional format of the artwork—one that obeys the material inside or outside structure, and the superstructure of art's institutions to the camouflage in other basic ruling structures—of art and its discipline-related subjectivities, there is only one little jump between levels. The environmental scramble manifests on more and more immaterial levels. I cannot walk into *Galerie* as into a museum. *Galerie* is immaterial, its gallery walls are the structures of experience and, in art's spaces or in the spaces of art's outside, its invisible theater walls are on the move. *Galerie* is operating on the theater stage of the real artworld. What Buren signals through a sign, they live. They promote a different kind of systemic thinking, an embodied and relational system-aesthetics. They take this universal unit of the artworld and make it gaseous. They dissolve its materiality in an affective solution. Walking on the street, I am within it. I am there because I decided to be there, or because they decided that I am.



In an advanced system-thinking we don't know anymore who is we and who is them.

Florin Flueraș has written a text on the phenomenon of recent and past “esthetic entities”<sup>7</sup> (*Second Artworld*, *Postspectacle*, *The Bureau of Melodramatic Research*, etc., and we can add *Galerie*, *Biennale de Paris* among others). The esthetic entities are works that are worlds, unrepresentable, unexhibitable, because they are not visual, not employable as such to perform in museums, they are not spectacles to be programmed in the theatre, yet they are effective. They are doing something. They are not as visible as they are influential. There are for sure more of these worlds, outside art, in the art itself, in cyberspace, within cities, and beyond. They are relations between people, concepts, and practices. They intervene in the practice of society and not only in the discourse of it. Since *real* society is unrepresentable, since a *real* community is the one that welcomes its own outside, these structures are on the move. They are running from their own propensity for closure and stability and oversaturation with identity. The artworks as artworlds are producing what Luhmann called “world-contingency”, systemically: “since [they] actually [exist] and can be convincingly experienced as such (if [they] can!), then something must be wrong with the world.”<sup>8</sup> Perhaps you already know them without having heard their names.

## Notes

1. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, "Pour un méta-pluralisme ontologique: le cas des mondes amazoniens", Conference paper for *Choses en soi: métaphysique et réalisme aujourd'hui*, 16.11.2016, Paris.
2. Arkady & Boris Strugatsky, *Roadside Picnic*, Trans. Olena Bormashenko (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2012).
3. Alexander Grothendieck, *Récoltes et Semailles, Part I (The life of a mathematician: Reflections and Bearing Witness)*, Trans. Roy Lisker, 1986.
4. See Ion Dumitrescu, "Pre", in *Black Hyperbox*, eds. Florin Flueraș & Alina Popa (Bucharest: Punch, 2017).
5. Thanks to Nestor Garcia Diaz for all the YouTube smuggling he has exposed me to.
6. Brian Massumi, *The Power at the End of the Economy* – lecture, at Robin Hood Minor Asset Management's office, in the frame of The Congress of Vagabonds, Theater Rampe, Stuttgart, 2014.
7. Florin Flueraș, *Esthetic Entities*, <http://www.fflueraș.ro/2016/02/esthetic-entities.html>.
8. Niklas Luhmann, "The Work of Art and the Self-Reproduction of Art", in *Art in Theory, 1900–2000, An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Malden: Blackwell, 2003).

# I'm Gonna Look For My Body Yeah – Somatic Fictions of Reparative Post-Porn

Antonia Rohwetter & Max Wallenhorst

## Warm-Up I Becoming-Popsicle



In a drawing by Harry Dodge, two popsicles are having an argument about the material properties of imagina-

tion and, as we will propose, about the future of porn. Both of the popsicles seem solid at their top ends, but melt into red and white liquid toward their bottom half, not pointing in any direction, but materializing into a strange texture that spreads on a surface not defined by the drawing (the paper itself). The dissolving popsicles are not touching each other yet, however they inevitably will. They are already entangled with each other, in dialogue and in the future. Their sketchy ontological status is as messy as bodily fluids—but however deep into the supposedly fundamentally different field of aesthetics they may be drawn from, as fantasies they lay claim to their own reality and it is perhaps a sweet one, too.

The intense, but not tragic, melting of the popsicles touches on the urgency with which a weird materiality—like the reality-of-fantasy—appears in our lives, to already have been there. Our phase of matter reconfigures itself, too, when confronted with the cyberspace that affect can be. Our bodies, too, are leaking into the realm of what is not yet, not anymore embodied, dissolving our contours into fetus-zombies, blurry, perhaps bloody even, yet still ridiculously confined to the limits of concretization and capacity. These urgencies express themselves in the proximity of very different, currently evolving, genres: New fascisms organizing themselves by a strategically neglected affect; LGBTQ living environments that seem increasingly impossible (virtual) in this context and therefore rely on the realm of fantasy

and its effective reality. And then, at first sight closer to here, in a closer sense of *genre*: Instagram filters, Affect Studies—practice-based choreography? In a different way than in the ‘90s or even the supposedly essentialist ‘70s feminism, these developments trace the concepts and feelings of *desire* and *fantasy* as a scene of change: Without teleological optimism, yet open for new excitements to come, thought and felt beyond the dichotomy of actual and virtual.

Okay. But—ehm—how do we actually do that? Follow our interest in the reality of fantasy? Rather than questioning the generality of the popsicle’s exclamation, which is certainly necessary to do more realistically than in our fantastic last paragraph, for us, here, there is no way around the embarrassment of this (post-) pragmatic question. We will address this—following accounts we are excited about—as a question entangled with sexuality, although it is obviously not the only one in which it becomes relevant. And because the popsicles look hot.

### **Post Porn As a Reparative Practice**

Porn is commonly seen as a genre in which reality and fantasy of sexuality are mediated and immediate. However, when “the appeal and materiality of porn”, as Susanna Paasonen suggests, “are linked closely to its indexical and iconic aspects (that is, its promise to act

as a document and proof of what has been)” (Paasonen 2011: 257), it becomes apparent that the porn we have watched so far does not trace an interest in the reality of fantasy. It obviously either pretends to actualize fantasy’s authenticity, no matter how fake, no matter how distant this authenticity might be, or “others” this fantasy as an out of reach imaginary. Porn cannot touch on the entanglement of a reality of fantasy because it relies on both as given, but separate. In contrast, a fantasy that implicates its own reality beyond actualization messes with separation and givenness so thoroughly that it becomes radically different from the fantasies we already had and from the fantasies we are ready or able to have. Thus, imagining a realm of reality-fantasy already becomes a generative practice: science fiction. If there is no reality of a pre-existing fantasy, the popsicle is perhaps stating: I’m interested in the reality of a fantasy I did not know could be mine. I’m interested in porn that promises to act as a document and proof of what has not been (or at least ranges in the ontologically precarious periphery of hegemonial world-building).

One could approximate this interest to *post-porn*, linking it to a question introduced by Tim Stüttgens: “What happens after the pornographic moment? What is the post ... in porn?” (Stüttgen 2009: 10) Drawing from the “mother of post-porn”, Annie Sprinkles, and the works of Paul B. Preciado, post-porn started as both

a practical and theoretical engagement with the pornographic regime of naturalization and its cracks and wormholes. It speculates upon a “revolutionary potential within the regime of sexual representation through performative excessiveness” while also underlining the strategic performance of the discourse itself: “[B]eware: this assertion is camp, a vulnerable gesture [...]” (ibid.) The gesture of post-porn is vulnerable precisely because it is not yet clear on how far the reality of this fantasy will go, however it obviously already enables a different set of announcements we can relate to.

To look for practices that make the reality of fantasy tangible as a moment of post-porn, we will make altering use of the term “somatic fictions” that we borrow from Preciado’s *Testo Junkie*: “These are somatic fictions, not because they lack material reality but because their existence depends on what Judith Butler calls the performative repetition of processes of political construction.” (Preciado 2013: 69) In *Testo Junkie*, hegemonial embodiment, i.e. the heterosexed body, appears as a somatic fiction; a construction that acts on and through the body. Preciado counters these somatic fictions with the ungoverned use of T (testosterone). Instead of framing somatic fictions as the governmental possibility of normative fiction acting through bodies, this text intends to use practices of somatic (science) fiction to trace unexpected, even desubjectivated forms of excited embodiment. This move might be similar to

how Preciado uses the notion of “somatic translation” in the dildo practices offered in the *Contrasexual Manifesto* (Preciado 2003). As an object and concept, Preciado’s dildo betrays and disposes of the truth of sex by taking it away from the bio-genitals and exposing them as prosthetic. In the *Contrasexual Manifesto*, the dildo, as a real and imaginative tool, can then be cited upon the body to transfer it into an erogenous landscape on which it can act and move. Literally, in one contra-sexual technique for three, heads are shaved and marked with read dildo-signs: “The three bodies learn and practice the technique of citation of the graph “dildo” on each other’s heads until they become experts in the art of provoking and simulating head orgasms.” (ibid.: 30)

Preciado’s conception of dildonics, the counter-science of the dildo that aims at “a general cartography of the cracks and slippages inflicted by the dildo on the hegemonic sex-gender system” (ibid.), is very close to Stüttgen’s claim of post-porn as a gesture of camp in its common discursivation as a project “of denaturalization, demystification and exposure of the elements and assumptions of a dominant culture” (Sedgwick 2003: 149) But as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has shown with care, camp is not ultimately bound to a love-hate relationship with the oppressive status-quo (like post-pornography assumably is to pornography’s regime of performative excessiveness, or the dildo is to the fiction of the phallus). It can also act as a “reparative practice” that is “additive



and accretive". "It wants to assemble and confer plentitude on an object that will then have resources to offer to an inchoate self." (ibid.)

In this sense the somatic fictions imagined/em-bodied by this text want to be reparative. We browse through the reality of fantasy as the periphery of post-porn, where the excitement is only beginning to intensify on a small and sometimes too-small scale. In this environment somatic fiction obviously remains close to the concepts of many somatic practices that establish an intimate encounter between bodily movement and imagination. We grasp the concept of somatic fictions as an attempt to leave space to affect and be affected by that what in realities-of-fantasy is not yet practice. At first sight, it is seemingly too virtual and too actual to be practiced, at least not by, not through us: anatomy, subjectivity and quantum physics, an algorithm and an emoticon. In these somatic fictions, even our involvement itself becomes and remains a precarious relation: Am I really part of this, of this fantasy? Do I really go for you, no, for this, whatever this is or may become?

The following will perform two sets of somatic fiction. Scrolling through different scenarios with the speed of theory, at the same time exploring the potential of theory as an ordinary genre to generate or even become part of somatic fictions as reparative practices. So it's going to be messy—it is already. Messy texts seem familiar in this environment, though it may start to feel

strange if we sense and think how our bodies hold this messiness together, how they keep up with the jumps. It is with these questions in mind, and not only there, that we trace somatic fictions as a material foreplay for a future sex – based in the sometimes extreme, sometimes banal outskirts of the here-and-now. It might be a foreplay, we might add, that does not rely on an optimistic relation to what comes next. It might even be okay with disappointment. I'm going looking for my body yeah. I'll be back like real soon (Solange 2016)

### Set 1

#### Imagine an Indefinite Clit

In 2016 the first full-size anatomical model of the clitoris became available. Made possible through the first complete sonography of the stimulated clitoris by scientists Odile Buisson and Pierre Foldés in 2009 (sic!), the clit-model is produced and distributed through 3D printing. Looking like a tulip emoji this 3D printed object reveals to us, or those who didn't know yet, that the clitoris is not only the visible and super erogenous "pea" that we normally refer to when naming the clitoris (Salami 2016). The so-called glans, the exterior part of the clitoris, connects to two shafts, cruras and corpora cavernosa, two strands of erectile tissue encircling the vagina from within. To speculate on how two very sensitive cruras of about 10 cm long stretch in your body towards the spine, while the corpora cavernosa tighten

around the interior of your hole is exciting—whether you have a clitoris or not.

