PERFORMANCE
PHILOSOPHY

THE OPEN FIELD OF PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHY

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Edition 4.2 of the *Performance Philosophy* journal is the culmination of an open call for proposals. This leads to the question: what is "open"?

On the most basic level, an "open issue" is an issue without a pre-defined topic that would actively shape the contributions' contents. But this typical meaning doesn't quite work here since the "topic" of the journal—if we spy in that word the Ancient Greek *topos*, or place—is the *field* of Performance Philosophy itself. Performance Philosophy is the place of the journal, and thus all articles, regardless of the edition's theme will convene there. Given that the definition of "Performance Philosophy"—what it *is*, what it *does*, how it *acts*, and how it *intervenes*—has yet (thankfully) to be neatly sorted out, the tacit topic of edition 4.2 is, to be more specific, a relatively *open field*. In this sense, edition 4.2 of the journal is an expression of the diversity of thought that populates this open field. Two of the essays included here—Brian Schultis's "Life, Movement, and Thought: Directions for Performance Philosophy and Practice as Research" and James Corby's "Failing to Think: The Promise of Performance Philosophy"—specifically address the geography and stratigraphy of this open field as well as the vectors of the various practitioners who gather there.

One take-away realization from those articles is that Performance Philosophy is still very much an *open question*. What are its distinguishing features? When its discourse makes claims about the thinking enacted by performance, what precisely is the nature of this thinking, and is this nature commensurate with traditional philosophical thought? In what ways is it possible for artists to take up or elaborate upon philosophers' ideas without capitulating to the language games utilized by philosophical discourse? Annette Arlander's essay, "Resting with Pines in Nida – attempts at performing with plants," picks up a version of this latter question by juxtaposing her own artistic

PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHY VOL 4, NO 2 (2019):325–331
DOI: https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2019.42250
ISSN 2057-7176

research with challenges posed by Michael Marder in the inaugural edition of this journal. The result is not an answer to Marder—who wonders what a performance would look like if it could spread out in all directions like a growing plant—but a detailed open question that manages to entangle with Marder's philosophy instead of responding to it.

Erin Brannigan's essay, "Talking Back: What Dance might make of Badiou's philosophical project," albeit in a different register than Arlander's piece, also brushes up against the warren of open questions that thrive under the field of Performance Philosophy. Whereas Arlander's artistic research eschews philosophical determinations and argument for an exploratory foray into the world of plants, Brannigan steps into the role of Philosopher in order to speak back to one of the most visible and widely-read contemporary French thinkers. By taking Badiou's essay "Dance as Metaphor for Thought" seriously and "on its own terms," Brannigan postpones the typical critique of Badiou (i.e., the claim that he necessarily subjugates dance to philosophy and upholds the tired hierarchy of thought so familiar within Badiou's discipline) in order to imagine how Dance might respond to Badiou's argument. To perform this feat, Brannigan gets creative; she conjures an aesthetic persona for Dance who can draw on the discourse of dance theory and philosophy in order to enter into dialogue with Badiou. Fascinatingly, this exercise ends up disarming Badiou's certainties with a series of open questions that remain for dance theorists and practitioners despite Badiou's philosophical system, thereby turning his definite claims into possibilities, nothing more and nothing less.

In a sense, then, the call for contributions that led to edition 4.2 was a signpost that marked the location of the open field we call Performance Philosophy and invited scholars and practitioners to tarry with the open questions that have sprouted in that field over the last six years. Once gathered together, the collection of contributors reveals a third understanding of "open," one that speaks to the multiple points of entrance through which members of various disciplines can access our open field. The field is open to many. That is to say, Performance Philosophy reveals itself in this edition of the journal to have an extraordinarily diverse roster of people who claim to have something to say about the practice of performance philosophy. Genevieve Hyacinthe enters the field through the discourses of visual art and Black Atlantic studies. Her article, "The Shape of Humidity: Performing Black Atlantic Theory Making," commences from bell hooks's assertion that theory making is "a location for healing" and proceeds to think through humidity as a kind of philosophical emollient capable of revealing new, possible worlds for black bodies. Sondra Fraleigh enters the field through a different portal, that of dance phenomenology. Her article, "Get Messed Up: Intentionality, Butoh and Freedom in Plasma," presents a philosophical, first-person exploration of Butoh and subjectivity in order to enact Paul Ricouer's mission "to take phenomenology to the bloodstream." And Gretchen Jude enters the field through queer sonic studies and feminist science studies in order to flesh out a definition for the "plasmatic voice" that "functions as instances of queer assemblage stretching to reach the radically Other that constitutes ourselves—facilitating the sense of what Alaimo (2010) terms transcorporeality, an understanding of human embodiment as 'intermeshed with the more-than-human world.'" On first glance, these three essays do not have much in common. And yet, upon encountering each other in the open field of Performance Philosophy, serendipitous points of commonality reveal themselves.

Readers of these essays will find unanticipated and intersecting lines of flight through plasma, new materialism, identity, and a range of other topics. These intersections were always potentially present, but the probability of their meaningful interaction in the terrain of everyday life is quite sensible and vibrant now that the authors have met in *this* open field. The valences of connectivity increase when these three articles brush up with Arlander and Brannigan. Hyacinthe (a name not to be overlooked) brings hibiscus flowers to mingle with Arlander's pines and Marder's plant thinking. Fraleigh's Butoh x-rays Badiou's understanding of "dance" and unintentionally collaborates with Brannigan's nuanced critique. Is it possible that Marder's query about a performance growing like a plant finds its philosophical elaboration in the collective offerings of this journal edition? Are we witnessing a cross-pollination of different species of thought that gives rise to a philosophy whose life more closely resembles a living organism than it does an "academic discipline"?

Or, to re-phrase that as an open question: In what ways might we describe the philosophizing made visible through the collection of these specific articles in this field at this particular time in history? What does the collection say about the field itself, about its generative possibilities and its invitations to future authors? The answers to these questions become quite interesting as we acknowledge the other players. For example, consider our friends with more analytic leanings, William Teixeira, Silvio Ferraz, and David Roden. The first two work as a pair to produce "The Performance of Time (or the time of musical performance)" in which an entire history of thinking about time—both philosophically and musically—gathers around the *Cello Sonata*, written by Bernd Alois Zimmermann, which, according to the authors, expresses an "extended present" that becomes thinkable by focusing on the performer of the piece. Roden also takes up the issue of temporality, but his essay brings us into contact with the complex process of musical improvisation. "Promethean and Posthuman Freedom: Brassier on Improvisation and Time" rubs up against Ray Brassier's normative claims in "Unfree Improvisation," ultimately to rub against the grain of Brassier and propose "an idea of posthuman agency adapted to a hypermodern milieu of self-augmenting technological change." The parallels between these two essays are striking, given that representatives from the discipline of music studies have so far gathered in fewer numbers in our field when compared to those of performance studies, theatre, continental philosophy, and dance. Thus, in addition to considering the specifics of each article's argument, we are prompted to attune ourselves to the serendipitous overlaps between the articles, since those overlaps produce something like a harmonic relation that resonates above and throughout the field of Performance Philosophy.

One harmonious intermingling sounds off through Keti Chukhrov's essay, "Repetition as the Performative Syndrome of Dying," where the word "rhythm" detaches from its musical family and departs into the word of psychoanalytic theory. Chukhrov writes:

> Rhythm is the quality that makes time uneven, anthropometric and irreversibly moving towards an end. Non-rhythmic cardinal time stands still; the rhythmized ordinal time moves unevenly, rushes and ends. Consequently, the rhythmic time is the one that exerts the peril of mortification.

While we might easily adapt these words to fit into the arguments mobilized by Teixeira, Ferraz, and Roden, they work in Chukhrov's essay to elaborate on the specific performative dimension of playful repetition at work in the seemingly unplayful act of dying. "The strange converse effect of all this is that not only is an act of repetition the syndrome of dying, but the dimension of death and dying then automatically qualifies performing arts, becoming the attribute of the performative procedure." With these thoughts, psychoanalytic theory merges with analytic philosophies of music and constructs a kind of bridge between two distinct areas within the broader field of Performance Philosophy.

Probing this possibility of harmonics a bit more, we can return to the themes of the four biennial conferences that I referenced earlier. The first two—What is Performance Philosophy? and What Does Performance Philosophy Do?—pose questions that this editorial has partially answered. Performance Philosophy is an open field of inquiry, seeded with open questions that inquire into the nature of performance practice, philosophical inquiry, and the imbrication of these two sets of action, open to individuals from any number of established academic disciplines. In its ever-shifting totality, Performance Philosophy not only forwards claims about the productive entanglement of its two constitutive keywords; it also invites its inhabitants to investigate the ground on which they stand in order to think again about the presumed certainties of inherited academic knowledge.

In terms of this inquiry into the ground beneath out feet, two articles in edition 4.2 add to our understanding of what Performance Philosophy does. Veronika Reichl's "The Feeling of Thinking: Stories and Animations on the Experience of Reading Theory" turns a creative and critical eye on the act of reading. By presenting modified versions of interviews conducted with readers of philosophy, Reichl ensures that we stop taking reading for granted and that we see it, instead, as an active site of meaning making and emotion production. The subjects of her interviews pick up Arendt, Deleuze, Davidson, Hegel, Derrida, and Paglia and enter into an aesthetic, as well as an epistemic, event. Reichl asks of reading, "But how is it done? How is it perceived? Which aesthetic and emotional experiences take place?" These questions thus reinforce the idea that Performance Philosophy relishes not-knowing as much as it works to contribute to existing philosophical discourses. Are we so sure we know what reading is when we do it? What emotions are in play right now as you read this?

In a similarly ~~self-reflexive~~ playful mode of criticism, John MacCallum and Teoma Naccarato put their imaginations to work to produce "Collaboration as differentiation: Rethinking interaction intra-actively." The Derridean style erasure present in the previous sentence (i.e., ~~self-reflexive~~) cites an important idea from this essay; namely, that the oft-conjured maneuver of self-reflexivity fails to advance critical inquiry. Quoting Karen Barad in their essay on this matter, we learn:

> [R]eflexivity is nothing more than iterative mimesis: even in its attempts to put the investigative subject back into the picture, reflexivity does nothing more than mirror mirroring. Representation raised to the nth power does not disrupt the geometry that holds object and subject at a distance as the very condition for knowledge's possibility. Mirrors upon mirrors, reflexivity entails the same old geometrical optics of reflections. (Barad *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 87)

MacCallum and Naccarato are, on the one hand, concerned with the failure of self-reflexivity in the realm of interactive design. On the other hand, the critique of interaction and self-reflexivity doubles as a tacit challenge to performance Philosophers. In terms of the first point, the authors bring intra-activity into a parallel position across from inter-activity so as to highlight the "processes of differentiation by which such things are continually made and unmade." "Expanding interaction design by engaging in processes intended to bring awareness to the value systems involved in the local production of 'interaction' and 'things that interact,'" they go on to explain, "offers an opportunity to treat these values, and likewise the designers (be it engineers or choreographers or composers), as objects themselves in the design process." In terms of the second, tacit dimension of their article, MacCallum and Naccarato, like Reichl, encourage their readers to stop and look around the field of Performance Philosophy. How are we acting in this space? As we, readers/consumers and writers/producers, help to design this field through our collective activities in/on/under/above it, are we conscious of ourselves as both objects and subjects? Are we aware of the diffractive potential of each structure we place in the field?

These questions tilt toward the realm of ethics and summon the theme from the Prague conference (2017): How does Performance Philosophy Act? Among the many answers that have been put on the table, one primary answer has been this: with the body. That is, by attending to what all a body can do—how it affects as well as how it is affected—our collective understanding of *thinking* undergoes a radical shift and turns away from mind-centered, idealist conjectures put forward over the last two millennia by science and philosophy alike. Sophie Doutreligne and Christel Stalpaert's "Performing with the Masquerade: Towards a Corporeal Reconstitution of Sophie Taeuber's Dada Performances" shows us, however, that a lot of work is required to reconstitute the bodies of historical subjects, especially when the materiality and movements of those bodies have been obscured by patriarchal and scopophilic regimes. In this particular case, it is the body of Sophie Taeuber that has been frozen within the Dada image archive. To reconstitute Taeuber's body and movements, the authors draw upon (the somewhat unlikely pairing of) Bruno Latour and Luce Irigaray in order to demonstrate how, through performance, the Dada artist baffled the rigid paradigms of masculinity and femininity structuring the realms of the visible and sayable in her time.

Concerned with an altogether different historical narrative, Georg Doecker analyzes the various iterations of the tale of "Libertatia," an ostensibly fictional pirate colony that's influence on modern literature is without question. The goal here, as in the case of Doutreligne and Stalpaert, is to scrutinize the way bodies act. In particular, his essay, "The Curiosity for Panic. On the Stories of Libertatia and Self-Organisation in Anarchism, Cybernetics, and Performance," is interested in the mechanics of self-organization that support anarchist communities. Finding that self-organization—at least in the tales of Libertatia—thrives on the entropic counterforces of self-disorganization, Doecker's essay prompts readers to re-evaluate the seeming "failures" of groups like Occupy Wall Street in such a way as to see in those groups' dissolution a salutary form of regeneration and transformation.

And with this discussion of self-organizing groups, we almost return to where we started, with a conversation about the field of Performance Philosophy. First, however, there are two more contributions to mention. First: Narjis Mirza's "*Ta'wil*: in Practices of Light." Having touched on what Performance Philosophy is, what it does, and how it acts, it is perhaps best to discuss this article in light of the upcoming, fourth biennial conference theme, "How does Performance Philosophy intervene?" Specifically, we can inquire into the ways that artists and scholars challenge and contest Western paradigms of thought while continuing to pursue philosophical lines of questioning. Mirza brings her own artistic practice to bear on this conversation, which, in turn, finds its inspiration in the Islamic philosophy of Mulla Sadra, particularly in his philosophical ruminations on light. Inspired by both the school of Ibn Arabi and Suhrawardi's Illuminationism, Mulla Sadra incorporates centuries of Islamic thought into his philosophical system. Mirza's light installations draw from this system and offer spectators a medium through which to embark on a spiritual journey. The intervention of this art and this essay does not only arise from its Eastern trajectory of thought—thereby forcing us (me?) to re-evaluate the givenness of our (my?) Western lineage—but also comes in the artful way that Mirza links Sadra's thought to Bergson who was himself influenced by the mystical branches of Islamic philosophy. Ultimately, Mirza's stance does not place her on the outskirts of the field we call Performance Philosophy but, instead, points the way to an as-yet under-explored territory of philosophical thoughts, there where Western and Eastern paradigms entangle.

Neither is the contribution to the [MARGINS] section of the journal truly on the margins since, after all, can an open field have margins? How does the center/periphery binary transform when "center" and "periphery" lose their geographical certainties? The collective Generative Constraints does not ask this question through their piece, "Break Up Variations: An Annotated Score," but they do ask a question that leads to a similar place: Might a "break up" become the most intimate dimension of any relationship?

> What we've got in common is this break up. That is our relationship, that we are broken up. We will be broken up forever and that is the most romantic thing there is. We'll never always be together. We'll always be always apart.

If so, then the binary (constraint) of together/broken up gives way to a (generative) series: together—broken up—somehow more together. What appears as decoupling leads to metastasis within the relationship, a growth the size and shape of which cannot be easily foreseen. Thus: Brexit will metastasize the relationship of "Europe" (and "Great Britain"). A performance score will metastasize the internal relationships of the performance act as it works to become the index of the latter. A group of artists and thinkers agrees to part ways, thereby infusing the agreement to separate with a life that keeps on living.

Now, then, back to the beginning. As Colby and Schultis implicitly ask, what all is going on in this field, and what can we expect in the near future? If edition 4.2 is indicative of the *openness* of Performance Philosophy, in the ways discussed throughout this editorial, then we can expect a broadening of views on what precisely "performance" and "philosophy" are, how they interact, why

we should care to attend to their interaction, and the forms of language mobilized to discuss these interactions (break-ups included). That is, we do not glimpse the slow growth of vertical structures upon this open field but, rather, a horizontal flow of energies produced by moving bodies and motile thoughts. The purpose of these energies may be as yet unclear, but their vibrancy and capacity to stimulate discussion cannot be denied.

Biography

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PERFORMANCE
PHILOSOPHY

LIFE, MOVEMENT, AND THOUGHT: DIRECTIONS FOR PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICE AS RESEARCH

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Life activates thought, and thought in turn affirms life
—Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche* ([1965–1995] 2001, 66)

The question of philosophy is first of all that of action
—Bernard Stiegler, "How I became a Philosopher" ("*Passer à l'acte*") ([2003] 2009, 7)

This essay attempts to relate two relatively recent developments in arts scholarship: Practice as Research (henceforth PaR) and Performance Philosophy (henceforth PP). Both PaR and PP seek to combine something embodied and temporal ("practice" and "performance") with something more traditionally discursive and epistemologically established ("research" and "philosophy"), but they have grown separately, with relatively little direct interaction (although certainly individual practitioners/scholars interact with both). These are complex, evolving movements, the identities of which are not only contested but intentionally left open in the interest of maintaining the widest scope of innovative thinking while still providing sufficient structure to thrive. Furthermore, PaR has a number of variations such as Performance as Research and Practice led Research to name just two (see Barton 2018, 4–5 for a more complete list and some discussion of the differences). These variations are sometimes regional but also reflect nuanced differences in the processes and outputs they imply. I will not attempt to disentangle these and will use the term PaR as a general term which has all of these in mind even as I acknowledge that they are not all the same.

PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHY VOL 4, NO 2 (2019):332–344
DOI: https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2019.42231
ISSN 2057-7176

My sense of the importance of this task is informed by Bernard Stiegler's essay "How I Became a Philosopher" (Stiegler 2009) in which he discusses how an act of transgression which resulted in his incarceration led to the development of his philosophical vocation. In the deeply personal nature of this essay in which he conflates his philosophical thought with the actions of his life, I find connections to my own hard-to-define but strongly felt philosophical vocation on which the developments of PP and PaR have had a clear influence. Similarly, the reference to Marx's call for a philosophy of action implied in Stiegler's original French title drives home the social and political stakes of finding a way of addressing this question of action—a question which I believe unites PP and PaR even as they have developed in their own historically and institutionally situated ways. The question of action draws together and renders inseparable epistemology and ethics, and this essay will read PP and PaR as particular instances of this broader drawing together and coupling. As I proceed, however, I will depart from Stiegler, and choose for my companion Gilles Deleuze, whose flashing, evental "life" feels closer to my own vocation than Stiegler's more phenomenological "individuation"—even as I recognize that, united by the common strong influence of Gilbert Simondon, they are probably closer in their thinking than their terminology would make it seem. So Deleuze will guide this essay, but Stiegler will haunt it, keeping his presence felt in the background and returning again at the conclusion.

Deleuze also offers a hopeful method for my daunting task of defining two initiatives as varied and complex as PP and PaR. In the introduction to *Difference and Repetition,* he announces the inauguration of a theatrical philosophy with Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. Their writing is populated by characters or personae on whom they comment like a director explaining how the parts should be played (Deleuze [1968] 1994, 9–10). He goes on to clarify that this philosophical theatre is really about movement (10). Deleuze's philosopher-as-director is directing the way his conceptual personae *move*. The differences between Kierkegaard's leap of faith and Nietzsche's Zarathustrian dance are directions or choreography which express philosophy as a function of bodies in space and time.

Instead of describing what PP and PaR *are,* then, I will describe the movements I see them making—directing or choreographing them like Deleuze's Nietzsche and Kierkegaard. The difference, of course, is that unlike the Overman or Knight of Faith, PP and PaR have referents in real life. They are more like characters who are based on current or historical people. I could get them wrong, and something of my own directorial aesthetic will inevitably slip in. Both PP and PaR continue to move and change, and my hope is that my proposed duet, if it doesn't represent everyone's experience with them, will at least give them something to experiment with as they develop.

My starting premise will be that both PaR and PP interpose *action* into the research process. This action has two qualities. It is effective—it accomplishes goals and makes changes in the world. Following earlier performance studies theory such as that of Richard Schechner, Jon Mckenzie has traced the emergence of performance in the second half of the twentieth century as "an emergent stratum of power and knowledge" (Mckenzie 2001, 18), and one way that performance manifests its power is through efficacy. This may involve rendering changes in society or individuals, a manager's effective capturing of profits, or a machine's efficient completion of the tasks set to it.

These models of the power of performance often feature clear outcomes for what constitutes effectiveness, culturally, economically, or technically. Yet Mckenzie's understanding of performance as a stratum of power and knowledge brings into focus the second aspect of the action which PP and PaR interpose in the research process. Consider the postulate in book IV of Spinoza's *Ethics* (IV, P38) in which Spinoza equates power with a body's capacity to affect and be affected by other bodies (Spinoza [1677] 1996], 137). This model of power is not task-oriented but based on interactivity. The action that PP and PaR interpose into thought and research is both effective, in that it changes the structure of the world and affective, in that it interacts in complex and ongoing ways with a variety of bodies and situations. Action is effective/affective. These effective/affective qualities are easy to see in practices involving the movement of biological human bodies through space and time. Speaking of written texts makes this idea of action more obscure, but following on the work of J.L. Austin in performative speech acts, PP has rightly upheld the effective/affective performative potential of writing.

To say, however, that PP and PaR are distinguished from other forms of thought through the interposition of effective/affective action is still not sufficient. There is nothing novel about action within thinking; any epistemological process will have some of it, be it the scientist's experiments and even the philosopher and humanities-researcher's archive and library rummagings. Research and thought involve movement and change, otherwise there would never be any new ideas or conclusions. Yet PP and PaR interpose this action differently—at different times—and in so doing affect the directionality of this movement. It is this difference in timing and direction that sets them apart.

Directional Movement: Equilibrium and Metastability

In Book 7 of Plato's *Republic* (Plato [388–367 BCE] 1989), Socrates directs a movement for learning and thought. His characters are chained in a cave facing a wall on which shadows move as they are cast by a fire. Ultimately, they turn around, leave the cave, and walk up a mountain, where they observe the sun shining constantly and eternally. They move around, up, and out.

As Socrates explicates the allegory in relation to the proposed education of the guardians of the Republic, the movement takes more defined shape. First, the one who is about to leave the cave—let's call him the student—encounters something in his senses which he doesn't immediately recognize, something which calls for further thought. The student inquires about it and so is led down a path of knowledge beginning with arithmetic and ending with dialectics. He moves from the unstable realm of becoming towards the pure Truth of being. In terms of the allegory which begins this chapter in the *Republic*, the student is drawn away from the fleeting moving shadows on the walls of the cave, toward the constant and eternal light of the sun. Deleuze appoints this passage in Plato as the inauguration of what he calls the dogmatic or moral image of thought. Its dogmatism comes from its assumption of a thinker of good will, who even though she may fall into error or other difficulties, and initially is dazzled and confused by the sunlight, has an innate and fundamental affinity with the true.

The dogmatic image of thought builds an epistemological model based on recognition. For Plato, this can be in the form of an immediate recognition which does not require further thought. As he discusses at greater length in *Theaetetus* (Plato [388–367 BCE] 1992), such an immediate recognition is still based on an acquired knowledge which resides in the observing subject—the examples in *Theaetetus* are a ball of wax on which objects of knowledge leave an impression and an aviary in which objects of knowledge are kept captive and called upon as needed to apply to one's observation. Yet Plato also recognizes that some sensual encounters give rise to a deeper thinking. He will return these encounters to recognition through a process which Deleuze describes as "reminiscence."

In Plato's *Meno* (Plato [388–367 BCE] 2011), Socrates leads Meno's slave through a process of articulating geometric principles in order to illustrate to Meno that learning has the character of such a reminiscence. Rather than telling the slave the principles, he asks him a series of questions which lead him through errors and confusion to the eventual articulation of truth. Such a process would not be possible, Socrates argues, if the slave did not already possess this knowledge and thus that the learning was a reminiscence and not a true acquisition. In Deleuze's language, what Socrates provided for Meno's slave was an encounter with a problem which forced thought. Socrates's questioning and the diagramming he and the slave do in the sand are an active thought process, but in the end the slave arrives at a proposition which "answers" Socrates's question. It is this proposition that Socrates claims to Meno that the slave remembers. The slave has gone through a thought or research process—an encounter which is embodied and develops with action through time—and then translates that process into a proposition. To see such a proposition, which is always projected back into a transcendental past, as the "locus of truth" (Deleuze 1994, 167) is characteristic of the dogmatic image of thought. The truth is always already given, and needs only a process of thinking to be transported from the darkness of forgetting to the clarity of expression as proposition.

Plato's upward and outward movement has a clear direction. It passes from one place of stasis—chained in the illusion of the cave—through movement up and out—the actions and dialogues which prompt reminiscence—and into a new stasis—the transcendental past, the constant and eternal light of the sun. Some of the directionality of the movements of PP and PaR are similar to this image of thought, yet the effective/affective actions they insert into the epistemological process upset this. Notably, they don't provide a return to stasis as the outcome of their movement, but instead maintain movement indefinitely. The dogmatic image of thought is not static. It involves clear movement and change, but this movement is circumscribed both in its direction and its duration. It moves, but always *toward* stasis. PP and PaR *resist* this movement—not to the point of suppressing it—but enough to keep it suspended and from reaching its final stasis.

Deleuze grounds onto-genesis and epistemology on a thermodynamic model of the passage of energy between intensities (Deleuze 1994, 117; Beistegui 2004, 265). Seen through this thermodynamic image, the directional movement of the dogmatic image of thought traces a diffusion between two non-reactive equilibrium states: low-intensity unknowing in which nothing arouses the curiosity and high intensity knowledge where the disturbances of sensory stimulus

have been calmed in the eternal solar light of knowledge. Such a movement does not occur naturally. Something must disturb the equilibrium of unknowing and set the process in motion. In the case of Plato, this is the sensory object which forces thought. Unable to account for it by ordinary recognition, the student is forced out of equilibrium and into a process which continues until equilibrium is re-attained in the state of knowledge.

This process seems to be consistent with the second law of thermodynamics, by which all difference cancels over time. Yet such a view does not tell the whole story. Following complexity theorist Stuart Kauffman and physicist Ilya Prigogine, Miguel de Beistegui points out that while near to equilibrium a system will function in linear ways, systems far from equilibrium often manifest varied non-linear potentialities. When certain constraints are in place these systems often maintain metastable situations of non-equilibrium which do not necessarily cancel back to equilibrium. For Kauffman, this kind of behavior accounts for why, even with the second law of thermodynamics in effect, the universe displays creative as well as entropic tendencies, not least the evolution of life (Beistegui 2004, 299–302).

Such is the model for Deleuzian vitalism—a system in which a far from balanced thermodynamic state gives rise to zones of intensity which in turn force movements which generate new forms. This onto-genetic perspective also explains Deleuze's objection to the dogmatic image of thought. While founded on movement, it is a simple movement from stasis to stasis, essentially a form of entropy, a form of death. One of the primary tasks of thought then is not to accelerate the movement toward Truth but to resist it, putting in the constraints that will keep the system out of equilibrium, maintaining not the linear movement toward Truth, but the non-linear movement of life. Deleuze's primary references for this kind of creative, far-from-equilibrium-system are the philosophical descriptions of crystal formations in solutions by Gilbert Simondon and Gregory Bateson's concept of a plateau. Bateson used this term as a way of describing how in his observations of the Balinese culture, social situations reach a certain point and are then diffused before reaching climax (Deleuze and Guattari [1980] 1987, 22; Bateson 1972, 112–115). In Deleuze and Guattari's hands, this concept describes a system of expressions which attain enough stability to contain meaning, but never reach a climax which would resolve into a dead equilibrium or prevent it from interacting with other systems.

In setting up such plateaus, PP and PaR attempt what Deleuze credits Nietzsche with restoring from the pre-Socratics: "the unity of life and thought" (Deleuze 2001, 66). Yet such a unity is elusive. How do we build and maintain it? We must find the right dance—the proper Dionysian movement to keep the doing and the thinking alive and together. This is a hard problem. It's not simply a matter of breaking the rules or declaring a chaotic anything-goes false freedom. The movement toward stasis must be resisted, but so must the movement toward chaos. The system must stay far enough from equilibrium to maintain its interactive capacity. The setting up and maintenance of such systems is the challenge that PP and PaR must meet, and in their approaches to this challenge their differences begin to emerge. Not surprisingly, it is the equilibrium toward which their methods most nearly approach that each works most vigorously to avoid. PaR has generally taken artistic practice as a starting point and worked toward academic legitimacy through

structures such as PhD submissions. As such it has needed to establish ways in which physical bodies in motion can meet institutional requirements of shareability, referenceability and collective meaning. To do so it contends with the equilibrium of the unexpressive, where practice or performance simply might not *express* enough to enter into discourse, and so simply disappears. PP, in contrast, emerged from a relatively institutionally stable starting point of philosophical thinking in relation to performance and so must contend with the equilibrium brought about by the unstable movement of performance being captured in stable, transcendental Truth.

In seeking to show the differences between PP and PaR in relation to the way they resist equilibrium at different ends of an intensive spectrum, I acknowledge that to effectively construct and maintain a plateau, any piece of research or thought must resist settling into equilibrium in *either* direction. This distinction between PP and PaR, then, relies more on the way in which the historical starting point of each movement has made one form of equilibrium more of a concern and therefore more of a focus than the other. Neither generalization could take into account the range and variety of both forms, but they provide a way of thinking about them that puts their contributions to the larger goal of constructing metastable, knowledge-producing plateaus into focus.

Turning towards Becoming: Performance Philosophy

Performance Philosophy as an organization was launched in 2012—an outgrowth of a conference in Performance and Philosophy in Berlin in 2010 which itself emerged from the Collaborative Research Centre's "Performing Cultures" and the "Performance and Philosophy Working Group" of *Performance Studies international* (Cull and Lagaay 2014, 3). Cull and Lagaay don't describe how the "and" was dropped from "performance and philosophy," in their brief history, but this move seems definitive for the opening of PP as a field. While effective/affective action likely had been interposed into thought before in these communities, dropping the "and" between performance and philosophy explicitly invited them in. An invitation is a long way from a practical method, however. One obvious way in which this interposition could be achieved is by beginning to understand performing artists as thinkers in themselves, but as Laura Cull points out, such attempts can be easily reduced to using performance as illustrations or examples of philosophical ideas understood to stand on their own (Cull 2014, 27). I won't offer a definitive answer to what the proper method should be because that question is at the heart of Performance Philosophy itself. One important theme, though, appears to be an orientation away from fixed knowledge toward something more changeable, experimental, and creative. Cull speculates following Jon Mullarky that PP might be "the practice of a certain kind of openness, or a felt 'knowledge of "unknowing"' in relation to performance as that which perpetually resists conceptualizations of it" (33). Similarly, Will Daddario calls for an approach to PP that approaches thought as something which isn't already known, but which must be worked out through active experimentation (Daddario 2015, 170–171). The implied motion of these stances directly contrasts with that of Socrates's imaginary students.

Socrates saw learning as a turning of the soul from the world of becoming to the world of being (Plato 1989, 209). The orientation towards "felt unknowing" and creative working-out in PP describe

a similar turning, but in the opposite direction. Daddario puts this explicitly: "Performance Philosophers *turn their attention toward* the embodied and verbal/linguistic, sonic, and pictorial languages of these artistic languages [by which he means here practices engaging with a present, ubiquitous "Real"] so as to re-conceptualize what thinking means, does, and is" (Daddario 2015, 169). In this way, PP takes up the gesture of turning from Plato and the dogmatic image of thought but reverses its direction. PP's turning takes its philosophers back toward becoming and all the additional movement and change this implies.

Such a reversed turning is an affirmation in the Deleuzo-Nietzschian sense. It differs fundamentally from the position of those chained and forced to look at the shadows on the walls of the cave because it activates a will or at least a desire. We turn toward becoming by choice, and in so doing affirm our embodied implication into what Deleuze calls "spatio-temporal dynamisms," which we know will transform us. Such an affirmation relates to performance in its imaginative sense of taking on new shapes, movements, and roles—the protean quality of the actor or dancer. Deleuze describes such a protean body as a larva, which plays upon its etymological meaning of something masked or disguised—as an actor in a play—and its biological meaning of an animal in a state of becoming, who unlike an adult animal has the capacity to undergo the forced movements of the developmental process. Daddario characterizes this situation as responding to an imperative, perhaps even a vocation in Stiegler's sense: "doing life is that which we *must* think," and he compares living with this requirement to a people who *must* hug, but lacking an understanding of what this means, end up moving their bodies in new ways and eventually incorporate this new movement into their social structures (Daddario 2015 170–171). Daddario's hugging/thinking without knowing what hugging/thinking is echoes Cull's "felt unknowing" in which what we do know, and in fact affirm, is our own larvality, that we are becoming, that we will constantly be forced into movements which feel strange and transform who we think we might be at any given time.

This kind of affirmation was made clear in a simple and personal way in a keynote conversation from the Performance Philosophy meeting in Prague in the summer of 2017 in which Alice Lagaay spoke with Hartmut Geerken about his lifelong research on Salamo Friedlaender (Lagaay and Geerken 2017). What was striking about Geerken's story was the way in which the phrase "I wrote a letter" coursed through his narrative like a refrain. Geerken's letters always seemed to lead toward unexpected adventures which simultaneously elucidated and brought further and bigger questions into his thought. Most importantly, though, they completely upset his life, forcing him into new movements like Daddario's compelled hugger/thinkers. Geerken's letters are perhaps a concrete example of an affirmative method. They are a clear effective/affective action in the sense that rather than dogmatically making a truth claim about the world they demand a further response. They also blow the imperative to move and change back to the sender, and ultimately establish a metastability through this exchange which resists equilibrium.

Movement and Expression: Practice as Research

Robin Nelson defines PaR by claiming that it "involves a research project in which practice is a key method of inquiry and which, in respect of the arts, a practice (creative writing, dance, musical

score/performance, theatre/performance, visual exhibition, film or other cultural practice) is submitted as substantial evidence of a research inquiry" (Nelson 2013, 8–9). Two aspects stand out in this definition. First, PaR involves a "research project." It is not something someone can do in a more casual way outside of the structure of a specific project. The second is the importance of submitting an artistic practice as "substantial evidence of a research inquiry." In the context of PaR, I believe this second part of the definition implies the first – the methodological importance of artistic practice. It would seem unusual indeed to propose a research project in which no artistic practice was part of the method, but which made up a significant part of the submitted product. This second clause, then, along with the association between PaR and a research "project" appear as the functional part of this definition.

These aspects of PaR are linked to very practical imperatives. Part (though certainly not all) of what PaR "does," is establish a structure by which PhD submissions can be accepted for degrees and texts accepted for publication. Much of its developmental history in the UK has been shaped by efforts of the RAE (Research Assessment Exercise) to develop strategies for evaluating practice, and from the Arts and Humanities Research Council funded PARIP project led by Baz Kershaw to develop modes of research inquiry in the performing arts and ways of evaluating them (Kershaw 2009, 2). This in no way diminishes the depth or importance of philosophical debates raised by and surrounding PaR, but it does condition them in certain ways. Fundamentally, it requires that "research" in Practice as Research be understood as a noun – as something which is sufficiently fixed as to be able to be reviewed. Of course, the first, methodological part of the definition is still extremely important. Nelson goes into extensive detail on questions surrounding the necessity and methods of documenting one's process in PaR. Tellingly though, Nelson is particularly keen to have PaR researchers document "moments of insight" in their process. Such an approach speaks to the often irregular and serendipitous arrival of "insight" within an artistic process but still frames that process as part of a progression toward an ultimate research output of which the insights gained in the process make the constitutive parts. Documenting their arrival clarifies them and bolsters their validity by appealing to their origin. PaR differs from more traditional research not so much in its methods—indeed many different types of research involves carrying out embodied actions—but in its expressive outputs. The essential innovation of PaR is to call into question the forms in which knowledge and understanding can be *expressed.*

Within the dogmatic image of thought, expression works through recognition. The writer finds a way in which to tap into the transcendental past in which the Truth is housed. This might be through a symbolic or linguistic construction but also may be more embodied and processual, such as when Socrates helps Meno's slave to remember the principles of geometry. Expression need not invoke this transcendental past, but it invariably has a relation to time. Some trace of one time makes a difference in another. It is usually a requirement for PaR PhDs that they produce such a readable trace—a "durable record" (Nelson 2013, 26)—which can be housed in the university library. Yet if PaR (or PP for that matter) is going to interpose effective/affective doing into the research process, then it cannot rely totally on these durable products. To do so would risk sidestepping the practice altogether, casting it as a part of a good will movement towards the stable truth. Frequently PaR researchers and their sponsor institutions attempt to mitigate this risk by

insisting that examiners be present for the live presentations of the researcher's practice. Nelson himself speaks to this irreducibility to documentation in his definition by saying that the artistic product is submitted "as substantial evidence of a research inquiry." He appears to suggest that evidence may not point to any concrete conclusion but simply to *a* research inquiry. This use of the indefinite article recalls the way Deleuze uses it to point to singularities which aren't determined (Deleuze 2001, 30). Similarly, Barbara Bolt uses the word exegesis to describe the usually written supplements to her artistic practice (Bolt 2007, 33). Exegesis is a particularly fortuitous word because of its connotations of bringing a sacred scripture to life. The exegesis in this sense truly makes the practice alive even while producing a durable document. Yet the exegesis, even if it is durable, is not the complete research. Ben Spatz offers that repeatable, shareable, and transmissible "embodied techniques" might provide a research-supporting durability to PaR (Spatz 2015, 235–236), and while I certainly agree that such techniques do provide important structures for embodied artistic research just as exegetic texts do, if they are really to sustain the boldness of the aspirations of PaR they must do so not only through their abstract form but also their temporal enactment. In order to generate an expressive action that doesn't appeal to recognition of the transcendental past, the effective/affective action itself must relate to times other than the narrow present in which it appears.

Deleuze frames this problem by describing two forms of time: Chronos and Aion. In Chronos, the past and future are subsumed into a rich and full present. It is not an elimination of diachronous time, but the flow of that change is completely taken into account by an abstracted "present" which sits in relation to the past which developed it and the future which elaborates it. "Being," in Plato's sense of an unchanging reality which underlies the phenomenal flux, aligns with this form of time, in which any becoming in the past or in the future is reduced to what it means for this essential present. In contrast, Deleuze describes Aion as the form of time in which the present is thinned to its mathematical limit between the past and the future. It's the form of time in which one cannot achieve the stability to speak of being but must always speak of becoming. Deleuze speaks of movement as the way in which one achieves a kind of paradoxical present within Aion: "This present of the Aion representing the instant is not at all like the vast and deep present of Chronos: it is the present without thickness, the present of the actor, dancer, or mime – the pure perverse 'moment' [...] It is not the present of subversion and actualization, but that of counter-actualization" (Deleuze [1969] 1990, 168). This idea of counter-actualization is a vital one for Deleuze, and one which he consistently associates with embodied artistic practitioners.

In Deleuzian ontology the real is composed of two elements: the virtual, which are the intensive relations that generate the differential character of reality, and the actual, which are the ways in which these virtual differences unfold in states-of-affairs over time. To counter-actualize is to act in a way which reveals the virtuality of the flow of actualization. Significantly, however, this is not accomplished through a proposition, which in Wittgenstein's definition makes a "picture of the world," creating a deep present of Chronos. Instead, counter-actualization forms moments out of the infinitesimally thin present of Aion. In "the ultimate sense" for an individual to counter-actualize, it is necessary "to attain to the universal communication of events, that is to the affirmation of the disjunctive synthesis beyond logical contradictions, and even beyond alogical

incompatibilities" (178). "The universal communication of events" here refers to the way in which certain events connect in chains of "repetition" which, in the manner of Nietzsche's eternal return are never repetitions of the same but cross-temporal connections which lay bare the virtual structure of the real. This virtual structure is not a fixed eternal picture but a "disjunctive synthesis" by which an event reveals the whole structure not in its completeness but through its continual genesis. Counter-actualization does not arrest the movement of actualization and becoming but resists it, slows it, allowing signs to emerge. The "counter" here can be read not as a direct opposition but as the application of selective resistance which draws expression from the relentless stream of becoming, setting up the productive tension that allows communication between the moments of Aion as the proper tension of a physical frame allows communication between the dancing bodies of ballroom dancers.

Deleuze's Chronos-Aion distinction echoes long standing debates around the temporality of performance. "Without a copy," writes Peggy Phelan, "live performance plunges into visibility—in a maniacally charged present—and disappears into memory, into the realm of invisibility and the unconscious where it eludes regulation and control" (Phelan 1993, 148). Phelan's "maniacally charged present" appears to align with Deleuze's Aion, yet its performance's "plunge into visibility" seems to capture no counter-actualizing traction. Rebecca Schneider offers a more optimistic vision of the temporal expression of performance—one which still affirms its resistance to the stability of the dogmatic image of thought. She sees a metastable intensity in performance that directly challenges the logic of the archive. Following Schechner, Blau, and Phelan, she asserts that performance is not its own archive (Schneider 2011, 98), but contesting Phelan she argues that disappearance is what the archive expects from performance, but that performance uncannily does not oblige:

> When we approach performance not as that which disappears (as the archive expects), but as both the *act* of remaining and a means of re-appearance and "reparticipation" (though not a metaphysic of presence) we are almost immediately forced to admit that remains do not have to be isolated to the document, to the object, to the bone versus flesh. (101)

Put in Deleuzian terms this fleshy non-document is a counter-actualization that rides the difference between the equilibrium of unknowing and the equilibrium of knowledge—within the "maniacally charged present" of Aion while finding the force of the event which connects in disjunctive synthesis across time.

The question again becomes one of method, and similarly to the affirmative method for PP, an expressive method is often the subject of PaR research rather than a starting assumption. Indeed, methodological research in performance has been a particularly fruitful area for PaR, but it raises its own set of questions around what methodological research in performance practice is for. Ian Watson, with high modern practitioners like Stanislavski, Barba and Grotowski in mind, sets the sciences apart from "the creative process being investigated by those concerned with acting. The primary concern for the latter is enriching the act of performance" (Watson 2009, 87). "Enriching the act of performance" sounds like a methodological goal, but it's expressed in vague, aesthetic

terms. Too easily, such an enrichment can be understood as better conforming to a preexisting performance aesthetic—as making "better" public performances. That is, of course, a methodological goal, and it likely inspires some PaR research, which must then be tasked with clearly articulating the aesthetic it is trying to realize. Yet looking at it this way vastly understates the broader potential for methodological research in PaR. If we understand performance itself as method then enriching the art of performance through creative practical research increases its capacity to affect other disciplines, not least philosophy. PaR, with its frequent introspective, methodological researches must always be mindful of the distinction between explicitly methodological explorations and forays into other realms of knowledge. Temple Hauptfleisch articulates a valuable distinction between "arts research as *a study undertaken THROUGH/BY MEAN OF the arts*" and "arts research as *the DEVELOPMENT OF NEW TECHNIQUES AND PROCESSES for making art*" (Hauptfleisch 2009, 44 emphasis original). In a way that echoes Watson, his second possibility seems to consider "making art" to be its own end; yet if we understand art as a process of research or thought it need not be. His two possibilities can intertwine in a renewing circle which like Geerken's letters set up a metastable plateau and resist equilibrium.

Conclusion: Vocation and Remains

In his essay on becoming a philosopher Stiegler argues that Socrates's death inaugurates philosophy by a *passage à l'acte* which links his individuation with the city, setting up an obligation to continue to interpret the laws of the city past his death. "In that regard," Stiegler writes, "Socrates' death *remains* incomplete—charged with 'potentials.' This is his genius" (Stiegler 2009, 5–6). Socrates has acted as a foil in this essay, but in Stiegler's reading, his death affirms not a stable eternal Truth but a radical turning toward the mutable laws of precarious Athenian proto-democracy. Stiegler plays on the two senses in which we could read "*remains* incomplete": the sense of Socrates's death not being completed and the sense of his death remaining in spite of or even because of its incompletion. It remains much like performance *remains* for Schneider, a paradoxical counter-actualization. Socrates in the end performs the ultimate (literally, in the sense of final) interposition of action into philosophy. Like a PaR researcher he submits an embodied action as his research output, slipping out of equilibrium in the final moments of his life. For those involved in PP and PaR, perhaps this is our vocation—to think even to the death. Maybe. But the duet I'm directing for PP and PaR is not so grandiose. The two fields don't seek death but affirm life within thought, and they do so in everyday and practical ways, by asking the questions, writing, performing, developing practices and techniques, carving out institutional structures, and resisting the twin dangers: pure, powerless inexpressivity and stable, changeless Truth. In so doing they act as opportunities, or perhaps as vocations, to adventures which we cannot anticipate but can only affirm.

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Biography

Brian Schultis received his PhD in drama from the University of Kent in 2016. His research built theory around Jerzy Grotowski's Paratheatre and Theatre of sources periods by applying the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari among others. The practical arm of this research, *The Sojourner Project* investigated performative meetings in relation to landscapes based on travel and transition. His current interests involve the relation between movement, threads, and textiles and the attendant questions of tension and release. He teaches at the University of Akron and is an affiliate scholar at Oberlin College, both in Ohio, USA.

PERFORMANCE
PHILOSOPHY

THE FEELING OF THINKING: STORIES AND ANIMATIONS ON THE EXPERIENCE OF READING THEORY[1]

VERONIKA REICHL AUTHOR AND ARTIST, BASED IN BERLIN

The following stories investigate in experience of reading theory. They are based on 50 interviews with dedicated readers of philosophy (students, lecturers, professors, and others), each focused on their personal reading experiences. Some of the stories refer directly and faithfully to one interview, others combine motifs from different interviews.

The stories are part of an ongoing project: I am writing a whole book of stories on the personal experiences of reading of theory/philosophy. If you would like to share some of your experiences, please contact me (i n f o (at) r e i c h l . n e t). I would love to conduct an email interview with you on your personal reading practice, on the books and authors that influenced you most, on the connection of reading and writing and on changes in your reading practice in the course of time. The interviews are confidential.

Three of the texts are accompanied by short animations, which explore the process of reading as a particular movement or form of touch. I hope they inform the stories in an interesting way.

PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHY VOL 4, NO 2 (2019):345–353
DOI: https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2019.42229
ISSN 2057-7176

Tom reads Hegel

Tom is sitting in the library. The other students are rustling their papers and whispering among the bookshelves. Tom is reading Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The work is the work of a master of philosophy. Hegel lays out concept after concept. Each is carefully worded and well thought-out. Tom is reading and trying to listen only to Hegel. Sometimes he manages to keep so intensely silent that he succeeds.

What is Tom's silence? It goes beyond non-speaking. It is a restraint. He is holding back his own thoughts, in order to fully perceive this other thinking. Tom delays his own thought impulses, so that they do not interfere with his understanding of Hegel. He pushes his own criticism aside in order to stay as close as possible to Hegel's ideas.

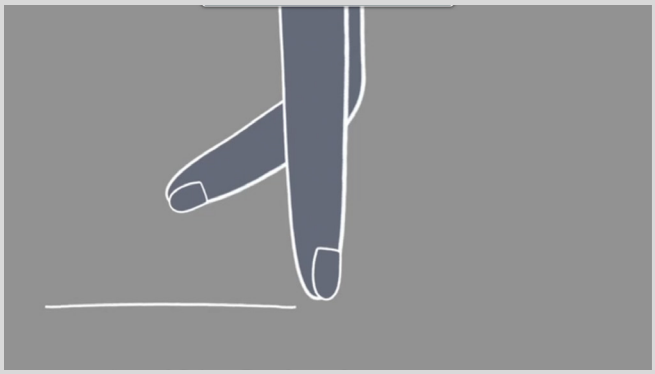
Tom's being silent means that Tom benefits more from listening to Hegel than from following his own ideas. Hegel's tone is very confident. As if he also assumes that Tom would benefit more from reading Hegel than from thinking for himself. Sometimes Tom has the impression that Hegel anticipates possible questions and comments from his readers. Yet this does not mean that Hegel answers Tom.

While Hegel is speaking and Tom is listening, Tom is a disciple. The promise of listening is: whoever listens best will be the next master. In a few years he or she will be allowed to speak and to expect new disciples to remain silent in front of him or her. Tom listens very well. He becomes familiar with Hegel's style, with his intonation, with his arguments. Tom reads the sentences again and again. He reads secondary literature: the readings of other disciples. He becomes a disciple of the disciples. Tom liberates himself from this situation by starting to teach. He writes books. He explains the master to other disciples. He becomes a master among the disciples.

Tom does not become a master before the master. After practicing silence for so long, he is never able to fully give up restraining and inhibiting his own thinking. Even after years and years, Hegel is still Hegel and Tom is still a person who is silent when he reads. And although Hegel resides in powerless, quiet, dead books, Hegel is never silent.

Ina reads Derrida

Video link: Animation accompanying *Ina reads Derrida*



https://vimeo.com/303232928

Derrida's texts start harmlessly enough. But then they suddenly accelerate. When they get moving, they want with all their might for Ina to think differently than she normally does. They insist that Ina keep all their axioms and claims active in her mind and that she take them as the foundation for the next sentence. Derrida's texts want Ina to adopt and maintain their special level of tension. They want to induce a certain twist into Ina's thoughts. All of Derrida's admonitory sentences in the first place admonish Ina not to sink back into her usual, tension-free way of thinking.

After a while the tension of the texts decreases. Time and again, the texts are interspersed with surprising passages of relaxation, in which things are said that seem self-evident. But Ina must be on the watch: soon the text will accelerate again, and if she does not read with the proper tension—with this special Derrida-tension—she will have to shamefacedly go back and reread whole pages.

Ina wonders how Derrida got himself into the right tension when he was young. She wonders whether he was resting when he wrote the tension-free passages and then started again with a fresh mind. She also wonders how long it took Derrida to be completely at home in his tension. How long until he was not able to pull out of it anymore. The main question is, however, how much Derrida Ina needs to read in order to be able to effortlessly switch to Derrida-mode.

A year later, reading the *Margins of Philosophy*, it occurs to Ina that she might have completely misunderstood the tension-free passages. Suddenly it appears to her as very likely that these passages have a special twist of their own and are actually also tense passages. Perhaps the very trickiness of Derrida's thinking presents itself in its purest form there; perhaps these putatively harmless passages are the key to Derrida's wit. If this is the case, however, these passages are too tricky for Ina. She continues to hop back and forth between different states of tension as elegantly as she can while reading Derrida.

Phillip reads Deleuze

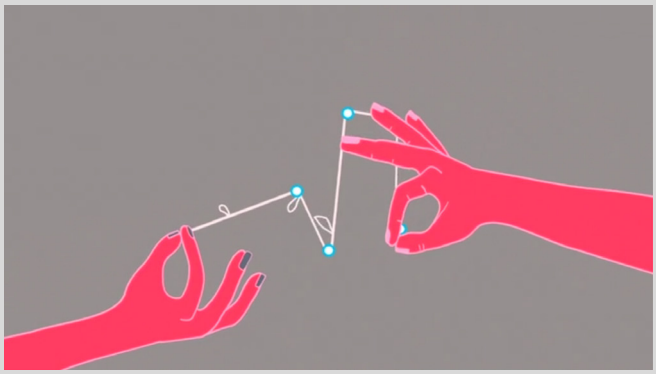
Every day Phillip sits down at his kitchen table for an hour and reads Gilles Deleuze. Deleuze creates concepts that vibrate in Phillip's head. Deleuze seems to be trying to formulate something that is almost impossible to formulate. Something that even Deleuze himself is hardly able to think. Something that he cannot define in simple terms. Phillip assumes that this is because the concepts are so glowingly new even for Deleuze. They might be easier to describe later on, but as long as Deleuze is comprehending them in the process of writing them down, he needs to put great effort into this writing. This is precisely why Deleuze is strict. Phillip feels Deleuze's boundless will to accuracy. Deleuze builds sentences full of negations: *It is not like this, and it is also not like that, and there is no way that it is like that*. Deleuze seems to be able to tell most precisely what his concepts mean by saying what they do not mean.

Phillip—at his kitchen table—feels stupid, for he is always thinking in the direction forbidden by Deleuze. Again and again, Deleuze reprimands him. After reading and thinking for weeks and being upbraided for his thoughts by Deleuze, after weeks of not being allowed to think anymore what he had thought at first, Phillip still does not know exactly what to think. But as he reads and re-reads and tries not to think what he thought the first time, a strong inkling starts to emerge. The concepts vibrate even more intensely.

Years later Phillip realizes that Deleuze's admonishing sentences refer only marginally to Phillip. His reading group explains to him that Deleuze was writing against other books and authors, usually without mentioning their names. Everywhere in Deleuze, texts are written against other texts, texts try to overturn and kill other texts without even mentioning the enemy's name. The insiders know it anyway; the others probably do not need to know. Phillip is always caught in the middle when he reads. He is attacked along with the targeted authors. He is snapped at for positions he is not even fully acquainted with. The vexing thing is that the idea of defending himself never even comes to his mind. On the contrary, Phillip tends to agree with whatever text he is currently reading. He feels justly criticised. Whenever he reads serious philosophy, he finds himself in the crossfire of discourse. The fury of this discourse rages around Phillip. But it is thanks to this severe rage that Phillip knows he is concerning himself with what is really important.

Keira reads Donald Davidson

Video link: Animation accompanying *Keira reads Donald Davidson*



https://vimeo.com/303092682

Keira pursues her reading like a martial art. Nothing feels better than hitting the keys and sensing her own arguments hitting the mark. Keira's philosophical fighting ethos is as strict as any found in a dojo: proud and composed, without self-pity and with the best possible technique requiring daily practice.

At the moment the fight is between her and Donald Davidson. She reads his essay *What Metaphors mean*. From the very first lines she does not like Davidson. There is something in his tone. Keira immediately wants him to be wrong. He is already tired when he thinks of the stupid objections that will inevitably arise. He believes that anyone smart enough will agree with his argument as a matter of course. Keira can hear it clearly. She admonishes herself to ignore his arrogance for the time being. She stares at the photocopied pages in front of her and reads closely.

Davidson discusses one theorist of metaphor after the other. He is most comfortable when he is proving others wrong. He tries to destroy their arguments with a few sentences. In this haste, obvious inaccuracies occur. But this does not necessarily mean that he is wrong on the whole.

While criticising others, Davidson is clear. But when he explains his own position, he remains vague. He goes on and on about metaphors carrying only a literal meaning. Yet he understands the metaphor as a discrete phenomenon. This does not make sense to Keira. It confuses her. She squints her eyes in order to read more accurately. To see what he means. By the end of the essay, Keira is still not exactly sure what his main argument is. The secondary literature does not help. Neither does it explain the precise construction of Davidson's argument, nor do the listed objections to it convince her.

Davidson is like so many theorists: he only thinks from his own little perspective and does not even notice himself doing so. Keira is undecided. Here and there he has a point: other authors' perpetual raving over the endless possibilities of metaphor is annoying. Keira reads the essay again and

tentatively agrees in order to see whether everything suddenly makes sense. She does not forget her reservations, she just pushes them a little farther away.

Keira wants to understand Davidson. She is willing to concede his argument if necessary. Yet she will not submit to Davidson by any means. It is important not to submit. Even if Davidson is smarter. Especially if Davidson is smarter. Nothing is decided yet.

What would it take for Keira to win? Victory would be hers if she could understand Davidson's text completely while at the same time being smarter than him in one aspect. If she could see Davidson's line of argument clearly, and at the same time could say why one particular point of it does not work. Then she would have won.

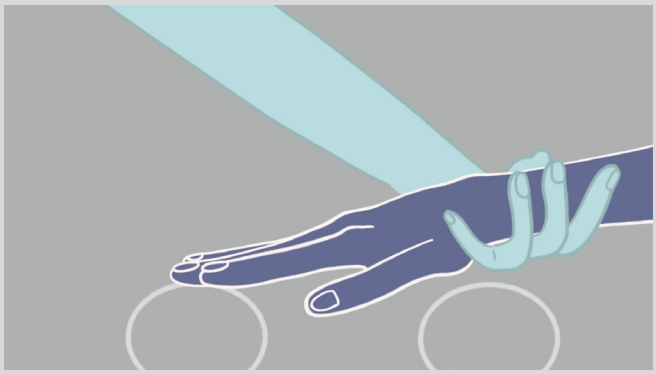
But it is not that easy. Of course she can find a few weak points. Especially his examples offer many possibilities for critique. But these points are not central to his argument. Pointing to them in order to reject the whole would be dishonest. Keira would only have won if she could find a mistake that is so central to the essay that it calls the whole thing into question.

Two days later, Keira reads the second half of the essay again. She is almost certain that Davidson is wrong, just not entirely. He is not quite as arrogant as she first thought. He is trying to be fair. Finally, she finds his core hypothesis: Davidson wants literality to reside on a different level of meaning than metaphor. He wants Keira to think of metaphor as a figure of speech such as a lie or a joke: metaphors are thus far less fundamental than literality. Keira thinks that the whole essay would be much more intelligible if Davidson would explain this right at the beginning. While she sits at her desk and wonders whether she can refute this thesis, she suddenly finds the right handle for pulling the whole essay to the ground. She can catch him where he is just as naive as those he criticizes: on the question of what literality actually is. He says nothing about it. He believes in the self-evident nature of the concept. Keira would only need one page to pull this rug out from under his feet. After that, it would be child's play to prove that his claims are untenable. It's a delicious moment. During the next hour, many more delicious moments occur, as Keira becomes more and more sure that her argument hits the mark. She is able to unhinge Davidson's whole essay. Now she has made contact; she feels Davidson's strength and she feels her opposing force wrestle him to the ground. She has found the right angle and can argue precisely. Now she can hit hard. It is a pity that Davidson is already dead and cannot answer. But he would probably not even read the objections of an unimportant female continental doctoral student anyway. But if he did, though, he would have to take them damn serious. Like the professors—old, conservative sods as well as young progressive ones—who only take her seriously once she has made some sharp remarks. It is only then that even female professors raise their eyebrows and remember Keira's name.

That evening, her triumph has already gone stale. It is actually annoying that she found something so fundamental. It means that Davidson is not an equal opponent. His mistake is so basic that it is not even worth writing a chapter on him. Davidson has become so unimportant that he will merely end up in a footnote in her dissertation. This is a great pity since she found such an irresistible handle.

Verena reads Hannah Arendt

Video link: Animation accompanying *Verena reads Hannah Arendt*



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Verena is reading in the park. She has a new haircut. Now she looks like a hands-on kind of person and at the same time very young. She is sitting the way she sat as a girl, with the book on her knees. It is the beginning of cardigan season: the sun is shining through the trees, still providing some warmth, but the breeze is chilly. Verena looks at her book.

Hannah Arendt leads the way and takes Verena by the hand. Her sentences trot along cheerfully, break briefly into a gallop, and return to a trot. She is focused on the idea she is developing, but she always has an eye on her readers and whether they are following her line of thought. Hannah Arendt has thought about everything for a long time. She takes Verena by the hand as if Verena were twelve and Hannah Arendt her beloved but strict godmother. Verena follows her easily and without defiance. Hannah Arendt helps Verena perceive something new: while her sentences guide Verena through one piece of the world, Hannah Arendt at the same time brings order into the monstrosity of this piece, thereby mitigating it. So that the world does not strike Verena in all its vehemence and Verena faces something more rational than the world as such, something that can be made sense of. And, moreover, something that allows for more hope.

There are two things that Hannah Arendt always keeps in mind: The Third Reich and the Greeks. The experience of the Third Reich lies beneath everything, lies above everything. The Greeks can be relied on. Hannah Arendt protects herself by looking to them. To her the Greeks stand for reason and farsightedness. Hannah Arendt uses them to understand the world. Looking to the Greeks, the world can return to reason. But it is not just these two things that keep reminding Verena of her childhood in the 80s in West Germany. Verena reads Hannah Arendt and sees the dark rooms stuffed with books her parents dragged her to. While the children played in the sun, the adults sat in heavy reading chairs. They smoked cigarettes, drank sherry, and talked endlessly. If you were quiet and inconspicuous, you could stay and listen. In Verena's memory, a beam of sunlight always came through a window and made the dust dance. Her parents were shaped by

the 60s. They had grown up believing in the Greeks and in Picasso, Klee, Brahms, and Glenn Gould. Remnants of this were still in them in the 80s. The third Reich was a point of reference, which they—like Arendt—never lost sight of. Verena remembers the atmosphere of these discussions: there was a shared reason, an encompassing concern, and a hope, all of which she now finds in Hannah Arendt. Only the high spirits conveyed by some of Arendt's ideas is absent from the murmurs of her childhood. The more she reads, the more Verena tunes into the sound of her childhood. She tries to figure out what exactly defined that sound.

Verena sits in the meadow and wants something back. But she does not know whether she is longing for what was refined and truly democratic within West Germany. Or whether she is longing for her young parents, whose friendly reason seemed to establish the possibility of a whole friendly, sensible world. Or if she is simply longing for herself at age twelve, when she was waiting for the right people to come, take her by the hand, and lead her into a world full of art and exciting ideas. Verena puts the book down and stretches out in the grass.

Inger reads and reads

Once in her early twenties, Inger was stranded at an airport and read Camille Paglia all night. Camille Paglia made Inger incredibly angry. The anger was terrific. Inger sat on the floor among all her things and was shocked by what she was reading. A moment later she was thrilled because Paglia was showing her a completely new view of the world. Ideas that had made Inger incredibly angry just half an hour ago suddenly began to make sense. Sitting there among all the waiting passengers, Inger could not stop reading.

During the next year she read Friedrich Nietzsche, then Judith Butler, then Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. The texts screamed at Inger. They stood in front of her, they stood in her way and hit her in the face. The ideas were brand new and made her buzz with excitement. Everything was possible. Everything could be different. The world could be full of surprising meaning. Philosophical theories shifted her perspective and thereby shifted everything. Inger could become completely different in this other world. Inger was reading in order to become a new, courageous person in a world full of new possibilities. Paglia, Nietzsche, Butler, and Hegel had already changed her world and Inger felt that she had just begun.

While Inger continued to read, while she was getting her degree, and the texts shook her up and tossed her around, while she was reading herself into a future in which she would be another person, something happened. She learned the language, she identified the foundations, she recognized the figures of thought. She attained a stable position. Fifteen years after she sat with Paglia at the airport, Inger had a doctoral thesis, a post-doc project, and a system. Now each new text immediately reminds her of Leibniz or Hegel or Žižek. Philosophy for her is still about earth-shattering perspectives. But Inger sees all of these perspectives at the same time. During these fifteen years—without being aware of it—she left the place where all the perspectives lay before

her. Now she lives one floor up. She looks down at all the perspectives. She sees them as positions on a map. She puts them into perspective. All the great theories look somewhat similar from above. Inger still has strong opinions, but she sees herself as one position in the field. She looks down onto her own position from above. Although Inger always hated it when people talked of philosophy as a form of literature, she herself has become a literary scholar of philosophy.

Notes

[1] "Tom reads Hegel", "Phillip reads Deleuze", and "Inger reads and reads" were first published in German as part of Veronika Reichl (2018), "*Das Gefühl zu Denken: Machterfahrungen beim Lesen von Theorie*," in *Macht:Denken: Substantialistische und relationalistische Theorien – eine Kontroverse*, edited by Katrin Felgenhauer and Falk Bornmüller, 153–157. Bielefeld: Transcript.

Biography

Veronika Reichl lives as a writer, lecturer and artist in Berlin. She received her PhD in the field of *Art, Design and Media* from the University of Portsmouth. Her book *Sprachkino* [*Language-Cinema*] describes in the interface between abstract, philosophical language and pictorial media. Veronika Reichl did a Diploma in Graphic Design and a Master of Arts in Media Art at Merz Akademie, Stuttgart.

PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHY

TALKING BACK: WHAT DANCE MIGHT MAKE OF BADIOU'S PHILOSOPHICAL PROJECT[1]

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The first version of this paper was presented at *Reason Plus Enjoyment* (UNSW, Sydney, 11–14 July 2015) and I have returned to it in light of current activity which constitutes the most significant 'philosophical turn' in Dance Studies since the work around Michel Foucault and the subjected body of the (ballet) dancer in the late 1980s to the early 2000s.[2] Monographs on the state of the art released in the last decade make substantial use of continental philosophy—particularly the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari—including books by Jenn Joy (2014), Petra Sabisch (2011), André Lepecki (2006, 2016), Bojana Cvejić (2015a), Ramsay Burt (2017), Derek McCormack (2013), and Frédéric Pouillaude (2017). This body of work in many ways constitutes a Deleuzian turn in Dance Studies. Such critical activity has been primarily connected with contemporary dance that has variously been described as 'conceptual' or 'non-dance' and which has dominated discourse in the field for the past fifteen years.

Dance as a discipline can be associated with a kind of *unassertiveness* that can be very productive. But perhaps we could be a little more pro-active in 'naming and claiming' for what is still a very new field of practice and theory.[3] My current research seeks to locate, articulate and assert dance knowledge as it circulates, often unnoticed, within the broader contemporary arts and its discourses.[4] My interest is in how the art form is perceived, how this generates a desire for dance in other disciplinary contexts, what preconceptions about the form such desires are based on, and how dance knowledges are being newly articulated in intermedial practices and discourses. When dance is drawn into the world of philosophy, for example, what is generated from this interdisciplinary encounter that is sourced in, and may contribute back to, the field of dance and

PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHY VOL 4, NO 2 (2019):354–373
DOI: https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2019.42240
ISSN 2057-7176

dance studies? Does philosophy—and its branch dealing with the arts, *aesthetics*—offer texts that could be applied to the task of disciplinary determination? Should we be looking there at all or turning, rather, to the methods of self-identification the art form chooses?

The popularity of Deleuze and Guattari's 'practical philosophy' within dance studies has seen it used in many ways. The verb 'use' in this context refers to the deployment of something in the service of something else, with little change to or benefit for the used phenomena. For instance, their philosophy has been the source of concepts applied to the analysis of specific choreographies or fields of choreographic practice, but also as a philosophical model per se that shares many of the qualities of dance and choreography.[5] Deleuze's disciplinary work in literature, film, and painting provides seductive critical concepts for the analysis of works of art where experiment, affect, sensation and movement all play crucial roles. Departing from the field of Deleuzian dance studies through attention to Badiou's work provides an interesting counterpoint. Examining a position in which the disciplinary distinction between philosophy and dance is asserted, albeit through the 'use' of dance by philosophy, provides a critical space to consider current practices and future trajectories.

I have come directly to Badiou through his essay on dance, 'Dance as a Metaphor for Thought' (1993), from his *Handbook of Inaesthetics* (2005), and make no claims to be an authority on his broader philosophical project. This essay has attracted some attention from Dance Studies as modern philosophers rarely consider dance within aesthetic projects (with the recent exceptions of Giorgio Agamben [2000, 2013], Jean-Luc Nancy [1993, 2005], Alva Noë [2015], Jacques Rancière [2004] and Didi-Huberman [2006]).[6] This paper approaches Badiou's essay on its own terms, considering its stated approach and central claims. This is in order to see his position clearly and avoid the dismissive tone of some responses from the field that have clouded accounts of Badiou's project through their desire for other approaches to philosophy's engagement with dance. 'Dance as a Metaphor for Thought' is antithetical to my own current, advocatory research, thus offering an adversary of sorts. If it is the case that dance is, in Badiou's words, 'instrumental' for the art-philosophy schema that he is formulating, and dance is being 'incorporated' into the strategies of a philosophy of art, what's in it for dance (Badiou 2005, 2, and Badiou 2014, n.p.)? Can Badiou's project be repurposed for our own disciplinary concerns? For instance, if his conception of dance (drawn from past philosophical accounts and for his own purposes) is seen as lacking from a disciplinary perspective, then what is the idea of dance that positions his as 'wrong'? And if it is the whole notion of a relatively stable, generalized model of dance that is so problematic, from which position can we begin to critique it?

In the following I will briefly situate Badiou's essay in relation to the work of other theorists and philosophers who have mobilized dance for their various projects. I will then outline the characteristics of the model of thought Badiou draws from Friedrich Nietzsche and Stéphane Mallarmé's work on dance, summarizing these as lightness, autonomy, restraint and silence.[7] Throughout, I bring a voice for the discipline of dance into dialogue with the philosopher to see what this produces. I ask whether anything could be put into play between the kind of thinking that Badiou finds modeled in philosophy's image of dance, and the creative practice of dance as it

currently stands. This is a move beyond Badiou. To do this, I turn to the field of contemporary dance both as it has been defined generally by theorists such as Laurence Louppe, and specifically in the work of my research peers, choreographers and scholars Lizzie Thomson and Matthew Day. Finally, I ask the following question: if Badiou does not provide a philosophical response to dance in its current configuration, what might such a project look like?

1. Dance-Philosophy

When it comes to philosophy's general project, Alain Badiou states that 'philosophy depends on art and not the reverse,' so it follows that encounters between the two occur in the field of aesthetics where art becomes inscribed in philosophical strategies (Badiou 2014, n.p.). For this reason, artists are right to be suspicious of philosophy; Badiou says that works of art are soldiers on philosophy's battleground, deployed in the tussle between philosophical projects, so that a philosopher's chosen artists are better off dead (Ibid.).[8] It is true that dancers and choreographers seem to have had little need for philosophy proper until the very recent 'conceptual' turn in dance.[9] Badiou might say that this is because some art forms make better 'objects' for a philosophical project; literature for example is more easily incorporated into the project of philosophy as both fields share the medium of the written word (Ibid.). This would corroborate Susanne Langer's observation that the fact that philosophy has avoided dance perhaps signals that the art form has a philosophical significance all its own.[10] In line with this thinking, for Badiou, when dance enters the field of philosophy and prompts the philosopher to 'tell me who I am,' the dance, in effect, is showing the philosopher how it escapes his grasp, '"barring" him from mastery' of the work of art (Badiou [1994] 2005, 1). Badiou characterizes the attitude of art as one of 'disappointment about everything that the philosopher may have to say about it' (2). Happily, Badiou is not concerned about such failure:

> Inaesthetics is always to say that the relation to art is not 'aesthetic' in the sense of a peaceful description of what artistic activity is. The strength or subjective potency of artistic truth is used by the philosopher in his or her strategic vision to propose arguments concerning art which give new force to the philosophical strategy. It is an incorporation of art in the philosophical fight. (Badiou 2014, n.p.)

This 'use' of art by philosophy is not undertaken in a spirit of disrespect, but rather a deep admiration that sees the philosopher bar *himself* from assuming that he could speak for the processes and products of art, remaining instead within the 'intraphilosophical' (Badiou 2005, 0). Badiou admits to another relationship with art outside his role as philosopher; 'when the philosophical superego is sleeping in myself I can clandestinely go to the side of the work of art' (Badiou 2014). We know that Badiou engages with art in other ways—particularly through his work with theatre.[11] For the current purpose we need to understand Badiou's position in relation to the history of aesthetic philosophy, which will illuminate his adoption of the term 'inaesthetics.'

Badiou's attention to dance joins a list of philosophers who have engaged the form as an unwitting partner, providing fuel for their own disciplinary thinking.[12] Poet-theorist Paul Valéry's writings on

dance—that owe much to Mallarmé—draw on examples as diverse as flamenco artist La Argentina, modern dance pioneer Loïe Fuller and the Romantic ballerinas. For Mallarmé and Valéry, dance provides an alternative model of expression external to language processes and structures of knowledge, an event of corporeal expressivity that their poetic words strive to match in a productive tension with failure (Brannigan 2011, 40–42). For Deleuze, the dance developing alongside Henri Bergson's philosophy in the late-19th and early-20th centuries participated in an influential movement revolution that was 'abandoning figures and poses to release values which were not posed, not measured, which related movements to any-instant-whatever' (Deleuze 1986, 6). Through this interdisciplinary shift in the concept of movement, Deleuze connects early modern dance to the emerging art of the cinema as the two art forms primarily occupied with space and time. And for Agamben, early Modern dance was an exemplar of gesture as a 'means without end'; corporeal actions that subvert the economy of production in which gestures work toward a predetermined outcome (Agamben 2000, 58).[13] For Agamben, contemporaneous theatre dance was part of a general 'gestural crisis' that marked modernity's shift away from effective gestures that had been characterized as functional and productive, being 'a means to an end' (56–59). In both Deleuze and Agamben, the connection between dance forms and concurrent developments in fields such as philosophy, mechanical reproduction, science or politics, is retrospectively written back into history through their work, with little evidence given of practical exchange in specific milieus.[14] So, while *in-step* or *in-advance* of developments in other fields, according to philosophy, dance appears *not* to have been *in-dialogue* with the same perhaps being understood, traditionally, as voiceless.

In 'Dance as a Metaphor for Thought,' Badiou is distinguishing his approach from those philosophers occupying the field of 'aesthetic speculation' (0). Here he is referring to philosophers whom he believes apply a concept of truth as either 'immanent' *or* 'singular' to their dealings with art, and those dealings range in attitude 'between idolatry and censure' (2, 9).[15] In the introduction to *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, 'Art and Philosophy,' Badiou outlines three schemata offered by philosophy in its dealings with art based on his understanding of the relationship between truth and art in each model: 1. 'didactic,' in which an external truth determines and regulates art, which art imitates (linking art, education and philosophy), producing a 'singular' relation to truth (Plato, Brecht); 2. 'romantic,' in which art alone is truth, so an 'immanent' relation to truth (Heidegger); and 3. 'classical,' in which art does not aspire to the truth of knowledge but is of a different order—verisimilitude operating in the domain of the imaginary (Aristotle, Descartes, Spinoza) (2–4). He argues that such models of aesthetic philosophy were not successfully challenged in the 20th century, not even by the historic avant-garde.[16] He then coins the term *inaesthetics* to describe 'an absolutely novel philosophical proposition' that recognizes that 'art *itself* is a truth procedure,' 'a singular regime of thought' (10, 0). Art produces a truth that is at once immanent ('art is rigorously coextensive with the truths that it generates') *and* singular ('these truths are given nowhere else than in art') (9). For these reasons, art exists beyond the scope of philosophy and Badiou 'makes no claim to turn art into an object of philosophy' (0).

Instead, Badiou takes up dance as a metaphor or 'instrument' (in his words) to describe a model of thought as it operates in philosophy. Badiou is thus using dance as a phenomenon to illustrate his

central subject which is philosophical thought; thinking and dancing are set out as sharing significant characteristics. In this way, dance is the instrument of the metaphor, and something about philosophical thought is apparently revealed through this process. Badiou is turning the 'subjective potency' of the art form—not examples of the art as objects—toward the task of accounting for a particular type of thought (Badiou 2014). His subject is *not* the 'singular regime of thought,' that is art and which is 'irreducible to other truths' (0, 9). And Badiou's essay does *not* seek to define or describe the artistic activity of dance. He refers to his project as 'intraphilosophical' (0); that is, belonging strictly to the internal and historical concerns of the discipline of philosophy, and deals only with dance *as it has been understood previously within that field*.

This distinction has been missed by some of the rather prickly responses to 'Dance As a Metaphor for Thought' coming from Dance Studies. Jonathan Owen Clark describes the essay as 'Badiou's theory of dance,' which misrepresents the project (Clark 2011, 58). Clark focuses on Badiou's statement that dance is 'thought as event, but before it has a name,' and sees this positioning of dance as operating prior to the logic of language as symptomatic of the art form's position as a 'perennial exception, problem, or special case' (52).[17] Catherine Botha's article focuses on the sentence in Badiou's essay where he states, 'dance is not an art, because it is the sign of the possibility of art inscribed in the body' (Botha 2013).[18] Elaborating on Badiou's claim regarding the 'non-art' status of dance, and turning to an alternative reading of Nietzsche to effectively challenge Badiou, Botha reads Badiou's statement from beyond the scope of his project. As Botha states, Badiou is not interested in defining dance, or specific genres of dance, in relation to art or otherwise (227). Using it, as he does, as a metaphor for thought, I believe this statement refers to dance as the sign of the possibility of thought before naming, that is, thought as it is experienced, 'inscribed in the body.' In Frédéric Pouillaude's important book, *Unworking Choreography: The Notion of the Work in Dance*, he gives a solid account of the history of dance as a subject within philosophy, finally observing that Badiou raises dance 'to the transcendental plane in order to say no more about it,' equating this approach to the work of many others (Pouillaude 2017, 10–11). For Bojana Cvejić it is an act of abduction; applying Badiou's 'subtractive ontology of events' to the art form while removing all of the real conditions under which dance occurs (Cvejić 2014, 148; 2015, 14; and 2015b, 8).[19] Pouillaude and Cvejić are right—Badiou is not interested in dance per se in this essay but in his own philosophical propositions, but he never indicates otherwise. Badiou is clear in his writing: the relationship between art and philosophy is 'instrumental [...] not to say the truth of the art but to inscribe the force of art in the philosophical strategy' (Badiou 2014). That is, he is using a particular notion of dance as a metaphor to uncover something about the nature of philosophical thought within his intra-philosophical project, not making claims regarding its nature as a creative discipline.

This instrumental use of art, where the art form is incorporated into the strategies of philosophy, can be contrasted to the approach in Jean-François Lyotard's writings on art. In past work I have turned to Lyotard's account of the philosopher's attempt to respond to the work of art (in this case painting) in the face of its assault upon thought in his 1993 essay, 'Gesture and Commentary.'[20] In this essay, Lyotard finds himself disarmed of his philosophical tools in the face of the work of art's affect. Here, the work of art 'happens' to thought in the tradition of Immanuel Kant's sublime: the

faculties of thought that scaffold philosophy under the rule of understanding cannot find the measures and limits that it requires in order to be effective (Kant 2000). This attitude in Lyotard's work has been described by Jon Roffe as a 'subservience' to art (Roffe 2016, n.p.). Lyotard describes how philosophy fails the artist; 'the philosopher, like a desperate lover, attempts to give to the work something he does not possess, namely, the words to carry on this gesture' (Lyotard 1993, 38). This is echoed in Badiou's respectful distancing from such ambitions in his own philosophy and the consequent distancing from the art form of dance in its contemporary configuration.