The more or less recent anatomical explorations of the clitoris, from Helen O’Connell in 1998 to Buisson and Foldés—all conducted without proper funding—have the unquestionable potential of breaking from the myths of the clitoris as a deficient penis-version and end the Freudian heritage of the distinction between (hysterical) clitoral and (mature) vaginal pleasure. But also, picturing this decentralized organ through its 3D portrayal enables an imaginative process that starts with the matter of the body tracing its multiplicities of excitement that are located in various places at once. The reality of fantasy that lies in this imaginative process is not only real because it is scientifically proven—for us it becomes effective through the material body because the revelation of the clitoris provides a structure for affective pleasures and desires. The 3D clit could be the somatic fiction of an agential organ that is not anchored in subjectivity, but lies simultaneously outside myself and inside the body—it becomes the unexpected toy of a post porn practice. But how can we play with it? How can the 3D clit become a reparative toy, in a way that it offers me something that is continuously additive to myself and my pleasures? If it functions as an imaginative prosthesis, how does it not only change the structure of my pleasure, but also my bodily movements that are always—even if hardly noticeable—involved in the

process of somatic imagining? And could these movements become part of a routine?

### **The Female Sex As Virtual Reality**

When reading Luce Irigaray's controversial essay *This Sex Which is Not One* (1985 [1977]), the description of the auto-pleasures presumably inscribed in the female anatomy might initiate excitements very close to the experience with the 3D printed clitoris:

*She touches herself in and of herself without any need for mediation, and before there is any way to distinguish activity from passivity. Woman "touches herself" all the time, and moreover no one can forbid her to do so, for her genitals are formed of two lips in continuous contact. Thus, within herself, she is already two – but not divisible into one(s) – that caress each other (Irigaray 1985: 24)*

To read about your lips caressing each other continuously doesn't only initiate an arousing imagination, but can also translate into movement. While reading, I rock back and forth on my chair trying to shift the position of my existent or non-existent labia so as to sense the auto-caresses. The movement might be as unnoticeable as when I am tensing my pelvic base some weeks after giving birth, recovering from a prostate disease. Although sensing where and how the labia

touch is not conducted with a specific intention like the movement that aims to strengthen the pelvic base, both movements share their mode of attention. It is not the inward bound concentration through which I move in practices of Body-Mind Centering. It's a mode of attention that diffuses while I read and rock, and later when I talk on the phone or wait for the train. The movement first occurs *en passant*; even before I notice that reading about the labia touching has triggered a movement. While I become aware of it, I can diffuse the auto-caresses to other inseparable body parts: my arm-pit—circling my shoulder sensing the indefinite, wet-ish touch; my butt cheeks—tensing them to sense where and how they are in continuous contact. The arousal triggered by these incidental movements is decentralized like the interior clitoris stretching indefinitely in various directions so that the intensity produced does not erupt, it can but does not need to ejaculate. It's a practice that might even be parenthetical to whatever it is you are doing right now. The evidence it produces is bodily, because this is where it appears to be sensed, but it doesn't need to be seen, it escapes the "scoptophilic lense" (*ibid.*: 26).

Developing somatic fictions of decentralized pleasure through the anatomy of the clitoris and Irigaray's account of female sexuality does run the risk of marking the modes of excitement the text draws its interest from as "feminine". But even if that might be the case, the

“feminine” here, as Rosi Braidotti puts it regarding Luce Irigaray, does not appear as essential or naturalized, but as “perfectly artificial” (Braidotti 2003: 44) The account of female pleasure in Irigaray and in how we like it to be referenced here, functions as a “virtual reality” (ibid.). It relies on the embodied reality of sexed bodies, because it is part of a feminist project that is aware of “women’s structural need to posit themselves as female subjects” (Braidotti 2003: 43). The sexed body then is not proof of biology, but appears as a machinic and complex artefact, an “interface of intersecting material and symbolic forces” (ibid.: 44)

In Irigaray’s account the virtual reality of female sexuality is indefinitely plural in its differences. Her conception of desire, as stated above, is based on the nature of touch as derived from the labia—touch as an indefinite self-touching “without any possibility of distinguishing what is touching from what is touched.” (Irigaray 1985: 26) Because “she” is always more than one and less than two, she is indefinitely other in herself. Locating the very impossibility of distinguishing between activity and passivity, in practices of an auto-caressing that is already taking place, seems promising, while also on the look-out for realities-of-fantasy that do not derive from a will of self-authorization or expression.

## Sexy At The Core of Mattering

Karen Barad takes a similar concept of touch even further, beyond the realm of human bodies. Barad grasps touch using the observations of quantum field theory (2012) in which the “touching” of void and particle is described through the self-interaction of electrons:

The electron emits a photon that makes a positron-electron pair, and the electron and positron annihilate, creating a new photon that is ultimately absorbed by the electron. In fact, there is an infinite number of such possibilities: the electron not only exchanges a virtual photon with itself, it is possible for that virtual photon to enjoy other intra-actions with itself—for example, it can vanish, turning itself into a virtual electron-positron pair whose terms subsequently annihilate each other before turning back into the virtual photon—before it is absorbed by the electron. And so on. (Barad 2012: 212)

As for the labia, who are not one but can't be separated into two, the possibility of the electron touching itself is indefinite and indeterminable as it happens through the emission and absorption of a virtual photon, whose possibilities to “touch itself” are indefinite as well. As the exchange of the virtual photon appears as the self-touching of the electron, the intra-actions of the

virtual photon with itself, open up the possibility to think about “touch touching itself.”

Irigaray’s virtual reality for the materiality of the female sex, being “indefinitely other in herself”, corresponds with Barad’s notion of matter in general: “Self-touching is an encounter with the infinite alterity of the self. Matter is an enfolding, an involution, it cannot help touching itself, and in this self-touching it comes in contact with the infinite alterity that it is. [...] Ontological indeterminacy, a radical openness, an infinity of possibilities, is at the core of mattering.” (ibid.: 214) This is how far, or rather how close, practices of somatic and in the quantum case not-so-somatic fictions can take us in a heartbeat: From a 3D model of a clitoris to the “core of mattering”. Whereas post-porn is often located in performative excessiveness in scenes of explicit- and over-explicitness, these scenes of materiality suggest that there might be something exciting going on in the implicit as well, in the interior, even on a quantum level.

## Set 2

### Every Texting Is Sexting

Let’s stay with Karen Barad while we move on:

*When two hands touch, there is a sensuality of the flesh, an exchange of warmth, a feeling of pressure, of presence, a*



*proximity of otherness that brings the other nearly as close as oneself. Perhaps closer. And if the two hands belong to one person, might this not enliven an uncanny sense of the otherness of the self, a literal holding oneself at a distance in the sensation of contact, the greeting of the stranger within?*  
(Barad 2012: 206)

Greeting the stranger within via WhatsApp: If you write a text message and send it to yourself – which is entirely possible with a couple of messenger apps – there remains a gap between sending and receiving. The sounds that are triggered by the two functions do not overlap and the second between them is long enough to be surprised by the outgoing/incoming text. There is a moment of excitement that is not only caused by the sudden realization that you are also on the receiving end from what you do to yourself. It is also the precarity of the text message itself: Did something change while shifting from typing to reading, while shifting from right now to right now, while shifting from one side of the chat window to the other? This second is, with Derrida, where the materiality of text (dis-)appears and it is also the place where its entanglement with our bodies becomes sensible: a factory of somatic fictions.

The text you sent yourself, just like a lot of texts, is regarded as part of a genre that generates fictions, but their somatic materiality is still disavowed. Though perhaps in the second between sending and receiving,

channeled through the back-end of the internet, the text warmed up and became a sext, even though all you wrote is probably something generic like “hi.” In sexting the idealization of text already starts to crackle: In its mediation of selfies, emojis and text, sexting starts to produce new somatic fictions that we learn to inhabit right now. As an interface of ordinary language and ordinary sexuality it outlines new contours of our bodies: Is iMessage becoming a new erogenous zone? Does this Emoji actually belong to my body? In the Gutenberg galaxies, every letter was a love letter. In the digital age every texting is sexting.

A couple of practices that are working towards generating post-pornographic material were precursors to this development and continue to intervene into its politics. They draw from the possibilities of Cybersex in text-based internet as well as from the contractual textual strategies of the BDSM scene. It seems that in carefully protocolled user-generated interfaces, writing practices become possible that leave behind the confessional tone that for Foucault is intrinsically connected to the dispositive of sex talk, enabling glimpses of a non-sovereign writing practice. Through genre-bound form of improvisation or a specific form of algorithmic writing we get a grip on the the corporeal dimension that reading and writing always has affected and been affected by. Writing then becomes available as a machine of proximity production, juxtaposing and entan-

gling previous, supposedly unrelated, elements. Where these elements are thus marked as contingent, sex starts to lose its naturalized status as the other of language. It is, as the discourse of contrasexuality has shown, up for debate—the responsibility one bears for the sex s\*he has intensifies, the politics of sex become outspokenly explicit. A debate that is not confined to the limits of language. A structural and sexy openness of writing shines through that provides the back-end of somatic science fiction practice.

### **What Was Cybersex?**

Let's assume that once upon a time—in the early days of the internet—there were already a lot people engaging in the construction of a similar somatic fiction: Cybersex, but Pre-Social-Media-Cybersex. Working with a story arc of the Miranda July movie *You and Me and Everyone We Know*, in a text co-written with Lee Edelman, Lauren Berlant examines the mediation of fantasy and reality in this medium of sexting *avant la lettre*. Here, two black boys, four and 14 years old, anonymously sex-chat with a bitter white curator in her forties. They know some things about the genre of Cybersex and the specific conversation that is demanded of them, but age difference requires them to make up a lot of their sexual maneuvers, as it does not come from experience.

At one point the younger one of the two improvises a fantasy of exchange: To poop “back and forth” and “back and forth with the same poop. Forever”. In a situation where he is chatting alone and without the spelling skills of his older brother, he invents an emoticon which is—covering his alphabetic non-sovereignty—able to materialize this imagination.