Deleuze has said, 'the only people who are capable of thinking their media are artists' (Deleuze 1987). But instead of subservience in Deleuze, art and philosophy are equals and so, rivals. So, as Roffe explains, Deleuze understands Proust's novel as an *alternative* to philosophy—its ambitions are the same: to attend to thinking. But art as an encounter is a violence to thought operating via sensation; this is very different to the processes of philosophy that have qualities of calmness and 'friendliness' (Roffe 2016, n.p.). What Deleuze and Lyotard have in common is placing specific creative acts and outcomes at the center of their labour of thought, remaining self-reflexive about the limitations of the latter, and this is where my personal affinities lie. They also both use the terminology of movement and force to explain the thinking involved with art, and this of course suggests there are affinities between the choreographic arts and the philosophical thinking involved in aesthetics.

The act of thought that Badiou is reaching towards and describing also shares the corporeal characteristics traditionally associated with dance such as *mobility*, *restraint* and *weightlessness*. However, he is not interested in marrying his model of thought to specific creative objects or forms. In fact, he may never have seen a dancer if we take his writing on face value. 'The contemporary configurations of art' (Badiou 2005, 14)—such as the crisis that was imminent for dance at the time of his writing in 1993 and would lead to its exhaustion or saturation—are external to his concerns.[21] He is undertaking an exercise that would find in dancing a metaphor for his own disciplinary labour, that is, the kind of 'thinking' required by philosophy.

To take up the side of Dance Studies, the question remains: What's in it for dance? According to dance and performance scholars, Badiou is neglecting the contemporary configuration of the art form and, as Cvejić points out, removing all of the real conditions under which dance occurs. So what is that contemporary configuration and what are those real conditions? Is there a 'dance' to set against Badiou's 'philosophy'? In order to argue with Badiou we are forced to implement a similar generalization of the field, replacing the philosophically derived notion of dance that he takes from Mallarmé et al. with a generic model of contemporary dance gleaned from the broad field of Dance Studies. To declare a set of principles or fundamentals for dance has become awkward in the post-modern period, but not so for painting. In *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, Deleuze states the 'three fundamental elements of painting' as being *figure*, *contour*, and *surface* (Deleuze 2003, 27). He also declares *space* and *time* to be the fundamentals shared by all the arts (Deleuze 1987).[22] Following Deleuze's lead, I will offer a set of terms in the context of Badiou's essay where disciplinary assets are being set out and deployed for various projects.

To do this, firstly we must acknowledge the necessary translation from body knowledges to language forms. Choreographer Mette Ingvartsen, who developed platforms for sharing choreographic tools and methods, puts it simply: 'verbal articulation and discursive practice is not the most evident mode of expression in relation to dance as an art form that is primarily physical, corporal, and non-verbal' (Ingvartsen 2009, 3).[23] So we proceed with an acceptance of the limitations of the medium through which we work.[24] Secondly, the 'white,' Western bias within the field of Dance Studies is noted; the narrow range of dance practices considered within institutionalised theatre dance genealogies echo patterns across the other contemporary arts. As Janez Janša and colleagues note, 'dance is an art form *par excellence* of the First World, the democratic and free world' (Janša et al. 2013, 18).[25] Thirdly, the conservatism that haunts any project interested in disciplinary formations provides a daunting challenge; to account for the limit-features of an art form that constitute its social condition and identity, while acknowledging the radical testing of those limits within experimental practice. A focus on elements that have traditionally constituted the grammatical parameters of dance must necessarily take into account the role of the same as points for resistance, subversion, critique, and dismissal.

French dance theorist Laurence Louppe's landmark book, *Poetics of Contemporary Dance*, returns to a model of dance that is committed to its corporeal foundations, offering key elements (via Laban and other pioneers of dance analysis) that are particular to the operations of the body; namely *breath*, *weight*, *tone*, *movement (qualities)*, *force/energy*, and *rhythm*.[26] As Louppe points out, there can be no question of constructing a comprehensive account of such materials; Laban's four factors—and any account of fundamentals—are 'only a step in the search for "choreographic materials" that are more global and also more disseminated so as to escape fixed frames of adjudication.'[27] So we also proceed with an understanding that this is a relational and contingent exercise. These dance fundamentals could be framed within broader foundational principles gleaned from several sources; *the mind-body*, *singularity/collectivity*, *presence/participation*, *process.*[28]

Badiou is clear that his is 'a certain vision of dance' (2005, 59). Of its many styles or genres, the dancing Badiou has in mind is specific, and it reveals how the preceding work of Nietzsche and Mallarmé informs his approach. It is thus apparent that while an ahistorical model of dance is evoked in Badiou's philosophy, history cannot be so easily extracted from any mobilization of a concept of 'dance.' He proceeds at first by negation: 'What, in Nietzsche's eyes, is the opposite of dance?' (59). It is the dance of a dancer 'imposed upon' by an 'external constraint,' that is, subjected to the choreography of someone else; what he refers to in shorthand as, humorously, 'obedience and long legs' (Ibid.). He states that dance is also 'miles away from any doctrine of dance as a primitive ecstasy or as the forgetful pulsation of the body' (60). So what type of dancing is it in terms of these real-world exclusions? Does it matter whether it really exists for Badiou's purposes? Possibly not, but armed with *our* definition of Dance, one way to enter into a dialogue with Badiou's essay is to ask: If dance could talk back, what would it have to say in response?[29] Firstly, it's important to note that Badiou would not be particularly interested—he is not writing for dance but for philosophy (Badiou 2014). Secondly, we can't assume that dance would care to respond given its apparent disappointment with philosophy's efforts (according to Badiou and Lyotard). But

assuming that Dance has a voice, is up for it, and chooses to respond, what would the dance of the early-21st century make of his evocation of the art form? Trying to answer this question facilitates a reinstitution of current dance knowledges through a fictional dialogue with Badiou and reveals something of the discipline to those of us interested in dance and dancing.

2. Dance as a Metaphor for Philosophical Thought

i. LIGHTNESS

The most immediate and repeated impression in Badiou's evocation of dance is *lightness* through a series of analogies including flight, birds, breath, a fountain, the air (57). 'Dance is opposed to the spirit of gravity [...] devoted to its zenith'; 'the body "on points," the body that pricks the floor just as one would puncture a cloud' (59). However, he goes on; 'to say that it is the absence of weight does not get us very far.' Rather, the emphasis is on 'an *unconstrained* body, or as a body not constrained by itself [...] in a state of disobedience vis-à-vis its own impulses' (60).

For Badiou's purpose, dance as weightlessnesss approaches the condition of thought as lightness and is associated with the qualities of innocence and affirmation (57–58).[30] At first glance, there is an echo here of the tendency to associate lightness and goodness with the mind, in opposition to the 'baser' characteristics of the body. So this begins to look like a return to the mind-body binary, with dancing as an image of the body released from its terrestrial, material reality and 'aspiring' to the condition of thought. The problem is clear; the dancing body becomes an image reiterating the mind-body division that dance, in both practice and theory, has so successfully and tenaciously overcome.

But there is something else going on in this passage—lightness and release from the habitual, impulsive or constrained—an escape into another modality; 'It is a new beginning [...freed] from all social mimicry, from all gravity and conformity,' but also from 'vulgar' untamed impulses (57–58, 60). The idea that dance is to the everyday body as philosophical thought is to everyday thought is perhaps behind this characteristic of lightness for dance (as a metaphor for thought).

Dance says:

The vertical orientation of dance was opposed in the early years of modern dance across the first decades of the twentieth century, and would never recover the weightlessness that characterized the ballerinas of Nietzsche's era. As in music, *tonality* (here in terms of muscles) would be challenged and give way to atonality which manifested as 'release' in dance. A new interest in weight, falling, floor-work and groundedness (even stasis) would replace elevation, defiance of gravity and muscular tension.

However, the association of this 'series' with a force that is *unconstrained* and *affirmative* is more resonant with contemporary practice: the validity of any-movement-whatever, a resistance to habitual movement, the free plundering of the body as an archive or repository of movements sourced elsewhere, and the important role of *choice* as a space of play, discovery and innovation.

As Valéry defined dance very early on in its post-classical life, it consists of 'an action that *derives* from ordinary, useful action, but *breaks away* from it, and finally *opposes* it [… They are] acts [which] have no outward aim' (Valéry 1964, 205).

ii. AUTONOMY

The dancing that Badiou evokes is characterised by *originality*, *singularity* and *autonomy*, qualities that are historically associated with the solo dancer/choreographer, yet he maintains the *anonymity* Mallarmé assigns to the dancer. As Badiou paraphrases, 'the dancing body is never *someone* […] It *depicts* [*figure*] nothing' (64).[31] Here is Badiou's 'subtractive' method; 'Every genuine instance of thinking is subtracted from the knowledge in which it is constituted.' So, 'the spectacle of dance is the body subtracted from every knowledge of a body' (66). The dance does not preexist—or outlast—its own event, just as the type of thought under discussion can neither preempt nor outlast its naming.[32] In a phrase echoed in Agamben's writing around the same time, Badiou writes, 'the dancing gesture must always be something like the invention of its own beginning' (57–58).[33] The dance does not even belong to the dancer but to its own coming-into-being; as 'a wheel that turns itself. […] A circle that draws itself' (59).[34]

> Dance is like a circle in space, but a circle that is its own principle, a circle that is not drawn from the outside, but rather draws itself. Dance is the prime mover: Every gesture and every line of dance must present itself not as a consequence, but as the very source of mobility. (58)

So the originary, autonomous status of dance is inseparable from an *auto-motility*. The circle keeps retracing that returning, self-enclosed, destination-less pathway. Badiou writes of 'the theme of mobility that is firmly fastened to itself, a mobility that is not inscribed within an external determination, but instead moves without detaching itself from its own center' (59).

Here is the movement of original thought, the 'new' thinking mobilized by a force or energy that we find also in Kant/Nietzsche/Deleuze. Badiou says, 'in actual fact, what justifies the identification of dance as the metaphor for thought is Nietzsche's conviction that thought is an *intensification* […] not effectuated anywhere else than where it is given […] it is the movement of its own intensity' (58). Badiou refers to 'the Nietzschean idea of thought as active becoming, as active power' (59)[35] and finally links this to his own event-theory: 'Dance would provide the metaphor for the fact that every genuine thought depends on an event' (61). We will return to Badiou's event-theory shortly.

Dance says:

For Badiou, it appears that the originary status of the dance as it comes into being in space-time is linked to the dancer as, at once, the medium/author and the object/outcome; that is, an *autonomous event* (57–58). Cvejić describes this as the 'coincidence of the source, instrument and site' in the figure of the dancer, and this fact is central to its specific status amongst the arts (Cvejić 2015, 9). Appearing, historically speaking, to indeed be autonomous yet generative of discourse that it does not need but which thrives on approaching the art form, dance has apparently floated free of the big ideas shaping the broader arts. This state-of-affairs lead Yvonne Rainer to famously

claim in the early sixties that dance has 'been the most isolated and inbred of the arts.'[36] This is an historicization of the art form that Dance Studies has worked hard to revise, claiming ground for dance as generative of, rather than merely responsive to, major cultural and aesthetic developments.

The turn to philosophy in recent dance practices as a point of reference, and even dramaturgical content, has been associated with an explicit introduction of dance into the heart of the contemporary world of ideas and related art practices. Cvejić refers to this as an 'inverse movement,' *as dance begins to use theory* in European 'conceptual' dance (8). Along with this development—the most radical in dance since the mid-20th century—we have seen a destabilisation of accepted notions of authorship, subjectivity, materiality and independence associated with choreography and dancing, terms that need to be dramatically renovated in light of such work.

As noted, in Badiou's formulation the autonomy of dance—along with its lightness—is inseparable from its motility. Movement, as a foundational element of dance, has been critiqued by some dance theorists (André Lepecki in particular) as 'modernity's onto-political mobilization of movement' (Lepecki and Allsopp 2008, 1). This theoretical move in dance studies reflects a wave of largely static pieces by new generations of choreographers. It could be argued that the turn to stasis since Cunningham's deployment of it in the 1950s and 1960s is actually an expansion of the field of movement, just as John Cage's use of silence was an expansion of the field of music. So the collocation of dance with movement might be accepted in this context. The image of dance as generative of movement which can travel out from its center, yet which retains its relation to its source, places dance at the centre of a network of forces, exchanges and transmissions; at the provenance of a choreography that invents its own context.

iii. RESTRAINT

Freedom, or a lack of constraint, is countered with an emphasis on 'the potent legibility of restraint' in Badiou's schema of dance (59–60).[37] He writes, 'dance offers a metaphor for a light and subtle thought precisely because it shows the restraint immanent to movement' (60). In another Agamben-like move, Badiou links this restraint to choice-making and the medial or inconclusive quality of the gestures of dance; he says 'dance is composed of gestures that, haunted by their own restraint, remain in some sense undecided' (61).[38] So for Badiou we have both restraint and rigour in dance as a metaphor for thought—which differentiates this model of thought from the everyday—combined with an inconclusiveness; a regime of thought involving a powerful combination of discipline and experiment.

Dance says:

The characteristic of dance as an art of restriction and restraint is in step with current models that understand choreography as a setting of limits upon the always already expressive body.[39] This is the 'craft' in the art and contributes to the expansion of the discipline's body-of-knowledge through a testing at these limits. At the same time, the problems, tasks or scores that facilitate this restraint are often designed to exclude pre-determined outcomes and resist closure into exact reiterations.

Experimentation within rigorous structures tests the limits of the form from within, rather than without. The case for contemporary dance as an art of experimental composition that deals explicitly with and through a series of formal restraints has been most clearly made by Jonathan Burrows in *A Choreographer's Handbook,* where the testing of disciplinary parameters regarding such things as repetition, expectation and risk have been convincingly laid out (Burrows 2010).

iv. SILENCE

Restraint as an aspect of *the thought that dance describes* is perhaps connected to Badiou's discussion of the dancing body as 'the silent body' (59). This silence is privileged in opposition to what he calls 'the aleatory and vanishing economy of the name.' Dance is now 'the metaphor for the evental dimension of all thought' which precedes all naming (62). Here he is returning to his event-theory which he describes as follows:

> Obviously, the only way of fixing an event is to give it a name [...] The event 'itself' is never anything besides its own disappearance [...] Dance would then point to thought as an event, but *before this thought has received a name*—at the extreme edge of its veritable disappearance [...] Dance would mimic a thought that had remained undecided, something like a native (or unfixed) thought. Yes, in dance, we find the metaphor for the unfixed. (61)

This evocation of dance at the edge of disappearance, resistant to language and suspended in its condition as medial—a means without ends—is consistent with Mallarmé and Valéry's interest in dance as a productive ideal for a poetics; to quote Mallarmé, '[the dancer] is a poem set free of any scribe's apparatus' (Mallarmé 2001,109). But there is also a Cagean dimension to this evocation of silence as a space that is full of potential and contingency; an unfixed quantity that is always in relation to an event, and in fact gives rise to it and provides the ground upon which it occurs (Cage 2011, 7–8).

And this event has a spatial dimension—dance offers an image of the space of this unfixed thought-event; 'Dance [...] integrates space into its essence. It is the only figure of thought to do this, so that we could argue that dance symbolizes the very spacing of thought' (63).[40] Coming before the naming or specific spatio-temporal dimensions of the event proper, dance 'must deploy itself as the survey of the site' (63). Here is Loïe Fuller in Mallarme's account: 'the enchantress creates the atmosphere, draws it to her and returns to it' (McCarren 1995, 757).[41] So the mode of thought that Badiou equates with dancing is 'undecided' or 'unfixed,' and prior to naming or 'inscription' (61); the event of thought in and of itself, as a process that institutes its own context.

Dance says:

Dance Studies has almost been built entirely upon a critique of the affiliation of the art form with the characteristics of ephemerality, disappearance, and a resistance to translation into language. Discourses surrounding dance have modeled new vocabularies specific to the art form and argued for its materiality, presence, repeatability and transmissibility. However, the mediality of the gestures of dance does appear to offer a genuine resistance and alternative to language-based

systems of knowledge, linearity, narrative and productivity. Badiou's description of a resistant or subversive capacity within dance in the face of a text and image-dominated world is politically significant for an art form that often seems to be on the knife edge between experimental leadership and redundancy amongst the contemporary arts.

So I have been preoccupied with the current conditions of dance as understood in its own discipline, ignoring Badiou's caveat that his project is 'not of dance thought on its own terms, on the basis of its history and technique, but of dance such as it is given welcome and shelter by philosophy' (63). The mode of thinking that Badiou aligns with dance has the characteristics of lightness, originality, autonomy, restraint and a resistance to closure through 'naming.' It occurs 'in the movement of its own intensity,' that is, it is not 'effectuated anywhere else than where it is given' (58). This is thought as an unfixed 'event'; 'an emergence that is indiscernable from its own disappearance' (61). Badiou concludes: 'It is for all these reasons that thought finds its metaphor in dance' (58).

3. Conclusion

What can we learn from the tensions between the model of thought described by Badiou and the specificities of dance as a contemporary creative practice? Jacques Ranciére explains that Badiou's 'denunciation of aesthetic usurpation [by philosophy] works to guarantee "the specificity of art"' (Ranciére 2009b, 64). Perhaps the specificity of art in relation to philosophy, but the evocation of dance in Badiou's writing does not, at first, seem helpful if one were seeking the specific, foundational practices of the form. Badiou harnesses a *body of knowledge* in the service of philosophy. The philosopher needs dance and the forces it creates, unleashes and mobilises to both fuel his own work and to serve as an ideal against which to measure the field's processes (Badiou 2014). So one result of the respectful differentiation between philosophy and art in Badiou's work is an exclusion of the thinking and doing that belongs to the art form itself. This is, at least, what has got Dance Studies riled up.

So what of the processes, knowledges and characteristics specific to dance asserted in my defining terms and throughout the above dialogue? Clark complains that Badiou neglects the notion that dance is a type of '*thinking itself*' (60) which is a well-established foundation of the form since the turn of the 20th century.[42] Badiou does acknowledge that art more broadly is 'a singular regime of thought' (0) with its own corresponding truths that will always remain external to the project of philosophy. A corollary could be that there are disciplinary regimes of thought that correspond with the artistic fields covered in his book (poetry, theatre, dance, cinema).[43] However in *Inaesthetics*, dance is understood strictly via the history of philosophical encounters with the form with no reference to actual dance artists, and Badiou's framing of the art form as a metaphor for the work of philosophy—i.e., thought—is in keeping with that history. In his chapter on dance, Badiou acknowledges a 'body that thinks' or 'thought-body,' which belongs to the arts generally, but finally baulks from 'defining a singular art' of the body that is *dance*, in fact stating that 'dance is not an art' (69–70).[44]

Nevertheless, the kind of dancing that comes closest to Badiou/Nietzsche/Mallarme's description would be the thinking-dancing of the immediate compositions of scored-improvised dance (and Cvejić agrees on this) (Cvejić 2015b, 14).[45] Here I am referring specifically to the dancing of my colleagues Lizzie Thomson (2016) and Matthew Day (2016). It is through the intensities of its own shifts between action and perception, or feeling-thinking-doing, that the dancing body produces its dance *in the moment of its occurrence*, with very little to hold onto after the event. Here is an unconstrained, singular, silent yet rigorous activity that resonates deeply with Badiou's model of thought. So perhaps, as Pouillaude admits, there is *something* of the truth about dance in philosophical approaches such as Badiou's (Pouillaude 2017, xii).

But perhaps I've fallen into a Badiouian trap. Despite his argument for a respectful separation between art and philosophy, Badiou compares their operations and has me interrogating how his model of thought stacks up against one particular iteration of dance—a certain mode of contemporary dance. In this way (and perhaps knowingly) Badiou (to quote Ranciére), 'forces a new consideration of the *aesthetic* tie between the productions of art and the forms of thought pertaining to art' (Ranciére 2009b, 82).

Finally, to return to the fact that dance lacks its philosopher.[46] Badiou would argue that dance, along with all the other arts, does not need one. Valéry and Mallarmé already feature heavily in dance studies and Deleuze appears more regularly recently, as already stated. But dance is not the object of study for these philosophers in the way that cinema, music and art can be for Deleuze, Adorno and Lyotard. Is there a freedom in this? Can we turn our attention back to our own resources rather than defining ourselves through another discipline's lens? Did we really exhaust the tools, knowledges and processes developed across the 20th century within the discipline before we looked beyond? I'm not convinced we did. There is clearly a third way that does not abandon the resources developed by dance artists and their commentators, but equally does not isolate dance from the world of ideas with which it is constantly in dialogue. If dance really did need one, I would wish for a philosopher who is attentive to the tools that the art form chooses for itself, who understands the historic and contemporary conditions under which it has and is operating, and who can give a good account of the role the body plays as the apparatus of process, production and reception in corporeally realized choreographies.[47] So perhaps it is best to thank Badiou for pointing the way towards newly refined encounters at the interface between dance and philosophy as they are appearing in dance and performance studies … moving on.

Notes

[1] Thanks to Bryoni Trezise, Hetty Blades, Anna Pakes, Jonathan Burrows, and anonymous readers for feedback on drafts of this paper.

[2] See, for example: Foster (1986, 1997); Innes (1988); Green (1999, 2000); and Dempster (2002). On Foster's edited book, *Choreographing History* (1995), reviewer Meglin writes, 'does anyone not cite Foucault anymore?' (Meglin, 1997). See also: Thomas (2003) for an account of Foucault's approach to the body and Burt (2004) on Foucault versus Judith Butler. More recently, in *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement* (2006, 8), Lepecki briefly cites Foucault's theory of subjectivity and 'technologies of the self' alongside Deleuze's development of the

same. For more on Foucault's appearance in dance studies see Wait and Brannigan (2018).

[3] Here I am deferring to French dance theorist Laurence Louppe's claim for contemporary dance as a phenomena emerging in the 20th century and distinct from Ballet (Louppe 2010, 23).

[4] See Brannigan (2015, 2016, 2017).

[5] For example, performance maker and theorist Bojana Cvejić takes both approaches. She applies the Kantian sublime, and Deleuze's development of this into what she calls an 'anti-representational conception of thought,' to a discrete body of European dance works late 1990s-present (2015, 37). Cvejić also notes a broader 'alliance between Deleuzians and performance studies scholars' that 'could be built on shared concerns, negotiated with the notions of process, relations, movement, affect, event, and liveness' (32). It should be noted that Deleuze only mentions dance in passing in projects that are not directly related to dance, so dance studies scholars, such as Cvejić, turn to his aesthetic philosophy in his cinema books and beyond, to his philosophy more generally.

[6] Cvejić (2015, 7) also points out the limited field for this kind of activity within philosophy.

[7] Badiou's key texts are; Nietzsche (1969) and Mallarmé (2001). He also references an uncited version of Paul Valéry's 'The Soul and the Dance.' What I don't cover in Badiou's essay is the Mallarméan characteristics of 'the effaced omnipresence of the sexes' (64), the principle of 'nakedness' (66) and the role of the spectator (67/8). I'm also not concerned in this instance with the comparison to theatre in Mallarmé; Badiou states that Mallamé's texts are 'governed by an inexplicit comparison between dance and theater' (63).

[8] Badiou goes on to say that philosophers working with living, contemporary artists do have an advantage, 'because it is a great victory for a philosopher to incorporate a living artist. It's much more contemporary and the philosophical strength of the in-inaesthetical incorporation of the living artist creates effects which have more potency' than the interpretation of historical artists. However, 'it's more difficult because we have to discuss [our work] with the artists, and if they contradict you completely it's a weakness.' For philosophers working with living choreographers, see the partnerships between choreographer Mathilde Monnier and Nancy (2005), or Flamenco artist Israël Galvan and Huberman (2007). These constitute encounters between philosophy and dance that are not so war-like, that take place on dance's terms, and which require artists that are very much alive.

[9] While choreographers' interest in philosophy has not played a significant role in dance studies, choreographers have engaged with their contemporaries in that field. Some include Isadora Duncan's interest in Nietzsche (for example Duncan (1928, 301) and also Martha Graham's (LaMothe 2006). There has been a recent discovery of a connection between Margaret H'Doubler's (Anna Halprin's teacher) radical dance pedagogy in the first half of the 20th century and her teacher, John Dewey (Ross 2000). There has also been William Forsythe's interest in various philosophers which is chronologically aligned with the post-structuralist turn referred to above. The connections between Merce Cunningham and Zen philosophy via John Cage is an important and largely under-theorised precedent.

[10] Langer (1953). I thank Matthew Day for first alerting me to this section in Langer.

[11] For example, see Badiou's plays such as *L'Écharpe rouge* (1984) based on his 1979 novel of the same name.

[12] Here I am limiting myself to those I have engaged with in my book (Brannigan 2011), and my current research.

[13] He describes a shift from pose (definition) to flow (open-endedness) and from effective outcomes to pure mediality. See Boenisch (2007, 26); Imschoot (2009); and Brannigan (2011, 82–107) for a discussion of Agamben's model of gesture in relation to Forsythe, Sharifi and early dancefilm respectively.

[14] In both Deleuze and Agamben it is in cinema that the gestures of mediality—developed, rehearsed or realized in dance—are recorded for posterity and analysis.

[15] 'The philosophical identification of art falls under the category of truth' (9).

[16] Badiou claims that the avant-garde was a 'desperate and unstable search for a mediating schema, for the didactico-romantic schema. The avant-gardes were didactic in their desire to put an end to art… But they were

also romantic in their conviction that art must be reborn immediately as absolute.' They were 'above all anticlassical' (8). This would mean that art is not 'innocent' but actively engaged with the discourses and philosophies that attempt to discern their truth status.

[17] Opposing this, Boenisch embraces Badiou's concept of dance as 'a ground before the name' in his account of William Forsythe's dancers; 'not outside of the processes and the logic of the name, but in the very process itself, presenting a moving existence which is neither absent nor yet inscribed by signs, texts, images, and names of the symbolic order of representation' (Boenisch 2007, 16). Clark goes on to critique Badiou's focus on 'dancing' as opposed to 'choreography' and makes an interesting comparison between Badiou's study of Schonenberg's music as dismantling 'the expectations associated with resolution' and the choreographies of Cunningham (57). However, the point remains that Badiou is only referring to dance as it has been mobilised within philosophy, not as it exists in specific case studies.

[18] Quoting Badiou (2005, 69).

[19] In *Choreographing Problems*, she writes of Badiou's work as one of the 'attempts of philosophy to usurp dance as a philosophical problem while ignoring the problems that dance poses itself,' treating it as 'a metaphor in universal abstract singular form, an ahistorical conduit for a general ontology' (3).

[20] I refer to this article in Brannigan (2011, Chapter 7).

[21] For an account of this crisis see Lepecki (2006).

[22] Deleuze also discusses aesthetic metaterms, some of which are relevant to the processes that we discover in dance: sensation, rhythm, measure, experience, experiment, form(less), force (2003).

[23] See also http://www.everybodystoolbox.net/.

[24] This definition of dance in its disciplinary formation is an excerpt from an as yet unpublished book chapter, 'Composition and Poetics.'

[25] They go on, 'if there is a dance history, it is the history of some student of a great Western master, mostly Laban, Wigman, or Palucca.'

[26] Laban favors space, time, weight, and flow, with effort coming later in his research, and Louppe's section on 'tools' is structured around the (poetic) body, breath, weight, (poetic) movement, style, time, flow, space, and composition (Laban [1950] 1971; and Louppe 2010).

[27] Ibid. And Laban himself states, 'As I was about to start work, to be the first among dancers to speak about a world where language alone is not good enough, I was well aware of the difficulty of this task' (quoted in Bradley 2009, 39).

[28] A sample of those sources are Bojana Kunst, André Lepecki and Sally Gardner, dance and performance theorists spanning the Europe, the USA and Australia respectively. In her contribution to the *Post-Dance* publication of 2017, Kunst focuses on 'the doing of dance' and its time, space, movement, physicality, energy, rhythm, power, exchange, context, weight, and materiality (2017, 130–131). In his contribution to the *Move: Choreographing You* catalogue, Lepecki cites 'corporeality, movement, and ephemerality' as elements 'that had been deemed constitutive (and exclusive to) dance as an art form' (2011, 153). And Sally Gardner focuses on movement, kinaesthetics, process, intersubjectivity, and a resistance to language (2008, 55–60).

[29] This diverges from the task to 'take Badiou's metaphor "seriously" and envisage the dance that would ensue from his axioms' (Cvejić, 2015b, 14). As Cvejić notes, this path is taken by Clark who tests Badiou's broader theories, beyond the essay under discussion, against Cunningham's work.

[30] Badiou says himself that this 'series' in Nietzsche related to the bird, air and child 'can appear very innocent, even mawkish, like a childish tale in which nothing may be asserted nor assessed any longer.' However, he points out that 'Dance is both one of the terms of the series and the violent traversal of the whole series' (58).

[31] Singularity and immanence are brought together here, and we have seen that these two themes form the

essence of his schema for the various links between philosophy and art. For his inaesthetics, 'Immanence: Art is rigorously co-extensive with the truths that it generates [...] Singularity: These truths are given nowhere else than it art' (9).

[32] This subtractive characteristic is restated here; 'Dance, as a metaphor for thought, presents thought to us as devoid of relation to anything other than itself, in the nudity of its emergence.' (66)

[33] 'If dance is a gesture, it is so, rather, because it is nothing more than the endurance and the exhibition of the media character of corporeal movements [...] it is a process of making a means visible as such.' Agamben 'Notes on Gesture,' 58, originally published in 1992. Badiou's essay on dance was first published in French in 1993 as *Danse et Pensée* ed. Ciro Bruni (Paris: GERMS, 1993).

[34] Here he cites Nietzsche, however Nietzsche never links the wheel metaphor directly to dance in *Thus Spake Zarasthura*. Badiou applies Nietzsche's image here of the innocence of the child to his discussion of dance as a metaphor for (philosophical) thought (58).

[35] This is linked to its positive energy; 'But this becoming is such that within it a unique affirmative interiority is released. Movement is neither a displacement nor a transformation, but a course that traverses and sustains the eternal uniqueness of an affirmation' (59).

[36] 'That dance should reflect these changes [in minimal art and beyond] at all is of interest, since for obvious reasons it has always been the most isolated and inbred of the arts. What is perhaps unprecedented in the short history of the modern dance is the close correspondence between concurrent developments in dance and the plastic arts' (Rainer 1995, 264).

[37] Badiou goes on: 'In dance thus conceived, movement finds its essence in what has not taken place, in what has remained either ineffective or restrained within movement itself' (60).

[38] This recalls Agamben's definition of the medial gesture as a 'means without end' (Agamben 2000, 58).

[39] 'This is perhaps Nietzsche's most important insight: Beyond exhibition of movements or the quickness of their external designs, dance is what testifies to the force of restraint at the heart of these movements' (59/60).

[40] Elsewhere Badiou describes the time of dance as 'the secret slowness of the fast' in relation to its powers of 'restraint' (60) and elsewhere again as 'pretemporal' in relation to the named event; 'Dance manifests the silence before the name exactly in the same way that it constitutes the space before time' (61/2).

[41] McCarren is translating and quoting Mallarmé.

[42] For example, in the pioneering work of Mabel Elsworth Todd (2008).

[43] The book's chapters cover poetry, theatre, cinema and dance. See Ranciére (2009a) regarding the 'identification of art's specificity with the specificities of arts' in modernism's project and the comparison to Badiou's project that insists upon the distinction between art and non-art (67–70). Ranciére explains that Badiou's interest is not in the material specificities of the various art forms, but in the specificities of the 'ideas' that 'reside' in them (70).

[44] It's a sleight of hand that claims that dance 'shows us that the body is capable of art' but that this is different to a claim for an 'art of the body' – that is 'defining a singular art' (70). Is Badiou suggesting that the 'body that thinks' belongs to all the arts but in dance we see 'the thought-body showing itself under the vanishing sign of a capacity for art'? (70). When we see this in dance, Badiou argues, it produces a feeling of 'vertigo' 'because the infinite appears in it as latent within the finitude of the visible body [...] the infinite capacity of art, of all art, as it is rooted in the event that its chance prescribes' (70).

[45] Cvejić however criticizes such a model of dancing as promoting 'the individual autonomy of the dancer and the fetishistic exclusivity of a "here-and-now" expression' (14).

[46] Cvejić also points this out (2015b, 7).

[47] One precedent here may be Deleuze's *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (2003), which specifically gives us both rigorous attention to the materials and tools that the art form chooses, and a philosophical theme of sensation shaped by that very attention.

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Biography

Dr. Erin Brannigan is Senior Lecturer in Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of New South Wales and works in the fields of dance and film as a writer, academic and curator.

Erin has written on dance for *RealTime* since 1997, and her publications include *Moving Across Disciplines: Dance in the Twenty-First Century* (Sydney: Currency House, 2010), *Dancefilm: Choreography and the Moving Image* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) and *Bodies of Thought: 12 Australian Choreographers*, co-edited with Virginia Baxter (Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 2014). She has published articles in journals such as *Senses of Cinema*, *Writings on Dance*, *Brolga*, *Dance Research Journal*, *Performance Paradigm*, *Broadsheet*, *Runway* and *International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media* alongside several book chapters.

Her current research projects are *After Rauschenberg – Composition: Movement: Experiment* (with choreographers Matthew Day and Lizzie Thomson), *New Paradigms for Performance Pedagogies* (UNSW T&L Grant with Bryoni Trezise) and *Dancing Our City* (with Julie-Anne Long and Amanda Card).

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PERFORMANCE
PHILOSOPHY

GET MESSED UP: INTENTIONALITY, BUTOH, AND FREEDOM IN PLASMA

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Introduction: Messiness, Butoh and Phenomenology

Although there could be other ways to "get messed up," I begin with butoh, an original and now transnational genre of dance that developed first in Japan in the aftermath of World War II.[1] My butoh mentor, Ohno Kazuo-sensei, said something in his workshops that stays with me and comes back when I most need it: "Don't turn away from the messiness of life." Life seldom conforms to expectations; quite often it veers away from our best plans. Loved ones become ill, or we don't get the job we thought we might. Someone we love dies, or someone we thought understood us has completely missed the point. Life gets messy. For Ohno, an aspiring dancer, this was being conscripted to serve in the Japanese army when he was thirty and returning nine years later to a nine-year-old son, Yoshito, who would later become his dance partner. One might think his dance career was over before it began, but Ohno, ever resourceful and trusting, went on to become a beloved world figure in butoh and beyond.

Ohno's statement on messiness has multiple interpretations, which are all helpful. It has existential meaning for those who dive into their creativity and fail forward. They understand that perfection and mastery are dead-ends. If they don't understand this at first, it will most likely come to them later, even if not exactly in these terms. His statement is also a warning for those who would look away from suffering or push away disease and disability. These are also part of life and not incidentally admitted in butoh where dancing "the weak body" rubs against potential tyrannies. I write under the title of messiness because my phenomenology seeks to strike a balance between

PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHY VOL 4, NO 2 (2019):374–392
DOI: https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2019.42224
ISSN 2057-7176

abstractions of theory and the unpredictable characteristics of dance and movement. Butoh provides an apt example. I write thematically and extensively about the perils of perfection and mastery in another work (2004). The phenomenological significance of *subjectivity, intention, individual habitus, freedom as lived and interactive states of being* come to the front in this essay, extending my prior works toward a constitutive ontology of dance and delineation of intrinsic values of moving consciously (1987, 2015). For the most part, I write from the perspective of the dancer and performer, shifting to theory with philosophy as scaffolding.

Phenomenology is also about getting messed up, rejecting norms in accepted theories and masteries. In the practice of phenomenology, one sets upon a Nietzschean open sea akin to dance improvisation. Likewise, Vida Midgelow sees improvisation as a paradigm for phenomenology (Midgelow 2018). One might begin with an idea, however, and see where it leads. Discovery as way forward appeals to me, even as it might also guide analysis in the discipline of phenomenology. In feeling its way toward order, this essay first articulates matters of subjectivity and subjects, which are often taken for granted.

Topics of subjectivity ground phenomenology beginning with the works of Husserl at the dawn of the twentieth century (*Logical Investigations* [1900] 1970), later infusing the voluminous work of Simone de Beauvoir, Paul Ricoeur, Jean Paul Sartre, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Accounts of osmotic subjectivity emerge more recently in the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari—specifically in a tripartite section of *A Thousand Plateaus*: "Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming Imperceptible" (1987, 232–309). In butoh-like similarity, Deleuze and Guattari pursue *morphic* subjectivities (254). Laura Cull (2013, Ch. 3) also connects butoh metamorphosis to themes of Deleuze and Guattari. Their creative, performative phenomenology has precedent in Sartre,[2] who brings the broad field of subjectivity and subjects to light, and quite brightly, as we see in the beginning of the next section.

Experience is first constituted pre-reflectively and doesn't stand still, nor does dance in the many ways we can envision it. The experiential perspective of lived time through movement and body was first modeled by Edmund Husserl in his constitutive phenomenology and surfaced later in Paul Ricoeur through his study of embodied volition and freedom. Ricoeur's far-reaching efforts "to take phenomenology to the bloodstream" ([1966] 2007, xii) contribute greatly to the undertaking of this essay. During his years of captivity in World War II, Ricoeur translated Husserl's work, becoming conversant with his distinctive style and philosophy of the body.[3]

This essay moves in the direction of Husserl and Ricoeur to examine concepts of "the body" and "nature" as tools of analysis and understanding. These terms are too often reductive, and although they have produced some valuable understandings and insights, they have become saturated, ignoring somatic complexities in the relationships between humans and the environments surrounding, suffusing and affecting them. The considerable influence of phenomenology on somatic studies in dance, somatic movement arts and psychology begins with Husserl, particularly through his concept of "the lived body." In this article, I stress this as framework for ecological activism. Correspondingly, the muddy subjectivities of crisis and passage in *butoh* provide concrete

examples for what might otherwise seem wholly abstract. Thus I include descriptive self-evidence of subjectivity in various dance experiences and somatic improvisations with an emphasis on butoh. These subjective reflections move along with the text, but are indented and set apart in the spirit of *poiesis.*

"A New Being Sense": Subjectivities and Environing Cores

Sartre asserted that subjectivity *is lived and not known* (1965, 300). Our living subjectivity eludes full knowledge. The minute we attempt to bring attention to something in subjective life, an experience, for instance, we turn it into an object, a thing or phenomenon—seen, touched, stated or expressed. It takes on forms of thought and object-distance. Like dance, subjective experience is always escaping into the lived moment. Its translation to objective knowable forms happens performatively through the arts, through sentience, and cognitively in the life and mind of the body.[4] We can translate the lived to the known because these are intrinsically related. In coming to attention, dance and movement become objects of knowledge. The knowable, becomes expressly known.

> *I come to know myself through the hands and feet of my dance, as these are innately related in consciousness. I know dance through my embodied experience—and as I dance with others and witness their dances. I might also map the affective geography of a particular dance: its spatial cohesion, shuddering flesh or quickened glance.*

Objectivity designates the thing-hood of things, and psychologically it points towards attentional distance in relationship. Objective distance is part of impartiality, independent thought and fairness. We could even call it a value when we identify it as desirable. It makes space for receptive neutrality and curiosity. Teachers and therapists both practice this kind of objectivity.