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It represents a fantasy that neither of the brothers knew could be theirs and it does not really become theirs in the mode of “having”, either. This is not only the image of touch, but through the excitement it creates (and in an explicitly sexual sense only on the end of the curator) it becomes touching itself, or rather again: touch touching itself. A specific expression of touching in which the virtual distance that the exchange of caresses always entails, that it relies on, is so intensely present, on so many levels, that it becomes visible. The curator and the smaller brother eventually meet and naturally their attempt to turn an intense fantasy into something even more real fails—thus the curator actualizes the emoticon in a different way, appropriating it for the title of an exhibition, and turning it into “an icon of the age of a queered relation that adds to ‘divestiture’ a proliferation of scenes of care that might give fantasy and living some better options. [...]” (Berlant/Edelmann 2014: 24)

The genre of Cybersex that gave this reality of fantasy “better options” is no longer accessible. As of now there is little internet left. Step by step the world-building we are entangled in when opening our web browser, structurally goes offline, offering proximities very close to the rest of our lives. But instead of waxing sentimental about how powerful companies conquered happy anarchist Cyberspace, realist fantasies of text-based internet enable new approaches to think about fantastic possibilities for current realities. The promise of cybersex was never only the all-too-easy flexibilization of identity which is now viewed critically by some—but also that there could be a user-generated protocol that would undertake some of the labor of not only subjective coherence, but also of relational openings: “Having something or someone is still unbearable, yet borne by mediation, as by genre—by the )) < > ((—people can be together only if they’re also apart in some way.” (Berlant/Edelmann 2014: 27) And for “having” sex, a close distance to sex that may—understood in this way—be underestimated, this outsourcing seems to be especially necessary.

### **Uncreative Writing As Sexting**

I know I could be more creative and come up with poetic lines, but I just really need your ass with me (Rihanna, 2016). As Rihanna makes clear, the really of contemporary desire may lie beyond creativity. *how 2 sext*

is a so called Twitter bot that sexts, which means: It is an automatic account that—following an algorithm—pieces together chunks of text into sexually charged fictional messages in a certain rhythm. The variants of the experiments are simple: how 2 sext generates tweets from text fragments of tutorials, uploaded by users to the popular self-help platform Wikihow and places the firm announcement “sext:” in front of them:

- how 2 sext** @wikisext · 26. Aug. 2016
- xo. **sext: i build my body...you develop your introduction**
- Original (Englisch) übersetzen
- 🔄 20 🍷 37
- how 2 sext** @wikisext · 26. Aug. 2016
- xo. **sext: you remove my stems from the spinach...i gradually make my spinach salad with feta and feta**
- Original (Englisch) übersetzen
- 🔄 27 🍷 43
- how 2 sext** @wikisext · 26. Aug. 2016
- xo. **sext: you accept that life just is as i take my deep breath**
- Original (Englisch) übersetzen
- 🔄 28 🍷 68

Rather than extrapolating real existing fantasies, reading the feed of how 2 sext randomly tests new textual constellations for their possible material effects. With simple juxtaposition, literally every instruction is

potentially exciting. “sext: you remove my stems from the spinach...i gradually make my spinach salad with figs and feta”. The algorithm threw in a personal pronoun—or was this a Freudian slip in the source?—connecting me, and in the frame of sexting specifically my body, to the strange materiality of spinach. However, a post-porn ontology would, as I would argue while you remove my stems from the spinach, try not to grasp this connection as a metaphor, in which the word “stems” represents a specific part of my body or a certain relationship we are in. In the moment you are fantasizing about them, I really have the stems you are really removing, even if you are just an algorithm. These stems, though, do not consist of spinach, but of the concrete circulation of affect they trigger, the affect, which is your take-away from me. With what remains I gradually make my spinach salad with figs and feta.

The Twitter feed shows how the framing of “sext:” touches upon the textual instructions exactly by not moving on them. The potential for the non-explicit material to become sexually charged lies in the vibrant distance that is made of the question, if it all can become so. Can we assume that in this environment, the Tweets are dancing a sext dance in the sense that they are performing a form in which their specific characteristics, not to say bodies, speculatively produce new relations?

A Twitter feed is not however, enough. Social networks are governed by a desire for the authentic body

and its steady authentication. In the various practices subverting these mechanisms, it becomes apparent that—unlike in the chatroom of Cyberspace, unlike how-sex—speech acts are not enough to counter its re-naturalization. So what if we were to perform such a sext dance with our human bodies? How can we embrace the virtual that lies between the sexually explicit gesture that you are firing in my direction and the random way I am just standing there, possibly scratching my head? How can we address the textual distance that produces the somatic fictions we are embodying—without the languaged communication of dirty-talk?

We could—with a simple analogy—mix up and try out instructive and protocolled movements that are directed towards our bodies and test how far we are capable of being excited by them. I pretend to perform a routine dental examination on you. Thus, I will, according to a random Google result: “Evaluate your overall health and oral hygiene / Take a full dental base chart of your teeth / Assess your need for tooth restoration and replacement / Check your bite and jaw for problems”. Perhaps I can imagine from your response that your teeth are starting to move and suddenly locate themselves all over your body. If they move to your anus I will switch to the protocol of wiping your ass. If they move to your navel I will switch to the protocol of building my body...you develop your instructions. However, this test is an actual test—we cannot cover every distance



between the implicit announcement of “sext” and what follows. The potential desire that we draw from in these experiments may expand as a result, but—if we want to establish it as something not entirely other-worldly—it is precisely not infinite and without capacity. In time, practical sexting will end up as classic role-play or, worse, as boring, tickling, painful, fun, embarrassing and ridiculous.

Similarly, *how2sext*, on the level of practicability, is no more than a joke performed with an irony that is not yet habitable. This is mainly because it (knowingly) reaches the limits of virtual desire that we so desperately want to be endless. Not more than a joke: “[T]he mouth is a hole. The laughter ejaculates out of the mouth. There are spits and coughs coming out of the depths of the body. Laughing is not pretty. Laughing is loud and dirty.” (Hirsch 2009: 327) The laughter that fills and dirties the room while some of us are dancing a sext dance, while you remove my stems from the spinach, which might bring about a change of temperature we have to acclimate ourselves to: It seems what we are looking for—what we are already looking through—does not always look hot. Nevertheless at some point it might give off heat: Warmth, as Lauren Berlant suggests, thinking through the mentioned scene of cybersex, “is an atmosphere that allows life and death to be in the same place as what’s potentially unbearable in love every minute, the having and losing that’s both ultimate and ordi-

nary.” (Berlant/Edelmann 2014: 25) How can we think about and move on to forming a genre that establishes warmth in which the experimentation with distances and proximities that constitute the somatic fictions of sex become a little more bearable?

### **Warm-Up II**

#### **Peri-Science Fiction**

This text claims to have performed somatic fictions of reparative post porn. Somatic fictions that can be initiated by the body and imaginations of the body not only engaging in explicitly sexual practices, but also on the quantum level, and that of the organs. They are initiated by fictions, not only on the narrative, subjective level of textuality, but on an uncreative, algorithmic level as well. That means, the production of a post porn that follows an interest in the reality of fantasy cannot be considered an activity. But neither can it be passively consumed in the way that porn is consumed. If it really embraces a strange openness, like the reality of fantasy, it cannot be embedded into the indexical and flat structure of *Youporn*. Post porn is entangled in the messy in-between, which is not abstract and undecided, but concrete and decisive.

The relationship of these specific somatic fictions, to each other, to us, to the world, remains intensely precarious—their coherence and belonging-to is always at

stake. The genre of post porn itself is an attempt to provide a nexus in which these somatic fictions can become less isolated and more effective. Post porn is not only a smart move in discursive politics, it is part of a practice of world-building, establishing a strategic alliance of very different, sometimes contradictory scenes of sex. However, the specific way in which they counter each other is—as we may have seen or even felt—not dramatic: What is here referred to as scene does not imply fragments of a drama. The way the scenes interact with each other is with care, and in need of being taken care of. Underlining the reparative impulse of post porn and its gestures of adding and assembling makes this work of world-building even more urgent. Somatic fictions become the most effective when embedded in a science fiction that cares for them, that allows them to increase their givenness in relation to each other.

When it comes to the world-building of science fiction, Quentin Meillassoux differentiates between two forms of science fiction (Meillassoux 2015). Science fiction as we know it, which for him merely extrapolates trends of the present, and *extro-science* fiction which marks the very parameters of these extrapolations, namely the accessibility of this “other world” to science itself, as contingent and thus speculative of worlds “outside of science”. Although Meillassoux has followed a different itinerary to come to this point, his caution about the extrapolation may be adequate for our

project: Not only because the exaggeration of some key features already close down the general potentiality of the future, but also because it transcends and “others” these moments as something that does not yet belong here. Too often, in the imagination of queer utopias, real existing body practices are glorified and extrapolated beyond all recognition, their specific qualities get blurred, sometimes to the point of making invisible the various struggles fought in and out of this scene.

On the other hand, Meillassoux’s demand for a maximum pure science fiction whose changes involve everything but us is not so appealing as we are looking to explore a reality-fantasy that could potentially entail us, precisely not as a centre, but as part of the world. So how about thinking about what we want to do, and what some are obviously already doing, as *peri-science fiction*? A practice of fantasy that does not identify with its object (as extrapolation would), but rather moves into its proximity, a practice that hangs out with the movements of the present it is excited by and amplifies this excitement, not looking for anything, just making them more evident. *Peri-science fiction* assembles them, and by bearing witness to their specificity working turns the distance between them into proximity, holding them together. Also the prefix *peri* is close to *perineum*. Which is already a nice place. A place to care for.

## Really Really Messy

If we still count on sex to mess things up, in order to get really really messy, we rely on a world-building that provides the resources to bear this messiness. Sometimes it is the performative excessiveness of a somatic fiction that messes things up. And sometimes, too, it is the “weakness” of a somatic fiction similar to the ones we browsed through, located in the grey area of excitability, that messes things up effectively. In order to hold these somatic fictions together, a reparative post porn world-building has to move out of the scenes of sex itself to cover the distance between them. Embedded in the brutal warmth of responsible care, somatic fictions get the chance of becoming-ordinary and it is then that these somatic fictions start to mess with the hegemonial concepts of care and responsibility themselves. Thus, to get really really messy, we have to engage not only with the sexy adult body fluids that traditionally count as messy, but also with the plastic that the 3D printer operates with, with the spit that comes out of a laughing mouth hole, with the fluidity of text messages, the strange yellow shit of newborns too, and the unpleasantly inert matter that sometimes is the organization of care.

### Illustrations

Harry Dodge (2012): Reality of my fantasy, courtesy of the artist  
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# But They Are Not Dancing?

Danjel Andersson

*I see a poster in the foyer of Inkonst, right before the premiere of “Hyper” by Margrét Sara Guðjónsdóttir. On it is a blunt statement printed: “World Class Dance”. WTF.*

I have seen audiences totally loose it in performances by Icelandic choreographer Margrét Sara Guðjónsdóttir. I have seen people crying and not being able to stop. Having to go home instead of going to the next program in a festival. The pieces are emotionally hardcore, but there is no clear point, no explanation, no message. Just a well aimed punch in the gut. Blam!

A blond woman holds a bottle of water. She is wearing underpants and a vintage tank top. “Hawks 2”. She seems totally concentrated, focused on the bottle she is holding in her right hand. Every limb in her body is tense and simultaneously loose, as if her brain and her body want different things. Or rather, her brain and body want the same thing but the energies in the body are unable to correspond with the action. Slowly but surely the bottle moves towards the mouth. She eventu-

ally tilts the bottle with tremendous power, the arm at a 90-degree angle from the elbow, and the fluid pours down her throat. The whole scene seems surreal, still it is only a person drinking water. The intense buildup in the music makes the action even more exhausting to watch. The concentration level that is demanded of me is remarkable, but it is not pity, nor identification, that I invest. I share the tension. The urgency. But there is no release. As the water pours, the lips and guttural movements are not in sync with the sudden flow of fluids; only small sips enter the lips, the dancers body give ups and lets the water pour out onto the floor. She begins the process of sitting down, another prolonged sequence. Her gaze and head seem detached, still searching the space, eventually sitting in the puddle. Her ass totally relaxed in the cold water, while the electronic soundscape pulsates and I almost forget to breathe. With super low energy, she turns toward the red velvet curtain behind her. Moving in slow motion, she finally opens it. Behind the curtain stands another dancer, the bright white color of the naked body in stark contrast to the deep red of the textile. Slowly she walks on stage, with an abnormal detachment to her actions. The curtain drops as the first dancer falls, still holding the string to the curtain.

This is the first scene of *Spotted*. The water-drinking dancer is Marie Ursin, and the one that just appeared is Louise Dahl.



*Spotted* is a duet in a series of works. I would like to call them the Red Curtain Productions, referring to *Blind Spotting Performance Series*.<sup>1</sup> Each work of Guðjónsdóttir is dense and intense, arriving at mutually exclusive but transmittable energies. Like the aggressive and depressive *Soft Target* (2010), which has a more active score: A confrontative contemplation on being watched, being seen, being an object of our gaze. It is violent and hardcore. The Red Curtain Series gives a feeling of defeat and disconnection. Still there is a strong presence of the feminist edge in *Soft Target* as it explores the relationship with dominant gaze culture—perhaps most present in the theater. This, to me, is what the red curtain emphasizes: The tradition of the judging, even penetrating, gaze and the vulnerability of its subject.

I often return to this scene from *Spotted* in my head, considering the ways in which such work is communicated. This query derives from speculations discussed in articles, seminars, board meetings and those of funding bodies. The so-called *dance defenders* would formulate a response such as, “but they are not dancing?” This, of course, being a rhetorical question.

I propose to use the work of Guðjónsdóttir as an example of this well-known conflict in the dance world. Other examples could include Juli Apponen when she reads from a text about the gruesome consequences of her sex change operation, Nadja Hjorton imitating a radio show, Mette Ingvarsten making confetti move,

Mette Edvardsen reading a book from memory, Gisele Vienne's puppets, Xavier Le Roy's conductor, and so on all the way back to Trisha Brown or Yvonne Rainer. I imagine that many curators from dance houses hesitate to present many of these works due to their lets call it "absence of Dance" or lack of "Dancy Dance". The word "Dance" in the House of Dance, or Dance Festival, or Moderna Dansteatern creates an expectation from the audience that the work may not fulfill.

In my experience these types of work can perform for many audiences. Especially if the public is open and ready for whatever. I will for the purpose of clarity in this text arguably categorize the audience in three boxes:

**1. Professional Audience**—A category of audience that is working hard to gain a sensibility through seeing many works. They are actively trying to expand their openness towards different types of work. Not only seeing works they hope they will like.

**2. Almost Everybody**—A category of audiences that these kinds of works work on. They have open expectations, and almost no knowledge, or prejudice, towards dance performances.

**3. Dance Defenders**—A more problematic kind of audience for these works, they are expecting something other than the given.

The question is how does one reach the *Almost Everybody* category with performances that are not content driven or work with already well-known conventions? The potential is in the urgency of these works; how they communicate and how they are taken in. In the case of Guðjónsdóttir, one can easily fall into descriptions of the intensities of the work. It would be so much easier to explain a new version of *Swan Lake* (the Hip-Hop version, or the all male version and so on). In the end many of these works get very little funding, are performed a few times to an audience I would describe as the *Professional Audience* (category 1). This is also the reason why these works are often labeled as elitist, particularly by the *Dance Defenders* (category 3). I would argue that these works are the opposite of elitist.

The other day I took a train to Malmö to see the premiere of a new Guðjónsdóttir piece called *Hyper*. It is an exciting entry point to a new cycle of works.<sup>2</sup> *Hyper* premiered in Inkonst in Malmö.

This curtain is white. On stage are four dancers, three of which are men. The soundscape is completely different from Peter Rehnberg's electronic punch from the *Red Curtain Series*. I find myself immersed in a sampled voice landscape, almost like a chant that moves around the space. Interspersed is a single, live recorded, song played in snippets. It felt as though I were at a party with children controlling the Spotify. The cut-up song is sung by a woman, Nathalie Merchants. Her lyrics seem

to be a reflection on the the advise of her father and her country. I am not sure if she sings us or U.S., political disgust for the time we live in is an undercurrent in *Hyper*.

The four dancers struggle with nothing more than standing. Their gazes are searching and it is as if their biggest organ, the skin, is hyper sensitive; able to absorb everything. They seem to experience an overload. A total burnout. They stand next to each other, but they are not connected. They are entities. Lonely together. Lost and vulnerable. It is as if hyper-capitalism is a virus and these people are sick—very sick. Stuck and lost. Every movement, however small, is transmitted. This time I breathe, but my senses are tense.

*Hyper* is presented by the Cullberg ballet. Guðjónsdóttir has presented her works in the freelance production circuit.<sup>3</sup> The Cullberg ballet is a dance company associated with “great dance”, with large-scale production, with the “big choreographers”, etc. The company is now on an new path set in motion by director of Anna Grip and now fulfilled by director Gabriel Smeets. The company has a seen a major transformation over the last years. Cullberg strives to be at the forefront of contemporary dance rather than a conservative upholder of its conventions.<sup>4</sup> Having the premiere in Inkonst in Malmö instead of Dansens Hus in Stockholm with a work by Guðjónsdóttir is a clear sign of this change. The question then becomes, how is such a piece com-

municated in Inkonst, an art center that present a wide range of live arts, not only dance? In the crowded foyer in Inkonst are small posters with an image from the show. The text: "Dans i världsklass" (World class dance). The return of conventions.

So how should one communicate? One can wait and let the lines blur themselves, let the works do the work for the audience, no matter what category our audience falls into—1, 2, or 3. Eventually everybody will realize that dance is not only dance as we know it.

The dance community itself has another way of dealing with this problem of naming such works. The tactic is to split the two concepts: Dance and Choreography. In MDT this has really helped the situation. I often say: "We work with choreographers, they propose projects and sometimes they dance." If we do not automatically demand movements from choreography, what can we then expect? This is an open-ended and very intriguing question. The concept of choreography has travelled into the domains of Expanded Choreography, where the field opens up even more. Even so, during the Post-Dance Conference, choreographer Zoë Poluch raised the question, what about dance-ing? Where does the -ing in dance go when we split dance from choreography?

Let me put it this way: Dance is not dance anymore. Dance is also dance. Dance is a choice. We operate in the era of post-dance. Marie Ursin's struggle in the opening scene of *Spotted* is one of the best dances I have ever

experienced. Way up there with the classics. But is it dance? No, in one sense, and Hell Yes in all others. The poster in the foyer in Inkonst is actually correct, when you think about it.

#### Notes

1. "Blind Spotting" for 8 dancers, (2014), "Spotted" (2014), "In the Blind Spot" a solo (2015), and perhaps also the film made from "Blind Spotting" and I would add the piece that led to these: "Variations of Closer" (2012).
2. The next part premier autumn 2017 under the name "Hypersonic States".
3. With the exception of "Step Right To It" made for DOCH students.
4. Another good example of a company in transformation is Iceland Dance Company under the leadership of Erna Ómarsdóttir.

# Post-dance, An Advocacy<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

When I was little I was convinced that an advocate was a fruit. An advocate, something like an avocado only a bit less green or perhaps an apricot just a bit bigger. My dad for some reason had a friend that was referred to as The Advocate and I couldn't for the life of me get him out of the fruit stand in the town square where we lived. So when my dad met The Advocate I thought he went shopping.

To advocate for or against something would hence be something similar to peeling or un-peeling the fruit, avocado or apricot. To propose an advocacy, under these circumstances, was just beyond my imagination, but it definitely had to do with fruit salad.

Here today I've taken it upon myself to engage with the forbidden fruit with a positive appetite. My attempt is to advocate for post-dance, or rather to propose an advocacy for it, if that is even possible in the English language. It seems namely that post-dance, without

asking for it, has been granted a negative resonance. Post-dance is something bad that should have stayed hidden on some back page of our general dance history. So bear with me, because this is the first attempt, and the first moment when post-dance stands in front of the grand jury. Will I manage to get post-dance out of the fruit stand, clear it from it's alliance with the fruit salad and produce an opportunity to understand the term as something useful and for the articulation of our future dance and choreographic practices.

What we know is that dance is no longer enough. Either the term dance becomes too convoluted and can not host contemporary practices nor its relations to contemporary contexts, environments, concerns, ecology (in its wider sense), critical theory or philosophy. Alternatively, dance becomes a term so wide that it envelops anything that moves and doesn't resonate of fruit salad but simple promiscuity, which probably is a great thing, but perhaps not in the long run. In light of this, instead of some horribly approximate terminology such as dance-dance or conceptual dance that both seem contradictory, let's see if we can shed some light on the notion of post-dance.

Sometimes I experience a slightly awkward moment after dance class or rehearsals, individuals that change their sweater and without having a shower shove a deo stick into their armpits and do what one does with such



a thing. Now, deo sticks are of course great but I cannot help but to contemplate for a moment, in relation to post-dance, do you use a deo stick or any other perfume or similar in order to enhance who you are, what you smell, boosting you and your identity, or do you use it in order to cover something up, to hide, to cross something out, to vanish.

What about post-dance? Do we understand post-dance as something that's supposed to cover up, to hide that dance smells really bad because it is sweaty, old and ready for the happy hunting grounds, or does post-dance carry the capacity for dance to enhance its bouquet, its delicate scent and give it that little extra that it from time to time needs. Is post-dance perhaps a blessing that can allow the fragrance of dance to bloom in its time, with its time.

Or turn the argument around. So far post-dance has just been an empty canister but when we apply, or fill it with the right dances it is dance that makes post-dance smell so enchanting.

During the last few days here at the conference I've picked up a vibe that the post in post-dance is understood as something negative, something that restricts dance from what it can be, or amongst the less open, what dance should be. Therefore, what I attempt to propose is not an advocacy for post, but instead for dance in or through post-dance. Because in fact what we need

to do is to rescue dance from its historically anchored position, unchain it from its legacy. Learn to speak dance from a new set of circumstances, situations and environments and allow it to gain new kinds of agency that resonate with its being here and now today and into the future.

A tiny spoiler, to increase the suspense. Post-dance is in itself an advocacy for dance, however not as a means of making it innocent (so that I can go back to “normal”) but instead an advocacy that empowers dance to be an active part of its past, present and future not only as dance, art, decoration and entertainment but as an active force or intensity in our societies, in the formation of social, human, relational, political and economical realities. Post-dance in this way can be understood as the inauguration of the moment when dance in and of itself started to be an active capacity in the formation of how we wish to live together. Precisely, in and of itself, not in respect of being a dance about this or that—in the sense of a topic laid out as a narration—but in and of itself, i.e. as dance. It is to this that we need to find a path.