Phenomenology explains somaesthetic subjectivities through intentional qualities of awareness. *Pre-reflective awareness* draws upon subjective experience without intervening words or interpretations and orients in the present. *Self-awareness* is by definition orientation toward "self" as self-reflexive. *Other-awareness* orients out toward external objects and others, constituting otherness in perception. It is not surprising that all of these ways interact and that orientation of awareness is part of doing, witnessing and interpreting dances. Reflecting on a particular dance as we try to "read" experiential and presentational aspects of it, or more aptly "interpret" it as dancers and writers, turns it into a linguistic artifact and object of language.

We might also, as in butoh and other dance forms, accept the present-centered subjective flow of dance as valid in itself, a ready-to-hand example of subjective knowledge. Butoh founder, Hijikata Tatsumi, terms his butoh "DANCE EXPERIENCE,"[5] using this English expression to suggest through the paradigm of experience that the significance of dance centers on its immediate occurrence for both the dancer and the witness. Of course writers might further meaning through theory, as they often do, and I attempt here, but this is once and sometimes more times removed from experience. Theory has the dubious advantage of being abstract and interpretive, and experiences are often

so real and relational as to be messy. Experiential values are intrinsic, subjective and foundational in dance performance.[6] These are the affective somatic values that are often indistinct and difficult to pin down because they shift through time. One can be happily engaged in a dance that brings pleasure, and in the next moment, feel density and sorrow.

Yet there is more than somatic self-awareness at play in subjectivity. At the same time we live through an experience, layers of consciousness connect us to a world beyond self—*the lifeworld*—originally configured in the kinesthetic field of bodily awareness. Subjectivities and dance experiences are not isolated but relate self to others and the world, what Husserl calls "the lifeworld." His term and its layered meanings are greatly expanded in light of dance through several phenomenologies and authors in a recent book, *Back to the Dance Itself* (Fraleigh 2018b). Husserl first speaks of the "lifeworld" in his criticisms of empirical, observational directions of natural sciences, which he sees as simply one way of knowing (1989, 383–390). The body he envisions is experienced with complexity from various lifeworld "horizons" or "attitudes" (1995, 164–165). Lifeworld is experienced relationally through normalized beliefs, self-understandings, everyday understandings, interpersonal and intersubjective communication, intuitive understanding, affective experience, ecological consciousness, and also perspectives of science (1989, 383–390).

Sourced in the intricate phenomena of the body, the lifeworld is social and political, cultural and artifactual, extending interactively toward the environing world of nature. Husserl views nature as constituted in sense: "The world as nature remains [...] a construct of sense, a synthetic unity in the infinity of environing natural cores" (Husserl 1995, 189). The body as lived participates in the constitution of the lifeworld. Husserl originally speaks of the environing natural world, and he also inquires into the world of spirit, which isn't a religious category in this thinking, but more socio-psychological, invoking subjective transcendence of ego. Encounters with the lifeworld aid in dissolution (or distribution) of the time-constituted ego in its ever-streaming passage (1995, 170–71). Body, the soma of self and the material world of nature are intrinsically (experientially) connected, and subjectivity has as many faces as nature.

It is thinkable, Husserl says, "[...] that there is no nature at all." But such thinking, he explains, also places consciousness outside of nature. In this attitude "[...] consciousness is not positable as something of nature (as state of an animal); it is absolutely non-spatial" ([1912] 1989, 187). Husserl posits lived space and time as active states of human consciousness arising through nature in relation to socio-cultural life. In *Material Feminisms,* Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman also study constitutive questions of nature:

> Whereas the epistemology of modernism is grounded in objective access to a real/natural world, postmodernists argue that the real/material is entirely constituted by language; what we call the real is a product of language and has its reality only in language. In their zeal to reject the modernist grounding in the material, postmodernists have turned to the discursive pole as the exclusive source of the constitution of nature, society, and reality. Far from deconstructing the dichotomies of language/reality or culture/nature, they have rejected one side and embraced the other. (2008, 1–2)

At the root of phenomenology, Husserl discussed reciprocity of the lived body and the natural world, describing the body as a "correlate" of nature and "a point of conversion" (1952, 297–299). Transformative possibilities ensue from there. Later, Maurice Merleau-Ponty uses the term "chiasm" to characterize perceptual reversibility as bodily lived. Chiasm represents the body as *a crossing over*, this through "the intertwining" of touching and touch, the visible and the invisible, as body and world cross over and enfold in perception (1968*,* Ch. 4). To put this directly, body and world are not separate entities, but are points of conversion and correlates in elemental and constant interchange. We share this encounter vividly in dance. When we direct our consciousness to the world of nature as embodied, it takes on "a new being sense" for us (Husserl 1995, 189), and in attunement with nature we care about it.

I read Emmanuel Levinas' phenomenological ethics in *Otherwise* (1974) similarly. And through Edward Casey's ecological ethics in *Eco-Phenomenology* (2003), I enter a "new being-sense" of my dance through environing nature.

> *When I experience the morphing world of nature and my body as correlated, or when I match nature in its mud and messiness in butoh, it takes on a new being-sense for me. Then I live the world and am not alone. Adapting and attuning my animal sense of being with others and belonging to nature has far-reaching ethical consequences.*

Butoh, Nature and Morphic Intentionality

Butoh provides danced examples of *chiasm*—in morphic encounters where the human and more-than-human worlds meet. In process, butoh is interactive, often shambolic and ready to adapt. It does not take an elitist view of life, rather all of life has a place in butoh, the dark as well as the light, and suffering is not denied. The body of messiness and crisis reveal it. Like Zen Buddhism, butoh lets go of expectations by letting things be as they are and as they change.[7] Takenouchi Atsushi's *Jinen Butoh* finds ways of including dancers of varied abilities in performances, favoring circumstances in nature where dancers listen to environmental surroundings, bonding with these meditatively or chaotically, as they are able.

Figure 1. Atsushi Takenouchi integrates a dancer with a disability in his butoh process at Schloss Broellin in Germany. Photograph by Sondra Fraleigh ©2003.

What Husserl studied as the conversional capacity of the lived body in relation to nature explains the transformational capacity of butoh, as does the related example of *chiasm* through Merleau-Ponty. Butoh folds into nature and the nature of individuals, as I explore in "Butoh translations and the suffering of nature" (2016).

> *In butoh I morph toward earthy origins, becoming insect and smooth stone, shaking water bag and itchy biotic matter—straining against restricted body parts, like hidden arms in waiting—or I flirt with emergent and hanging limbs—my limbs, like limbs of trees suspended. Admitting the shifting uncertain ground of life, and as witness to the consistency of human life with other life, I cross over.*

The butoh body as *a point of conversion and chiasm* exposes what post-structural philosophers Deleuze and Guattari study as infinite modifications on "planes of consistency" (1987). Butoh cultivates fluid, often slow-growing dances of flow and constancy similar to the connective rhizome multiplying stems and shoots underground and over that Deleuze and Guattari made famous in philosophy.

Chiasm intertwines and converts, while the rhizome spreads without ending. In the model of rhizome from material nature, culture spreads like the surface of a landscape, filling empty spaces outwards and upwards, or dripping downwards through cracks, weathering into life like the Body Weather performances of Min Tanaka. These began in butoh through the radical examples of Hijikata Tatsumi, but now spread nomadically outward via the many students who studied and danced on Tanaka's farm in Japan. One instance can be traced *in four shoots*: beginning in Japan with Hijikata, passing to Tanaka, extending from Tanaka to Oguri in California, and then reaching from Oguri to the recent site-specific dance of Rosemary Candelario in North Texas. She writes of her experiences with Oguri through her own work in "Dancing with Hyperobjects: Ecological Body Weather Choreographies from *Height of Sky* to *Into the Quarry*" (2018).[8]

As a stem, the rhizome moves like Japanese cosmological *ma* in butoh, the *ma* existing in between things and sharing with the plants and animals it touches. The horizontality of the rhizome resists vertical cultural chronology and organization; instead, it favors a morphic-nomadic system of growth and proliferation. The rhizome can assimilate textures of nature and culture as they bump against each other—cross over, tangle, clump and mingle.

Rhizomes can be redirected and encouraged in nature as also in dance. In butoh, modification is lived through corporeal continuities of *becoming other* subjectively, intentionally and not so neatly. At once culturally founded and exceptionally global in aesthetics and participation, butoh provides ready instances of the complex workings of morphic intentionality. *Rhizomatic in orientation, morphic intentionality spreads individual consciousness toward otherness.* But it would be a mistake to identify butoh solely with the rhizome. Its performed variety orients consciousness in many ways, but the transformational nomadic one stands out. Becoming other—being plant and animal, shoot, salt, stone and sea—butoh dancers join the nature they find and envision. Fluid transformation can contribute to an aesthetic of freedom in butoh, particularly in dances performed empathically for the doing and not intended for an audience.

Being in transit like free ions in plasma, the dancer doesn't have to attach to anything, or coalesce a form, but in terms of identity and core, culture plays a necessary part. Butoh isn't free to be just anything. Japanese origins ground its identity, often resonating in meditative slowness and appreciation of odd or antiquated moments. Tadashi Endo's work, *Ma,* uses the connective in-between-ness of *ma* culturally and intentionally, dancing with antique pots and weather-beaten appearances that can turn silken in an instant.[9] Japan seeds butoh in the morphic *ma* of sand, as sand appears often in spectacles of Sankai Juku and the distilled solos of Yoshioka Yumiko. Japanese *ma* appears in appreciation of flowers loved by Ohno Kazuo-sensei, and especially in plum blossoms and slow growing *shin orchids* of Ohno Yoshito's workshops. In her chapter on the concept of *ma* in Japanese cosmology, Christine Bellerose compares such butoh phenomena to "moonlight peeping through the doorway" (2018).

Figure 2. Yoshioka Yumiko next to a cone shaped sand pile, a manifestation of ma in her solo Before the Dawn (2005). Photograph courtesy of Yumiko Yoshioka.

Imaginative Actions and Uncertain Events

Butoh sinks in melting disappearance, while ballet aspires upward. At least, these are some typical ways of orienting consciousness in these genres. Movement intention founds specific genres and unique styles in making and doing dances. Intentionality is not simply a projection toward future action (what I intend to do tomorrow), even as it might in some instances be about this. *Intention is embodied orientation and moving on purpose.* Husserl studies intentionality as the primary theme of phenomenology and the fundamental property of consciousness (McIntyre and Smith 1989). In his first publication, Husserl represents intention as a mental property ([1900] 1970). Later his philosophy expands toward intentional experiences of all kinds, accounting for motility, kinesthetic consciousness and lived body consciousness as integral to the larger world of nature and creativity of societies and cultures (1989, 1995, 2005).

To act intentionally is to orient a movement, plan or purpose, but not as purely subjective. Intentionality is a relational concept. Subjectivity becomes inter-subjectivity when flowing interactively between sentient subjects. It becomes intra-subjective in valorizing nonhuman actants, a current concern of performance in a world in crisis.[10] Anthropocentric studies in arts and humanities put humans at the center and in dangerous exploitation of nature. It seems

increasingly important to say that intentions in dance are embodied relationally, flowing or subsiding with others, and in a larger sense, reflecting the lifeworld that animates intent. Dancers can ignore this relational synergy, or pay attention to it through an ethic of care and belonging.

Agency in dancing develops through ability and trust as these grow in relation to basic motility, valuation and choice. Ricoeur's early work on "complexity of values on the organic level" (1966, 110–122) details how valuation (embodied discernment as process) and choice (the power to decide and act) are first lived pre-reflectively. His hermeneutic envisions kinesthetic consciousness in reciprocity with movement awareness and affectivity. His is an overarching view of voluntary and involuntary systems of the body relative to values of freedom and nature. The volitional basis of freedom (the ability to chose) is lived first somatically through the body in his perspective. Relationships between movement and action are central to Ricoeur's project. We commonly speak of dance as movement. Looking more closely, we see that dance is several things according to perspective. Among the arts, dance involves how people make meaning through imaginative actions and uncertain events.

> *My dances grow from possible acts of movement and states of being, implicating choices and unpredictable outcomes. This is true of my improvisations, but creative wonder motivates my choreography as well. "What will this dance be, and how will it seem"? These are some of my questions at the outset. "What intentions will be realized, and which ones will fade? Maybe this dance will just be a mess! It could fail or fall apart. But how will I know what my dance could be if I never risk its possibilities"?*

Acts of intentionality settle in the body and become habits in repetition and reinforcement. Habits escape notice in everyday movement and in rehearsed skills that are eventually taken for granted. I learn this through Ricoeur's physiological phenomenology ([1966] 2007). On a pragmatic level, I encounter issues of habitus and change through the Feldenkrais method of somatic education (Feldenkrais 1985). Consciousness is laced with habit and alive in the rehearsed networks of the nervous system, or "the corporeal involuntary," as Ricoeur puts this (2007, 85–134). But movement that has been consciously embodied has the advantage of conscious recall. As permeated with movement habits, the body is constantly undergoing change and can be renewed through conscious attention, particularly in cultivating movement arts. Attempts to expand skill and to bring habit to attention are part of the educational project in the somatic study of dance. More broadly, the teaching and learning of movement in yoga, dance, sport, and martial arts is a project of working through embodied habitus and change, even as awareness of this may be superficial.

> *Suddenly, I come up short. Habits interrupt an easy flow and introduce murkiness. I want to move freely—with trust and ease according to my intentions—but habits keep me stuck. Or do they?*

To surpass habit, we seek to move freely, or in the manner of our choices. Certainly many choices have already been embodied in dancing if one has danced even for a while in a particular style or several. But one still has choices to make in the uncertain field of movement. In its concerns for sense perception and action, the somatic project in dance explores how activities and ways of

performing become persuasive in life. Husserl first identified "sensuous dispositions with their individual *habitus"* (original emphasis, 1989, 308), and he built toward "the *total style and habitus of the subject*, pervading, as a concordant unity, all his modes of behavior, all his activities and passivities, and to which the entire psychic basis constantly contributes" (original emphasis, 290). Husserl's work concerning habit is reiterated throughout phenomenology, showing the importance of intention and choice. Intentionality is formative.

As initiating constitutive phenomenology, Husserl teaches that personal intentionality has its origin in activities and becomes embodied through "the active or constitutive nexuses, and that by means of many levels built one on the other" (1989, 344). We develop *momentum* in such layers or levels of activity, hopefully in positive directions of agency and choice, and not just in upward climbs toward empowerment. To what end do we repeat and layer? Perhaps power isn't a desirable value? Maybe it depends on the situation and one's intentions? Do we need a less controlling prompt than empowerment to signal confidence in realizing and claiming rights? We see abuses of power all around if we are careful observers. For myself, I want to dance toward joy, and I'm cautious of power. I seek the right rapport with it, because I don't think empowerment leads automatically to freedom. The freedom to be myself glows more brightly as I age, and the freedom that comes through aging is the most awesomely difficult of all.

Conscience should temper intentionality. *Concerning habits of thought*, languages of "power" and "empowerment" are naturalized in unquestioned habitual uses. Husserl calls unquestioned biases *the natural attitude* (Husserl 1970; also Fink with Husserl, 1995, 166). Phenomenology questions habits of language and performance, especially those that reinforce individual ego as singular and powerful. Husserl writes that ego shifts into obscurity in "every act-performance." Self-activation (as Ego) shifts into new lines of cognition as actions are embodied and sink into obscurity. This represents a stage when we no longer think about our actions, they have become a part of consciousness, familiar patterns and rehearsed attitudes. "As soon as the focus of the Ego is withdrawn from it, [action] changes and is received into the vague horizon" ([1930] 1989, 114). Empowerment as having power can get messy. It matters what one does with having power, and it also matters in the choice to let it go.

> *I ply my flaws in becoming bee pollen through Waguri Yukio's* butoh-fu *(imagery). In butoh improvisations, weakness is as good as strength, and doing nothing as good as doing something.*

Empowerment signals a positive value in the ability to dance as one intends, but it isn't a constant. As a variable matter of consciousness and intent, empowerment exceeds itself in being shared.

> *When I dance with others in the morning rays of the coral-rust canyons near my home in Utah, our morphic dance marvels in sage and fog, spreading its never-ending flicks and flutters. If my foot stumbles against a cleft, I can grow a new "being sense" to carry me on. My torso shudders while my head perseveres a bobble and warm colors rub against me. When I think, I think how very little on earth remains unaffected by human interventions, but for now, I am present in beauty. Dancing barefoot on sun-warmed*

sandstone disrupts my habitual orientations and worries. I heal through dancing this way.

Freedom as Lived in Dance

Freedom has subjectively lived values. For Afghan women, driving a car brings both fear and freedom (AFP News Agency 2015). For dancers, freedom might arrive in several ways, depending on the situation and the kind of dance involved. In Sartre's philosophy, freedom is not a choice but a "condemnation." We are free whether we want to be or not, and we are making choices whether we realize it or not (Sartre 1947, 27). Freedom is a root principle of existential phenomenology, and it is not simply a concept but rather a living condition of subjectivity, as I have explored in other contexts (Fraleigh 1987, 2004). We live freedom and constraint affectively. To live in "bad faith," as Sartre popularized this expression, is to fail to live in the light of one's freedom, a matter of denial if you will. On the other hand, agentic freedom is grounded in responsibility—in owning the outcomes of one's actions and amending mistakes without blaming others. This also translates to social and political spheres of action, even to the values of freedom as they manifest in taking a stand—especially in messy times—matching one's intentions through bodily powers and synergies, balances and failings, dancing and writing fearlessly amid uncertainty.

This is what art is for. As one of the original existential phenomenologists, Simone de Beauvoir studies the positive and messy aspects of art and ambiguity in her key work on ethics, *The Ethics of Ambiguity* ([1948] 1994). Admitting disorder in the uncertainties of life, she inflects freedom with engagement and art with conscience. Anti-essentialist feminist positions take root in her historic statement that "biology is not destiny." Freedom for women, as Beauvoir originally sees, lies in the freedom to determine their own bodies and lives. But this isn't all. Freedom also blossoms through happiness. For Beauvoir, freedom is not simply a matter of empowerment, the right to speak or absence of constraint. Freedom becomes concrete as the "joy of existence" is asserted: "the movement toward freedom assumes its real flesh and blood figure in the world by thickening into pleasure, into happiness" (1994, 135).

For Ricoeur, freedom relates to naturalness and spontaneity, and he is not speaking naïvely of nature, but of what becomes "naturalized" in a constituted Husserlian sense. He doesn't make a simple identification of freedom with nature, but rather speaks to how habit and skill interact as we bring what seems natural to attention and consciously improve on it, or else join the involuntary maze. In either case, we do the latter. We learn about bodily-lived freedom from this vantage point through Ricoeur's hermeneutic study of the relationship between freedom and nature in movement. Movement and knowledge are bound together in voluntary effort, as the mental and physical bring about "an undecipherable unity, beyond effort" ([1966] 2007, 249). Movement that once required effort ceases to be an effort; then bodily spontaneity and freedom can emerge. In learning a new skill, for instance, there comes a time when the movement feels natural. We commonly call this "second nature." Ricoeur argues that the voluntary and involuntary dimensions of human existence are systemically interactive in the body.

> *As I decipher this experientially: volition encounters the hazy silent workings of the somatic involuntary nervous system. This gratefully stubborn system of embodiment draws volition past conscious control into the matrix of movement. Volitional encounters are part of the fascination of dancing better over time; and in contexts of healing, of dancing courageously toward obscurity and revelation. The easy and the difficult both belong to freedom and are potentially valuable in dance.*

We become what we do and are responsible for what we become. Values, in what is deemed to be good or the good in experience, don't come ready made and unmovable, even if they are already present in societal and familial habits. To some extent, values are malleable and developmental. In dance processes, they are lived and interpreted. As politically motivated, values stand out; people say or dance what they care about and want to change. Struggle, crisis and suffering all motivate change. But values in the backgrounds of skill acquisition are less clear. Volition as a use of the will still provides a clue, however. Will and value are not the same things, but they are connected through intentionality and the corporal involuntary ("body and the total field of motivation," Ricoeur 2007, 122–134). We direct intentions in dance, and this is a use of the will, not necessarily as willful, but relationally and in reciprocity of voluntary and involuntary systems. In this sense, our choices are embodied organically through repetition—and in consent or refusal ("motives and values on the organic level," 104–122).

In performance, dancers orient movement, imagery, and affect, and they do all of this simultaneously, sometimes passing through liminal states and lassitude. Internal time consciousness of intentionality in dancing is intricate and shifting. In relating to the emergent dance, we draw up various states of affective being and attendant values, some sorrowful, some painful, some joyful and free. I think somatically of "matching" my intentions, not mastering them, and about merging with the worlding motions of the world, as Heidegger speaks of "worlding" in a wide way.[11]

> *Wholeness engulfs me, and I say "yes," to an arising action, or in refusal, "no." When actions flow as of my own nature, I can unselfconsciously and pre-reflectively absorb the somatic life of my dance, saying, "yes" to my body. What I dance also dances me. In willing, I consent and refuse; laugh and weep. In realizing my choices, I dance my uncertain freedom.*

In dance, freedom roots in motility and the ability to act and is realized through attributes of choice. In studying freedom and nature relative to the will, Ricoeur writes that the body takes the form of the will (1966, 249, 328). Feldenkrais famously taught that if you don't have at least three ways of doing something, you don't have a choice, as I learned in Feldenkrais classes. Will and freedom, including choice and its constraints, are relative faculties of moving well. They manifest explicitly in dance and performance where the social intersects affective and political life. Freedom in one of its meanings refers to rights and independence as lived. Political actions have a lived basis, as do the politics of dances.

Affects of freedom arising in feelings are circumstantial, interactive and subject to individual interpretation. Individuals can realize freedom in choreography and improvisation, in dance for everyone and in highly produced theater, as also in butoh, contemporary dance and ballet. A phenomenologist would say that freedom as lived is a matter of consciousness. Political *tests* of freedom also motivate consciousness. I have written about this in post-metaphysical terms of "letting the difference happen," not to advocate a certain politic but to look at the phenomenon of difference and repression, presence and absence, as a phenomenologist might, and to relate this to "uncertainty" in dance (Fraleigh 2004, Ch. 6). Dance in its playful, autotelic or "for itself" metaphysic is synonymous with freedom. Dance as generative is fulfilled in being what it is. First, we dance for the dancing. All other values—the performative, educational or political—depend on this intrinsic (experiential) value.[12] Underneath its many affects and purposes, dance is another word for freedom. Dance is a verb of permission. Enforced dance is a corruption of freedom.

Freedom in Plasma, a Butoh to Do

To perform freedom thematically, I suggest a butoh-inflected process as an odd way of slipping through a trans-theoretical hole and into a time of metamorphic pre-reflection. The improvisation outlined below is in the spirit of Ricoeur's "phenomenology of the bloodstream" (1966, xii), encouraging morphology as entrance into a state of biologic play. We learn about plasma and freedom from life science: "Plasma makes up the sun and stars, and it is the most common state of matter in the universe as a whole. [...] Unlike ordinary gases, plasmas are made up of atoms in which some or all of the electrons have been stripped away and positively charged nuclei, called ions, roam freely" (Emspak 2016).

> *Dancing Freedom in Plasma*
>
> Let the suggestion of ions roaming freely in plasma guide your improvisation. Do this dance with others, somewhere beyond four walls. If you decide to move in the metamorphic spirit of butoh, give up your habitual way of dancing, and let yourself move in simple basic ways, using everyday movements of hunching, stillness, rolling, shaking, leaning off-balance, falling, squatting, crawling, turning slowly into the ground and back up, whirling, etc.
>
> Wear a fanciful costume that you can put together easily from your closet or available materials. If there is mud or dirt available, smear some on your face and "mess it up." Let the environment you choose assist you in the dance. Keep your focus wide, attending to self, other dancers and the environment. Interpret plasma freely. Rocks, twigs, sand, flowers or bricks might be available as props. Use what you find. Let the sounds of the environment be your music and metamorphic ma.
>
> Begin rolled up on the ground, leaning on something, or squatting in a tightly closed bell-shape, whatever this suggests to you. Take a deep breath, and hold it; let your dance begin as you gradually release your breath and your body also starts to roam. To begin, you might let go controlling instincts if you hiss the breath out gradually through closed teeth. Continue your dance until you feel any reticence or restriction give way and you roam easily (nomadically) at will. End by voicing a vowel sound, audibly or not. Then begin to clap your hands together softly. When

everyone is clapping, the dance is finished. Take time to check in with each other about your experience.

Butohist Yoshioka Yumiko holds that "our life consists of continuous interactions between nature, society, energy, and ourselves."[13] Her butoh is shown in Figure 2.

Intention Matters

Originally Japanese, butoh grew in retreat from late capitalist social structures, walking a messy line or sidling *ma* through chaotic and contradictory states, all of this in morphic modes of intercultural transition. As part of Hijikata's butoh revolution, he railed against the production/consumption wasteful cycle of American style democracy entering Japan after the Second World War. "I don't want a bad check called democracy" is his famous manifesto. Hijikata's rejection of dance as production is voiced in his surrealist essay, "To Prison" (1961, 44–45). Yet, his butoh is not pedantically cast solely in political terms. He conceived *dance as experience* and cast a wide net of intentionality concerned with the social body in crisis and the suffering of nature. These mesh in his last solo performance, *Leprosy,* part of a large anti-war work, *Summer Storm* (1973) performed by his company at Kyoto University. In several sections, this work moves through wide ranging performative intentions from serendipitous play to Japanese rituals reimagined. Hijikata's solo dance of *Leprosy* is faint, closely personal although distanced emotionally, and openly cast in a seeming desire to mitigate the pain of others.[14]

It would be a mistake to see butoh in a neutral transnational space, even as it migrates easily and is not a traditional form. In its subjective, agentic and interactive character, butoh demonstrates how the wide-ranging acts of dancing pave ways into extraordinary workings of intentionality. Like all dance, butoh derives from intrinsic (affective) characteristics of movement. And like much dance, it is motivated by cultural factors, by individual conscience and bodily-lived experiences of play, work and nature. These mesh in butoh, and not in equal amounts. The cultural roots of butoh lie in Japan, which inflects all of its manifestations, whether or not its inheritors remember. Intention matters. Intentions of performers orient danced actions and possible meanings in butoh as in all dances.

I can be without explanation or apology in butoh, and however its experiential messages morph in my movement and imagination, they still remind me of Japan.

Figure 3. Sondra Fraleigh with her Japanese waterfall maple butoh tree in Brockport New York, performing, Tell Me. Photograph 2005, courtesy Sondra Fraleigh.

In conceiving *dance as experience,* butoh offers "a new being sense" to escape interpretation and reading of dance at a remove. The being of butoh, or its ontology, surfaces in light of *dance experience* with stylizations mattering less. Today, butoh is more difficult to identify, since the stereotypical white rice powdered bodies no longer epitomize it. What remains, then?

History remains. Intentions remain. Conscience remains. Butoh is oriented in morphic transformative intentionality. Thus in Zen *suchness*, presence and acceptance, it doesn't turn away from crisis or pain and messiness. In metamorphic butoh and similar kinds of performance, one can work with loss and imperfection, not needing ideal resolutions. Butoh's orientation in *dance experience* also remains. Experience and presence remain as messages. As archive, suspicion of production also remains. Movement is fundamental to purposeful actions and interactive encounters in all dance; nevertheless, as a matter of stated intent, Hijikata, the rebel, sought a "purposeless" use of the body to avoid the onus of production (1961, 44–45), even as he did carry out many productions.

Nature Remains

Through Husserl and his inheritors, phenomenology presents human life as part of the lifeworld of nature, which is constituted in movement both culturally and organically, like the streaming of atoms in plasma. As alive in time, dance unfolds this flowing life—a larger life of performance than production. Butoh, in particular, thickens bodily points of conversion with environing nature and the social body. To confound messy times, its performers shed the social body to reveal the primal

body—"the body that has not been robbed," as Hijikata famously puts this. Butoh continues, sometimes under other names, spreading into the atmosphere and soil, particularly through the ecologically inspired work of Atsushi Takenouchi who dances in tortured and remote places to heal the earth, as his mentor Ohno-sensei did before him. Like Ohno-sensei, Takanouchi also favors flowers and beauty. Through paradigms of dance experience and participation, butoh imbues "a new being sense" of our belonging to nature and generates transcultural interconnections with ecological conscience.

Figure 4. Takenouchi Atsushi dancing on the Island of Corsica. Photograph by Hiroko Komiya ©2018.

In ontic connection, we circle back to our earlier examinations of subjectivity and the lifeworld, as with a renewed sense of belonging, we emphasize Husserl's ontology, which does not separate subjectivity from nature but notices its power and limits: "subjectivity in its grip upon it changes nature, but alters nothing of the unity of nature as core in its own ontological form" (1995, 189).

All of this can be refined.

> *By now, the cadence and rhythms of phenomenology feel deeply familiar to me, as if they were already in my blood stream. At odd moments they beckon like butoh in friendly bells and echoes. As this morning's early fog blanketed the desert, I reached back in history to draw phenomenology and butoh forward into the new age of electro-acoustic music. I call the music video that resulted, sounding earth. Dancer Robert Bingham morphs through sound and movement in the soft sandstone of Snow Canyon, Utah, as my camera witnesses his dance in the presence of nature.*[15] *I understand the video as a butoh-inflected eco-somatic performance of movement, nature, music and image. But, you might wonder, is it butoh? Imaginably, it is whatever you want it to be. I venture this with Ohno-sensei and Merce Cunningham who both valued the subjective place of the audience. Butoh is the dance of everyday life, which is messy but very precious, as Ohno-sensei also taught.*

Notes

[1] For butoh and WW II, see Fraleigh, "Messy Beauty and Butoh Invalids," in *Dancing Identity: Metaphysics in Motion* (2004, 153–190).

[2] On Deleuze and phenomenology relative to Sartre, see Gün̈zel (2014).

[3] For more on Paul Ricoeur's translation of Husserl, see Don Ihde's forward to the new edition of Ricoeur's *Freedom and Nature* (2007).

[4] As in Sartre's work, the more recent neurophenomenology of Francisco Varela explains how knowledge is embodied and enacted through the senses (Varela 1991, 1996).

[5] Hijikata Tatsumi's DANCE EXPERIENCE no Kai (Hijikata Tatsumi's Dance Experience Meeting) written in English was the title of his first recital/concert in July of 1960. For more on this and eight "dance experience butoh methods" of Hijikata's students, see Hijikata Tatsumi and Ohno Kazuo (Fraleigh and Nakamura 2006, Ch. 4).

[6] Experience is explained as the basis for valuing in axiology (Taylor 1961). For a study of value in environmental ethics, see Taylor (1986).

[7] For the relationship of butoh to Zen Buddhism, see Fraleigh (1999).

[8] Candelario's article appears in Fraleigh and Bingham (2018).

[9] See a full description of his work, MA, in Fraleigh (2010), 167–171.

[10] For more, see Bingham (2018).

[11] Heidegger writes extensively of "the worlding of the world" (1971, 163–86).

[12] For intrinsic value, see Taylor (1961).

[13] Author's conversation with Yoshioka in Broellin Germany, 2003.

[14] For a full description and analysis of Summer Storm through the full-length performance film by Arai Misao (2003), see Fraleigh (2010, Part 2, Ch. 1).

[15] For video, see Fraleigh (2018a). Lou Harrison advised the author's music for dance master of arts study. She hopes he would be happy with the occasional drone of this music video, and its rolled silences in the presence of nature.

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Biography

Sondra Fraleigh is professor emeritus of dance at the State University of New York (SUNY Brockport), a Fulbright Scholar and award-winning author of nine books. She has also published numerous book chapters. Fraleigh was chair of dance at State University of New York at Brockport and later head of graduate dance studies, also selected as a university-wide Faculty Exchange Scholar. She received the Outstanding Service to Dance Award from CORD in 2003, and was a teaching fellow at Ochanomizu University in Tokyo in 1990. At her Eastwest Somatics Institute, Fraleigh develops and teachers her own style of somatics work internationally, including intuitive dance with influences from butoh, her Land to Water Yoga techniques, and Shin Somatics® Bodywork. Phenomenology infuses her somatics perspective.

PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHY

VOCAL PERFORMANCE THROUGH ELECTRICAL FLOWS: MAKING CURRENT KIN

GRETCHEN JUDE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS

Overture: Vocoder Resistance

Video link: Yellow Magic Orchestra

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0HubIA-BGGI&t=1m1s

> Is it me, is it you
> Behind this mask? I ask
> –Yellow Magic Orchestra, "Behind the Mask" (1979)

Starting in the late 1970s, groundbreaking Japanese electropop group Yellow Magic Orchestra—Haruomi Hosono, Yukihiro Takahashi, and Ryuichi Sakamoto (with collaborators Hideki Matsutake and Akiko Yano)—used the vocoder, a voice encoding hardware, to create robotic vocal effects. Inspired by West German electropop quartet Kraftwerk, YMO deployed these effects to achieve an appealing yet subversive sonic style, inspiring early hip-hop artists like Afrika Bambaataa (perhaps consonant with Afrofuturist themes exemplified by jazz visionary Sun Ra).

How did this distorted singing—often described as cold and metallic—resound so successfully with international audiences? East Asian Studies scholar Michael Bourdaughs (2012) hears in YMO's vocals a radical resistance to Orientalist stereotypes of Japanese identity. Bourdaughs asserts that

PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHY VOL 4, NO 2 (2019):393–409
DOI: https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2019.42235
ISSN 2057-7176

the group consciously "appropriated Western stereotypical fantasies of orientalness and performed them back as an empty, parodic identity" (188) as part of their larger "attempt to decouple the sounds being produced from preexisting notions of music as authentic expression of the interiority of the singer" (189). Simulation becomes liberation, as Yellow Magic Orchestra

> undermine the very opposition between inauthenticity and authenticity. Their music, performance styles, and recording techniques [...suggest] that under the conditions of contemporary capitalism and media culture, the fake might be more real than the real itself. (188)

In other words, in their performance of a self-consciously "Japanese" identity, YMO both created a unique sound and called into question the very idea that their (Japanese) sound could be "new" rather than either "traditional" or "imitative" (of Western forms). The band's troubling of the boundary between imitation and authenticity was a high-stakes move within a culture emerging out from under decades of post-war American political and cultural dominance.

The robotic quality of Ryuichi Sakamoto's voice-through-vocoder—an early example of what I term *plasmatic voice*—sonically performs through the posthuman symbiosis of (marked-Japanese) person and machine. Sakamoto's voice emerges cyborg-style through electronic circuitry, through (apparently) apolitical electropop, and challenges racial/national hierarchies through parodically dehumanized vocal timbres. Further, the chorusing effect of the vocoder multiplies the single voice into harmony with itself, even as the clarity of the lyrics is obscured by the early technology's rudimentary processing capabilities. Whether or not we strain to listen across cultural and linguistic borders in order to understand the message, this plasmatic voice affects in unexpected ways, along myriad vectors such as race (in its crosscurrents with Afrofuturist hip-hop) and gender (as in the early work of Laurie Anderson as well as in music by Planningtorock, which will be taken up later in this paper). The queer resonances of plasmatic voice echo out into the nonhuman spaces of the Anthropocene.

Electric Voices: Delineating Fleshly and Plasmatic Vocality

In any discussion of voice (in its most literal sense—as a cry or utterance), there is a human body, which sounds from birth. Even in the absence of encabled electrical current, this fleshly voice (a term inspired by the Japanese term *nikusei*, lit. "meat-voice," which indicates vocalization without electronic intervention) is by necessity always moving, never static. From its inception in the nervous system of a sing/speak/er (when impulses spark across synapses to move lungs-larynx-lips), the resultant sound transduces, emerges, proliferates, and dies down. Vibrating the body and thereby its vicinity, voice is both oscillation (patterned vibration in place) and transmission (of sound waves outward), as air molecules are pushed and pulled concentrically from the sounding body. Moving further out, these expansive movements may multiply through reverberation, as the airy energies bounce off or are absorbed by surfaces (changes in particles' vibrational frequencies). Other materials may resonate upon contact with these sounding molecular waves, creating sympathetic resonances that amplify the voice and let it linger.

With their moving body, a person sounds a space, moving other objects/bodies within the space. The radius of sounding is limited by material constraints: muscular power and resonating technique of the vocalist, surface textures and resonant qualities of other entities in the space (walls, trees, human bodies). Other sounds may arise nearby, perhaps interfering with or adding to the oscillating patterns offered by this fleshly (human) source. Yet soon—not much longer than an exhaled breath—the sound dies down.

The situation changes once the electricity is turned on. Electrical current, created and controlled by human endeavor, flows through cables, offering to transform the power and scope of a voice, in both space and time. Once electrified, the voice moves beyond mere bodily might, potentially amplified above human volume range. In the analog and into the digital age, the voice's oscillations are etched into surfaces and traced through silicon; from these materializations, voices, having left their living bodies further behind than ever before, can be played back indefinitely, in apparent reanimations or imitations of the original bodily movement. When sound waves are converted to representations (either analog or digital) that can be stored as electrical signals, these signals are open to processing and eventually decoded (over and over again) using hardware that converts them into audible sound waves. The subtle vibrations of these electrified materials and processes murmur-creak-shout within the new "voices" as they are rematerialized/reconstituted via the refined electrical flows of our complex (post)industrial global system.

Electricity, existing as energy resulting from the emergence of charged subatomic particles, is widely generated, accumulated, channeled as flow, and consumed by humans via physical networks that now extend over most of the earth's surface. Thus, although in its most elemental form—lightning—electricity moves unpredictably and ephemerally, electrical flows entwine with more solid matter, as its potential rests in human-built infrastructure such as power plants and electrical grids. Early European experiments with electricity powered notions of societal control, as "the taming of electricity suggested a revolution in human beings' relationship to their natural environment, and [...] this same concept was directly translatable into their sociopolitical environment as well" (Hollinghaus 2013, 61). For Americans in the early 20th century, technological innovations that brought electricity into daily use were accompanied by a discourse of electricity as a metaphor for "social progress and better, more exciting living" (62).

Plasmatic voice pushes back against common understanding of technologically-mediated voice (broadly construed as any electrical intervention into or processing of the fleshly sounds emerging from a human vocal system) as additive and prosthetic.

Like the fleshly voice that pre-existed the harnessing of electrical power, plasmatic voice is transitive and relational, facilitating flows of affect and information in the spaces between people. Plasmatic voice is complexly (and not entirely humanly) embodied, its materiality multiplied in its travels and transductions. It remains sensorial and emplaced yet tends to disperse in once unimaginable ways (now made mundane).

In its performance, plasmatic voice happens between and within specific bodies in specific contexts, as it vibrates through keenly embodied senses (never limited to a disconnected ear). Like

its fleshly counterpart, plasmatic voice may evoke in those it touches shared meanings and shareable imaginings. Yet plasmatic voice also works at scales of speed and size that are accessible to human perception only via multiple modes of mediation (often in networks of nebulous control by corporate, governmental, and other entities). In short, plasmatic voice is amorphous and rapid, personal and vast.