This path however—at least so far—is not all linear, so what follows might at times seem not even remotely connected to dance and choreography but hopefully in just about an hour things should appear a little bit more clear.

Before we embark, a small remark on the context. I have been part of the Swedish dance community for a rath-

er long time. Some twenty-five years plus. I was there when Dansens Hus opened their doors but luckily I was not there in 1986 when Pina Bausch visited Stockholm. Regardless of the number of years, nothing like this conference has ever happened here in Stockholm; a conference of this magnitude, with such an international audience. Although it comes across as a cliché, so many young and new faces.

This is something that I find extremely cool, that it is a conference, that however blurry and all over the place, it is strongly pointing towards the future of dance, a strong future for our art form. For the art form that we have devoted more or less large parts of our lives too.

When I look at the program I don't see any of those heavy names that could be here to consolidate dance and make sure we have value, because of the past. To me this is a sign of health, of elan vital. Dance doesn't need to hold on to its past because it looks at a promise of value to come. Post-dance is a promise, this conference is a promise, and a starting point for a great future, where dance finally can let go of its past, me included, and enjoy a new kind of future that starts with honoring the present and the dance to come rather than how it has been for so long—bowing to history and celebrating the past. But the future is big and generous, and it is with this in mind that I want to make an advocacy for post-dance, which is at the end of the day an advocacy for dance.

## Let's Get Going

Perhaps it appears strange to begin an ode to dance with epistemology, but as we will see, it is precisely in respect of epistemology that post-dance operates and how it identifies a fundamental change.

Epistemology can not at all be translated to knowledge, but its root *epistēmē* can. Epistemology is hence the study of the nature of knowledge, it is the study of knowledge, or the study of the possibility of knowledge. But it is also the other way around; that some or other dynamics of knowledge are always attached to an epistemology, which is to say, how a particular dynamics of knowledge operate, situating and relating to itself and the world. A certain dynamics of knowledge knows how it operates by elaborating on its own epistemology, and an epistemology further implies an understanding of how a dynamics of knowledge elaborates an ethics, a politics, forms of inclusion and exclusion.

For something to be enabled, to be given a function in reality, to be acknowledged and subject to change, to be located etc., this something needs be inscribed in knowledge. It needs to participate in forms of knowledge and is accordingly inscribed in some or other form of epistemology.

Now, epistemology is not just a matter of reason, rationality, writing, numbers and math. Language is certainly dominant and powerful concerning epistemology but any knowledge by definition involves an epistemolo-

gy, knowingly or not, including the body, movement, dreams, intimacy, spirituality, poetry, carpentry or gardening.

All kinds of knowledge participate in the world differently, and the understanding of this participation is what we call epistemology. Science for example, in order to not mess up the universe or people's health, needs to have a very precise articulation and clear rules in respect of its epistemology, whereas artistic practices can appear to have a less rigid one. Which obviously an illusion, it is just that the premise for precision is entirely different. At the same time, it is first when something can be defined as a knowledge, a somewhat autonomous dynamics of knowledge that it also must elaborate an epistemology. It is a sign of sophistication when a set of procedures, a technique or way of doing enters a process of elaborating an epistemology, as it implies a shift away from directionality toward the possibility of self-reflection.

Next to epistemology we need to visit another term, a rather heavy and complicated one, ontology. If epistemology is the study of the nature of knowledge and how in respect of this knowledge something participates in the world and formulates relations, ontology is the study of the nature of being, but it is also the study of categories of being and interrelations of entities that really exist. Everything, including immaterial things,

emotions, memories, a bit of smoke, the universe and a job interview are all things in the world and are hence carried by ontology. Some thinkers believe things have different ontology whereas others, often contemporary thinkers, consider that everything by necessity must share a flat ontology, otherwise it's simply not ontology enough.

For rather many years, ontology has been a dirty word and it is only over the last ten or so years that it has been claimed as valid again. Some thing is always inscribed in ontology in some or other way, but as we humans have access to the world through knowledge, through epistēmē, we cannot have access to something's ontology, something Being. Nevertheless, the study of and elaboration of ontology offers new modes of thinking and gives way to the possibility to speculate on a world without knowledge, of experiences beyond comprehension. Further, the possibility that the body in ways operate if not outside so at least on the brink of knowledge, and that sensations, affect, events, energy and so on—however when we encounter them, transform into representation, into knowledge—that the encounter is such that its nature is not epistemic or knowledge base.

In fact, however ridiculously categorical, one can divide the history of philosophy in a similar manner. Philosophy in the west with its etymology in the

Greek masters can be divided into an ontological and an epistemological period. The classical philosopher approached a problem with the question "What is...". What is this or that independently of context, perspective, time and space etc. What is, in other words, from every perspective thinkable and not for everything always, a person, a stone, a little bit of smoke, history, what is a microphone for humanity and a ping-pong ball. What is something's Being.

In the 18th century, however, something occurs, the seemingly elementary realization: how can I, we, humanity have even the slightest clue what something is, or what being or Being is for a stone or anything at all? Hume and Kant inform the world about this slight dilemma, arguing that philosophy could afford a little cheating. When philosophy asks "What is..." it is in fact asking, what is for us, or what is for consciousness, or better, what is in respect of knowledge, or the knowable. There we go, and we still live with it, the epistemological period in philosophy. Philosophy is a matter of knowledge and since knowledge doesn't have foundation, it is not a matter of what something Is but what something is, is is what power wants it to be. We can thus say that the second episode in philosophy is exclusively a matter for the mind and reason, which, for good or/and bad, excludes an endless amount of opportunities and resources.

From ontology to epistemology, perhaps—and cer-

tainly—there are possible new entry points or modes of contesting the hegemony of reason, rationale, and knowledge. If so, does that also imply a questioning or even the end of art and aesthetic appreciation as we know it? Because evidently art and aesthetics—dance, performance, choreography, live- and body art—is authorized vis-à-vis western forms of determination, reason, rationale and knowledge.

### **Dance Is Not Choreography, Nor Is Choreography Dance**

There is a common understanding that choreography and dance is causally related, meaning that choreography is the means and dance the end. This is epitomized in the American choreographer Doris Humphrey's book *The Art of Making Dances* from 1958, in which Humphrey sets out to comprehensively lay out choreography as a craft. Here, which that title makes evident, she proposes something like: The art of making dances is called choreography and dance is made out of choreography. The art of, could certainly be understood in the sense of being detached from art and aesthetics similar to the art of cooking, the art of motorcycle maintenance, the art of love or the poker, but it seems simply as if Humphrey has mixed up art with the artisanal. Forgiveness.

Yet, the art of making dances is clearly identified as choreography, and as mentioned, it is a recursive movement thus dance is equally made out of choreography.



Choreography and dance end up defining each other like yin and yang, perfect harmony which is all good but it also implies that there can be no external input. In other words, there is and strong, causality between choreography and dance.

It is further interesting that Humphrey forgets to define what dance is, but instead it seems like choreography is the art of making dances as we know them. Or choreography is the art of making conventional dances and reversed, conventional dances are what you make with choreography as the apparatus. No wonder choreographers or dance makers for such a long time have done everything in their power to get as far away from choreography as possible.

Over the last 20 years we have, however, seen a crumbling of this causality or the marriage between choreography and dance. There were certainly dark precursors but it is first in recent times that the relation has cracked. The initiative certainly came from choreography, but lately, and especially the last five years, somehow since 2012, dance has caught up and is currently in the middle of its emancipation from choreography. I'm deliberately using *emancipation* here, emphasizing that emancipation is not the same as being enlightened or rejecting something. An emancipated person is not somebody who lives alone—that part dance has made sure of at least half a century ago—but implies the

production of a new voice, i.e. to bring a new voice into the world. This is exactly what is happening right now, if I'm correct, with dance. And the great part is that it is happening in, so to say, the wrong places, in the margins. Even better, those wrong places know what they are doing, not what it will look like or what shape it will take, but they know what they are doing.

Indeed, there is a need for not just one but two divorces. We need to divorce choreography from dance and equally dance from choreography. However, just because there is a divorce going on it doesn't say there isn't love, it is just a matter of breaking the spell and allowing choreography to be something else than the mother of dance or was it the other way around. Choreography and dance are two distinct capacities and it is time to let them shine each on their own and together.

It is common knowledge that architects fear mess and therefore compartmentalize, build houses. But if architects fear mess then what does choreography, or what do choreographers fear? They fear movement and therefore organize such. Choreography, like architecture, is a matter of domesticating or taming movement. Choreography organizes movement. In other words, choreography is a matter of structuring. It goes without saying that structuring does not necessarily imply tidy, ordinary or formal. Structuring though implies the existence of some kind of system, code or consistency.

Conventionally one would say that structures are abstract capacities, and they hence need to attach to some kind of expression to gain entry into the world, they need to plug into some form of representation. One of the possible expressions that choreography can take on to gain representation is dance but it can as well be a score or an algorithm, a text or drawing, video, film or memory, and there is certainly no necessity for choreography to take on an expression that has a direct relation to movement. Choreography is not moving at all; it is when something forms a relation to a choreographic structure that movement in some or other form emerges.

It is usual to propose that choreography is the organization of time and space, but to define choreography in such a way is problematic, because what then is choreography not? And at the same time to define choreography as the art of making dances, implies that choreography is bound to an expression and in order for such a definition to make sense the expression must either be what we have decided it to be, or be defined in respect of criteria, but then choreography can never exceed its boundaries and change. A first step is to question the and, that choreography is the organization of time and space. Choreography differentiates from architecture, which is the organization of space over time, by being defined as the organization of time over space. In other

words, architecture erects structures that coagulate space in respect of the dynamics of time, whereas choreography instead produces structures that enables times movements in respect of the stability of space.

But this is not enough, in order to close in on what choreography is, I propose a different perspective, a different form of definition that bypass the essentializing desire behind any question including “What is”. Although instead of asking how choreography is – introducing a drama – our aim is to define choreography in respect of its circumstances.

It has been considered that choreography is a set of tools. That a choreographer runs around with a toolbox. Some probably do, but it appears as though a toolbox is devised for something. Humphrey in her book goes through her tools. A choreographer’s toolbox seems to be causal to an expression, and it smells pretty much like that expression is, after all, dance. Therefore, it has been proposed that choreography indeed is a set of tools but that the tools are generic and hence can be applied more or less successfully to anything, both in respect of production and analyses. This implies a departure from determination in relation to expression and the choreographer can, so to say, choreograph anything.

Why is this important? Because if the choreographer’s tools are not causal to dance it enables a shift from cho-

reography understood as expertise to instead latch on to competence, which proposes that the choreographer can apply for funding for projects that don't end up as a dance, on stage or not, but that the choreographer's project is defined in respect of the tools used. Hence the choreographer can apply for funding for a film however it doesn't include any dancing but is realized through choreographic competences. Or the choreographer can write a novel without having any aspiration to be recognized an author but as a choreographer whose expression happens to be literature. In fact, if the choreographer's tool box is generic, nothing says that the choreographer's expression is within the aesthetic realm; as much as the city planning office has a bunch of architects in the office, they should also have a horde of choreographers designing and analyzing flows and movements in the city.