Friction Produces Charge

In theorizing plasmatic voice as a vibrant assemblage comprising human and electronic elements, I tap into global flows that transpire unpredictably in local encounters and interactions. In our transcorporeality, we are "intermeshed with the more-than-human world" (Alaimo 2010, 2). We humans are not alone in the world; we humans alone are not the world. The bodies of others inhabit and surround us. The listening/singing self is complicated (and never completed) as it vibrates with proximate and distant others—an intermaterial vibrational practice of deeply embodied and co-constitutive listening and sounding (see Eidsheim 2016). Plasmatic voice accounts for these relations/transductions, working as a listening technique, a concept for critical analysis as well as an electrified singing practice.

As illustrated by my listening to Yellow Magic Orchestra's "Behind the Mask," plasmatic voice faces the structural imbalances of power that make up life in capitalist, (post)colonial, and (hetero)sexist hegemony, while pushing back against Enlightenment humanist understandings of the self. Foregrounding the tactility of friction for interpersonal encounters in such fraught contexts suggests that we admit that we inhabit "zones of awkward engagement, where words mean something different across a divide even as people agree to speak. These zones of cultural friction are transient; they arise out of encounters and interactions" (Tsing 2005, xi).

Unlike approaches to audio technology and performance that feed into and from the values of control and mastery, plasmatic voice (as both intellectual and aesthetic praxis) is rooted in these "awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference" (4). Fiction reminds us of the ameliorative potential of plasmatic voice assemblages, that "heterogeneous and unequal encounters can lead to new arrangements of culture and power" (5), as illustrated in plasmatic encounters that dis/reorient the individual person in/through new contexts and relations.

Furthermore, through contact, friction produces charge—making triboelectricity the epitome of the queer relationship between bodies and current in plasmatic voice. The word "electrum" comes from the Greek word for "amber": that which attracts when rubbed (Fahnestock 1999, 178–179). This etymology underlines the materiality of plasmatic voice, which, while impossible to hold down, is nonetheless emplaced and embodied in its instantiations and performances.

Electrical charge is not itself immaterial. Electricity matters, whether in technological or organic flows. As feminist physicist Karen Barad explains:

> Imaginings, at least in the scientific imagination, are clearly material. Like lightning, they entail a process involving electrical potential buildup and flows of charged particles: neurons transmitting electrochemical signals across synaptic gaps and through ion channels that spark awareness in our brains. (2015, 387–388)

Plasmatic voice, in its electrical entanglements with the processes of being, appears alive—a nonhuman animacy acknowledged in the Japanese word for electricity, *denki*, (lit. "lightning–mind/spirit"). As described by philosopher Brian Massumi, a flash of lightning is an event that also appears as "an extra-effect: a dynamic unity that comes in self-exhibiting excess over its differential conditions. In the immediacy of its own event, the event of lightning is absolutely, self-enjoyingly absorbed in the singularity of its own occurrence, and that's what shows" (2011, 20).

Plasmatic voice as an analytic tool challenges the discourse of technological control. As a practice (of embodied/emplaced listening/singing/thinking) it opens space for feeling failure as its frictions and flashes call into question the teleological progress narrative of the Enlightenment, pushing back against the place of electrical devices (and electricity itself) as "symbols of modernization and progress" (Hollingshaus 2013, 56).

Attending to nonlinear plasmatic flows encourages intermaterial vibrational practice of both listening and sounding, which makes sensible the non-human Other in the voices that emerge from speaker cones and headphones (and elsewhere). As suggested by the complementary notions of queer listening (Bonenfant 2010) and the vocalic body (Connor 2000), plasmatic voice entails the co-creation of a listener's sense of another's body-in-motion, through mediated transductive networks animated by controlled electrical currents.

Furthermore, as Anthropocene changes make clear the inescapable failure of the notion of human-led progress as a sustainable enterprise, plasmatic voice sounds out affective spaces in which to re-sense the impending reality of sweeping devastations, allowing for the possibility of decentering the human in favor of more expansive and flexibly relational ways. Rather than pure virtuosity powerfully amplified above the noise floor of the 21st century, plasmatic voice sounds trashy. It sonifies queer aesthetics that may comfort and connect us, below the dully-repeated trumpet peals of apocalypse.

Unlike vocal power extending through broadcast transmission and amplification technologies that facilitate dominance of a single voice over many, plasmatic voice performs multivocality as many voices sound together—as clearly audible in Yellow Magic Orchestra vocoder chords, in which Sakamoto's single fleshly voice becomes a chord. In later sections, I offer an invitation to listen to further instances of plasmatic voice in popular music through my own perceptual apparatus and affective set, as I shape the idea of plasmatic voice in conversation with myriad other voices.

Plasmatic voice foregrounds the bodily origins of voice while resisting normalization of the individually-sounding human body as central to all analysis, bringing into hearing range the nonhuman in the shifting assemblage of vibrating human and other bodies. This assemblage

resists the more common conception of prosthetic extension, offering a relation of field and flesh that is not additive but something more complex.

The Problem of Prosthesis: Voice + Electronics

The microphone is the main entry point of sound waves (such as a voice originating from a mouth) into the indeterminate chain of multiple interventions (such as transduction, amplification, signal processing) that enables the output of various novel yet human-seeming vocal-like sounds. Yet the microphone, as synecdoche for this dispersed audio network, stands for understandings of technology as prosthetic extension. In models of prosthetic extension, "voice + electronics" promotes an asymmetrical relation of control and power; human-controlled machines extend human dominion. Throughout the development of communications technology, audio devices have been conceptualized as tools that extend human capacity while preserving the normative "humanness" of the unmarked (white, cis-male, able) body (Mills 2012).

Prosthetic logic asserts that the (vibrating) body is a fixed and bounded entity, the function of which can be augmented by the addition of modular technological devices, without qualitative change to either the body or the technology. Dianne Currier (2002) enlists Deleuze and Guattari to take aim at the view of technology as prosthesis, asserting that, "whatever permutations arise from a prosthetic encounter between bodies and technologies, they remain bound within the logic of identity or sameness that structures all binary oppositions" (529). Such a view limits analysis of technology's roles and effects, since the prosthetic equation relies upon "a self-identical and unified self" (530) as its assumed starting point, to which is added a non-self or "'non-body' force or entity" (Ibid.). Thus, prosthetic logic stymies understanding of anything beyond detachable (technological) objects added to a stable (human) self. The diffuse, mutable character of audio networks such as P.A. systems, for example, cannot be accounted for in prosthetic logic. Furthermore, the ways that human vocalists adjust their own voices in response to the lively interventions of a P.A. system in particular acoustic contexts (i.e., moving the mike's position to avoid the squeal of feedback) go largely ignored.

Moreover, the trope of prosthesis reifies normative understandings of human embodiment: "If the prosthesis presumes an enhancement to the 'natural' body [...], then bodies and prostheses are already naturalized rather than being understood as socially constructed" (Jain 1999, 39). Eschewing the prosthetic lens that favors essentialized categories of identity, assemblage theory—when infused with more complex and nuanced understandings of structural identity—can further analysis of plasmatic voice in performance. As we hear in the layers of Sakamoto's vocoder warble, a voice is never simply a human voice.

Deleuze and Guattari's influential term assemblage, translated from the French *agencement*, literally means design, layout, organization, arrangement, and relations. As queer theorist Puar points out, the notion of assemblage as a theoretical term should thus be understood as refocusing analysis from fixed content to tendencies: "relations of force, connection, resonance, and patterning [that] give rise to concepts" (Puar 2012, 57). The human body is thereby not only "de-

privilege[d…] as a discrete organic thing" (Ibid.) but also emplaced within relational networks of human and nonhuman agents and forces. Utilizing assemblage theory in performance analysis entails a shift from valuing "what things are" to "what things do" (Currier 2002, 534). Furthermore, since spatial and temporal conditions of varying scales are also part of an assemblage, such analysis facilitates context-specific modes of thinking. "Becoming," as opposed to "being," challenges the notion of a fixed or essential self, promoting process-based understandings (Currier 2003, 333–334).

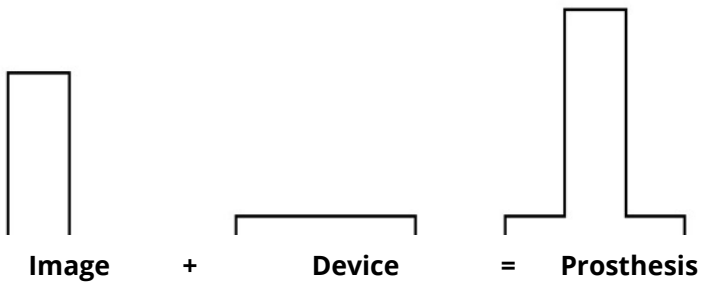

Figure 1.

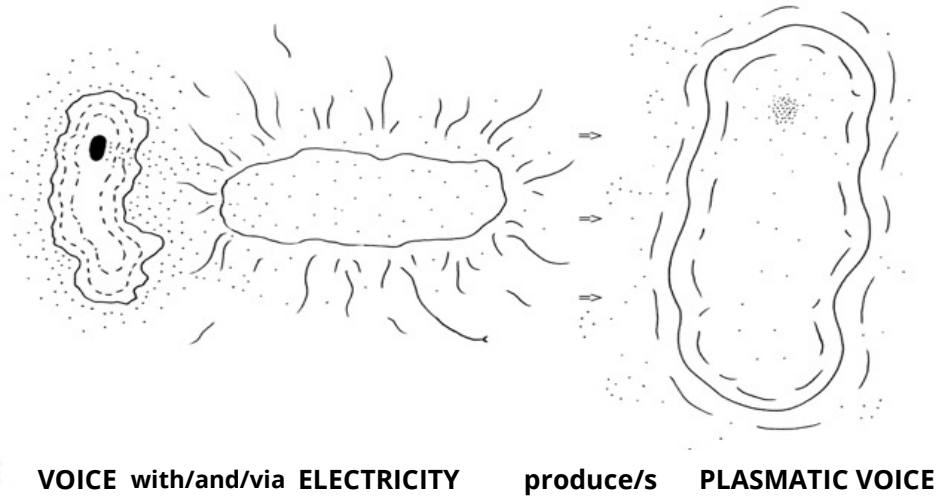

Figure 2.

(Dis)Charge and Plasma

In situations of plasmatic voicing, "what is at issue [...] is the nature of matter and its agential capacities for imaginative, desiring, and affectively charged forms of bodily engagements" (Barad 2015, 388). In its heterogeneous transcorporeality, plasmatic voice can vibrate wildly, shaking off firm boundaries of structural identity and circulating through wide networks, set off by the early impulses of performers like YMO. Just as it charges the fleshly voice to problematize sociopolitical categories, it also challenges understandings of how human technology relates to the nonhuman world.

The electrostatic discharge of a lightning flash occurs as differential electrical charges at a distance resolve to neutrality, but the flow does not move efficiently to resolve difference. Rather, as Barad describes:

> flirtations alight here and there and now and again as stepped leaders and positive streamers gesture toward possible forms of connection to come. The path that lightning takes not only is not predictable but does not make its way according to some continuous unidirectional path between sky and ground. (398)

Indeed, in this electrical interaction, the ground charge flickers upwards toward the sky.

Further, lightning entails the creation of plasma, enacting a change of state in the gaseous molecules of air. Atoms break apart and free (negative) electrons flow in a plasma channel. Plasma, one of the four basic states of matter (the others being solid, liquid, and gas), is not otherwise commonly found on the earth's surface—although solar wind (itself a flow of plasma) in its interactions with the earth's atmosphere creates the polar wind, a massive plasma fountain in the earth's magnetosphere. The auroras visible in the circumpolar regions result from such interactions, as charged particles (or ions) precipitate in the upper atmosphere; more mundane are the low-density plasmas of neon and florescent lights, creating the colored glow of charged particles by adding energy to a sealed tube of ionized gas. A plasma cloud holds no charge, as it contains approximately equal numbers of positive and negative particles; yet it is extremely conductive, filled with the possibility of myriad flows. As lightning creates plasma in the air—and plasma, a field of further possible flows—plasmatic voice, in its unpredictable instantiations of listening and vocalizing, indicates the existence of fields that facilitate dispersed sparks of performances that unsettle humanist hierarchies of order.

At the quantum level of the electron, matter engages in infinite indeterminate involutions, as particles emerge, transform, and transition unpredictably (399–400). "Matter is never a settled matter," asserts Barad, even at the level of elementary particles:

> Matter in its iterative materialization is a dynamic play of in/determinacy. [...] It is always already radically open. Closure cannot be secured when the conditions of im/possibilities and lived indeterminacies are integral, not supplementary, to what matter is. (401)

Plasmatic voice, as concept and practice, engages in its own intimate, indeterminate entanglement with potentials and flows of bodies/devices and electrons. Plasmatic voice energizes vibrational practice, engaging analog and digital networks to enter into transformations at scales that elude human sensory capacity. Yet these plasmatic flows eventually recombine, condense, freeze. No phase change is permanent, and the energetic/energized/energizing indeterminacies of matter-in-motion elude human control.

Plasmatic voice as a listening/singing/thinking practice enables me to attend to the human-bodied voices far from me, as it puts me into ineluctable connection with the impoverished people in faraway factories who make my electronics. It heralds massive climatic changes, both impending and already underway. Plasmatic voice sings with the possibility of phase transition, as a change in quantity (of energy) results in a change in quality (state). If free-moving gas molecules are cooled to a specific temperature, they will condense into a liquid. This change of state binds the molecules together, resulting in a set of altogether different behaviors. Conversely, hotter conditions will force a phase transition from gas to plasma, the process of ionization in which the bonds between molecular particles (electrons and nuclei) themselves are loosened, and ready to conduct electrical flow. Plasmatic voice holds within its diffuse fields the fleshly voice of a human body.

Queer Listening to Vocalic Bodies: Expanding Intensity and Affect

> Queer listening listens out for, reaches toward, the disoriented or differently oriented other. [...] Listening becomes the act of paying intense somatic attention to the ways that our bodies engage with the sonic stimuli around them, in order to decide which emanators of vocal sound to gesture toward, which of these to want and to seek. [...] These stimuli are not just sound. They are tactile. (Bonenfant 2010, 78)

In intermaterial vibration with plasmatic voice, I attend to and extend toward other point-sources of vocal sound phenomenologically, as an individually-embodied organism. In a practice that "reaches toward" abjected or silenced others—and thus outward to the possibility of someone/thing beyond what is (officially) recognized—I sense another as (queerly) myself. The listening "I" is emplaced in time and place, rooted in particular relations to multiple non-"I" elements of multiple intersecting assemblages, via not only sociocultural but also transcorporeal processes of embodiment and othering. Attending to the crucial experience of perceptual intensity that Massumi (2002) discusses as "*the felt reality of relation*" (16, italics in original)—helps to make sense of gap between the me and not-me vibrating together.

Part of the challenge of analyzing somatic experience is that intensity is ineffable. Whereas sociolinguistic qualification operates on the level of content, intensity resists assimilation through language alone, since intensity is a matter of degree. If language constructs a linear temporal flow in "a world of constituted objects and aims" (26), then intensity—functioning as a complicating "immediacy of self-relation" (14)—fluctuates in nonlinear patterns of resonance, like sound waves echoing back and forth through the air between walls.

Similarly, affect (that is, the potential to affect or be affected) resonates with vibratory motion. Affect can be recognized as emotion only once it is reinserted into narrative time via social convention as "intensity owned and recognized" (28). Affect occurs in temporal flux, as an entity's fluctuating "powers to affect and be affected" fold and feed back into future and past contemporaneity with the present (15). This folding of time forms memory. Variation in intensity is felt, as "feedback and feedforward, or recursivity [...] folds the dimensions of time into each other" (15).

A third state between active and passive, affect may be said to be the zero point in an oscillation, the critical point of emergence. In the assemblage of plasmatic voice, when electrical components energize, then exceed, human sensory thresholds (via extreme speed, for example), the intensity of bodily affect undergoes sudden transformation. Witness the perceptual shift of what sounds like (or more accurately, is sensible as) a pulsating rumble (of, say, 10 Hertz or cycles per second) into a deep continuous bass when the frequency shifts into the audible range for humans (between 20 and 20,000 Hertz for the average adult).

Video link: Low Frequency Test Tones

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n5visUIa2MY

Yet affective resonation occurs within the organismal boundaries of a (human) body, leaving nonhuman materialities unaccounted for: "With the body, the 'walls' are the sensory surfaces. The intensity is experience. The emptiness or in-betweenness filled by experience is the incorporeal dimension [of indeterminate potential]" (14). Media theorist Mark Hansen (2004) similarly suggests a human organismal bias:

> When the body acts to enframe digital information [...] what it frames is in effect itself: its own affectedly experienced sensation of coming into contact with the digital. In this way, the act of enframing information can be said to "give body" to digital data—to transform something that is unframed, disembodied, and formless into concrete embodied information intrinsically imbued with (human) meaning. (13)

Yet the process of embodiment in plasmatic contexts is always already beyond human, since we continually redefine ourselves in relation to our shifting transcorporeal conditions:

> The energy and impulses of bodies and electronic circuitry combine and find new forms, and they are traversed by flows of light, information, signs, sociality, sexuality, conversation, and contact that give rise to differing meanings, experiences, and configurations of bodies and technologies. (Currier 2002, 535)

After all, a body in motion (in time and space) does not coincide with itself, but rather "with its own transition: its own variation" (Massumi 2002, 4). Thus, a body in motion is not quite itself. Frequency (as of a sound wave) functions as a similar combination of repetition and variation to create the

molecular oscillations of air pressure that make up the sound. A body carries a charge of indeterminacy in "its openness to an elsewhere and otherwise that it is, in any here and now" (5). Or put another way, "the air is charged with possibility" (Puar 2012, 61). The challenge for critics and artists, listeners and vocalists alike, is to develop language that does not dampen the charge of "*the felt reality of relation*" (Massumi 2002, 16), but, rather, that expands the possibilities of the critical apparatus of a mutually sensing assemblage beyond a lonesome human skin. Plasmatic voice as queer listening practice allows for a vibratory sensation of what lies beyond the breakdown of rigid gender categories, a moving venture into the (as-yet) unknown.

***Break*: Pitch-shift Transduction**

Video link: Planningtorock

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0fAJ7nlD3_Y&t=36s

> I know my feelings
> Under my deep skin
> Crawling out from my feelings
> I know my ceiling
> Took me into a doorway
> –Planningtorock, "Doorway" (2011)

Planningtorock performs this plasmatic becoming, as their voice resounds via the material flows of electronic sound technology, pushing the limits of conventional gender signification, another queering. When hearing a voice (a shifting pattern of sound waves shaped by a moving vocal tract) in everyday contexts, social categories of gender push the listener to locate the sound of every voice within a binary category of gender. And yet as literary scholar Steven Connor (2000) suggests in his theorization of the vocalic body, such an aural confection ("a man's voice" versus "a woman's voice" or vice versa) exists within the listener's perceptual processes at least as much as it is suggested by the singer's physical presence:

> What kind of thing is a vocalic body? What sorts of vocalic bodies are there? Such bodies are not fixed and finite, nor are they summarizable in the form of a typology, precisely because we are always able to imagine and enact new forms of voice-body. (36)

As thoughtless performances and cruel enforcements of binary gender fall away (including "objective" scientific research that claims universality of categories and results based in culturally-specific norms), expressions of gender that do not conform to narrow assumptions and overgeneralized averages bloom and flower through the queering potential of plasmatic voice.

Listening to Planningtorock's words sung by a voice that is pitch-shifted and formant-adjusted to fall precisely upon the gender faultline between cis-male and cis-female (for a normative English singer), my own queer body resonates sympathetically. I attend to the vibrational world around

me, to the ways that the air shimmers sonically, and from these sounds I perceive/construct the vibrating source that produced some portion of those shimmers. Without knowing that I do so, I identify and prioritize which of those shimmers and their attendant source(s) are most important for my continued organismal existence. The flow is ongoing and there are myriad airy vibrations in every moment of the ongoing co-creation of my vibrational world. Perhaps I sound in response, and/or attend to familiar soundings, the voices coming from similar cousin-shapes—what I perceive as the soundings of kin. I open toward their echoes. My own body vibrates in time with the gender nonbinary vocalic-body that I hear/create.

A voice exists outside/between bodies, yet always implies the sounding of a particular body. We hear context in that voice as well: the acoustic space of origin (as well as distance and position from the listening ear) in the sound of an acoustic voice. In amplified and recorded voices, we hear the qualities of machines added into those vocal timbres—even as we feel certain of our ability to identify in those machinic voices the specific bodies of the singers we love. A voice is always a body in a place—and just as the place may be artificial (e.g., the large hard space conjured by electronic reverb) so now too may the voice.

Plasmatic voice as intermaterial vibration entails the co-creation of a listener's sense of (another's) body-in-motion. The feeling of that body's humanness is a complex and shifting assemblage of social/cultural conventions, biological functions (of the sounding and perceptual systems), and technical designs. In encoded and re-synthesized voices, we hear not the external, visible forms of artificial bodies, but the shifting vibrations of acoustical models animated by digital software and electrical current—and then through the internal sympathetic vibrations of our very own eardrums transduced into our nervous systems.

As "the voice-body is […] a body-in-invention, an impossible, imaginary body in the course of being found and formed" (Connor 36), they/we resonate non-binary plasmatic voices beyond our own collective making—vocal bodies of people who exceed the limits of ethnic identity and binary gender, to vibrate with future sounds of now-coming-into-being. Such intermaterial vibrational practice as it moves into the interstices of failure is a very queer art.

Sounding the Queer Art of Failure: Digital Trash and the Materiality of Electrons

> To live is to fail, to bungle, to disappoint, and ultimately to die; rather than searching for ways around death and disappointment, the queer art of failure involves the acceptance of the finite […] Rather than resisting endings and limits, let us instead revel in and cleave to all of our own inevitable fantastic failures. (Halberstam 2011, 187)

Plasmatic voice as queer sonic practice may suggest new ways of becoming less human and more humane, as we enter into vibratory relation with the world-in-breakdown. Oblique to the queerness of plasmatic voice is Haraway's appeal to "make kin sym-chthonically, sym-poetically" (2015, 161) as a move toward amelioration of the ecological and ethical problems of Anthropocene.

However, making kin of electrical current, a human-controlled refinement of a phenomenon that is one definition of animate life, requires coming to terms with the unsustainability of audio technology.

Plasmatic performance requires highly refined nonhuman components (i.e., audio hardware) and processes (i.e., steady electrical current) to exist. Such components make plasmatic voice as practice both a product of and contributor to the Anthropocene. As Jonathan Sterne writes:

> "New" media technologies as we know them, and all of their components, are defined by their own future decomposition. Obsolescence is a nice word for disposability and waste. Billions of pieces of computers, Internet hardware, cellphones, portable music devices, and countless other consumer electronics have already been trashed or await their turn. The entire edifice of new communications technology is a giant trash heap waiting to happen, a monument to the hubris of computing and the peculiar shape of digital capitalism. (2007, 17)

In other words, the failure of media hardware produces fodder for the burgeoning technosphere, a new part of earth's system that may be considered an offspring of the biosphere and human systems. The technosphere now co-comprises the realm of contemporary human endeavor:

> The technosphere as defined here comprises our complex social structures together with the physical infrastructure and technological artifacts supporting energy, information and material flows that enable the system to work, including entities as diverse as power stations, transmission lines, roads and buildings, farms, plastics, tools, airplanes, ballpoint pens and transistors. (Zalasiewoicz et al. 2017, 2–3)

The processes contributing to the technosphere show no signs of slowing, but rather "[c]ontinuous growth, transformation and re-incorporation takes place among these components, and its scope is now global" (11). Its physical aspect is estimated to have a mass of 30 trillion tons—"five orders of magnitude greater" than the earth's present human biomass (Ibid.)—which, at its current population of over seven billion individuals, is itself both unprecedented and difficult to imagine:

> The enormous scale of the technosphere by comparison to pre-anthropogenic systems becomes even more apparent when one considers that present human biomass is more than double that of all large terrestrial vertebrates that characterized the Earth prior to human civilization and is an order of magnitude greater than present wild terrestrial vertebrate biomass. (Ibid.)

Current taxonomies cannot account for individual elements such as electromagnetic waves that leave only ephemeral physical traces; examination of the technosphere requires "devising classifications of technological morphology and ultimately making connection to dynamical considerations, for instance of energy flows" (3).

Furthermore, the technosphere as a whole has emergent qualities, dependent upon human action (both individual and collective) but ultimately beyond the reach of human control, operating with

"quasi-autonomous dynamics" (Haff 2014, 126). These emergent and unpredictable flows are an ineluctable part of the dire matter of the Anthropocene, as the "success" of capitalism's systems of planned obsolence turns into the "failure" of the global climate to support human life.

Plasmatic voice as posthuman vibration must be engaged in ways that take into account the high tech trash that comprises "a catastrophic dimension of that middle space between fantasy and accomplishment" (Sterne 2007, 29). Going further, we must understand the dispersed assemblages of electrical mains systems and audio hardware (in relation to ourselves as listeners/singers) as something beyond mere mechanical tools—engaging plasmatic voice as a "method for imagining, not some fantasy of an elsewhere, but existing alternatives to hegemonic systems" (Halberstam 2011, 89). Attuning to (other) queer bodies reaches further, toward the nonhuman world upon which humans rely.

Donna Haraway, in her writings on the Anthropocene (or the Capitalocene, Plantationocene, or Cthulucene), suggests:

> If there is to be multispecies ecojustice, which can also embrace diverse human people, it is high time that feminists exercise leadership in imagination, theory, and action to unravel the ties of both genealogy and kin, and kin and species. (2015, 161)

Kin-making, or "making persons, not necessarily as individuals or as humans" (Ibid.) is one alternative to the human-centric lifeways that build and sustain the failing human/nonhuman systems of the technosphere. Improviser, programmer, and music scholar George E. Lewis (2000) suggests that such personhood may be extended beyond biological entities that Haraway proposes to be made kin, to our very tools and instruments:

> The "anti-authoritarian" impulse in improvisation led me to pursue the project of de-instrumentalizing the computer. If the computer is not treated as a musical instrument, but as an independent improvisor, difference is partly grounded in the form of program responses that are not necessarily predictable on the basis of outside input. (36)

As human-bodied organisms, we have the propensity to hear voices, even beyond the human, thereby giving voice to flows and motions beyond culturally recognizable beings' fleshly embodiment. This listening ability exhibits our capability to enlarge our vibrational practice to include not only human(oid) motion but also environments and ecosystems.

Coda: Vocoder Dissolution

Audio link: Black Moth Super Rainbow
https://blackmothsuperrainbow.bandcamp.com/track/new-breeze

New breeze came, the evil won't stay
New breeze came and drove it away
Fallout rain wears down the paint
Doomsday downgrade, swallow nightshade
I got a sunburn fever
I got so high from a creeper
I always dissolve when I'm near you
I hope you're here when I fall through
–Black Moth Super Rainbow, "New Breeze" (2018)

Pennsylvania (U.S.A.) pop experimentalists Black Moth Super Rainbow utilize an eclectic array of electronics (including vocoder) to produce a surprisingly organic sonic atmosphere. Here, the singer's voice-through-vocoder sounds neither robotic nor human. Rather, white noise whispers gently through the low, humming pitches of the melody, almost devoid of the formants that typically characterize a human vocal tract, to evoke something more like a warm wind. Add ample reverb and a warbling synth counterpoint and the lyrics soar, as though sung by distant bees, a grove of trees, or even the air itself. Yet in both timbre and text, the musical aesthetic avoids the nostalgic trope of "pristine nature," as the materiality of audio technology itself intrudes into the music. Glitchy stutters in the vocals at the beginning of each verse—like an old cassette tape with its magnetic layer flecking off, or even as if the headphone jack connection is right this instant shorting out—evoke the more-than-humanness of the scene, in which environmental forces and technology create a posthuman environment into which the myth of human control blurs and fades.

Listening (as a post-lunch body walking in a valley under a raucously cloudy sky, earbuds tightly in-ear cabled to battery-powered mp3 player with a recent internet link), I long to dissolve alongside this plasmatic voice, which is simultaneously recognizable as a singer of English yet next-to-unimaginable as a human-bodied person. Intermaterial vibration along with this sound tickles open hitherto unimagined queer affective spaces inside, which hint at "the dissolution of boundaries that shore up human exceptionalism" (Alaimo 2017, 112). From a mask to a doorway to a breeze, I hear performance-becoming-present though shared sonic vibration, as alternating current makes alterity kin.

Attending to the interface between human and nonhuman, with an openness to affect and its accompanying becoming-with, provides an alternate starting point for responding to the dreadful problems posed by the Anthropocene. Rather than clinging to human-centric affective logics of (post)apocalypse—anger, depression, paralysis—moving, instead, with plasmatic voice makes tangible the possibility of moving toward new lives always emerging.

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Biography

Dr. Gretchen Jude, a scholar-practitioner of sound, completed her Ph.D. in Performance Studies at the University of California, Davis, in June 2018. Gretchen's dissertation engaged with intersections of voice and audio technology in Japanese experimental and popular music.

Gretchen also holds an M.F.A. in Electronic Music and Recording Media from Mills College, as well as koto [Japanese zither] certification from the Sawai Koto Institute in Tokyo. In both academic work and performance research, Gretchen aims to synthesize and harmonize personal, embodied experience with the rapid changes in culture and machinery that both empower and impinge upon us.

PERFORMANCE
PHILOSOPHY

COLLABORATION AS DIFFERENTIATION: RETHINKING INTERACTION INTRA-ACTIVELY

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Wherever you are, imagine three other people sharing the space with you. They are seated on the floor, legs crossed, backs straight, eyes closed, hands on knees, wearing loose-fitting skin that is not their own. They are breathing slowly and calmly but deeply and audibly. They are wearing headphones that indicate when to inhale and when to exhale. Their breath is regular; they take precisely six seconds to fill their lungs to capacity, and then another six seconds to completely void their lungs of air. Take a few breaths with them…in for six seconds…out for six seconds…in…out. It's ok if the imposed regularity of the clock is uncomfortable, it's supposed to be. This is not normal involuntary breathing, nor is it Pranayama, nor is it recovery from physical exertion. It's an exercise in aligning a bodily process to one of mechanical regularity.

PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHY VOL 4, NO 2 (2019):410–433
DOI: https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2019.42234
ISSN 2057-7176

PRELUDE: CHOREOGRAPHY, COMPOSITION, AND INTERACTION

As composer-choreographer, we create work for stage and installation that is often described as "interactive performance," perhaps owing to our use of technologies for biosensing and motion-tracking. Through our appropriation, use, and misuse of technologies from other disciplines, we have become implicated in cross-disciplinary discourse regarding interaction, and interaction design. We must acknowledge from the outset, however, that we do not believe there is such a thing as performance without interaction, or performance without technology. We employ the terms "interaction" and "technology" in their broadest senses and with intentional ambiguity to evoke the multiplicity of meanings they perform in different disciplinary contexts (music, dance, computer science, physics, chemistry, statistics). This paper is an attempt to interrogate assumptions regarding interaction within our own and other disciplines as a way of caring for our relationship to these fields. Our interest here is not to define interaction, nor to challenge or critique existing interpretations of the term. We also do not desire a common language across disciplines, such that we may design interaction together in a way that we all appear to understand, at the expense of collapsing the specificity of our different perspectives. As choreographer-composer traversing disciplinary cultures, what we are after, really, are strategies for interdisciplinary collaboration that resist subjugation of viewpoints and that not only tolerate, but rather require *critical* difference between practices to thrive.

We begin by arguing that the concept of "interaction" can only take on meaning in a situated context and is therefore an object subject to design. We look to Karen Barad's notion of "intra-action" as a way of framing the process of constructing concepts such as "interaction" and "things that interact," as well as the concept of "intra-action" itself (Barad 2007). From that viewpoint, we then discuss Susan Leigh Star's concept of "boundary objects," which, since its introduction in 1989, has become an important tool in the analysis of collaborative work. One of our goals in this discussion is to better understand how the concept of boundary objects relates to consensus and difference. Finally, we propose a practice of "critical appropriation" in which we assert that all use of technology (broadly construed) involves appropriation—an act of taking and making our own. Sustained attention to the ongoing act of appropriation, always already underway through use, is a practice of care for the multiplicity of that which is being used, and more generally, a practice of care for difference.

Move closer to one of the breathers, and sit down on the floor so that your knees are almost touching theirs. Really try to match the regularity of the breathing of the person directly in front of you. Now reach into the chest of this person. Through the skin that is not theirs, between the bones, and find their heart. Hold it with both hands as you continue to synchronize your breath with theirs.

Composers, choreographers, architects, engineers, city planners, human computer interaction designers, all construct technologies (public spaces, machines, software, choreography, buildings, compositions) that restrict and encourage different types of behavior in time. Across these and myriad other disciplinary practices, the approach of any designer to shaping relationships between "things" (e.g. bodies, data, or ideas), positions the designer in relation to these "things" as objects of interaction, without precluding the designer being one of these objects. This design process is grounded in understandings of what these things *are* as objects of interaction, and therefore, what they *can do*, that are rooted in the conceptual frame and intentions of the designer. Many aspects of this conceptual frame may remain tacit and implicit throughout the design process—ideas about humans, non-humans, bodies, machines, technology, interaction, computation, space, time, gender, race, etc. Approaching interaction design by engaging in processes intended to make these aspects of the conceptual frame, and the values that underlie its construction, explicit, offers opportunities to treat these constitutive differences which bound conceptions of "things" as objects themselves in the design process.

We propose that interaction design be coupled with *intra*-active design, i.e. a continual and explicit engagement in the local production of subjectivity, which positions the interaction designer as an entity in the context of interaction. The concept of "intra-action" is not offered here as a replacement for, or redefinition of "interaction." Each of these concepts only becomes meaningful through its situated use and utility, which is defined, in part, by its continual differentiation from the other. By differentiating between interaction and intra-action we do not arrive at a binary explanation; rather, the concepts of interaction and intra-action only come to matter *intra-actively* in a given design practice. Interaction and intra-action become entangled in any examination of the ways in which the value systems of the designers have become inscribed within the technologies and techniques of an interactive system. For example:

Imagine that we wish to design a device like the Microsoft Kinect—an array of cameras and microphones with a microprocessor that produces an estimate of the number of human bodies in its field of vision and a representation of the positions of the joints of those bodies. During the design process the designers must answer, implicitly and/or explicitly, questions concerning what constitutes a human body and how it will be represented. Does it have four limbs? If not, how many can it have? Can it be in a wheelchair? A bed? What types of clothing can it be wearing? The designers also must ask where a body can be—can it be outside? Underwater? Is the body free to move through the same physical space as the device we are designing, or is it encumbered by the limits of the field of vision of the cameras? Answers to these questions, and no doubt a host of others, describe what bodies *are* and *can do* from the viewpoint of the object to be designed. As the object is built, these *descriptions* become *inscribed* in the hardware, software, operating instructions, training videos, etc., and ultimately produce a set of *prescriptions* for *how, where, and what to be and do* if one wishes to be identified as an object of interaction in this context.

These prescriptions delimit the boundaries of a community populated by those who are able, willing, and interested to participate in interaction as put forward by the designers of a given technology. They are the foundations of culture, discipline, knowledge, and power in this community, and construct the group of objects available for interaction, as well as the locally-derived concept of interaction itself. In this paper, we shift our focus from the design of interaction between objects to the situated design of the culture organizing things that interact. This requires attention to those aspects of interaction design concerned with the construction of boundaries for the purposes of organizing objects of interest.

Cultures and their constituent parts—disciplines, knowledge, subcultures, politics, conflicts, etc.—are not stable, and cannot be represented in their totality through any means. The process of referencing a community, a culture, a discipline, is a process of stabilization through various forms of in-, ex-, oc-, and transclusion. This process is the construction of a social object belonging to the community engaged in observation and reference; to say that this object is distinct from the community being observed would be to engage in a second processual construction of a community as a social object. Such an object, related to Durkheim's concept of a "social fact," is itself a process in relation with those engaged in its construction, and, as such, may not be referenced or represented in its totality. The relationship of these societies with those who construct them depends on the ways in which their borders have been designed to include, exclude, occlude, or transclude their designers.

Judith Butler points to the haunting of constructed borders by all that has been rendered invisible, yet remains (1993, 8). The absent presence of objects of non-interest is what stabilizes interpretations of objects of interest within a locally-derived system of interaction. That which constitutes a body in the eyes of the Kinect (or more generally, that which constitutes a body or object of interest in a system of classification), is set against that which it views as lacking bodily coherence, a view that overlaps with that of the designers. This body and other-than-body require one another in order to differentiate their ontologies through an ongoing process of constitutive constraint, which is never resolved once and for all. It warrants consideration then: "Given this understanding of construction as constitutive constraint, is it still possible to raise the critical question of how such constraints not only produce the domain of intelligible bodies, but produce as well a domain of unthinkable, abject, unlivable bodies?" (xi). Through their shared becoming, bodies of interest and bodies of non-interest remain entangled and intra-active, haunting one another as exteriorities within, resisting binary designation, and threatening the sovereignty of the local system of interaction. The "filtered-out" bodies, gestures, and "noise" of an interactive system remain integral to the coherence and operation of that system. Reiterating, with difference:

> it is not enough to claim that human subjects are constructed, for the construction of the human is a differential operation that produces the more and the less "human," the inhuman, the humanly unthinkable. These excluded sites come to bound the "human" as its constitutive outside, and to haunt those boundaries as the persistent possibility of their disruption and rearticulation. (8)

When the sanctity of the objects of interest is undermined by the absent presence of their obligatory others, the designer must look beyond the discretized frame of interaction, towards the continual field of intra-action of which they themselves are part.

Bring your attention to the gradual changes in tempo of the heart you are holding. Speeding up as the lungs are filled, slowing down as the breath is released. Stay here for a moment, just focusing on the gradual shifts in tempo of the heartbeat with the breath.

Now bring your attention to the pulses themselves, those movements that fill your hands and produce tempo. Feel the ways each beat marks and divides the breath, and the ways the breath groups the beats. Perhaps those groups begin to take on character, shape, meter.

Take note of moments when a beat happens to occur at the moment of a transition from an inhale to an exhale, or an exhale to an inhale. Or a beat that happens to perfectly divide the breath into equal halves.

Now bring that same attention to the beats that fall in relations with the breath that are not so simple to categorize. Moments when the beats seem to be floating against the metrical regularity of the breath, before they lock back in briefly, only to float away again.

INTRA-ACTIVE DESIGN AS COLLECTIVE SUBJECTIVATION: FROM CAUSALITY TO ENTANGLEMENT

Intra-action is a neologism coined by Karen Barad which she describes as signifying "the mutual constitution of entangled agencies" and can be understood as shifting the focus from the individualistic notion of things interacting and cause/effect dualism to the material-discursive production of subjects and objects that intra-act (2007, 33). In her article "Quantum Entanglements and Hauntological Relations of Inheritance: Dis/continuities, SpaceTime Enfoldings, and Justice-to-Come," she elaborates:

> In contrast to the usual 'interaction', the notion of *intra-action* recognises that distinct entities, agencies, events do not precede, but rather emerge from/through their intra-action. 'Distinct' agencies are only distinct in a relational, not an absolute sense, that is, agencies are only distinct in relation to their mutual entanglement; they don't exist as individual elements. Importantly, intra-action constitutes a radical reworking of the traditional notion of causality. (Barad 2010, Note 1, 267, original italics)

While discourse about interaction, itself a thing, requires things that interact, discourse about intra-action involves processes of stabilization and destabilization (of these processes), the continual

making and unmaking of things. Whereas things like interaction are often visualized using arrows to represent information moving from one object to another, an aspect of intra-action concerns the way in which those arrows and their directionality get constructed—the notion of cause and effect is replaced by entanglement.