Concerning choreography's relation to education, this requires vast rethinking, not least in respect of what research implies. It seems complex to conceive of research in dance without either considering one or other forms of application, or that it becomes negatively self-referential—research of the researchers own expression as the researchers own expression. With this in mind it is perhaps interesting to develop research profiles concerning choreography rather than dance. Moreover, research in dance, what is it that e.g. a PhD committee should evaluate and through what criteria, if

what is displayed is (personal) ability, not a proposal for a methodologically consistent inquiry.

A problem appears when addressing choreography in respect of tools, generic or not. A tool is always directional, it, so to say, knows its job and operates within realms of accomplishment or measurability. A tool is assigned a function and a function is assigned value through consciousness, or, a something that has direction can only accomplish what can be known. It can only solve problems to which there is a preferable solution. One can certainly bastardize a tool; use a screwdriver to make ice cubes or your mobile phone as a doorstop, but that doesn't release the tools from capacities that consolidate knowledge.

Tools, with some generalization, connect to technique: an ensemble of tools that are coordinated in order to facilitate something. That is to say that a technique is also directional and operates within realms of success, accomplishment and measurability. In dance, technique is still central and the dancer is often training to master a certain technique. Many might contest such a statement and argue that dance has emancipated itself from techniques. I am of the opinion that dance has rejected certain techniques but that the understanding of dance and dancing today is still deeply constructed in respect of techniques, perhaps even stronger today with the increased impact of street dance, capoeira, marshal

arts and improvisation techniques inscribed in the contemporary dance context.

Improvisation connotes motivations in the direction of non-restricted movement, a dance correlated with notions of liberty, even freedom. Now, it appears suspicious to consider that one should train under an expert's authority who has developed a technique for how to be liberated or free. To paraphrase Slavoj Žižek, what improvisation in dance is doing is to try to convince the executer that he or she is free however she knows all too well that he or she is not. It is a training in looking like or moving as though you are free.

Technology, which evidently is not causal to machines, steam engines, Tin Woodman or laptops, is a different affair. Technology is not directional but can be understood as an entanglement of possibilities which can, in a multiplicity of ways, be given direction. It has no goal, no inherent interest, but is instead, at least initially, a neutral ensemble of opportunities. If a technique has already told you what to do even before you start, a technology is a reversed opportunity. If you don't carry knowledge correlated to it, it is useless. Techniques are always prominently striated whereas technologies are striving to become smooth.

Can dance and choreography learn something from such an orientation, and instead of training the student or ourselves in techniques—with mastery as the motivation—can we consider shared practices deepening

our knowledge of how to navigate technologies. This division raises further questions, technique appears to connect with expertise, or knowing more and more about less and less, in many ways a historical model of approaching knowledge, whereas technology instead seems to connect with competence, an understanding of knowledge which has more to do with the ability to find and activate accurate knowledge for a certain situation, i.e contemporary networked knowledge. At the same time, it is obvious that competence reverberate with neoliberal attitudes, which is perhaps not exactly desirable.

Instead of thinking choreography as a set of generic tools, that however generic has strong telos, can we consider choreography a technology, a set of opportunities that are interrelated but non-directional. If choreography is defined as the art of making dances, it can only be considered in respect of a question, "what". The moment choreography loses its causal relations and becomes a generic tool it opens up to the question "how", it becomes methodological, analytic and critical. Choreography understood as a technology initially dissolves its relation to at the same time both essence and methodology, analysis and critique, i.e. drama, but opens the door to self-inspection or reflection – and hence an autopoietic move. Choreography can then be understood as an approach, an approach to dance as much as to writing, to city planning or to life. If technique is to



be understood as the way to fulfill something, technology can be equated with a knowledge, which is not a matter of fulfillment but instead of the opportunity to question, develop, rearrange, transform e.g. fulfillment.

If we consider choreography a knowledge, a choreographer is not, any longer, only somebody who makes dances, nor a person who puts together a book or makes a film, nor a competence approaching certain—which can be many—expressions into the world, but is the opportunity to enable forms of navigation in the world. If choreography can be understood as knowledge it becomes a way of approaching and conducting life.

### **But Then What Is Dance?**

To figure that out we have to take a step back and return to choreography. As we mentioned, choreography is an organizing capacity; it structures, and structures have sustainability. Structures enable stability and hence recognition of different kinds. Structures are capacities that makes it possible to return, to retrace, and do something again. Any structure can be recognized as a kind of semiotics, and subsequently choreography is a semiotic opportunity and it becomes evident that choreography is languaged, which certainly is nothing good or bad but enables only certain opportunities. What it enables is exactly that that it can enable, or what is possible, also impossible which is anyway only the obverse

of the possible. What is possible are indeed a whole lot of things, but it is nevertheless only that. Choreography remains in the realm of the possible and thus in the last instance consolidates the world, humanity, and life as we know it.

At this moment we need to make two short excursions. First, imagination. Imagination has been understood in different ways through out history but over the last 50 years, from the mid 60s, imagination has been understood as something we recognize with and through consciousness, and hence consciousness is languaged. What can be imagined, or not-imagined, remains in the realm of language—some kind of language—and therefor in the realm of the possible. One can only imagine what language allows us to imagine. One can only imagine what is possible, and not, but as we know that's again just the obverse.

A few years ago Zizek used a sentence borrowed from Frederic Jameson proposing that it today is more difficult to imagine a way out of capitalism than it is to image the apocalypse. Indeed, if, as Franco Bifo Berardi, Maurizio Lazzarato and others have proposed, capitalism has coopted language, or as Bifo has it, that we live in a semio-capitalism, it goes without saying that we cannot imagine our way out of capitalism because firstly, imagination stays within the possible, and secondly, if capitalism has coopted language then whatever we imagine is and will be a capitalist imagination. In short,

with the terminology of Deleuze, imagination is reactive, which makes possibility and choreography equally reactive and consolidatory.

And now, identity. However much Judith Butler is an unconditional super hero, identity, especially in not so scholarly contexts, and even more so identity politics cause problems.

We know from Rancière that “The essence of politics is the manifestation of dissensus, as the presence of two worlds in one.”<sup>2</sup> which implies that politics, for Rancière is something that happens within the realm of reason, and hence is languaged, therefore supports the possibility. Politics is the maintenance of an endless negotiation. Politics is two worlds in one and always in the realm of the possible, which means that identity, when understood as politics, consolidates as an endless negotiation, without grounds (if it was grounded it must be in one world thus not politics), simultaneously within the subject that is never one, and between the subject and the world but it is always a negotiation within the two worlds, within the realm of the possible. The problem for identity politics seen through this lens is that it ends up fastening what one can possibly be or not, which is also possible. In short identity politics is deeply anthropocentric and passive aggressive.

Choreography, imagination, and identity are structuring capacities that reinforce forms of causality and

determination that in its turn enables forms of power to stay in power.

### **So then what is dance?**

Choreography is easy, it can be scary but at the end of the day, choreography is reliable, predictable and harmless. Dance is way more complicated and something, as we shall see, to fear. Dance is not the sister of choreography but rather its complete opposite. But how can dance be identified? Dance in the first instance, or should we say in its rawest, initial form – which is yet to gain form – is a non-organized some thing. That is, the dance that we seek to gain access to when we practice authentic movement, a dance that has taken on no organization, that has not been domesticated by any form of structure. If choreography is a structuring that needs to apply itself to an expression to gain tangibility, dance is “pure” expression that needs to latch on to some or other structure in order to gain sustainability in the world, to gain recognizability and thus be introduced into the realm of the possible. Dance in the first instance can only be experienced, but it is an experience that is pure affect and therefore situated outside the possible, or as Brian Massumi has it, “address not subjects’ cognition, but rather bodies’ irritability.”<sup>3</sup> It is first when dance submits to a structure that it can be experienced in respect

of consciousness, captured and reflected, remembered and executed again.

We say it again, dance in its first instance is some thing and non-organized, and some thing non-organized can not have extension in time and/or space but exists only in *presence*. It has no history, no future, it doesn't have anything and certainly not identity. It is, in Agamben's terminology *whatever*—but whatever it is is this which means that the dance is given agency—or in the terminology of the French philosopher Tristan Garcia, *n'importe quoi*—no matter what, and again dance is given agency. Dance in its first instance is one, or One, and One can not be negotiated, it thus exceeds the realm of the possible. Dance is not a matter of imagination, but some thing that traverses imagination to also conspire with realms that we can not even imagine imagining.

We will return to dance as One later, but first. Dance in its initial state is not organized, it is pure expression, but in order to be located it needs organization, yet dance is not causal to choreography. There is no causality between choreography and dance nor is there between dance and choreography. And this is where we will not only support the notion of choreography as expanded practice but also dance as expanded practice. Dance does not need choreography but can, to an equal extent, structure itself vis-à-vis other opportunities; somatic organization, BMC, therapy, disco, sports, mar-

shal arts, literary structures or structures connected to manufacturing, domestic labor or quantum physics.

When choreography detaches from dance it opens up for new opportunities, to identity as a choreographer doesn't automatically make you deal with dance, it's after all a knowledge. In a similar manner, it is important for dance to liberate itself from the violence of choreography and iterate oneself as a dance-maker rather than as a choreographer, announcing that it is two different things. A dance-makers production doesn't emanate from an interest in choreography but in dance and in what ways dance can, and differently, attach to forms of structure, thus, so to say, creating different kinds of dances.

A choreographer can obviously identify all kinds of movement or not in respect of choreography, but that doesn't say that all dances are made to satisfy the choreographer's notions of complexity, composition or harmony. And who is to say that dance is in ocular art form in the first place.

An expanded understanding of dance further question what forms of representation dance can take on. Who says that a dance artist's work gains representation on stage, with a producer and receiver? Can dance as an artistic activity also take on other forms, such as dancing together, workshops, shared practices or other formats without considering them as practice that should at some point coagulate and take on a choreographic

structure, or that a workshop has any other aim than to dance together and is producing specific experiences, and that is art enough. Visual art has gone through such a deterritorialization, so that visual art is a dynamic or field that is not synonymous with a certain form of representation or say product.

For a long time, dance has been domesticated by choreography, perhaps for so long it doesn't remember how it was when "free". Today, or over the last few years, it appears that dance has, because of complex reasons, political, social, technological and philosophical, become observant to capacities inherent to it that exceeds the realm of the possible, imagination and language however not in order to become, or connect to authenticity, nature or truth but perhaps, to something much more frightening however necessary. Instead taking on the task of generating opportunities that lie beyond language and hence capable of producing irritations on the body, affects that intensify us to imagine that which we can not even imagine imagining.

### **Dance Is Not Performance**

In order to make things even more complicated, we need to make another distinction, between dance and performance.