Similar ideas can be found in the writings of Deleuze and Guattari:

> Mimicry is a very bad concept, since it relies on binary logic to describe phenomena of an entirely different nature. The crocodile does not reproduce a tree trunk, any more than the chameleon reproduces the colors of its surroundings. The Pink Panther imitates nothing, it reproduces nothing, it paints the world its color, pink on pink; this is its becoming-world, carried out in such a way that it becomes imperceptible itself [...] ([1980] 1987, 11)

It is not enough here to reverse the arrows and say that the tree trunk reproduces the skin of the crocodile—that is simply a judgment made from another perspective framed by mimicry, imitation, reproduction, evolution, etc. Another way to say this is that the chameleon is a process in continual change (becoming), and as such cannot be represented through any means, material, discursive, or otherwise. When we label it "the chameleon" and discuss what it may or may not be doing when it "changes color," we have produced a necessarily incomplete representation of it—a new object—that omits an infinitude of aspects that fade into imperceptibility. What was omitted was done so due to our context, our frame of reference, and our current set of intentions concerning our construction and use of the chameleon *(i.e., making a point in this paper).*

Conceptual shifts such as these are radical as they are invitations to uproot the settled knowledge and resolved disputes of a discipline, to probe those aspects of disciplinary knowledge that ground practice. Just such a shift formed the basis of the approach to what Félix Guattari and Jean Oury referred to as "institutional psychotherapy" as practiced at the psychiatric clinic of La Borde since the 1950s where "everything there is set up so that psychotic patients live in a climate of activity and assume responsibility, not only with the goal of developing an ambience of communication, but also in order to create local centres for collective subjectivation. Thus it's not simply a matter of remodeling a patient's subjectivity—as it existed before a psychotic crisis—but of a production *sui generis*" (Guattari 1995, 6). This approach has profound implications not just for the working methods of the institution, but the institution itself: "one could not consider psychotherapeutic treatment for the seriously ill without taking the analysis of institutions into account. Reciprocally, the conception of individual treatment came to be revised, bringing greater attention to the institutional context" (Guattari 2015, 61). Guattari's views represent a turn away from individualism:

> So we are proposing to decentre the question of the subject onto the question of subjectivity. Traditionally, the subject was conceived as the ultimate essence of individuation, as a pure, empty, prereflexive apprehension of the world, a nucleus of sensibility, of expressivity—the unifier of states of consciousness. With subjectivity, we place the emphasis instead on the founding instance of intentionality. This involves taking the relation between subject and object by the middle and foregrounding the expressive instance. (Guattari 1995, 22)

In the context of interaction design, "taking the relation between subject and object by the middle" requires letting go of interpretations of mimicry and causality between pre-constituted "things." Only through their differentiation within processes of subjectivation and intra-action do discrete "things" *become*, and therefore become available as objects that can be made to interact.

> *Continuing to stay attentive to the complex temporal relationship between the breath and the heart, begin to imagine the hearts of the other two breathers in the room with you. Imagine that although their breathing is the same as the person in front of you, and their hearts follow similar patterns of acceleration and deceleration, the three of them produce a complex counterpoint of pulses out of which you find yourself in the continual process of making and unmaking rhythmic patterns, all against the* cantus firmus *of the breath.*

INTERLUDE: WHAT-WE-MEAN-BY-INTERACTION

We pause here to bring awareness to our own process of weaving together appropriated passages of text by immanent philosophers in order to construct a narrative that is ours, not theirs, and designed to convince you the reader to consider our frame of reference. These authors and passages have been chosen strategically not just for the profundity of their ideas, but with full knowledge of our use of their discursive gravity as a technology of power. "My inhibitions, as you can see, can be expressed only by being dressed up in external statements, and now that I am using quotations as weapons of debate, I will offer some more in the hope of salvation" (Guattari 2015, 208):

> Discourse is not what is said; it is that which constrains and enables what can be said. Discursive practices define what counts as meaningful statements. Statements are not the mere utterances of the originating consciousness of a unified subject; rather, statements and subjects emerge from a field of possibilities. This field of possibilities is not static or singular but rather is a dynamic and contingent multiplicity. (Barad 2003, 819)

> Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it, any more than silences are. We must make allowance for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. (Foucault [1976]1990, 100–101)

> To what extent does discourse gain the authority to bring about what it names through citing the conventions of authority? And does a subject appear as the author of its discursive effects to the extent that the citational practice by which he/she is conditioned and mobilized remains unmarked? Indeed, could it be that the production of the subject as originator of his/her effects is precisely a consequence of this dissimulated citationality? (Butler 1993, xxi)

Papers such as these are often described as contributions to this or that field; however, in consideration of the frame of reference established in the previous sections, we must acknowledge the inherently intra-active nature of such a contribution. We see this work as a contribution to the discourse intended to shape the contexts in which conceptions of "interaction" and "things that interact" are produced. The production of a definition of "interaction" is the production of subjects included within the boundaries of that definition, as well as the domain of the excluded, who come to haunt that boundary. The design of interaction necessarily includes becoming subject to "what-we-mean-by-interaction."

Intra-action is related to collective modes of work such as collaboration, cooperation, coordination, teamwork, etc., but generalized to take into account that these notions themselves are produced through intra-action and that the participants, human or otherwise, are never stable, but are in continual processes of becoming and unbecoming. Intra-action can be seen as the dark matter that binds these continually changing, partially understood objects together in an ontogenetic becoming-universe.

The primary question with which we are concerned is how, and to what extent, we may design that universe, and what is at stake in the choice of different approaches. In the following sections, we investigate the concepts of boundary objects, diffraction, and critical appropriation as potential approaches to intra-active design.

Return your attention to the pulsing heart in your hands.

IS THIS A BOUNDARY OBJECT?

In the social sciences broadly, and human computer interaction and science and technology studies specifically, the concept of "boundary objects" is often deployed to describe and facilitate interaction between communities. Introduced by Susan Leigh Star in 1989, the concept was also intended as a provocation to the artificial intelligence community to reconsider notions of what constitutes intelligence from the standpoint of cooperative work in open systems. The following year, Star and James Griesemer refined the concept, demonstrating and advocating its use as an analytical tool to frame the cooperative actions of the players involved in the early years of UC Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology (Star and Griesemer 1989). By way of a definition, Star and Griesemer offer the following:

> Boundary objects are objects which are both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and the constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites. They are weakly structured in common use, and become strongly structured in individual-site use. These objects may be abstract or concrete. They have different meanings in different social worlds but their structure is common enough to more than one world to make them recognizable, a means of translation. (Star and Griesemer 1989, 393)

Star and Griesemer write that the production and management of boundary objects "is a key process in developing and maintaining coherence across intersecting social worlds" (Ibid.). Isto Huvila goes a step further, stating that they "are a precondition for communication, cooperative work, and having reached mutual goals" (2011, 3). Star and Griesemer describe boundary objects as an expansion of what Callon called *interessement*: "*Interessement* is the group of actions by which an entity [...] attempts to impose and stabilize the identity of the other actors it defines through its problematization. Different devices are used to implement these actions" (Callon 1986, 8). While these two analytical approaches are similar, Star and Griesemer emphasize the construction and use of objects that get created to negotiate the boundaries between viewpoints rather than the processes of translation of information as it crosses boundaries.

For Star, the term "object" is meant to be understood in a variety of pragmatic, disciplinary, and material senses, as

> something people (or, in computer science, other objects and programs) act toward and with. Its materiality derives from action, not from a sense of prefabricated stuff or "thing"-ness. So, a theory may be a powerful object. Although it is embodied, voiced, printed, danced, and named, it is not exactly like a [heart] that has four [chambers]. A [heart] *may* be a boundary object [...]. (Star 2010, 603, original italics)

The point being made here is that the materiality of an object, be it a theory or a heart, does not determine whether or not it is or can be a boundary object. Rather, it is the differential materialization of this object through its performance within overlapping systems and worlds, always underway and always in relation to the materialization of other objects, that informs interpretations of it as a boundary object.

Imagine a healthy, beating heart, fully functional in its capacity as an organ sustaining life in a young pig. In this capacity, it sustains the basic biological systems of the body, but also requires those same systems in order to function. Now imagine the heart, i.e. the muscle, cut from those systems and removed from the pig. Displaced from its role in the sustenance of the body in which it was grown, it is now free to be used in other ways, as food, as an object in a piece of art, or perhaps even, as seems likely at the time of this writing, it may find use as a functioning heart again, ensuring the longevity of a being from another species. The specific heart that we are imagining was one that was bought from a *triperie* in Nice; it was intended to be sold for food, and indeed, we intended to eat it, but only after filming it as an object of choreography. We spent two days exploring and filming intimate touch with each other and the heart, after which, we could no longer imagine the heart in its capacity as food.

So, is this pig's heart a boundary object? This question requires the construction of a context in which this question matters. We could discuss its role in terms of capitalism, the geopolitics of meat consumption, animal rights. We could also discuss it in terms of its role in shaping the exploration of touch and movement in an artistic context between two people with different disciplinary backgrounds. We can also see the construction of the pig's heart through description

and recollection for the purpose of arguing that boundary objects are always constructed *a posteriori* in order to shape the viewpoint of a peer group, rather than through use as suggested by the literature. There is a grave risk for us here that one day you may encounter the short film in which we handle the pig's heart and see it as an example used to make a claim about boundary objects, or worse, you may think that it was produced with that purpose in mind (we assure you it was not).

The point being made here illustrates a bifurcation of a boundary object into an object constructed through cooperative work, and an analytical object used to describe said work. An ethnographer studying cooperative work is also implicated in cooperative work. For the people under study, theories and other "things" have the potential to become boundary objects in the context of their cooperative work. However, when described as such by the ethnographer, these objects, along with the people that use them, may also become boundary objects in the production of knowledge between the ethnographer and the ethnographer's peer group. This is to say that the construction of a boundary object to describe aspects of collective work becomes a boundary object in the collective work practice of description. In Callon's study of the different parties involved in the preservation of sea scallops in St. Brieuc Bay, he astutely implicates the disciplinary peer group that the Japanese researchers are affiliated with as contributing to the intentions of the researchers (Callon 1986). Similarly, in order to situate this discussion of boundary objects in a larger discourse, we must implicate ourselves as part of the peer group associated with Star, Griesemer, and those others who contribute to the production of knowledge related to boundary objects.

In this very text, we appropriate the concept of boundary objects—which can itself be used as a boundary object—and employ it in order to question the capacity of boundary objects to support approaches to interdisciplinary collaboration that not only tolerate divergent viewpoints, but that require divergent viewpoints to operate and flourish. As a potential boundary object, this paper is part of a context of intra-action that includes other publications about boundary objects that are themselves potential boundary objects.

Bring as much of the palms of your hands and your fingers into contact with the surface of the heart as you can. Try to envelope it fully so that you can feel as much of the subtle complexity of its movement as possible. Let the discreteness of 'beats' dissolve into continuous and continual waves of pulses. Feel them travel across, through, between your hands. Try to imagine that in the smallest movements, the ones barely perceptible, the heart is gathering the energy it needs to beat. Now imagine that you can increase that energy by squeezing it in those moments between the beats, pushing energy into the heart, and receiving it back in your hands when it beats.

HAUNTED BOUNDARIES [OF BOUNDARY OBJECTS]

Star and Griesemer assert the "fundamental sociological finding" (1989, 388) that consensus is not necessary for cooperation; however, their text belies the belief that some form of reconciliation of differing viewpoints is necessary for cooperation:

> Consensus is not necessary for cooperation nor for the successful conduct of work. [. . .] However, scientific actors themselves face many problems in trying to ensure integrity of information in the presence of such diversity. [...] When the worlds of these actors intersect a difficulty appears. The creation of new scientific knowledge depends on communication as well as on creating new findings. But because these new objects and methods mean different things in different worlds, actors are faced with the task of reconciling these meanings if they wish to cooperate. This reconciliation requires substantial labour on everyone's part. Scientists and other actors contributing to science translate, negotiate, debate, triangulate and simplify in order to work together. (Star and Griesemer 1989, 388–389)

The characterization that diversity causes problems, that the intersection of worlds creates difficulty, situates the concept of boundary objects as the key to reconciling these meanings so that communication can occur and new scientific knowledge can be created. Boundary objects are positioned as passage points through which information must flow for cooperative work to produce knowledge. What a reconciliation of viewpoints implies, and the ways it differs from consensus, has been examined by Huvila who writes that, "the creation or reshaping of a boundary object is always an attempt to make a hegemonic intervention" (2011, 21). He elaborates:

> the boundary object and boundary crossing have a purpose. This purpose, even a very lenient one, is an attempt to influence adjacent communities and as such a more or less belligerent form of hegemonic intervention. [...] A specific characteristic of a boundary object is that it makes hegemonic interventions easier to accept for communities with antagonistic tendencies even if the emerging norm would be advantageous by default only from the point of view of the hegemonic position. Boundary objects may thus be seen as facilitators of hegemonic interventions of different levels embedded in the boundary practices of interfacing communities. (Huvila 2011, 21)

The construction of this hegemonic relationship is the construction of a particular type of interaction, which itself occurs in the context of intra-action and the production of truth/power. While the subjugation or assimilation of viewpoints as they funnel through the passage point of the boundary object may be consensual or even welcome, the dynamics of boundary crossing cannot be interpreted outside of the operation of power. In Foucault's estimation:

> In itself the exercise of power is not violence; nor is it a consent which, implicitly, is renewable. It is a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme, it constrains or forbids absolutely; it is nevertheless always a way of acting upon an

> acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action. A set of actions upon other actions. (1982, 789)

What Huvila is effectively proposing is a category of boundary objects that we might call "hegemonic boundary objects" that are used to conduct and describe collective work that is based in particular assumptions about productivity rooted in Capitalism. The production of these hegemonic boundary objects in analytical discourse reflects the analyst's frame of reference, intra-active context, and operations of power. Actions are not themselves *a priori* hegemonic in nature; the determination that an action is or was hegemonic is a situated one that requires the production of a subjectivity in which the action *becomes* hegemonic.

While our purpose here is to highlight the subjective nature of such a determination in order to invite discourse about other possible subjectivities, doing so pushes us into delicate ethical territory where questions of accountability and responsibility must be raised, both with respect to the act deemed hegemonic, and the act of deeming an act hegemonic. The proposition that these determinations are situated in one's subjectivity does not imply absolution of responsibility; on the contrary, their production is entangled with questions of responsibility. Responsibility requires things to be responsible to, and the production of those things cannot be distinguished from acts of responsibility.

In a similar vein to Huvila's account of boundary objects as hegemonic interventions, Kathryn Henderson describes "conscription devices" as visual representations used to enlist and organize participation in collective work. She states: "Since visual representations are located at the center of power, they are the locus of action, which may be negotiation and consensus, or it may be conflict and power plays" (1999, 134). This notion of power, limited in its conceptual and geographic reach by its ocularcentrism, is very different than Foucault's "total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions" (1982, 789). Power cannot be reduced to control. The characterization of power as a central hub (i.e. a conscription device), that mediates between the interests of parties during interaction, is a colonialist narrative: it fails to acknowledge the continual, intra-active construction of the haunted boundaries of these objects, as well as the infrastructures they traverse.

Elaborating on the concept of boundary objects, Bowker and Star discuss "boundary infrastructures" as "objects that cross larger levels of scale than boundary objects" to "deal with regimes and networks of boundary objects (and not of unitary, well-defined objects)" (Bowker and Star 1999, 313). They explain that, "[w]hat we gain with the concept of boundary infrastructure over the more traditional unitary vision of infrastructures is the explicit recognition of the differing constitution of information objects within the diverse communities of practice that share a given infrastructure" (314). While "scaling up" from objects to infrastructure (another type of object, in our estimation) grants perspective on the systemic operations of power, the plasticity and translatability of a boundary infrastructure between communities still requires the management of "divergent viewpoints" by way of "accommodations, work-arounds, and in some sense, a higher-level of artful integration" (292).

To this end, we inquire: just how little overlap, or conversely, just how much difference can a boundary object, conscription device, or boundary infrastructure tolerate before one's notion of cooperation or collaboration breaks down?

In her 2007 article "Boundary Negotiating Artifacts: Unbinding the Routine of Boundary Objects and Embracing Chaos in Collaborative Work," Charlotte Lee provides a substantial critique of the community's adoption and use of boundary objects. In her estimation, the problem lies not in the conception of boundary objects themselves, but rather in the "tendency of researchers to label every artifact [that moves between communities of practice] a boundary object" because "it forces us to deny what we observe, to ignore the finer points of the boundary object definition, or to awkwardly wrap new theories around the [definition of boundary objects]" (2007, 314). Lee points out that in their original conception, "ultimately boundary objects was posited as a creature based on established standards" and that "[t]he dependence of boundary objects on the premise of established standards is inherently problematic for theorizing incipient, non-routine, and novel collaborations" (Ibid.). To account for artifacts that exist in "projects that are fairly non-routine and fairly complex," Lee introduces the term "boundary negotiating artifacts" (334). What is at stake in her critique of her community's (over)use of boundary objects is the neglect of work practices that do not appear similar to those that gave rise to boundary objects in the first place. Or worse, perhaps, that the study of "incipient, non-routine, and novel collaborations" will be misconstrued, a risk that puts her community's knowledge on shaky foundations.

In her conclusion, Lee questions whether the focus on "standardized artifacts and stable organizational contexts" is due to them being "most easily codified into our computational systems" (336). While this is surely not the only reason, it highlights the role of the observer, the person ultimately responsible for the construction of boundary objects / boundary negotiating artifacts. A description of a boundary object or a boundary negotiating artifact is an expression of the frame of reference from which the observer views the world, an expression that is then performed by the reader in the context of the discourse that constitutes the practice of boundary object production.

In the framing of boundary objects, boundary negotiating artifacts, and boundary infrastructures as a means for cooperation and reconciliation—in service of a shared goal or greater good—the non-neutrality of the boundary as common territory must be taken into account. Designating a border territory or "common ground" for passage and translation between communities requires the drawing of a boundary around this shared space that may not be symmetrical in its inclusivity and reflectivity of interests. When cooperation, reconciliation and collaboration are promoted under the guise of accessibility and diversity, it is important to shed light on colonial and capitalist imperatives to standardize methods and maximize productivity through the self-regulatory and disciplinary effects of power.

While the concept of boundary objects (and its variants) tolerates some degree of difference, it cannot accommodate irreconcilable difference in which there is no reflection of viewpoints between communities. By requiring mirrored interests as the basis for plasticity and

translatability—and therefore visibility—the framework of boundary objects positions difference in opposition to similarity, and dissent against consensus.

In time with the person whose heart pulses in your hands, gradually begin to accelerate the pace of your breathing, fully emptying and filling your lungs with each breath. In through your nose, out through your mouth. As you continue to speed up, taking in much more oxygen than your body needs, you may find that the air feels cold in your nose, in your throat, in your chest. Continue faster still. Your fingers may begin to tighten and curl, locking on to the heart. This is normal, it will pass. Faster still. Feel the heart in your hands beat faster and more regularly as both of you continue to accelerate. Inhale, exhale, inhale, exhale, inhale.

INTERLUDE: A FAILED ATTEMPT AT REFLEXIVITY

Here's the thing. Boundary objects are frightening for us because they represent what we perceive to be a practice of colonizing knowledge by recharacterizing it in order to serve the needs of a different community. What we have to account for now is the way in which we performed exactly the same act in order to make our point about it.

Our intent as authors, if such a thing can be trusted, is not to interact with you, the reader, through the transmission and translation of ideas towards shared understanding. We simply do not believe that such authority exists. And yet, our authorial attempts to reflexively account for our role in this discourse are not sufficient to reveal our own sense of intentionality, for in reflexively reflecting ourselves back to ourselves, we cannot but see our own vision of ourselves.

> [R]eflexivity is nothing more than iterative mimesis: even in its attempts to put the investigative subject back into the picture, reflexivity does nothing more than mirror mirroring. Representation raised to the nth power does not disrupt the geometry that holds object and subject at a distance as the very condition for knowledge's possibility. Mirrors upon mirrors, reflexivity entails the same old geometrical optics of reflections. (Barad 2007, 87)

The problem is that a reflexive accounting of ourselves as authors in the story we are trying to tell never really brings new information to that story, it simply tells a different story, one that includes us, an accounting for which we must account, reflexively, on and on.

What we must do is bring into question the intra-actively enacted boundaries of ourselves as selves with the authorial capacity to produce an object such as this text, or a shared goal such as this: *As authors we seek to articulate approaches to design, in and between multiple communities of practice, that not only tolerate difference, but rather, that require critical difference between practices in order to thrive.*

Our use the term *critical* here and elsewhere is an amalgam of its definitions and stands in for the assertion that the noun it describes matters in a given context. It is not enough to speak of difference, but rather difference that has crossed an inflection point, difference that has been brought to a point of critical mass, difference that is essential to a context and that must be cared for in order to prevent it from becoming flattened.

In caring for the critical differences that emerge in our designing of interaction as composer-choreographer, we desire strategies that are not based on critique, for as Barad reminds us:

> Critique is all too often not a deconstructive practice, that is, a practice of reading for the constitutive exclusions of those ideas we can not do without, but a destructive practice meant to dismiss, to turn aside, to put someone or something down—another scholar, another feminist, a discipline, an approach, et cetera. (Barad 2012, n.p.)

Our critique in the preceding sections is not a critique of the *concept* of boundary objects, rather it is a critique of the *act* of constructing boundary objects. Such an act involves the construction of a community, a practice, and a discourse through the making of their boundaries, and what we have tried to show is that the making of those boundaries is the expression of value systems. The problem is that in order to express our critique of these kinds of acts, we first had to construct a community, a practice, and a discourse in which these acts were performed. It's not enough to say that we did this—to admit our culpability—nor is it enough to point out that the act of critique is an act of making communities that can be critiqued. When communities are made, they are always in relation to the things they are not, including the continual acts of their making, and our goal here is to foreground, so that we may better care for, the relationships that ultimately form these communities.

In search of approaches to designing interaction that bring awareness to the value systems involved in the local production of "interaction" and "things that interact," we appropriate Barad's appropriation of "diffraction" (from quantum physics into agential realism), as a method to examine "patterns of difference that make a difference" between communities of research. Further, we discuss the potential value of what we term "critical appropriation," i.e. the re-contextualization of technologies across disciplinary boundaries, with care for perceived transgressions of the ethical norms that govern notions of proper use and mastery in the respective domains. Our use of the term "appropriation" is itself an appropriation and repurposing of this term to resist, rather than facilitate, the colonizing of knowledge by recharacterizing it in order to serve our own needs. Following the logic developed so far in this text, our interpretation of the concepts of diffraction and critical appropriation can only be understood through ongoing intra-action with concepts introduced earlier in the text, such as interaction, reflexivity, and boundary objects.

Hold your breath.

DIFFRACTION: CRITICAL DIFFERENCE AND RESPONSIBILITY IN COLLABORATION

Barad builds on the metaphor of "diffraction," proposed by Haraway (1992), as a strategy to resist framing the "geometrical optics of reflection" as the source of difference between phenomena (Barad 2007, 87). Whereas reflection involves the bouncing back of a wave (e.g. of a light, water, or sound wave) from a surface, diffraction is the changing of direction of this wave as it passes around the edges of an obstacle or through a narrow opening. As a wave in the ocean encounters a rock that breaks the surface, the wave bends around the rock and interferes with itself on the other side. The effects of this interference are as much the result of the characteristics of the wave as they are of the size and shape of the rock. Unlike mirrors which produce images of objects placed at a distance, "diffraction gratings are instruments that produce patterns that mark differences in the relative characters (i.e., amplitude and phase) of individual waves as they combine" (81). In appropriating the concept of diffraction in order to investigate how different differences come to matter, Barad highlights that:

> [diffraction] is not just a matter of interference, but of entanglement [...] There is not this knowing from a distance. Instead of there being a separation of subject and object, there is an entanglement of subject and object [...] instead of being about offering an undistorted mirror image of the world, it is about accountability to marks on bodies, and responsibility to the entanglements of which we are a part. (Barad 2012, n.p.)

This warrants emphasis: by deconstructing notions of reflexivity, individuals and institutions are not absolved of responsibility for the ways in which they are entangled with "others," for these others, to repeat from Butler, are what come to bound their "constitutive outside, and to haunt those boundaries as the persistent possibility of their disruption and rearticulation" (1993, 8). Subverting hegemonic narratives of control-based interaction between subjects, the intra-active character of

> diffraction patterns illuminat[e] the indefinite nature of boundaries—displaying shadows in "light" regions and bright spots in "dark" regions—the relationship of the cultural and the natural is a relation of "exteriority within." This is not a static relationality but a doing—the enactment of boundaries—that always entails constitutive exclusions and therefore requisite questions of accountability. (Barad 2007, 135)

The enactment of boundaries does not necessarily, or perhaps ever, distribute territories and agencies symmetrically. As such, it is reductive (and potentially dangerous) to characterize power relations within and across these borders as a matter of interaction, that is, as reciprocal actions, effects, and influences. Framing interaction as reciprocal exchanges or mappings between things (people, objects, data, disciplines, cultures, etc.), does not account for shifting asymmetries between these things; it lays the foundation for subjugation by way of self-regulatory and disciplinary effects of power, and fails to implicate all participants in the "entanglements of which

[they] are part" (Barad 2012, n.p.). An important distinction between reflection and diffraction is that:

> diffraction does not fix what is the object and what is the subject in advance, and so, unlike methods of reading one text or set of ideas against another where one set serves as a fixed frame of reference [i.e. interaction], diffraction involves reading insights through one another [i.e. intra-action] in ways that help illuminate differences as they emerge: how different differences get made, what gets excluded, and how those exclusions matter. (Barad 2007, 30)

Designing interaction involves the mapping of perceived difference between objects of interaction (e.g. bodies, gestures, physiological processes, media, etc.), within the frame of reference of the designers. What constitutes "difference that matters" within this locally derived system of interaction depends on the vision of the designers, which necessarily excludes types of difference that are invisible to them. Shifting focus from the reflective tactics of interaction design towards the diffractive performance of intra-action does not necessarily produce greater visibility of difference itself, for difference's sake. Haraway makes the important distinction that, "a diffraction pattern does not map where differences appear, but rather maps where the *effects* of differences appear" (Haraway 1992, 299, original italics). Mapping the effects of differences does not presume that these differences emerged from a unitary source. This is important, because it subverts the assumption that difference can only come to matter in opposition to an originary sameness. In this regard, Barad argues that:

> If diffraction is to serve as an important metaphor for differences that matter, it is crucial that we pay attention to the kinds of differences that different understandings of diffraction evoke, so as to not conflate questions of accountability to differences that matter with postmodern celebrations of difference for difference's sake. (Barad 2007, 214)

In Barad's use of the term, *diffraction* stands in for at least three things: a theoretical description of the behavior of light and matter as both waves and particles; an ethnography of the development of quantum mechanics in response to a phenomenon that defied explanation in terms of classical physics; and a philosophical proposition that subject and object are not separate or separable. We are inspired by what we read in Barad's development of diffraction as a metaphor, but we must also acknowledge that we do not have the same relationship to science and philosophy that she does. Our background as choreographer-composer in no way precludes us from engaging in scientific and philosophical discourse, but we do have a different frame of reference and we are aware that the boundaries of diffraction, or rather, "what we mean by diffraction," are differently haunted for us.

Our appropriation of diffraction, and likewise boundary objects, is done to explore approaches to collective work, specifically different conceptions of interaction design such as composition and choreography, rooted in difference *qua* difference, rather than difference as defined with respect to sameness. It is an act no different than Barad's appropriation of Niels Bohr's formulation of

quantum mechanics or Star and Griesemer's appropriation of the founding of the Berkeley Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, with the possible exception that we acknowledge the aporetic act of constructing a subject in order to argue that there is no *a priori* distinction between subject and object. This is to say, this presentation of diffraction and boundary objects is based in constructions of them—constructions that we have argued throughout the entirety of the paper are shaped as much by what they include as what they exclude.

For us, this is an exercise of *critical* appropriation, which we describe as a sustained act of appropriation that is continually destabilized by the provocation that things only become things through exclusion, that what is excluded forms the basis for other onto-epistemologies, and that we bear responsibility for that which we exclude. Paraphrasing Derrida, we are "responsible to anyone (that is to say, to any other) only by failing in [our] responsibility to all the others, to the ethical or political generality. And [we] can never justify this sacrifice; [we] must always hold [our] peace about it [...] What binds [us] to this one or that one, remains finally unjustifiable" (2008, 70).

As an approach to intra-active design, what the metaphor of diffraction offers, especially to those involved in interdisciplinary collaboration, is the proposition that it is possible to work together—responsibly—not only based on a mutual goal or common ground that reflects an overlap in viewpoints, but rather, through an investigation of how and why differences have come to matter within and between individuals, disciplines, and cultures over time. Approaching collective work diffractively requires awareness of the ongoing production of difference, not only quantitatively, but æsthetically and ethically, as it transforms with and through the entangled agencies of participants.

Having discussed the potential of boundary objects and diffraction as approaches to intra-active design by interaction designers across disciplines, we now discuss our conceptualisation and practice of interdisciplinary design by way of *critical appropriation*.

Resist the urge to release. You may feel your chest move involuntarily. This is your diaphragm spasming, trying to pull air into your lungs. Try to relax, and it will pass. Keep holding.

CRITICAL APPROPRIATION: INNOVATION BY DESTABILIZATION

Critical appropriation involves the continual de- and re-contextualization of technologies (concepts, tools, techniques, etc.) between disciplinary communities, with attention to shifts in ecology and epistemology, as well as perceived ethical transgressions (Naccarato and MacCallum 2017). Whereas appropriation may be associated with the reflective tactics of interaction—displacing objects from one context to another without investigating how and why differences emerge—critical appropriation is necessarily diffractive: shifts in ecology and epistemology are positioned as objects of interaction in relation to appropriated materials. As a means to address non-consensus and conflict in interdisciplinary collaboration, critical appropriation differs from

boundary objects in that it is not intended to mitigate divergence by translating differences into shared understanding, goals, and productivity. Critical appropriation is not a matter of adaptation in which objects "are weakly structured in common use, and become strongly structured in individual-site use," or in which "their structure is common enough to more than one world to make them recognizable, a means of translation" (1989, 393). Critical appropriation is a provocation to continue to understand objects (people, bodies, movements, gestures, concepts, disciplines, cultures, communities, infrastructures, boundaries, etc.) as inherently multiple, and to bring attention to their ontologies outside of their current subjectivity. This is not a matter of bending the ontologies of objects to fit them inside an ethico-æsthetic frame that is accessible to all parties in a project; rather, critical appropriation is entangled with "a politics and ethics of singularity, breaking with consensus" towards collective subjectivation (Guattari 1995, 117).

Importantly, a diffractive reading of boundary objects, diffraction, and critical appropriation, as well as interaction and intra-action, works to "illuminat[e] the indefinite nature of [their] boundaries—displaying shadows in 'light' regions and bright spots in 'dark' regions" as well as their "constitutive exclusions and therefore requisite questions of accountability" (Barad 2007, 135). Each proposition addresses difference, power, and collaboration from a particular orientation within an entanglement of value systems, the effects of which are in continual intra-action through our appropriation and treatment of them in this paper.

In our collaborative practice as a choreographer-composer we place emphasis on critical appropriation of biosensors in creation and performance as a means to intervene in the invisible boundaries of our own ethico-æsthetic frame(s) of reference (Naccarato and MacCallum 2017). We often use electrocardiograms (ECGs) in a variety of contexts in our work: they are worn by dancers, their amplified and processed signals are listened to by musicians, and those same signals are felt by guests invited into the work. The critical appropriation of the ECG devices, the WiFi technology used to transmit their signals, and the hardware and software used to amplify, process, and transduce those signals so that they may be heard and felt, involves a sustained act of care for discourse surrounding their ontology, epistemology, ethics, and æsthetics. In this practice of critical appropriation, questions about what an ECG is and how it works are inseparable from questions about what the heart is and why we might want to measure it. Questions about how to relate to a sonified ECG signal in a musical context are inseparable from questions about how we conceive of musical time, and other temporalities. Practical questions concerned with how to properly wear an ECG and the effects of movement on the signal are inseparable from questions of physiological control, the relationship of space to time in dance, and the ways in which space and time are constructed. The goal here is to gain insight into our practices as they are disrupted at the point of their intersection with an object of incommensurate difference.

There is always risk that the transposition of specialized technology across disciplinary lines will compromise the rigour and scepticism of the respective disciplines. For example, in the appropriation of biosensors from medicine to artistic practice, diagnostic practice may be diminished, because artists have different disciplinary training, and divergent (non-medical) goals. Likewise, the rigour of compositional and choreographic practices may be undermined by the

imitation of foreign techniques for research, which serve the intentions of an alternate discipline. Importantly, an artist employing a biosensor in a manner contrary to the training of a medical professional should not be seen as lacking that training any more than a nurse who uses a biosensor without considering the æsthetic implications of their actions should be seen as lacking artistic integrity. In scenarios of appropriation, the question is not whether the encountered value systems are good or bad or right or wrong, but rather, what goals these values propagate in a given disciplinarily-constituted, and therefore exclusive, context.

For example, consider the heart that continues to beat in your hands. It is incommensurable with the trace of an ECG. The ECG measures an aspect of the heart that we do not feel when we hold it in our hands. They are related and in relation, to be sure, but the ECG is not "the-thing-we-call-the-heart," i.e. the seat of the soul, the originary source of music and love. The sensation of your heart pulsing in my hands is of an order of complexity that defies description in terms of dimensionality, space, and time. These beats that I feel are simultaneously neither-discrete-nor-continuous-yet-both-discrete-and-continuous (Maffie 2004, n.p.). They travel through and between both of my hands, which, as I slowly move them, continue to shift the origins and trajectories of discreto-continuous pulses. I placed my hands inside your chest because I wanted to be closer to you, to experience your heart directly, free from the noise of mediated experience. I wanted to hear, feel, see, and smell your heart, not your chest, your lungs, your skin, your electrical potential. But I am still on the outside, around your heart. I don't think I wanted to be *inside* your heart; I think I wanted to be coextensive with it.

Noise is a problem with all acts of measurement, but here, perhaps, "noise" can offer opportunities to explore what Guattari might call the "mutant coordinates" of a discipline. The pill that we are offering here is a hard one to swallow: we are suggesting that noise, the very "thing" that obfuscates the "thing" we are interested in, should be considered as an opportunity to question the foundations of our interest in that particular "thing"; that the noise that prevents us from recognizing a particular "thing" as an object of interest for interaction (be it a physiological process, a gesture, or a body) might be an indication that our notions of the constitutive boundaries of this "thing," are, in fact, noisy.

By paying attention to the noise of our own perception, which may be based on our disciplinary training and cultural context, as well as our material bodies and material practices, or our mood on a given day, we become implicated as subjects in the perceptual process. Likewise, by paying attention to the noise produced by the hardware and software, its designers and users, and the intra-active context of interaction, the exclusion of data from a signal, becomes evident. Importantly, there is no un-noisy or un-mediated signal, nor is there an un-noisy or un-mediated perception of this noisy signal. Noise is always present, and in cases of appropriation of technologies, interrogating so-called noise can point towards the operation of ethics within and between collaborators and disciplines.

What is at stake here is the construction of a discipline that no longer recognizes that there are conceptions of gestures, bodies, processes, or concepts, outside of its frame. Once we as a

community have decided, implicitly or explicitly, what, for example, a gesture is, we can stop looking for gestures that fall outside of that spatio-temporal frame. The reorientation of the concept of gesture from descriptive to prescriptive brings with it an ethical weight that can stagnate a discipline through the subjugation of æsthetic exploration. That bears repeating: the moment that we make the transition from using the concept of gesture to describe aspects of a mover's movement, to prescribing that movement as a gesture, we have entered into ethical territory that begins to restrict æsthetic choice. This process of restriction is inescapable; our goal here is not to advocate for its dissolution, but rather for a continual process of disruption of ethical restrictions through critical appropriation, disciplinary collaboration and æsthetic exploration. Through the intersection of divergent value systems in disciplinary crossings, there is potential for disruption of the calcified conventions of each discipline—by all that haunts them—and therefore a reconfiguration of what is being included and excluded from their respective territories.

Guattari likens this type of destabilization to mutation and sees the reframing of disciplinary structures such as psychoanalysis in terms of ethico-æsthetics, rather than simply ethics, as key to resisting stagnation and homogenization.

> If we turn for a moment to a discipline like psychoanalysis, which claimed to affirm itself as scientific, it is increasingly clear that it has everything to gain from putting itself under the ægis of this new type of æsthetic processual paradigm. Only in this way can it reacquire the creativity of its wild years at the turn of the century. (Guattari 1995, 106)

In the field of psychoanalysis, this has deep implications that require no less than the redefinition of the body itself.

> Let us take as a final example an open redefinition of the body, so necessary for the promotion of therapeutic assemblages of psychosis: the body conceived as intersection of partial autopoietic components, with multiple and changing configurations, working collectively as well as individually; all "the bodies"—the specular body, the fantasmatic body, the neurological corporeal schema, the biological and organic soma, the immune self, the personological identity within familial and environmental eco-systems, collective faciality, refrains (mythical, religious, ideological...). (Guattari 1995, 117–118)

This passage is remarkable in its articulation of an aspect of psychotherapy, a predefined conception of the body and its binary relationship to the brain, that for many practitioners has been rendered invisible by the boundaries of their disciplinary training. Further, it points to the difficulty of the type of work we propose in this paper, which is to say, we are advocating for engagements with technology that are harder, not easier, slower, not faster, and which not only defy measurement and evaluation, but call into question the nature of their roles.

Our formulation of critical appropriation thus far has been with respect to the use of technology for purposes other than those for which it was designed. Critical appropriation, however, is a general, diffractive practice intended to bring awareness to, and care for, the multiplicity of an

object and to prevent its collapse down to something perceived as singular by the practitioners operating inside the structure of an emerging discipline. We appropriate technologies critically as an intervention intended to destabilize the boundaries of our practice, but it is normal for new practices to emerge out of those interventions. As practices stabilize, they become technologies in the world, belonging to others than ourselves, until ultimately that which we engendered, we now appropriate, critically.

Critical appropriation is a destabilizing practice—a process of intervening in moments of relative comfort in order to interrogate aspects of practice that have stabilized and receded into the shadows. From the shadows, these elements continue to calcify into increasingly solid boundaries making voices that come from outside their borders increasingly less intelligible. These boundaries form the ethics of a discipline—they separate those actions that cannot be done from those that must. They produce language that renders utterances unintelligible and construct the machinery that allows actions to be seen as transgressions. To repeat more generally, what is at stake here is the construction of disciplines that can no longer recognize forms of knowledge and know-how that operate outside of, yet continually haunt their boundaries.

Release the air in your lungs as you gently release the heart in your hands. Bring awareness to the rising and falling of your pulse as you breathe deeply and slowly, in through the nose, out through the mouth. Find a position that's comfortable as you recover your breath.

POSTLUDE: APOLOGIA

Wherever you are, imagine you are us, and there are three people sharing the space with you: Karen Barad, Michel Foucault, and Félix Guattari. They are seated or standing, silent, relaxed, simply listening and observing. You, choreographer-composer, in making a point to yourself, composer-choreographer, reach for a text you did not write, wielding it as a weapon of debate, subject to the gaze of the person who wrote it and their peers.

Appropriation is always violent, and we have engaged in it throughout this paper; for that we apologize, especially to those from whom we have taken and mis-re-presented. Appropriation is not ok and cannot be made ok by acknowledging or apologizing; the only thing we can do is act responsibly inside of the context of our own making. The words in this paper are ours, even those we attribute to other authors—and now they are yours.

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Biographies

Teoma Naccarato and John MacCallum have been collaborating since they met in 2013. Their collective work draws on their disciplinary training in music composition, choreography, creative writing, and computer science, as well as their deep interest in performance art and philosophy. Together they devise performance-installations and publications, and guide workshops on the themes of 'Relational Listening' and on the 'critical appropriation of biosensors in artistic practice.' Teoma is currently completing her PhD at the Centre for Dance Research (C-DaRE) at Coventry University in the UK, and did her MFA at The Ohio State University, and her BFA at Concordia University in Montreal, all in dance/choreography. John did his PhD at UC Berkeley, his MM at McGill University in Montreal, and his BM at the University of the Pacific in California, all in music composition. They have each held a variety of research and teaching positions over the years in the US and Europe, and currently live in Berlin.

PERFORMANCE
PHILOSOPHY

THE SHAPE OF HUMIDITY: PERFORMING BLACK ATLANTIC THEORY MAKING

GENEVIEVE HYACINTHE PARSONS SCHOOL OF DESIGN AND SCHOOL OF VISUAL ARTS

> I saw in theory then a location for healing.
> (hooks 2017, 59)

A Black Atlantic Body amidst the Thermodynamics of a Storm

Kara Walker disrupts the historical master narratives around paintings of black life in *After the Deluge* (2006) as part of her interrogation of the matrix of black Atlantic arts and cultural practices and water. Exhibiting offerings from the New York Metropolitan Museum's collections depicting US American black life of the nineteenth century by artists such as Winslow Homer and Joshua Shaw, and including her own art formats that have appropriated or responded to these artists' works, Walker's premise was,

> not simply about the American South or Hurricane Katrina, although it was inspired by the effect of the chaotic storytelling that erupted in the media during the long, ugly aftermath. [...] I pieced this show together as an attempt to think about visual representations of Black life, in particular, but not exclusively, as it is shaped and transformed by external forces such as the sea, the slave trade, and the failure of retaining walls. (Metropolitan Museum of Art 2006)

PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHY VOL 4, NO 2 (2019):434–451
DOI: https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2019.42237
ISSN 2057-7176

A representative work might be Winslow Homer's *The Gulf Stream* (1899), an oil painting based upon sketches he made while traveling in the Bahamas (Spassky 1982, 35), which offers viewers the opportunity to rethink how the black body performs with water within the space of the painting, with evolving cultural implications. Homer's rendering of the black Atlantic body in water has myriad possible reception-based readings sparked by close visual analyses and reflections upon the history and visual culture of the time in which these works were created. This article begins with a short consideration of these readings that places focus on how Homer's depictions resonate with notions of black corporeal collapse. Using this notion as a point of departure, the discussion recasts the predicament as one of black Atlantic corporeal endurance made possible through mastery of the liminal nature of water and breath. With the spirit of healing that bell hooks asserts that theory making can be, the reflection then turns to poetries of black Atlantic rituals circulating around floral remedy, and artistic and therapeutic treatments such as those performed by Lygia Clark and Wangechi Mutu. Ultimately, I suggest that artistic and theoretical practices of endurance and healing include humidity and breath as integral elements. Following hooks's lead, the writing takes risks by privileging musings on affective embodiment (hooks 2017, 62) and "expansive perspectives on the theorizing process" (63).

Winslow Homer, The Gulf Stream*, 1899. Oil on canvas. 28 1/8 x 49 1/8 in. (71.4 x 124.8 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Catherine Lorillard Wolfe Collection, Wolfe Fund, 1906.*

In the center of *The Gulf Stream* drama, a black man turns his head to his left, looking beyond the picture's plane. Shirtless, appearing only in rough-hewn khaki pants, he reclines with his weight mostly on his elbows upon the deck of a modest fishing boat. The vessel is battered by tumultuous waves, has lost its mast, and is pitching forward on its port side, tilting the body of the man toward the ocean and the mouths of circling sharks. A large colonial-style ship sails on the far-left horizon, almost invisible in the clouds; popular readings submit that the man does not see it, but, alternatively, we may conjecture that he is trying to elude it. A black freeman in the waters of the British West Indies might choose to negotiate shark-infested waters rather than seek refuge on a carrack for many reasons, including competition and fear of indenture. Despite the man's precarious state, Homer paints him with a softness of light and color that positions him in harmony with the sublime waves of charcoal blues and steely whites that dominate the horizontal picture plane, capped by billows of clouds that roll across it at a distance. The sharks are rendered in the same colors but with darker tonalities, signifying their threat. It might be said that the poetry of color and drama of brushstroke rival the story of the painting, suggesting that for Homer, the energy of the medium is perhaps more important than the humanity of the man. A *New York Times* review from 1908 supports this argument. It states that the painting reflected Homer's dramatic and free "natural"—rather than academic—style, characterized by his impactful handling of monotone color schemes, while giving little mention to the black man's position except to comment that "the figure of the negro is by no means faultless in draughtsmanship" ("Art Here and Abroad" 1908, X10).

Reflecting upon my own reception of the painting, I've always first connected with the young man's afro-coolness—the idea that in the face of various emotionally fraught situations, particularly those of unimaginable challenge, the maintenance of equanimity is characteristic of "black response" and is reflected in the man's bearing, his appearance as a figure in "control… [and] having the value of composure…" (Thompson 1973, 41). The gray drama and poetry of Homer's painterly approach set the tone for me to see the man in this way. Christopher Reed similarly points to the remarkable vibrancy of Homer's brushstrokes as a contributor to the emotive quality of his black images, submitting that the artist often rendered "enigmatic" and "stoic" black figures within scenes of imposing nature from "sea[s] of cotton" to dynamic oceans formed by the "painterly gesture of Homer's waves" (Reed 1989, 73). Reed goes on to suggest that Homer identified with the "Others" that he illustrated and at the same time sought to establish a similar sense of identification on the part of his viewers for his painted subjects (76–78). Reed's optimistic point of view is perhaps at odds with the fact that *The Gulf Stream* was created during the era in the US South when the imprint of slavery still glowed from the scalding edges of the institution's hot brand, an American visual culture out of which racially charged films like D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915) would emerge a decade later, Homer's past as a master in renderings of black caricature, and perhaps most poignantly, Homer's addition of the ship on the distant horizon of the scene as a sign that the man might be rescued rather than face certain doom, only after the painting was on display at the turn of the 19th to 20th centuries and viewers made "persistent" inquiries "about the man's fate" (Smith, 2006, E27).

Despite Homer's addition of a far-removed glimmer of hope in the form of the distant boat to the original composition, one may still view the man of *The Gulf Stream* as yet another black body disregarded. My imagined ending is more positive than what Homer first suggests: left to his own situationally limited but ever-improvisational and fortitudinous devices, I imagine the man's survival. Maybe I do this because the man in *The Gulf Stream* is in an ineffable situation: I cannot really go there nor put words to the terror I think he must feel—terror Homer has rendered in romantic paint and ocean surf.

Why paint this situation? While Homer never commented on the subject, Paul Staiti (2001) considers *The Gulf Stream* in relation to the turn-of-the-century US interest in thermodynamics. Other artists, authors, and philosophers of Homer's time took up the topic of thermodynamics, broadening it from physics into contemporary social theory. In short, the scientific theory posited said that 1.) matter cannot be either created or destroyed and added that 2.) thermodynamic systems necessarily move from a state of higher energy to a state of lower energy. At the cultural level, this theory translated into the idea that all systems move toward collapse.

> So popular were the laws of thermodynamics that they were provocatively invoked and applied in turn-of-the-century America as the logical explanation of or justification for the activities of industrial production, laissez-faire economics, imperialistic expansion, human consumption, female sexuality, racial degeneracy, and nature itself. (Staiti 2001, 12)

Historian and social thermodynamics theorist Henry Adams—and his audiences—saw nature as "just another system of energies engaged in 'incessant transference and conversion. [...] Man is a thermodynamic mechanism'" (cited in Staiti 2001, 13), and thus body, soul, culture, and humanity were not immune to the system and its outcomes.

Life degrades in many of Homer's turn-of-the-century paintings, including *The Gulf Stream*, where the black man on the fragile boat will, as is presumed by many, end up as matter from a depleted thermodynamic system. He will become a heap lying on a Bahamian beach with vestiges of a boat by his side, as depicted in Homer's *After the Hurricane, Bahamas* (1899), a piece that foreshadows *The Gulf Stream* (23).

Winslow Homer, After the Hurricane, Bahamas*. 1899. Transparent watercolor, with touches of opaque watercolor, rewetting, blotting and scraping, over graphite, on moderately thick, moderately textured (twill texture on verso), ivory wove paper. 380 x 543 mm. The Art Institute of Chicago. Mr. and Mrs. Martin A. Ryerson Collection, 1933.1235*

While some have read Homer's genre paintings of black home life as indicative of his sympathies for the African American experience, many of these works—which the painter referred to as "darkey pictures"—show black characters as entertainers for white onlookers (26), suggesting Homer's belief in racial hierarchy. Moreover, in the range of sea paintings that Homer created during the turn-of-the-century, white seamen are imaged in the heroic romantic tradition of Théodore Géricault, while black men, as in *The Gulf Stream* and *After the Hurricane, Bahamas*, are imaged as "mere bod[ies], matter, or ingestible thing[s] about to be consumed by the thermodynamic machine of nature" (Ibid.). Given this circumstance, it is perhaps clear why Kara Walker included *The Gulf Stream* in her exhibition in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, when, as Jamelle Bouie (2015) puts it, the "nation's amazing tolerance for black pain" was exposed.

Unable to register the ineffable, I don't imagine an outcome of life-taking collapse, and I recast the narrative to these ends: The man in *The Gulf Stream* will find a way to shore, and if he is the man heaped on the beach in *After the Hurricane, Bahamas,* he is recovering after his ordeal, re-gathering his strength. bell hooks has suggested that love is the opposite of estrangement (hooks and Yancy 2015, unpaginated); seeing a part of myself in this man—his humanity, blackness, and Caribbean-ness—I do not feel separate, and my loving eyes cannot allow his "degradation" to happen. The black man presumably sustains himself with the stalks of sugarcane that lay beside his right calf, partially under the shade of the boat's hold and sloping down toward the menacing sharks in a manner suggesting they might serve as improvisational harpoons.

Sugarcane historically co-evolved with the man's ancestors as one of the primary crops cultivated by slaves in the British West Indies and, as such, might be viewed as a symbol of subjugation; however, an alternative view might hold that the fortitude that actualized sugarcane invests the man with hope and endurance.

Cane Cutters in Jamaica, 1880. Wikipedia Commons.

While British slaving (the transport of slaves from Africa to the West Indies) was banned in 1807, slavery was not legislatively abolished until 1834; thus, the presence of sugarcane in this painting

of 1899 may suggest that the man himself may harvest sugarcane as an entrepreneur or indentured servant, endeavors that require complicated survival skills and reflect his varying levels of agency, economic and otherwise. The trio imaged in the photograph of sugarcane workers from the British West Indies fuels my imagination of who the man on the failing boat might be. At the same time, they may stand as those presences—those contemporaneous with him and those who have gone before—buoying him with hope.

Sugarcane also provides corporeal nourishment for those who know how to access it, and we see the three sugarcane workers sucking on the stalks in a manner knowable to them due to their intimate knowledge of the crop they've nurtured through their devoted harvesting. Though the man in *The Gulf Stream* is bare-breasted, clothing cues further support the idea that he is one of these skilled laborers: Close visual attention to his mottled pants, heavy from humidity and salt water, reveals their semblance to those worn by the man of the sugarcane trio. Further evidence can be gleaned from another work by Homer, a watercolor study also called *The Gulf Stream* (1899), where the man rendered wears the complete ensemble of the male sugarcane worker from the photograph, from hat to shirt and pants. I return to the notion that the man whom Homer is attempting to degrade into matter by the water's thermodynamic relentlessness may actually be resisting entropic erasure through the strength of his cultural lineage and DNA.

Winslow Homer, The Gulf Stream*, 1899, though dated by the artist as 1889. Transparent watercolor, with touches of opaque watercolor and traces of blotting, over graphite, on moderately thick, moderately textured, ivory wove paper (lower edge trimmed). 288 x 509 mm. The Art Institute of Chicago. Mr. and Mrs. Martin A. Ryerson Collection, 1933.1241*

In disclosing the "graceful brutality" of Homer's registration of the black body within a painted representation of nature's thermodynamic destruction and then writing an alternative I want to see, I attempt to do the work of healing by transforming my feelings of the ineffable, and concomitant anger, into "energy that can be recycled in the direction of our good" (hooks and Yancy 2015, unpaginated). Another beholder of Homer's oil painting, Daniel Reiss, notes that what he similarly viewed as the endurance of the man at sea helped him find gentleness with and transformation of his own uncontrollable temper, writing:

> This fight in me and so many men is resolved in *The Gulf Stream*. Look at the relation between the open mouth of the shark and its teeth and the dark opening of the boat's hold from which sweet sugar cane extends. The cane represents a world giving the man sustenance. The fierce and the sweet do not jump from one to the other, as they once did in me. (Reiss 2000, 4)

Though he may not explicitly call it as such, Reiss sees black perseverance in the black Atlantic tempest and holds fast to it for his emotional survival, as the black man in *The Gulf Stream* wills himself through the storm.

Cultivating Humidity as Life Force

Black Performance is a liminal concept, a confluence of "time, space, and action: bodies, machines, movement, sound, and creation [...] culminat[ing] within temporalities of struggle and renewal" (Madison 2014, vii) relevant to the way in which the man from *The Gulf Stream* is contextualized in this consideration. Following Kara Walker, for instance, I am offering a recasting of the manner in which the black man was crafted to perform by Homer within the painting to bring our attention to his endurance—black endurance—in the face of art and cultural objectification and disempowerment more generally. Work must be done to transform the performance of the black man in *The Gulf Stream* from passive matter taken up by the thermodynamics of water into one of an active agent intent on survival, and this may be in part the point of Walker's *After the Deluge*: It may be our work as artists, writers, and viewers to disrupt the oft-rendered collapse of the black body in art and visual culture in water contexts and otherwise. Doing so aligns with Thomas F. DeFrantz and Anita Gonzalez's black performance theory imperative where they argue for new critical inquiries "for packaging ideas about black people in particular places during shifting historical time periods" (DeFrantz and Gonzalez 2014, 1) like the shifting American land and seascape of Homer's era. In a widely discussed current pop cultural context, Beyoncé does this palpably in her own way in the video *Formation* (2016), where in place of black bodies, a police car is swallowed by New Orleans waters (more recent memories suggest these could also be the waters of the Gulf Stream around Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands stirred by Hurricane Maria). As Hilton Als poignantly notes: "She sits on a New Orleans police car that slowly sinks underwater as images flash past, powerful evocations of blackness: bodies, hair, quiet faces measuring how others have discounted their lives and moved on" (2016, 66).

With a bit of an historical foundation in place concerning representations of the black body in engagement with water, this article now turns to my work of black Atlantic theory-making, specifically concerning the black body in conditions of humidity as a metaphor for collective and personal limitlessness as life force.

I imagine that the man in *The Gulf Stream* was fortified by sugar cane, and the cane's relative viability may have been aided by the humidity of the ocean environment, since the crop flourishes in regions of high tropical humidity (Netafim, no date, unpaginated). Similarly, the orange hibiscus flowers, like this one right outside the door of my house, connect to notions of black Atlantic vitality and survival in relation to the negotiation of water, not in its liquid state, but in the more abstract yet ever-expansive form of humidity and heat. This flowering plant provides me with a sense of the level of humidity for the day and, in so doing, prompts the actions I will take to navigate it. Scientific studies say that heat and humidity can cause rage in people (Raj 2014), and flower alchemists in the black Atlantic ritual tradition of Santería have long identified hibiscus-type plants like mine as "widely used in the spiritual field" to calm "an angry person" (Diaz 2018, 107), once activated through ritual processes catalyzed by the plant's decoction—or the making of matter and mist of its petals and leaves. Hibiscus Sinensis are the flowers of the Orichá (Santería deity) of feminine comeliness and the sea, Yemayá, who makes sure that men and women adrift in the Atlantic, like the man in *The Gulf Stream*, have safe passage (Diaz 2018, 107); thus, the plant outside my door not only portends the level of humidity I may expect that day, but also exists as part of my personal pantheon of spiritual guardians.

Genevieve Hyacinthe, Hibiscus Flower*, three digital color photographs from a series of twelve, August 2018*

Daily observation of the hibiscus in front of my door suggests that the flower's vitality and concomitant powers of spiritual and physical healing for those that use it for ritual practices may be connected to the interaction of the flower with aerated water. The series of photos shows the flower growing blooms and opening its petals after a few days of not being watered; however, the sun was hidden by cloud cover that day, and the air was heavy with humidity, due to days of rolling August storms. This suggested to me that hibiscus are hygroscopic and that humidity might be more integral in causing it to blossom than sunlight. Once the bloom is open, one can clearly see the elegant configuration of its sexual components flourishing. In the dark rose cavern, out of which the orange petals emerge, one can see the vase-like bulge of the ovule and embryonic sac from which the style reaches upward, capped by the yellow cluster of miniscule bursts forming the anther and crowned by the five fuchsia caps forming the stigma. The black Atlantic flower's hygroscopic existence that causes its physical proliferation, and its spiritual power to soothe anger—and hence, perhaps extend life by assuaging rage—is imperceptible to the eye.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari provide a theoretical framework relating to black life and humidity that conjures notions of vitality rather than the decline associated with the degradation of the black body in water associated with the rhetoric of Henry Adams' thermodynamics raised by the imperiled seafarer in Homer's painting. They propose that art is a form of "sensory becoming [...] the action [... of] ceaselessly becoming-other (while continuing to be what they are), sunflower or Ahab [...]; sensory becoming is [...] otherness caught in a matter of expression [...]" Art "incorporates or embodies" this becoming, giving it "a body, a life, a universe [...] These universes are neither virtual nor actual; they are *possibles* [author emphasis], the possible as aesthetic category" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 177).

My act of theory making considers the hibiscus flower, as an artform—a *possible*—illuminating for me the prospect of black endurance through connection to humidity. Like black Atlantic hibiscus flowers, people of these environments may similarly thrive as a result of "the thousands of passive syntheses of which we are organically composed" (Deleuze and Guattari cited in Hroch 2015, 75). Black Atlantic people as *possible* beings are "a contraction of earth and humidity" (76–78):

> What organism is not made of elements and cases of repetition, of contemplated and contracted water, nitrogen, carbon, chlorides and sulphates, thereby intertwining all the habits of which it is composed? [...] [All] is contemplation, even rocks and woods, animals and men, even Actaeon and the stag, Narcissus and the flower, even our actions and our needs. (Ibid.)

I am struck by the specification that water in its gaseous form—as humidity—is part of the balance comprising the contraction of the earth, providing a theoretical contrast to the way the black body is more commonly spoken of in art history and visual culture in relation to water in its liquid state, as elucidated in the discussion of Walker's *After the Deluge* and one of its representative works, *The Gulf Stream*. In the latter's discourse, the black Atlantic body and its associations with water are often tied to notions of enslavement and its aftermaths (even in Flint, Michigan, for example). Tainted water handled by the bureaucracy hurts black people and those others living in the area disenfranchised by class and other factors.

Humidity, by contrast, is a state that is freer, and at the same time it is tied to the universal in the sense of corporeal existence and potential flourishing (like the hibiscus)—we all breathe air and water and thrive off of it. To cast the black Atlantic body in relation to humidity is to simply offer another *possible*, another opportunity to "excavate and enlive[n] [...] enactments that sustain blackness," (Madison, 2014, vii) after acknowledging and reflecting upon the histories and contemporary realities of violence associated with water from the Atlantic slave trade to the precarious nature of living in the lowlands and upon islands vulnerable to being overrun by water: Katrina in New Orleans, Maria in Puerto Rico and The Virgin Islands, and Florence's water surges upon the low income and black "defenseless zones of the Carolina floodplains in North Carolina" and areas home to vulnerable animal and coal-ash waste stations come to mind (Mock, 2018). Unlike water, humidity is more difficult to metaphorically or critically contain. In this way, it is a marker of freedom on a sensate or archetypal level applicable to "being." Thinking back to Homer's thermodynamic water system evokes for me the idea of what Deleuze and Guattari might call the range of "habits"; perhaps "generative" for Deleuze and Guattari, where Homer might refer to it as "degradation"—a term that is not inherently negative, but when human beings are inserted into the equation as was the case in the painter's time, "degradation" has harrowing implications. That said, both "systems" include manifold actions concerned with the on-goingness of nature: respiration as enlivening the cells and cell cast-off; the growth of embryo to form and the loss of matter to nurture it; the watering or observing of a breathing and blooming hibiscus by the door and its loss of oxygen. My reading places focus on a sense of endurance in the spirit of Deleuze and Guattari, where all things go through cycles of transformation and continuance. I recast the thermodynamics illustrated in *The Gulf Stream* as the cycling of water to life-giving humidity and breath rather than ceding the black body to nature's violence, death, and eventual rebirth into some other uncertain form. The "contraction of earth and humidity" are dynamics of the biosphere where all matter and forms are interdependent and respire together in their respective nuanced ways.

Petra Hroch performs a poetic reading of this passage of Deleuze and Guattari, stating: "For Deleuze, the subject is a contradiction, contemplation, or composition of nested agencies, agential materialities, actions, responses, and witnesses that interact with no origin, no centre, no 'I', only a cooperation among many little so-called 'selves'" (Hroch 2015, 61). The "many little so-called 'selves,'" like the breathing cells of my skin that act in continuity with those of the hibiscus flower's petals, open to humidity for well-being as an expression of living hygroscopically. Similarly, hibiscus flowers are ritualized in Santería to quiet asthmatic symptoms and smooth "angry" or disturbed respiration so that humidity moves across the lung membranes with the ease of its movement across the lamina of hibiscus petals (Diaz 2018, 107). Pantanjali tells us that smooth breath fosters smooth states of being and more acuity of insight:

> The fourth step in Yoga practice is the expansion of individual prāṇa into cosmic prāṇa (prāṇāyāma). Here there is cessation of the uncontrolled movement of inhalation and exhalation.

> Breath control is a byproduct of prāṇāyāma. [...] Breath control is accomplished by either holding the breath after inhalation or exhalation or by stopping the breath naturally anywhere in the cycle. One begins practice of prāṇāyāma with breathing exercises and breath control and one ends with the experience of cosmic expansion, cosmic energy, cosmic prāṇa. (Pantanjali 2010, Sutra 2.49, 57)
>
> From prāṇāyāma comes the dispersion of the covering that hides the light I-Am or the Self. (Pantanjali 2010, Sutra 2.52, 59)

Pantanjali, Deleuze and Guattari, and the hibiscus flower encourage us to bring awareness to the breath that informs all things, the steady flow of energy, the contraction of earth and humidity, the subtle opening of the pores of petals. When our biosphere becomes inflamed in the face of socio-political drama of or nature's sublime within *The Gulf Stream*, a metaphor for black Atlantic identity as part of the *Undercommons* that Fred Moten and Stefano Harney define as the systemic mechanisms designed to inflict and perpetuate brokenness upon "black people, indigenous peoples, queers and poor people" (Halberstam 2013, 6), we may get to the state of coolness, afro-coolness, by refining our awareness of our breath, particularly when it is heavy with humidity's vitalness, while we in the undercommons figure out how to continue to cultivate both alliances among ourselves and our visions for a world beyond the limits of our current existence as "broken" (6).

I ruminate upon the possibility that we increase our capacity for resistance and imagining through fostering the connection between black Atlantic being and salutary humidity, as an alternative to ill-boding water. The water metaphor bespeaks a connection that may be more representative of our history of existence within an irreparable system of economic and social exploitation. I offer, however, that the metaphorical intersection of the black Atlantic body and humidity represents a union with the interiority of being, the nurturing of feeling within a body that has perhaps had to numb and limit itself as protective means. My perspective resonates in part with Sarah Jane Cervenak's ingenious musing on the poetics of air and black breathing as a signifier of the complexities of a pneumatic commons: "To live within air is to be in common. A postaquatic commons. A pneumatic commons. Respiration is a choral practice; the interplay between oxygen, trees, flesh, and cells together. We might say breathing is reproduction's ur-text" (Cervenak 2018, 167). Cervenak's black pneumonic commons—black breathing and continuance—is as a "fugitive choreography" in an ongoing dynamic of eluding white attempts at containment and control (168).

"Closeness," as a term for high levels of humidity, is a *possible* for the collective nature of Cervenak's fugitive choreography as a collective and intimate coming together in the black pneumonic commons. My perspective is informed, in part, by my reading of Sasha Engelmann's (2015) discussion where she submits that humidity is among the qualities that comprise air's poetics: In artistic form, air evokes the sensation of "atmospheric experiences":

> Air's poetics involves the deliberate cultivation of receptiveness to the cosmic force of air and atmosphere as they fold and shape forms of life. It manifests in the courage to allow air to permeate the lines of an essay, article, poem or those of a

> drawing, so that a relation between the body and air is presented rather than re-presented. (Engleman 2015, 433)

Engelmann refers us to the poetry of Gilliam Wigmore, who states: "The skin and air intermingle/ each so near to the other/ there is no space/ between through and water/ regret and growth," and surmises, "The movement here is towards a conception of air as creatively, emotionally and affectively generative of ways of inhabiting atmospheric space" (Engelmann 2015, 433). Humidity may be taken as a factor within this "creative, emotional, and affective," location of the body in self-reflective engagement with air. Humidity adds to this intersection where, "The sense of thickness [...is] necessary for perceiving the way matter is conveyed in and through air in felt exchanges and dissipations rather than frictionless passage [...]" (Ibid.). When one says, "It's thick," in relation to the humidity of the moment that gives life to hibiscus petals, one may at the same time also infer one's own being "outside" in the midst of communal social activist engagement, and/or being "inside" in the process of aligning with "prāṇāyāma [and] the dispersion of the covering that hides the light I-Am or the Self" (Pantanjali 2010, Sutra 2.52, 59), among the possibilities of black Atlantic existence and healing within the pneumonic commons of being.

The Shape of Humidity

Black Atlantic co-presencing of breath and humidity can be read into the work of black Atlantic modern and contemporary artists (the focus of this section) perhaps adding further traction to the dynamic's appropriateness as theory. DeFrantz and Gonzalez write that African Diaspora [which includes the black Atlantic] is "the unfolding of experience into a visual, aural, kinesthetic culture of performance." Akin to the surface of a human body, plant, or flower, "[...] Like skin, it is porous and permeable, flexible and self-repairing, finely spun and fragile. And like skin on a body, diaspora palpably protects us. We wrap ourselves in its possibilities, and they remind us of impossible connectivities [...] The connective skin of diaspora offers us protection from the coldness of individual isolation" (DeFrantz and Gonzalez 2014, 11). To counter isolation is to heal. Through ritual practice and formal poetry, the black Atlantic artists Lygia Clark and Wangechi Mutu engage in healing practices motored by allusions to humidity and breath.

The Brazilian artist Lygia Clark uses *relational objects* in treatment practices that she terms *Estructuraçào do Self (Structuring of the Self)* (Wiebe 2014, 111). Clients regularly visit Clark in her Rio studio and healing space, where the artist balances their bodies according to her belief that a body in spiritual and material alignment is one that recognizes its "unfolding totality" (Ibid.). This recognition and accompanying healing can be actualized through Clark's therapeutic deployment of "massive maternalization" (Macel 2017, unpaginated). In the video *Memória do corpo* (Carneiro 1984), we encounter Clark at work. Close-ups, as she soliloquizes before the camera, reveal that her skin is glistening, indicating the humidity of the environment.

One client, a man stripped down to his underwear, reclines on a mattress "filled with Styrofoam balls" (Macel 2017, unpaginated), his skin exposed to receive Clark's treatments. Among the healing objects she employs is a plastic bag full of air, gathered from the humid atmosphere and the

humidity of her own breath, which she glides and tumbles across the man's skin, following the folds and terrains of his body. Seashells humming with the residue of sea mist and tides are placed over his ears. Clark blankets his body in accumulations of various therapeutic devices that she has found and transformed through her artistic and ritual touch. We see another, larger, clear plastic bag of encased humidity topping the arrangement of accoutrements on the solar plexus and heat center regions of the patient's torso, like a life vest or protective shield. As Christine Macel recounts, the client describes his experience of being treated by Clark in the following way:

> Each time [things] moved over me, I was above all skin, above all a surface [...and the surface] is the place where we are with the world. [...] I did not exist inside. [...] And suddenly, honey, filled me inside. (Ibid.)

The honey that Clark's patient experiences through therapeutic protocols, imbibed with humidity, is *sukha*, the pleasure principle in the construction of Atman, or consciousness or thought (Srivastava 2010, 79), the opening of the hibiscus flower and what my dance teacher, Youssouf Koumbassa, might mean when he encourages his students to relax and feel sweet while dancing in Conakry under humidity averaging 77 percent. This level of humidity falls within the range of *Undercommons* healing (*pace* Halberstam 2013, 6): It is only slightly below the average of 79 percent in Clark's Rio de Janeiro, the Gulf Stream-stirred regions around the Bahamas that average 78 percent, or the 82 percent humidity levels outside my door in New York that opens hibiscus petals in August. These are among the conditions wherein, through consciousness of prāṇāyāma, black pneumatic commons can harness vitality and flourishing (Cervenak 2018, 167). As one black Atlantic female cultivator of prāṇāyāma remarked:

> Yoga is the process of connecting the mind and body and spirit to operate as one with a centralized focus on the breath because the breath is life sustaining and without the breath none of us would be sitting here right now [...] at times they say you can hear your own heart beat or focus on a white light and an energy that allows the [...] I like to use the term, creator energy or universal force [...] to come within to help you to calm yourself, to begin the process of being able to meditate. (Tenfelde, Hatchett, and Seban 2017, 3)

The A-U-M of prāṇāyāma is replete with the humidity of the practitioner's breath and continuous with what Cervenak (2018) calls "enfleshed breath," respiratory inflections—"vocables [...] such as 'hah' and 'tuh'"—emitted at the ends of words discharged during black Pentecostal practice (Cervanak 2018, 167), and perhaps in the "*jóia*" of Brazilian Portuguese breath that gives healing shape to humidity in Clark's therapies.

"Enfleshed breath" was the ether permeating Wangechi Mutu's exhibition *Ndoro Na Miti*—"the Gikuyu Words for Mud and Trees" (*Wangechi Mutu: Ndoro Na Miti*, 2017)—at the Gladstone Gallery in Manhattan (January–March 2017). Mutu's arrangement of an outsized garland of mālā beads on the floor, in resonance with the other forms in the space, is a materialization of the incantational energies of black Atlantic humidity.

Wangechi Mutu, Ndoro Na Miti *Installation View, Gladstone Gallery, New York, 2017. Courtesy of the Artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels. Photo Credit David Regen.*

While the atmosphere felt thick, close, and heavy with humidity, the gallery did not make any special adjustments to accommodate Mutu's sculptures (email exchange between author and Isaac Alpert, Gladstone Gallery, July 16, 2018), some of which were formed through the compression of earth from her Kenyan home, which she, in turn, shaped around a paper core (conversation between author and gallery assistant, March 22, 2017), while others were forged through bronze casting processes (Mutu 2017). I deduced that factors undetectable by scientific measure may have created the sensation of closeness, like the Atlantic breeze of Orichá Yemayá that opens hibiscus flowers in resonance with the breath of Tulasi, the Hindi humidity goddess who exhales Mutu's Kenyan earth westward across continents and oceans:

> Tulasi loves humidity. If you live in a dry, arid climate, you may need to find creative ways to increase Tulasi's moisture intake through Her leaves. Dry air can cause Her leaves to curl and turn brown at the edges. In such conditions, She may also look thirsty, even if you have been giving her adequate water. Misting water on the leaves with a spray bottle increases humidity. Placing two or more pots of Tulasi together can help, as the plants will enjoy sharing the moisture they transpire. (Amritanandamayi, 2015, 87)

In my imagination, I saw the yellow clusters and fuchsia blooms of my hibiscus, fostered by humidity's kindness, transformed by Mutu in *Ndoro Na Miti* into hyperbolized scale and finessed from Caribbean floral polychromes into the tonalities of beach grays and earth browns. The surface

interplays of my hibiscus, with its smooth petals, fuzzy stalks, and grainy projections, found resonance in the sleek, rough, and spiky skins of Mutu's sculptural forms that inhabited the gallery space. She conjures the idea of water with the sculpture included within the installation, *Nguva* (Mutu 2017), an East African sister to *Mami Wata* of the black Atlantic.

Wangechi Mutu, Ndoro Na Miti *Installation View (Detail), Gladstone Gallery, New York, 2017. Courtesy of the Artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels. Photo Credit David Regen.*

Nguva has the steely gray skin of deep-water fish or serpents (*sans* scales), webbed hands, an impressive yet uncanny-looking tail that is impossibly elongated, and cornrows peaked to resemble fins, who lounges upon a pedestal as if beached on the shore. As in my reading of the beached man of *The Gulf Stream*, her situation has a liminal sensibility; yet, hers is a story that we may not be able to conjecture through anticipated scenarios. She is an art form in the sense described by Deleuze and Guattari, a figure of "universes [that] are neither virtual nor actual; they are possibles [...]" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 177); she is a metaphor evoking the *Undercommons* envisioning of a possible world beyond our known experience (Halberstam 2013, 6).

In *Ndoro Na Miti*, humidity takes the shape of Engelmann's airy poetics (2015, 433), as the invisible mist that likely halos the body of Mutu's *Nguva* water goddess. At the same time, the airy poetics' "sense of thickness," in the form of a palpable presence devoid of "frictionless passage" (Engelmann 2015, 433), is brought to mind by the mālā beads and their dispersal around the exhibition space as orbs of accumulated brown earth detailed with Makonde-inflected cosmograms (Mutu 2017) and spikes, and/or as *guṇa*s (three "essential energies of the mind and individual's personality" (Jayasheela and Salagame 2018, 33), molecules exhaled through prāṇāyāma or virus (Mutu) with or without consequence. The airy poetics of Mutu's *Ndoro Na Miti* operate on the level of possibles,

rather than limits. "Mutu's sculpture acts as a corrective to a violent cultural consciousness, while offering an alternative narrative of embodiment and being in the world" (Mutu).

The shape of black Atlantic humidity—"enfleshed breath"—is the boundlessness of *being*. Fierceness's sustaining force is prāṇāyāma. I exhale together with Cervenak in the close of her "Black Night Is Falling" consideration, ending this musing with her words and letting go of this moment of theory-making as healing (hooks 2017, 59). *Kumbhaka* (कुम्भक) the space between. The inhalation, will come again without effort:

> Hydrogen. Oxygen. Carbon dioxide. The aquatic-pneumatic reach of black song becomes a floral blossom uprooting the fence. Air's reproductivity is the ur-text of the earth. Its blackness forged through the damp air of undisclosed performers, unlocatable respiration forming the possible and impossible themselves. (Cervenak, 169)

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Biography

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PERFORMANCE
PHILOSOPHY

RESTING WITH PINES IN NIDA – ATTEMPTS AT PERFORMING WITH PLANTS

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In this text I am asking whether it is possible to respond to the challenge of a philosopher with artistic means and without attempting to philosophize or without trying to apply or illustrate the philosopher's ideas. How, I wonder, could such a response be communicated in a journal? Is it possible to demonstrate the thinking that takes place in performances designed for a camera via visual media, or is verbal description the only alternative? How can one avoid turning the demonstration into some form of critical studies, or into an artist talk that remains within the realm of work stories rather than amounting to a visual argument?

The challenge that serves as a starting point for the following reflections was formulated by philosopher Michael Marder, in his text 'The Place of Plants: Spatiality, Movement, Growth' (Marder 2015) based on a talk given at the opening of the exhibition *Plant Science* in 2013. The challenge to artists, published in volume 1 of this journal, 'to include the spatiality, movement, and perspective of the vegetal in their work' (Marder 2015, 192) will serve as my prompt, although the artworks used as examples by Marder are approaching the issue of working with the vegetal in a rather different manner than the works I will present here. He focuses on artworks that use vegetal growth as material for installations that investigate the relationship of the human body and the vegetal.

The sequence that inspired me to respond to or enter into a dialogue with Marder is formulated as a series of questions at the end of his text where he notes that, '[i]n addition to engaging with the products of growth, artists can plug their work into the process of growth, broadly understood as a striving' and continues:

PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHY VOL 4, NO 2 (2019):452–475
DOI: https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2019.42232
ISSN 2057-7176

> What would it mean for a performance, or for another artistic practice, to strive like a plant in all directions at once, excessively, and with the utmost spatial or corporeal attention paid to every inch of the place where it unfolds? Where is the border between concentration and scattering here? And how can we first throw ourselves into such a performance or creative act, the way a seed is sown without any guarantee that it would germinate? What would need to be set up for this kind of performance to grow, to extend its reach, while remaining rooted in the context wherein it first cropped up? What would its modular self-complication or self-replication in this place, which I have provocatively analogized to the Baroque, entail? And how, if at all, would it engage with the plants themselves? (193)

There is a whole cluster of challenges here—besides the overall challenge of engaging with plants in some manner, there is the focus on the place or site, the reference to striving in all directions, the balance between concentration and scattering, outreach and rootedness, a focus on action without guarantees, as well as the idea of modular self-complication or self-replication—all of which resonate in some manner with the rather simple and mundane practice to be described in the following.

Moreover, this challenge can be placed within a broader demand to artists and scholars alike to investigate ways of collaborating with creatures in our shared surroundings, to find ways of relating to the environment that are meaningful from ecological, new materialist and posthumanist perspectives. Perhaps artistic research (Borgdorff 2012; Schwab 2013; Biggs and Karlsson 2011), creative arts research (Barrett and Bolt 2010, 2014) or performance as research (Allegue et al. 2009, Riley and Hunter 2009; Freeman 2010; Nelson 2013; Arlander et al. 2018) can respond to that broader demand through their capacity to allow and to generate hybrid forms of thinking and doing.