Some 50 years ago it was urgent to contest genre and discipline. It was politically important to voice the

importance of cross-over, inter-disciplinary and so on. Both in respect of the hegemonies within the arts but also in respect of life in general. When dancers insisted on improvisation in the 60s it was not just because it felt awesome, it was also a political critique, not necessarily in a direct or outspoken manner but in respect of the homogenization of what the body could be or do. It is no coincidence that Judson Church happened in the same decade that every other art form emancipated and insisted on liberties. But when we look at today's situation, it rather seems rare to find an artist or anybody else for that matter that is not multi-, inter-, post- something, interactive fucking everything, participatory to the whole world and so on. To produce definition is not dangerous, it is not a threat to our already constitutionally authorized liberties but perhaps even a way of contesting and figuring out what those liberties really can do for us, or what we can really not do because of them and from there on use our fantasy to short cut them.

Performance is a subject performing subjectivity. In other words, it's an identity performing identity, idealizing or disregarding, one's own or a mask. Dance is different, and there are obviously endless gradations to be considered and celebrated, but nevertheless, by understanding the differences we can also understand what it is that is experienced etc. Dance is not first of all a matter of subjectivity. Dance is a subject performing form. It is subjects or identities performing but their



responsibility is not to issue subjectivity but instead to, so to say, become vehicles for the dance, to become anonymous.

There are a few interesting consequences entangled in this consideration. First, a subject performing subjectivity or identity by definition remains in the realms of the possible, whereas there are different opportunities for a subject performing form, it appears that the subject performing form opens for the opportunity of the subject to consolidate itself as *whatever* or *n'importe quoi*, i.e. to exceed the domain of the possible and hence produce the possibility for a contingently different comprehension of the dancing subject. In respect of a subject performing subjectivity the spectator is obliged to confirm, also possibly through rejection, the subject, whereas in dance, at least the possibility is present, the spectator is not present in order to confirm or not the subject on stage but the dance's form which is not in any respect identical or even superimposed on the dancing subject. Performance maintains and strengthens agency in the subject but only in respect of already elaborated grids of power. Dance carries the opportunity to pass agency from the subject to dance itself. To dance in this respect implies the possibility to learn from dance, instead of learning how to dance or how to be one's self.

If we understand this distinction in respect of Jacques Rancière's 2004 lecture *The Emancipated Spectator*<sup>4</sup> pub-

lished in 2009, we understand that performance defies the opportunity of emancipation. The spectator becomes stultified by being obliged to confirm, thus maintaining her or himself in the realm of the possible. It is obvious that the opportunity for emancipation can not be produced, but that emancipation necessitates an encounter with something exceeding the possible. Dance on the other hand carries with it the possibility of exceeding the realm of the possible precisely because the spectator, or implicated, is not there to confirm anything, or can only contingently confirm form, contingently because form exceeds the opportunity of anthropocentric epistemology. Performance might be loud, dirty, provocative and so on but its excess and abundance always remains within the realm of the possible. It is dance, however formal, that is really excessive and abundant, indeed because it carries the possibility to exceed the possible, also the possibility of abundance. Performance, however excessive, is a practice contained by probability – thus measurability – whereas dance practices contingent excess, an excess beyond the measurable, beyond reason, ratiōn and fuck knows what.

My mother has a friend who every time we meet tells me how amazing it must be to work with dance, to be able to express yourself everyday and at work. I support her and agree, mostly not to upset my mothers and her relation, but in fact the reason to dance, for me, is exactly the opposite. If I wanted to express myself I'd

probably work with theatre, pop music, slam poetry or something similar but not dance. In fact I dance in order to be anonymous, to for a moment be on vacation from myself, from that self that I'm obliged to perform everyday all the time independently of who I am or what kinds of inscriptions I carry. Dance is indifferent to who I am, and it is in that space of dissolving subjectivities that something can become some thing, and some thing is only recognizable, as Massumi told us already, in respect of bodies' irritability.

However, we will not venture further into this rather complex landscape. Contrary to what post-structuralism, conceptual dance and a general semiotization of dance (hence we only have access to the world through consciousness and consciousness is constructed as a form of language, it goes without saying that dance inevitably is a semiotic capacity, and therefore "knows" what it means, what it communicates) suggests—that dance is something we "only" experience through "the subjects' cognition", I believe it is possible to consider dance to address a properly corporeal or embodied experience but we must take into account that this is not an experience that is in any respect helpful, therapeutic, supportive or in any other aspect sympathetic, it is namely an experience that is contingent to cognition and takes place solely on the territory of the body, the individual's body which is not your body but a generic body, or a body<sup>5</sup>.

## Possibility and Potentiality

If something is always possible or if what can be imagined remains attached to possibility, which is to say to reality, and always located in reality vis-à-vis complex networks of relations (an if always needs a then in the same sentence.. get rid of the if?). What then is that some thing which is not something, and where? One opportunity is to make a distinction between possibility and potentiality, though here we don't mean potentiality as in, this or that person has potentiality, meaning it is investable or something that most certainly will generate revenue, but instead points toward the opposite, namely that some thing that exceeds the possibility to be harnessed by measurement, discourse, revenue, quality.

What is possible is in the world, it has already been actualized and is no longer real but exists through its relations. Something possible is always entangled, that is, it is relationally composed and therefore never complete. Everything possible is capacitated being two and thus subject to transformation and it can occupy different positions in the world as long as they are confirmed by its relations.

On the other hand, potentiality is not in the world, is not actualized but therefore real, however the price for real is that it is absolutely void of relation, it Is. Therefore, it can only not occupy a position, can not be located and further can not under any circumstances

change. Being real, recalling Agamben and Garcia, potentiality is always *whatever* and *n'importe quoi*, simultaneously *whatever* and *no matter what*, but not necessarily strange. Potentiality is not a domain, nor is it a negative domain, it is instead a double negation, it is the negation of a non-domain, but, however mystical it might sound, that is where some things reside, just before, since forever and always, it or they actualize and transform into something.

Recalling the very beginning, we can understand that the realm of the possible overlaps, if not coincides, with epistemology, and that potentiality refers to ontology. Possibility resides in the doming of knowledge, reflection, transformation, extension whereas potentiality is the realm of *Being*, of matter-iality—which is not materiality and which is prominently non-relational, non-extended and non-timely. Add to that the possible, which is by definition contextual, individual, partial and general, when potentiality is at the same time singular and universal, it is by necessity one, or *One*, obviously completely without structure and pure expression, but again as a double negative. Just to make it clear, potentiality is void of representation but also void of non-representation.

Possibility and possibilities can be produced, just use your imagination. Potentiality on the other hand can not be produced, only the production of it's possibility to occur. There are no guarantees, concerning potenti-

ality nothing is secure, it can not be calculated, it is not a matter of probability but instead of contingency. The only thing that is necessary is that something or not will occur.

### **Is It New or Is It New?**

And again a slight clarification. We need to make a distinction between different kinds of new. Our times celebrate everything new and simultaneously attacks the cult of the new, especially with nothing in particular except slow food or "I'm a barista". The new is it and we are all inscribed in cherishing it, not least the artist whose job, according to for example Boris Groys, is to produce "unique" statements. The new is equally valid for the Swanlake that the Royal Ballet is preparing, even for the Marina Abramovic at the Modern Museum in Stockholm, as it is for Nicki Minage' next hit.

We don't live in a culture of the new, we live in neo-liberal capitalism and as we all know it's an address to the world that has only expansion in mind. The new is for all of us, but the new that neoliberalism obsesses over, at least so far, is a false new, i.e. only a better version, an upgrade, an improvement, always based on what we know. This is a new that functions within the domain of the possible, it's in Deleuze terminology, a reactive new, which means that it consolidates what is already approved. In Deleuze we find a more prominent

new, namely an active new, which is a new that is not derived from what is, from what is common, from what is known. It is a new that must emerge from potentiality, a new that doesn't belong to the domain of knowledge or the possible. This is new with a big N, but what are the consequence of the possibility of the New? In short, the reactive new perpetuates the world or perhaps makes it a little bit better or worse. The New, as it is not part of knowledge thus having no representation, poses a problem to knowledge. Knowledge can not incorporate the New, and the result is either, that the New is rejected, denied, erased or knowledge will have to change in order to be capable of assimilating The New. As the New cannot be incorporated however, knowledge can not change in respect of what it already is, that is to the better, a version, an alternative or upgrade. Instead it will have to change contingently to itself. One could also say that it is not the the New that is incorporated by knowledge but instead knowledge that is incorporated by the New.

Boris Groys has argued that the responsibility of the artist is precisely to produce the possibility for the New to occur, and continues to propose that what the artist is doing is not to make something better, to increase qualities of life etc. but instead to make something come to an end<sup>6</sup>. Briefly, Groys' argument distinguishes art from design, where design is a matter of improvement (reactive new), art is a matter of the emergence of the

New (active new) which evidently is “dangerous” as it arrives with the possibility of a breach, of non-calculable or contingent change. In short design is always a matter of politics, and therefore conditioned, whereas art, in respect of a lineage from Kant to Groys always is one, and unconditional.

Ten years ago Groys’ proposal would have seemed rather ridiculous, not least because it rhymes rather badly with post-structuralism, but today it seems relevant if not important to think and practice along the proposed lines. At the root of his proposal lies the potentiality for art to change the world. We can not imagine our way out of capitalism, but if art’s job is to make something come to an end, it, according to Groys, must do so through the production of the possibility of something to emerge that does not belong to knowledge. What we further can understand studying Groys is that art, or rather the aesthetic experience—as we also showed earlier—isn’t an experience embedded in knowledge but on the contrary the aesthetic experience is, so to say, an ontological experience, which, further more, makes it clear that art and culture is and must remain two separate capacities. See appendix.

If design is something calculated, it means that it is a production engaged in reflection, analyses, critique, that something can be optimized, and that notions of manufacturing are implied. Art, which is not skill or ability, in order to be differentiated from design, must



engage differently, art is not analytical and critical, it is however seemingly romantic, generous and without reason. Arts job is not to be critical, the artists certainly but not art, it is not reflective but productive. Art is a speculative.

When we use the term speculation we don't mean speculation, as in the stock market, which is exactly analytical and revenue related, we mean speculation as in the production of the possibility of a contingent non-projective future. Choreography, as we have seen, is an organizing principle, which implies that it remains in the realm of the possible. Choreography is reflexive, analytical and critical which of course was one reason why it gained such prominence over dance, in the '90s—the decade when deconstruction still ruled and everything, not least because of Butler, was inscribed in meaning. There is no magic in choreography, which we indeed can see when looking back at the '90s and '00s. The magic is in dance. If dance in its first instance is non-organized, pure expression, can we perhaps consider that dance carries capacities towards speculation? Dance is a subject performing form, dissolving identity, resolving something in favor of becoming some thing. Dance in lieu of this is something that I can or not give attention; the dance is indifferent to me, the spectator (carries its own agency) yet becomes some thing, some thing to which knowledge can not attach but instead is forced to speculate with. From my point of view, dance

offers and opportunity to speculation, in that it offers the possibility for potentiality to emerge.

What are to tools we can, what are the machines one can use for speculation to possibly emerge. One option is to hope for the best, dance around with a serious face and say no more... Or is here a recursive momentum? We must, because we have no other choice, use choreography—the technology—to enable this moment to possibly happen. Although since we know that choreography is domesticating movement we now need to reverse our understanding of choreography and use it to assemble an apparatus, that gives us the opportunity for a speculative dance. We need to use choreography not to harness and domesticate dance but instead to free dance from our desire to locate it.

Coming back to improvisation for a moment. Conventionally, as we proposed, improvisation is a matter of liberating the dancer, either from something negative in society—how to be human etc.—or from the hardship of choreography—Balanchine. But what about if improvisation is not about freeing the dancer, the subject, which in ways proposes that improvised dance is not dance but performance, but instead, saving improvisation dance from becoming performance, can we estimate improvisation as a means of freeing dance from us? And the knowledge through which we can produce the possibility for this to happen is called choreography.

Our most difficult task however, and this is where

we need to rethink conceptual dance, which is always a matter of translation – and acknowledge concept dance – the assemblage of a machine that produces indetermination (both concerning the artist in the studio and the spectator in respect of a representation) – is to not desire the dance, or value it, i.e. assign value to it but to remain indifferent to it. This is an indifference that can only be obtained through an engagement with a concept. It is a difficult indifference to manage as it is far from being nonjudgmental. It is rather to also become indifferent to oneself, or to paraphrase Deleuze, it is a matter of becoming indifferent to one's own indifference.

### **Aesthetic Experience**

It is Kant that offers solutions to how to situate art and aesthetic experience in capitalist society. In premodern societies art was not separated from craft but this became imperative when a capitalist understanding of manufacturing, expansion etc. gained moment. If in capitalist economies art was not separate from manufacturing, how could it be that a, let's say, certain painting made an impression while another one did not. If art and the experience it possibly generated was not separated from other experiences how then could one argue the value, symbolic or economical, of a certain painting, piece of music or poem. It was necessary to separate art

from craft and introduce a study of non-teleological judgment and taste. Why do you adore that and I find it indecent, and how does it happen that we seem to agree on some things and not on others, beauty etc.?

Now the problem with aesthetic experience is that it must be autonomous and contemplated without interest in order not to end up in simple manufacturing and elementary determination. The price to pay for those two criteria however is that the aesthetic experience is one, and therefore can not actively participate in a political context. Art can not actively purport a political agenda. Art, or aesthetic experience, is not something the implicated interpret, it is not something one learns from, or is enlightened by or vis-à-vis one changes opinion. The artists' dilemma since the later 19th century, is that either art is granted some kind of autonomy but then no politics, or art is politics but then it ends up being design, losing its autonomy and all of a sudden sees itself implied in modes of accomplishment or efficiency. This is obviously what is happening when neoliberal governance instrumentalizes art, not just to be in the service of the nation or to be part of social democratic decentralization, but are keen to make the experience transformative for or in the spectator, or implicated. Art's responsibility in neoliberal times, following Bojana Cvejić, doesn't much differ from the manufacturing of lifestyle, and lifestyle is way foreign to Kant's aesthetics.

Kant has been strongly discredited over the last many

years, as his aesthetic implies forms of transcendence. Evidently Kantian aesthetics was a dirty word for anybody signing up to post-structuralist agendas. Within a philosophical climate where speculation is favored, Kant's thought can be understood through a different lens. In an omnipresent capitalism we cannot not understand that arts job must be considered differently, as anything that doesn't necessitate autonomy and disinterestedness immediately becomes supportive of or to capital, and art becomes useful. Arts defense against neoliberal policy can only be to insist on being worthless, without value, and as we know something always has value but some thing does not, and the emergence of some thing implies bringing the world or something to an end. With a slightly more positive connotation we can also read "to an end" in terms of Greek thought, where a similar gesture amounts to bringing something into existence, bringing-forth something and into the world i.e. "from" potentiality, poiesis.

### **Conclusion (Just Kidding)**

Before we come to a conclusion, a brief reflection on what an aesthetic experience is or does. What is it that the subject experiences when having an aesthetic experience, when having an encounter with art? If art is not to be understood vis-à-vis utility or design but rather autonomy, the experience must be self-referential. I love

this piece of art because I do. The moment one starts to explain why, telos or utility becomes difficult to keep at distance. Similar to love. One loves somebody because because not for this or that reason. You don't love because somebody's money, long legs or curly hair. One loves, full stop. I love you because I love you, capiche! And if somebody asks you why, just leave.

Therefore, what I experience is experience. It is not this or that experience, what I experience is a self-referential experience. I experience experiencing. But what is that? Gilles Deleuze proposes that one experiences liveliness, or in more contemporary terms life+. Perhaps one can rather say, I experience myself as being a live, but not as my life, instead I experience myself as a life, or as we saw earlier, the experience implies to, with my own body experience a body, a generic body.

*We will say of pure immanence that it is A LIFE, and nothing else. It is not immanence to life, but the immanent that is in nothing is itself a life. A life is the immanence of immanence, absolute immanence: it is complete power, complete bliss. /.../ it is an absolute immediate consciousness whose very activity no longer refers to a being but is ceaselessly posed in a life.<sup>7</sup>*

Through my life I experience life as such, a life. The aesthetic experience is pure experience, it is always matter-ial and since it is autonomous, what it brings can only be contingent to life. In other words, the aesthetic

experience, as Deleuze tells us, is the experience of potentiality. It is precisely here that art, artistic production and the possibility of aesthetic experience is important today, because the “outcome” or residue of the aesthetic experience is contingent to life, which means that it also can carry different in kind, ways of living together, of sharing resources, understanding property, being human.

### **Post-dance At The End**

Anything post is something that makes every sane person suspicious. Post-modernism is dubious, post-conceptual art very, post-dramatic maybe just a mistake after all, post-porn omg very suspicious. But what does post actually propose, what does it mean? Post evidently does not simply mean after. Post-modernism is not what comes after modernism, something that shuns the past and with a patricidal gesture gets rid of legacy. No, post rather communicates when or that something has gained the ability to reflect its own existence, capacities and positions. Post-internet art is not an art that takes distance from the Internet but instead reflects the circumstances that art is confronted with when every art is reflected in, through and with the Internet.

Post is not rolling one's eye “that was so bad”, nor is it something good but now without authenticity, or the seconds season. Post instead is when something gains

knowledge about itself, it is when a set of tools, generic or not is transformed into a technology, it is when something loses its projective function and become inseparable from a context.

Post-dance is not something after dance, it is not in any respect choreography or snobbish French non-dance, it is dance and choreography that has detached from elementary forms of causality or determination, that has buried Humphrey and let go of the choreographer's toolbox, understanding that dance and choreography are forms of knowledge that can reflect themselves. As something reflects itself it also gains the opportunity or necessity to devise its own ethics and epistemology—understanding its conduct and position as knowledge in the world. Post-dance is a dance that acknowledges that times change, that dance is not the same in a crumbling welfare state, that a liberal understanding of art sucks, that collateral damage is important, that dance and art is not marginal to society but an economy as any other, that there is no dance today that doesn't resonate of the Internet, that its history is changing because dance is made available via the Internet, that dance history is written by the wrong people, that acknowledges that high and low is interchangeable, post-colonialism, performance studies, artistic research, the messy mix-up between practice and theory, Beyoncé and technology, and does it all through an emerging epistemology of dance.



More than so, post-dance signals a return of dance and dancing. Post-dance is the recognition of dance being its own capacity for experiences outside the domain of the possible as much as dance as knowledge, dance and dancing elaborating its own epistemology. Post-dance is when dance and choreography reclaim, and successfully, their autonomy and in a totally new way. Post-dance, therefore, offers dance to detach from being about something, having application – thus functioning as a vehicle for some other discourse or attitude – and instead allows dance to produce politics on its own terms, through its own discursive apparatus. Post-dance is when dance in itself becomes political. Post-dance is the moment when dance can capacitate the world not in favor of, but in and through itself.

Most of all however, Post-dance is a celebration of dance, the moment when we recognize that we can dance again, when dance emancipated itself from choreographers, and when dance acknowledged that it carries its own agency, carries potentiality into the world. Dance is something, but it is also some thing, not always already organized but it organizes itself. At that moment it also becomes something that “politicians” need to fear, that need to be feared. Post-dance is some thing that is not always identifiable, it carries its own weight, it carries its own weapons, it carries its own agenda, independently.

## **Appendix: Ten Statements on Art and Culture.**

1. Art is not culture nor is culture art.
2. Art is not synonymous with culture but is always taking place against a cultural background.
3. Culture however is not art. A culture equals its circulation of value, whereas to art circulated value is supplementary.
4. Culture is the condition necessary for art. Any culture. No culture is more or less suitable for art, but different cultures provoke different forms or expressions of art.
5. Art carries with it that it is potentially produces or differentiates culture. However, in order for this production to not coincide with production in respect of culture, it can not not in the last instance be contingent.
6. Culture is through and through inscribed forms of measure and divisibility. Art on the other hand always withdraws from divisibility, if on no other level in respect of supplementary value.
7. Culture implies the formation and production of identity and community. Culture is caring, controlling, conditional and fundamentally territorial.
8. Art in respect of aesthetic experience implies, concentric yet not directional (strategic and void of conditions), withdrawal from or undermining of identity and

community. Art in respect of aesthetic experience therefore is deterritorializing.

9. Culture by necessity implies a coagulation of perspective. Art on the contrary is an indication of a fluidization into horizon.

10. Culture implies forms of governance, which initiating moment always is totalitarian. Art is always universal, in so much that it is the very absence of governance. Culture therefore is through and through correlated to politics, whereas art, in respect of aesthetic experience, collapses politics into doctrine, however a doctrine that refers only to itself as itself.

Culture is negotiated whereas art is one.

#### Notes

1. This text is based on a transcript, with a few alterations due to context, of a key-note delivered for the Post-dance conference at MDT, Fall 2015.
2. Jacques Rancière: *Ten Theses on Politics, Theory and Event* 5.3 (2001).
3. Brian Massumi: *Fear (The Spectrum Said)*, positions 13.1 (2005) 31–48.
4. Jacques Rancière: *The Emancipated Spectator*, London, 2009.
5. See Gilles Deleuze: *Pure Immanence, Essays on A Life*, New York, 2001, p. 25–33.
6. Boris Groys: *Going Public*, New York, 2010.
7. Gilles Deleuze: *Pure Immanence, Essays on A Life*, New York, 2001, p. 27.





Sometimes it's necessary to make tangible what you do, without authorization and without good advice. Here it is, now we know.

Sometimes, to write history, it is necessary to figure out what was. Sometimes it is urgent to understand what we haven't yet done; put our bodies and minds together and prefigure what is to come. Not in order to know in advance or project, on the contrary to labor for a future that is yet to be shaped, to change how things change.

Post-dance is a collection of text by artists, scholars, thinkers, producers, activists, or simply people that care and care deeply for dance. Here they come together, not knowing for what more than the necessity to exactly come together and make tangible.

Post-dance is an open term that throughout the book is given different qualities or functions as a trampoline for movement and thought.

Post-dance, the book, emanates out of the conference Post-dance held in Stockholm in the fall of 2015. Initiated by MDT, in collaboration with Cullbergballen and Uni Arts it gathered a full house of eager dance people for a three-day session.

Was it good? Yes, it was, it was very good, we just didn't know what kind of good. This collection is the first step, hopefully one of many, toward an understanding of what and how it was as good as we already know. This is our way of sharing with you who weren't there, voices from within contemporary dance.