Although Marder's challenge is formulated as a series of questions, I do not read it as a suggestion that these issues have not been dealt with by artists before. Marder gives several examples of works focusing on vegetal growth in his text. And historically speaking there is no lack of artistic engagement with plants, from vegetally inspired ornamentation on textiles, pottery and architecture to paintings, poems and science fiction stories of plants. Living plants are used as material in practices as divergent as garden design, floral arrangements and contemporary bio art. The resonance with Marder's specific formulation, cited above, and with the works I will describe later, is linked, however, not only to the vegetal topic or material and the dependence on a specific site, but to the way of working, the manner of producing numerous variations rather than discardable drafts for one final outcome.

This text will unfold in three parts, in order to foreground the visual in one of the parts: First, a brief introduction to the background of my work and the context of Marder's text, then a visual account of the performances on site in Nida, and finally a discussion of the possible resonance with those works and the above quoted challenge.

PART ONE: Background and context

The project 'Performing with plants'

The works to be described are loosely linked to the artistic research project 'Performing with plants',[1] which can be understood as an attempt at responding to the challenge of engaging the vegetal by means of practical exploration. The main purpose of the project is to articulate and further develop experiences from previous projects focusing on landscape, by creating performances together with plants, especially trees. In the research proposal the aims of the project were summarized as follows:

> 'Performing with plants' is an artistic research project aiming to investigate the question 'how to perform landscape today?'. A post-humanist [sic] perspective prompts us to rethink the notion of landscape, and to realize that the surrounding world consists of life forms and material phenomena with differing degrees of volition, needs and agency. What forms of performing landscape could be relevant in this situation? One possibility is to approach individual elements, like singular trees, and explore what could be done together with them. [...] The aim of the project is to develop techniques generated during previous work by the applicant, i.e. the twelve-year project *Animal Years* (2002–2014), where focus was on showing changes in the landscape over time, rather than collaboration with the trees. By collaborating with plants more sensitively and ecologically, sustainable modes of performing can be developed, in order to serve as inspiration and provocation regarding ways of understanding our surrounding world. (Arlander 2016)

The most important questions explored by the project are: 1) How to collaborate with nonhuman entities like plants (trees and shrubs)? 2) How to further develop experiences from previous attempts at performing landscape? 3) How to create actions with plants, in which humans can be invited to participate and join in? An overarching research problem is: How to perform landscape today by collaborating with trees and other plants, with an awareness of the current posthumanist and new materialist understanding of the environment? Or perhaps we should write 'environment' (Alaimo 2010), since the idea of a separable environment is actually part of the problem to be addressed. To designate certain parts of existence to serve as environment to humans is no longer automatically acceptable.

Discussions concerning the notion landscape, and whether it is at all useful within contemporary art, have taken place within art theory (DeLue and Elkins 2008); scholars wonder if romanticising 'Nature' as 'Landscape' actually supports an untenable attitude to the environment. By creating images to be looked at from a distance, and from a human perspective, one might be indulging in a 'profound form of idealism' (Morton 2011, 80). For a truly ecological view, we should leave the idea of landscape and 'at least allow other entities, sentient or non-sentient, to talk to us' (Ibid.). Many artists are aware of this dilemma and try to move beyond visual representation of landscape or vegetation. Three examples involving coniferous trees, like the pines in Nida, which I will present later, can serve to exemplify various approaches: Agnes Denes' *Tree Mountain—A Living Time Capsule* (1996) in Ylöjärvi, Finland, with 11,000 planted pine trees, is an early example of a large-scale environmental rehabilitation project. Eija-Liisa Ahtila's video portrait of a single Spruce, *Horizontal* (2011), shows how our representational system is built to depict humans, and Marcus

Marder's sonification of biological processes in *Trees: Pinus Sylvestris* (Marder 2016) translates the suffering of a tree for human ears.

Rather than working with vegetal growth as material in the tradition of bio art or making biological processes understandable for humans with the help of technology, this project explores everyday forms of embodied action by performing for camera together with trees in the places where they grow. The project can be positioned at the intersection of performance art, media art (or video art, if we can speak of that today) and environmental art, in the encounter of traditions—performance art's emphasis on embodied presence, video and media art's valuing of repetition, transformation and critical reflection on technology and environmental art's sensitivity to the possible effects and side effects an artwork can have on the people and ecosystems involved.

The works I will discuss here, however, *Resting with Pines in Nida 1–12*, are only loosely related to this project, which began in Helsinki and continues in Stockholm. They differ from the main strategies used in the project, where focus is on repeated visits to the same trees and thus on temporality. In Nida variations of once-only encounters with several pine trees shift the focus to questions of compositional alternatives or changes in framing, distance and positioning of the human figure and their implication for our understanding of the human-tree relationship.

Plant thinking, plant theory, plant language

Marder's text can be placed within the growing interest in plant studies in recent years, an interest to which he himself has been substantially contributing. It is to some extent a further development of animal studies (Derrida 2002; Haraway 2008) and posthumanist thinking (Wolfe 2009; Braidotti 2013) and has focused on plant rights (Hall 2011), plant philosophy (Miller 2002; Marder 2013, Marder and Irigaray 2016), plant theory (Nealon 2016), the language of plants (Kranz, Schwan, Wittrock 2016; Gagliano, Ryan and Vieira 2017) and more, such as queer plants (Sandilands 2017) or vegetal performativity (nicolić and Radulovic 2018). Discussions on plants and performance are mostly linked to ecology in broader terms, as in the journal issues *Performing Ethos* (Allen and Preece 2015) or *Performance Research: On Ecology* (Bottoms et al. 2012). There is no issue of *Performance Research* 'On Plants', or 'On Vegetation', so far, comparable to the two issues of *Antennae* (Aloi 2011a, 2011b) looking at plants and art. My own contributions focusing on performing with trees (Arlander 2010) or junipers (Arlander 2015b) have not found their way to these discussions. This is not the place for a proper survey of the field, nor am I the right person to undertake one. The brief notes in the following are meant to serve as a background to Marder's challenge and this specific discussion of resting with pines in Nida.

In *Plants as Persons, a Philosophical Botany* (2011), Matthew Hall analyses philosophical and religious writings from various traditions. He propagates an understanding of plants as 'active, self-directed, even intelligent Beings' and suggests that the 'recognition of plants as persons' emphasizes 'the view that nature is a communion of subjective, collaborative beings that organize and experience their own lives' (Hall 2011, 169). Moreover, he notes how 'working closely with individual plant persons also has the potential to shift the view of nature as an organic, homogenized whole—which [...] contributes to the backgrounding of nature' (Ibid.).

In contrast to this idea of extending personhood to plants, Michael Marder challenges humans to learn from the dispersed life of plants and to recognize planthood in themselves. In his study *Plant-Thinking: A Philosophy of Vegetal Life* (2013), Marder offers a critique of the Western legacy of plant neglect by proposing a vegetal anti-metaphysics and stressing the importance of understanding vegetal life for understanding what it means to 'live with' other beings. For him 'the dispersed life of plants is a mode of being in relation to all the others, being *qua* being-with' (Marder 2013, 51). Moreover, 'the vegetal democracy of sharing and participation is an onto-political effect of plant-soul' which must 'eschew the metaphysical binaries of self and other, life and death, interiority and exteriority' (53). Marder tries to formulate a post-metaphysical way of thinking by focusing on 'the suppressed vegetal sources of human thought' (152). In his view, 'all creatures share something of the vegetal soul and [...] neither coincide with themselves nor remain self-contained, but are infinitely divisible' (51).

Thinking for Marder is not the sole privilege of the human subject. The vegetal *it thinks* refers to an undecided subject. *It thinks* is not concerned with 'who or what does the thinking?' but 'when and where does thinking happen?' Marder explains, because it arises from and returns to the plant's embeddedness in the environment. All radically contextual thought is an inheritor of vegetal life, he adds (169). This is fascinating with regard to site-specific artistic practices as well, especially when trying to explore performing together with plants on site.

An anthology, which brings into dialogue the different discourses of science, philosophy and literature, *The Language of Plants: Science, Philosophy, Literature* (Gagliano, Ryan and Viveira, 2017), is a further example of an increasing interest in studying vegetal modes of being. Despite the seeming impossibility of understanding plants, 'we should continue trying to listen to what plants tell us in their own modes of expression' (Gagliano et al. 2017, xviii). From a critical theory perspective, Jeffrey Nealon suggests in *Plant Theory: Bio Power and Vegetable Life* (2016) that 'the question for politics in the biopower era is not really what we humans *should* do [...] but as Foucault suggests, [...] to pay closer attention to what our doing does' (Nealon 2016, 113).

Hall's idea of plants as persons is problematic and neither compatible with Marder's anti-metaphysics nor with a new materialist ontology, but nevertheless triggers the question of how to respect the integrity and specificity of individual trees as partners in performance. Here, 'individual' cannot be understood in the sense of indivisible, for most plants are exactly that, divisible, but rather in the sense of being unique as a result of the plants' responses over time to the specific circumstances where they grow, a sense of plant individuality emphasized by scientists as well (Trewavas 2011, 29).

Marder's ideas on vegetal democracy I have explored elsewhere (Arlander 2015 a). In this context his notion of vegetal thinking is a useful reminder that there are various forms of thinking taking place, also in the practice described, such as some kind of performance thinking (Nauha 2017), the thinking of the camera through its automatic functions, the thinking of the human being framing the image, as well as the vegetal thinking of the pines that serve as performing partners. Following Nealon, or Foucault, we can ask how to understand the effect on the trees, or at least minimize the

harm done to the trees while performing with them. And most importantly, what does this kind of doing do; what kind of human relationship with the trees in question do specific compositional choices willingly or unwillingly propagate.

Transcorporeality and *zoe*

Some notions developed by new materialist feminist theorists are helpful in articulating what it might mean to perform with plants. The notions intra-action and agential cut developed by Karen Barad (2007) I have discussed elsewhere (Arlander 2014, 2018b) and will return to briefly, below. Other relevant notions for thinking and performing with plants are natureculture (Haraway 2003), sympoiesis (Haraway 2016), trans-corporeality (Alaimo 2010), and *zoe* (Braidotti 2013, 2017). The idea of *zoe* actually resembles Marder's idea of plants, animals and humans as 'growing beings' (Marder 2015, 187). Growth, breathing and the collaboration between Marder and Luce Irigaray I have explored in another text (Arlander, forthcoming). The notions trans-corporeality and *zoe* could perhaps help us understand the shared vitality and ongoing exchanges between the human being and the pines in the examples to be described.

Understanding 'human corporeality as trans-corporeality', a notion developed by Stacy Alaimo, 'in which the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world', stresses the fact that 'the substance of the human is ultimately inseparable from "the environment"' (Alaimo 2010, 2). Trans-corporeality 'reveals the interchanges and interconnections between various bodily natures' (Ibid.), thus making the term helpful for understanding the exchanges between and amongst animals and vegetation, and thus also in this practice of performing with plants. There is an ongoing trans-corporeality between humans and trees, a chemical and physical exchange, despite the impossibility of verbal communication.

This exchange and communality between human animals and plants can also be articulated as a '*zoe*-centred egalitarianism'. Rosi Braidotti posits *zoe* (rather than *bios*) as a ruling principle, as the 'dynamic, self-organizing structure of life' which 'stands for generative vitality', a 'transversal force that cuts across and reconnects previously segregated species, categories, and domains' (Braidotti 2017, 32). She proposes '*zoe*-centered egalitarianism' as 'a materialist, secular, grounded, and unsentimental response to the opportunistic transspecies commodification of life that is the logic of advanced capitalism' (Ibid.). In relationship to plants we could think of our common partaking in *zoe* as a generative vitality we share with vegetation.

Performing and appearing

What does performing with plants mean in terms of performance? The act of performing for camera is relatively easy to understand as a performance; the camera takes the role of the witness or the audience: when the camera is on, the performance begins, and when it is off, the performance ends. This kind of limited understanding of performance excludes, however, other types of performances that emphasize action and process rather than the role of the witness. Following Karen Barad, for example, performances take place everywhere all the time. For her, meaning or intelligibility are not human-based notions. 'Discursive practices are the material conditions for making meaning [...] [and] meaning is an ongoing performance of the world in its

differential intelligibility' (Barad 2007, 335). Thus, plants, too, are participating in this ongoing performance of the world. Therefore, there seems to be at least two kinds of performances in my example of performing with trees, the general performance going on in the world, including the plants, and the specific performance extracted out of it by the camera. The act of video recording means framing an image and cutting it out of the surroundings, and deciding a time continuum with beginning and end, for instance a period of time in the life of the tree. Each cut is the result of intra-actions of the apparatus in question, the environmental circumstances and various material-discursive practices, including compositional choices. And by these agential cuts (Barad 2007, 139) that designate what is spatially and temporally included in the video and what is excluded from mattering, a specific performance is extracted from the general performance that is going on in the world.

Can I really say that a tree is performing with me? Although understanding the relationship between performer and environment from a posthumanist and new-materialist perspective prompts us to consider how to perform together with life forms and phenomena around us, including plants, this might seem counter-intuitive at first. Elsewhere I have examined the implications of this 'performing with' (Arlander 2018a). When resting with a pine, performing together with a pine tree, posing for camera together, I am actually using the tree as my performing partner, without its consent, rather than trying to make myself understandable to the tree or to understand the tree's wishes or needs. How can I say that I am performing with a tree, that we are performing together? We are sharing the same image space, however, much as we were sharing the space on the same dunes. We are appearing or occurring together.

Probably not everybody would agree that plants perform, but there is no doubt that they appear. The interesting question is, can humans appear with them? In Finnish two words are used for performing, the transitive form '*esittää*', which is used when you perform something, and the intransitive '*esiintyä*', when you are performing yourself in the sense of appearing, of being on display. In Finnish, the word for 'appear' does not necessarily have the philosophical connotation of appearance as opposed to truth or reality, but is concerned with being visible, in the front ('*esillä*'). Both words for performing have a whole spectrum of other meanings, but their difference is perhaps clarified by a musician who exclaimed: 'Unfortunately, you cannot perform (esittää) music without performing (esiintyä)', meaning that you cannot play the music piece for an audience without being on display. Perhaps this distinction between the two modes of performing, 'the showing doing' and the 'showing oneself' or 'being shown'—appearing—can help us see how the pine trees perform.

The idea of occurring or appearing with plants actually resonates with the approach suggested by Marder elsewhere that 'plants articulate in their language devoid of words […] [f]irst of all, themselves […] they reaffirm vegetal being, which, through them, becomes more spatially pervasive' (Marder 2017, 120). According to him, 'plants articulate themselves with themselves' but they also 'articulate the burgeoning emergence, or self-generated appearance' thus 'demonstrating how a being can come into the light, appear, and signify itself' (122). If this is the case for plants,

why not for human beings as well? Could I not try to appear and signify myself together with the trees?

PART TWO: Resting with Pines in Nida

In September 2017 during a residency at Nida Art Colony on the Curonian Spit in Lithuania, not far from the Russian border, I worked in the very particular landscape in that area, experimented with ways of performing with the pine trees covering the dunes, mainly by posing with them for a video camera on tripod, editing these experiments to small videos and describing my explorations in blog posts, which serve as material for the following account (with excerpts in footnotes). The video stills in the following try to demonstrate the crude visual thinking involved.

Nida is a town located on the Curonian Spit, a peninsula or 98 km-long, curved, sandy strip of land that separates the Curonian Lagoon from the Baltic Sea and forms Neringa National Park. The northern part belongs to Lithuania and the rest to Russia, with Kaliningrad (formerly Königsberg) as the nearest city. Most of the spit is covered in pine forest. The Great Dune Ridge separating the Baltic Sea from the Curonian Lagoon was formed on moraine islands from sand transported by currents, and later covered by forest. Due to intensive logging in the 17th and 18th centuries the dunes began moving and burying the settlements. Dune stabilisation work was begun when it was obvious that human habitation would not be possible without direct action. A protective dune ridge was formed along the seashore and reinforced with pine trees and brushwood hedges to prevent the movement of the sand. Today forests and sands dominate the landscape on the Curonian Spit, with only eight small settlements (Unesco website). As a result of 'this unique union of man and nature in shaping the landscape', the area was proclaimed a national park and UNESCO World Heritage Site (Lithuanian travel website). In other words, 'even the spit's most deceptively natural areas are really monuments to human striving' (Morton 2006).

There is a tradition of artists celebrating the landscape in Nida. From the late-19th century, the dune landscape around Nidden, as it was called at the time, was popular among landscape painters from the Kunstakademie Königsberg, who formed the expressionist artists' colony, Künstlerkolonie Nidden. The writer Thomas Mann had a summer house built on a hill above the Lagoon, and spent the summers of 1930–32 there with his family (Nida/Nidden website). Nida Art Colony (NAC), which opened in 2011, is part of Vilnius Academy of Arts (Nida website), and located at the outskirts of the thriving tourist village.[2]

Figure 1. Snapshot of the forest

The pine forest covering the area around Nida is lovely to walk in, although not really conducive for performing; most of the trees are slender and straight, with no branches to sit on (see Figure 1). My initial impulse was to keep walking.[3] Later I combined walks recorded with an action camera into the video *Walking in Nida* (22 min. 22 sec.), an experiment in performing landscape rather than performing with plants. I also tried to create compositions with images of the tree trunks, made close-ups of the pines' bark and explored other possibilities, trying this and that, but never made any edited works of these various try-outs (See Figures 2 and 3). This way of spreading out in all directions, exploring different dimensions of the environment, experimenting with various techniques and tools in parallel, testing several working methods rather than developing one of them, reaching out for alternative approaches (movement or immobility, wide framing or close-ups, focusing on the forest or the paths or other vegetation and so on) indeed resembled 'to strive like a plant in all directions at once, excessively' (Marder 2015, 193) albeit unlike the plants, in this case mostly in vain.

Figure 2. Video still of unedited material

Figure 3. Video still of unedited material

The first individual tree to pose with I found to the north of the colony.[4] The two performances for camera with that pine tree were recorded on Saturday afternoon 9 September 2017 and edited into *Resting with a Pine 1* (12 min. 58 sec.) and *Resting with a Pine 2* (12 min. 2 sec.). Two completely different images (see Figures 4 and 5) were produced of two almost identical performances with the same tree, by changing the position of the camera.

Figure 4. Resting with a Pine 1 video still

Figure 5. Resting with a Pine 2 video still

A few days later I made a new attempt, when encountering a pine with a trunk bifurcated near the ground.[5] This third performance was recorded on Tuesday 12 September 2017 and edited into *Resting with a Pine 3* (6 min.). The following images demonstrate the problem of working with horizontal video images of trees, which are decidedly vertical (see Figures 6 and 7), as well as the ethical implications of compositional strategies. Maintaining the human scale and the 9:6 landscape format completely disregards the specificity of the vertical tree partner.

Figure 6. Resting with a Pine 3 video still

Figure 7. Snapshot of the pine

More pines to pose with I found closer to the sea side of the spit, near the 52-meter-high Parnidis sand dune. The pine trees on the dunes grow in a different manner from the ones in the forest, individually, with some distance between them, and with their branches spread out on the sand, as if keeping it in place, and are easier to capture in landscape format (see Figure 8).[6] Three performances with three different pines were made on 13 September 2017 and edited into *Resting with a Pine 4* (9 min. 16 sec.), *Resting with a Pine 5* (8 min. 10 sec.) and *Resting with a Pine 6* (6 min. 58 sec.).

Figure 8. Resting with a Pine 4 video still

Especially in the two last ones (see Figures 9 and 10), the human figure is fairly large and dominating and the pine seems more like a supporting prop. Dissatisfied, I abandoned these experiments for a while.

Figure 9. Resting with a Pine 5 video still

Figure 10. Resting with a Pine 6 video still

When my time in Nida was drawing to a close I decided to try my habitual way of working, at least once, and to find a tree to visit repeatedly to make a time-lapse video. I chose a tree high on the dunes and made two performances, sitting higher or lower in the same tree, on 23 September, in preparation for the time-lapse work the following day.[7] They were edited into *Resting with a Pine 7* (8 min. 12 sec.) and *Resting with a Pine 8* (8 min. 12 sec.) to be of equal duration, possibly to be shown together (see Figures 11 and 12).

Figure 11. Resting with a Pine 7 video still

Figure 12. Resting with a Pine 8 video still

On Sunday 24 September I recorded a series of performances with the pine tree every two hours between 8 am and 8 pm and edited these recordings into the video *Sunday with a Pine* (8 min.12 sec.). Later, the blog notes I wrote after each visit were recorded and added as a voice-over to the video, resulting in *Sunday with a Pine - with text*. This narrative version was made only after reading the text as an accompaniment to a screening of the video in Helsinki (27 October 2017) where the mundane text served as a contrast to the romantic imagery (see Figures 13 and 14).

Figure 13. Sunday with a Pine video still (8 am)

Figure 14. Sunday with a Pine video still (8 pm)

At the Open Studios event in Nida the following Monday, however, *Sunday with a Pine* was presented without text and inspired some mild collegial critique. I realized my previous attempts were less problematic, but also less interesting, because they did not flirt with the tradition of the 'sublime'.[8] The thought of my vanity influencing the images was irritating, so I decided to make a few more attempts, with various distances to the camera, either too close or too far in order not to emphasize the human figure.[9] The four performances recorded with one pine tree on 26 September were edited into *Resting with a Pine 9* (5 min. 26 sec.), *Resting with a Pine 10* (7 min. 10 sec.), *Resting with a Pine 11* (7 min. 10 sec.) and *Resting with a Pine 12* (6 min. 15 sec.). They exemplify a form of visual thinking, of searching for ways to make the relationship between the human and the pine more equal, by showing only a fragment of both (see Figures 15 and 16), either almost in silhouette or by focusing on the 'skin' of the pine with the presence of the human only hinted at by the scarf.

Figure 15. Resting with a Pine 9 video still

Figure 16. Resting with a Pine 10 video still

Another strategy was to increase the distance, adapting to the scale of the tree, in order to show it in full (see Figure 17) or to place the camera at mid-distance, where the human is still discernible (see Figure 18).

Figure 17. Resting with a Pine 11 video still

Figure 18. Resting with a Pine 12 video still

To experiment with the possibility of contrasting the view of the tree and the view from the tree, the tree's view as it were, I held an action camera while sitting in the tree recording the view simultaneously with the video camera on tripod recording the main image.[10] Thus, four videos of the view from the pine were recorded, *View from a Pine 1* (5 min. 26 sec.), *View from a Pine 2* (6 min. 43 sec.), *View from a Pine 3* (6 min. 43 sec.) and *View from a Pine 4* (6 min. 15 sec.), which all look rather similar (see Figure 19).

Figure 19. View from a Pine 1 video still

The only video that I have developed further of all these experiments, so far, is *Sunday with a Pine*. Combining the various attempts together would probably be the best way of exhibiting them—a demonstration of the process, or, of the difficulties of posing with the pines, or of performing with trees more generally.

In contrast to my usual way of working—repeated visits to the same site edited to form rough time-lapse videos showing changes in the landscape—these once-only-performances produced something between a still-image and moving image. This is further accentuated by showing them here as stills, without duration or performative dimension. Some of the images convey a distinct atmosphere, while others seem like thoughtless variations, as if I did not spend enough time behind the camera choosing the composition, and preferred the experience of sitting in the tree. But, however magic the moment of sitting in the tree, what remains is the recording. There is a tension between experience and the record of it, between an event and its documentation. These performances were nevertheless deliberately made for and by the camera, intended for future viewers.

The emphasis on work-in-progress or flow rather than a timeless object or work, is discussed for instance by Boris Groys (2013). 'Documentation of the act of working on an artwork is already an artwork,' he writes. Moreover, 'If the public follows my activity all the time, then I do not need to present it with any product. The process is already the product', he adds. 'If art has become a flow, it flows in a mode of self-documentation. Here action is simultaneous with its documentation, its inscription. And the inscription simultaneously becomes information that is spread through the internet and instantly accessible by everybody' (Groys 2013, n.p.).

One of the reasons I began creating rough time-lapse videos documenting changes in a landscape was to avoid the idea of representation, the one image that would somehow stand in for the landscape. Experience of landscapes showed me that everything was in a constant flux, changing from one moment to the next. By returning to the same site and by keeping the framing constant, I could avoid the lure of adjusting the image to include the beautiful sunset or the dramatic shadow and so on.

I tried to translate this same idea of repetition to my once-only-performances and poses with pine trees in Nida, by choosing one more tree and then one more… They were all beautiful and valuable and extraordinary—or did I simply reach out again and again, waiting for a surprise, an unforeseen event? The focus on experimentation, on generating variations, instead of polishing a final work, is a common strategy in contemporary art, where process is increasingly stressed over product. And it is this focus, this excess of variations, that takes us back to the challenge we began with.

PART THREE: Discussion

In what way do these experiments respond to the challenge to artists posed by Michael Marder that we began with? The suggestion to 'plug their work into the process of growth, broadly understood as a striving', is linked to trying out various approaches and creating variations. 'What would it mean for a performance, or for another artistic practice, to strive like a plant in all directions at once, excessively […]'? What is excessive for one artist is ordinary for another; in this case looking for new tree partners, creating new versions with the same partner, trying with another camera and so on, is excessive compared to my previous modes of working. And to do it 'with the utmost spatial or corporeal attention paid to every inch of the place where it unfolds?´ These works were conditioned by the site, the specific characteristics of the landscape and the vegetation, and tried to utilize their potential, but attention could always be more detailed. 'Where is the border between concentration and scattering here?' This question seems to be crucial in much artistic practice; to focus on one thing and develop that, or to experiment and produce variations in an almost vegetal manner; one more leaf (or needle) and then one more, and more…

The question '[w]hat would need to be set up for this kind of performance to grow, to extend its reach, while remaining rooted in the context wherein it first cropped up?' is more specific in its address of the context or site. To work with plants in the place where they grow, as in this case, to respect the specific spatiality of plants, poses problems related to the tension between representation and performativity. How much of the specificity of a tree and its site can be maintained in digital video works.

Perhaps the most inspiring of the questions, regardless of the perplexing reference to the Baroque, is the following: 'What would its modular self-complication or self-replication in this place, which I have provocatively analogized to the Baroque, entail?' In some sense the production of variations, of alternative poses or portraits with and of the same or alternative pine trees, from the same or an alternative camera angle, could be understood as a form of self-complication and self-replication. It is further accentuated by the fact that the same person acts as the artist behind the camera and the performer in front of the camera. And lastly, Marder's surprising remark regarding such a practice, asking 'how, if at all, would it engage with the plants themselves?' Here Marder opens the possibility to look at the mode of working rather than the subject, topic or material of the work as attuned with or emulating the vegetal. Although my examples are focusing on plants as subject matter, or rather on specific pine trees growing in a specific area, the idea of an artistic practice that resembles vegetal growth, a vegetal sensibility, is the most enticing.

The difficult balancing between scattering and concentration, between outreach and rootedness as well as of modular self-complication or self-replication is evident only with hindsight. Instead of concentrating on working with one image until it is perfect, or worthy of display, my choice was making more images, encountering more trees, creating an abundance of alternatives. In another sense this focus on dispersed vegetal being, or on the flow of matter is also in line with new materialist and posthumanist thought, where the value of forms of *zoe* or types of critters partaking in mutual trans-corporeality cannot be self-evidently divided into hierarchies of good and bad, right

and wrong, successful and superfluous, although such exclusions and inclusions are constantly taking place in practice.

Perhaps an approach of variations and excess, a vegetal impulse of sorts, simply exemplifies a tendency common among artist researchers to go on experimenting for the joy of it, sometimes after the aim of the project, the possible insight sought for has been reached. This is a characteristic common to many performance practices as well, the wish to go on far beyond what is needed in order to make a point or to gain the knowledge sought, a wish to go on singing, to 'keep growing'.

But what about resting? The title of the variations described and of this text is 'Resting with Pines', not growing with pines. Resting is another dimension of vegetal being that we could attune to and learn from. Although the silence or slowness of trees is largely an illusion and due to the limitations of the human sensorium, trying to stay for a while with such sessile beings as pine trees in the place where they live, to perform, appear or pose with them for a moment, will inevitably help us in resting, too.

In the beginning I asked whether it would be possible to respond to the challenge of a philosopher with artistic means, and whether such a response could be communicated in a journal? Is it possible to demonstrate the thinking that takes place in performances for camera with visual means without turning the demonstration into critical studies or an artist talk? Based on the experiences in writing this text I would say that it might perhaps be possible, even though this text has here resorted to many more words than images.

Appendix

Sunday with a Pine: https://vimeo.com/287796798

Notes

[1] Att uppträda / samarbeta med växter – Performing with plants, an artistic research project funded by the Swedish Research Council at Stockholm University of the Arts Research Centre (2018-2019). See https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/316550/316551

[2] 'I can imagine this as a real tourist paradise in summer months. /--/ Nida really looks like a place with more than hundred years of experience in tourism – picturesque, clean, cosy and peaceful but a little lively too, in the right corners.' (bp 4.9.2017)

[3] 'After a few days of walking back and forth on the sandy forest paths on the pine-covered dunes of Nida I have realized that in contrast to the usual proverb, I cannot see the trees for the forest. /--/ Something in the environment suggest moving on the paths rather than sitting in one place, so I played with my little Gopro action camera and tried to see what could be done with it. (bp 8.9.2017)

Exploring movement has been my main challenge during this week in Nida… /--/The problem of the moving

camera, the moving image, literally, is not solved by these experiments, though.' (bp 10.9. 2017)

[4] 'The forest is full of pine trees, all fairly straight and tall, or then small mountain pines that form impenetrable thickets. Finding a suitable partner is not an easy matter, so I decided to return to the pine with the branches bending low that I saw yesterday and to try to make a session with it. In the afternoon I changed to my black 'performance outfit', took my camera, tripod and scarf, and set out to find the pine. /--/ In the end I found two ways of framing the image that were somehow interesting. The first one with the pine branches in close up covering the whole upper part of the image and the second one with the sculptural shape of the branches crossing each other. I sat for approximately ten minutes for each image and was rather lucky in having that part of the forest for myself for a while. /--/ These small videos I called "Resting with a Pine" and that is exactly what they are about.' (bp 8.9.2017)

[5] 'After a rather long walk on the forest paths north of the colony I suddenly saw a pine tree by the path which looked inviting, because it was divided in two fairly close to the ground. It turned out to be somewhat of an illusion, though, and not so easy to climb up to. But I finally managed to straddle it, like a horse, and sit there leaning against the wet trunk for a while. /--/ The image looks fairly comfortable, but it is so very misleading with regard to the tree. The beautiful form of the trunk needs a vertical image to come to the fore.' (bp 13.9.2017)

[6] 'Yesterday I returned to the dunes where I saw the first pines with strong and spread out branches suitable to sit on, and found more than enough of possible partners. The pines look special because they grow individually and not in thickets as further up on the spit and they spread out their lowest branches on top of the sand, as if to keep it there, under their skirt hem as it were. I tried to find ones that would let some of the view to be seen through their needles, and to have the light in a nice angle. The first one is taken with the camera on the slope so it looks like I would be sitting very low. The two others are taken with the camera below, but a little bit too close. The human figure is again fairly large compared to the tree.' (bp 13.9.2017)

[7] '[T]oday, when the weather suddenly cleared and a beautiful sunshine made everything look interesting again, I realized I should perhaps try to make one rough time-lapse session with a pine tree and my ordinary equipment after all. /--/ I found a potential pine partner near the beach, but perhaps too far to return to every second hour, so I walked up to the parking lot near the dunes and chose a pine tree with low and relatively bare branches. Most of the pines on the dunes are spreading their branches to create impenetrable green mounds, but this one … seemed easy and inviting. So, I made a brief session as a try out, sitting up in the tree and on the branch almost touching the ground. … I managed to find a place for the camera on the slope that enabled a framing with the horizon approximately in the middle of the image, and I tried to mark the place by sticks in the sand. Leaving the tripod there for the whole day is probably not a good idea, because it is quite close to the parking place and there are lots of visitors on the weekend. Concerning the schedule starting and finishing at eight could be ok, the sun rises something like half past seven and sets around half past seven in the evening, but there is probably enough light at eight to end with a fadeout…' (bp 23.9.2017)

[8] 'Prompted by the comments I received I realised that I very easily succumb to a form of vanity, creating romantic imagery where the human figure looks good and the atmosphere is somehow semi-sublime. This was particularly true for the work I showed, Sunday with a Pine, which is recorded from a middle distance. My previous attempts, especially Resting with a Pine 4, 5 and 6 are much less flattering for the performer, but also less pleasing as views, and perhaps less interesting, too, because they do not "flirt" with the problematic tradition of the "sublime" landscape. I was nevertheless irritated by the idea of letting my vanity influence the images, and decided to make one more attempt.' (pp 27.9.2017)

[9] 'On Tuesday afternoon I climbed up to the dunes and looked for a suitable pine that would stand relatively alone, so I could have an image of it from a distance without other branches hindering the view. And of course, I wanted to find one I could easily climb on and not be completely covered by the needles. I chose one near the open dunes and tried to find the right angle for the camera with regard to the sun. I had also brought with me my go pro, and wanted to experiment with recording the view from where I sat in the tree with that camera while my main camera on the tripod would record the whole scene. I made four attempts with the tripod placed at various distances. The two first ones are in close up … with only my shoulder visible in the image. The first one is actually too dark, almost

in backlight, but there you can see something of the landscape below. The third one is about as far as I could get without bumping into another tree and shows the pine in full. The fourth image is something of a compromise, from a distance, but closer, so you can see the human figure more clearly. It is perhaps closer to a romantic version again.' (bp 27.9.2017)

[10] 'The go pro images from the four variations look almost the same: I had the camera in my hand while sitting in the pine, and although I tried to stay immobile there is small movement all the time. They are ok as still images, even though the horizon is leaning one way or the other and you cannot see so much of the view in them either.' (bp 27.9.2017)

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PERFORMANCE
PHILOSOPHY

REPETITION AS THE PERFORMATIVE SYNDROME OF DYING

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A well-known Moscow conceptualist, Andrey Monastyrsky, gives a wonderful example of the performative syndrome of repetition in his diary notes of 1981. While once reading an article by Boris Groys (1981) on the autonomy of art, the artist suddenly felt certain audial discomfort. Something was distracting him. He stopped reading and heard the sounds of someone vomiting. It happened to be a drunken man. Monastyrsky went on reading, but twenty minutes later discovered that the sounds persisted, only now they were completely changed: they had stopped being physiological and had become musical. Listening closely to them again, Monastyrsky discovered that now there were two creatures emitting sounds. One type of sound seemed to be the cawing of a crow and the second sound accompanying the first turned out to be that very drunken man—only this time quite consciously mimicking the sounds of the bird's cawing. The concerted cawing of the crow and its repetition by the drunken man lasted for quite some time. As Monastyrsky comments: "It all sounded harmonized and musically interesting. The sounds of human cawing were full of sobriety. In them one could discern the tender and almost loving gratitude to the original" (Monastyrsky 1997).[1]

What is interesting in this example is not at all mere imitation or mimicry; but rather the two manifestations of two temporalities, or the two modes of reality. The first, mundane mode of reality, in which the man vomits and the bird caws, is transposed into the second mode of extra-reality as it unfolds as a performative and aesthetic excess and complement in relation to the first, mundane one. The main thing in this transposition is not merely the repetition of the bird's sounds

PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHY VOL 4, NO 2 (2019):476–489
DOI: https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2019.42236
ISSN 2057-7176

by the man, but the man's leap out of the temporality of existence, out of his mundane "being"; this happens by means of performing the excessive act of cawing—the act that turns the drunken man into a grotesque and humorous performer. Performing as a bird in such a condition might not be the best way to survive. What is abnormal and pathological here is the transposition from the mundane mode of reality (act of vomiting) to the repetitive performance of cawing (excessive mode of reality that we therefore refer to as a second reality). Instead of following the dictates demanded by self-preservation (dealing with the procedure of vomiting), the drunken man, conversely, indulges in the nonsensical practice of aesthetic play through repetition (mimicking the cawing)—conduct that contradicts and hampers his life. This brings us to the second reality of repetition that mocks the self-preservation instinct of the "first" mundane reality. Thus the second reality of performative repetition is in a way counter to life and is ontically perilous to it. However, this second reality of repetition, within its own temporal anthropometry and the performative singularity, happens to be life's aesthetic pleroma,[2] plenitude. So, from the point of view of the first, normal, mundane reality and its ontic conditions such pleroma of play approximates death, the threshold of life, and is directed towards it. In the dimension of the second performative temporality, however, the pleroma of play, on the contrary, evolves and unfolds as the pushing forward of a certain excessive sequence of acts. It is because of this aporia—ebbing of life in the ontic dimension, but accelerating it aesthetically and performatively—that Gilles Deleuze claims that such a mode of performative repetition is torn away from any chronic temporality, remaining without any semblance to the original (2001, 15–30).

I. Disjunction of Time

Despite the disjunction of temporalities, however, the regime of the second, aesthetic reality of performative repetition and play quite paradoxically preserves its bond with the "first," "normal" one. To recall a claim made by Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition*, repetition is not an analogy: it is a paradox of a situation and is therefore *solitary*. There can only be a repetition of repetition: i.e., the second reality of performing is always already torn away from whatever happens in life (Deleuze 2001, 23). On the other hand, however, in *Logic of Sense,* Deleuze insists on the genetic tie of the repeated with what happened in the first reality, in reference to which the performative act of repetition becomes the syndrome (Deleuze 1990, 109–118, Ch. 2. "Repetition in Itself"; 148–154, Ch.3. "The Image of Thought"). As we see from the example of the drunken man, the triggering moment—the drunken man's feat and the cawing of the crow—resides in the first reality: the repetition is triggered by those conditions. But at the same time, the paradox of repetition unfolds somewhere and somehow in such regime that the connection with this first reality is nevertheless lost.

Deleuze explains this paradox by the impossibility and incapacity to know what happened, unless one leaps out of what happened towards transposing it in repetition. As he states: "When the consciousness of knowledge or the working through the memory is missing, the knowledge in itself is only the repetition of its object. It is played, repeated, enacted instead of being known" (Deleuze 2001, 14). So it is this test of not knowing that instigates the character to repeat. The less one knows

or remembers, the more one repeats. (Let's imagine here Oedipus, Lear, Hamlet. Their becoming the theatrical characters, as well as their acting and excessive performative conduct within the plot is instigated by an event that paralyzes comprehension of its reasons and shuts out the world, in which transparency and knowledge had been possible.) Repetition endeavors to anchor the unknown, the happened; it serves to grasp that which has happened; but the more one repeats, the more one ousts what has to be anchored and grasped; the more what has to be grasped unfolds, the more the performative repetitive disguises it.

I will mention two eloquent examples, which, with almost mathematical precision confirm this aporetic bond between the first chronological temporality of being and the second excessive temporality of performative repetition, torn from the first, but at the same time tied to it. Dramatic plays have numerous examples of such disjunctions between the "first" time and the "second" excessive time of performative repetition. In this case, the act of performing takes place as a mimicry, by means of which it attempts to repeat the event, the trace of which had been lost. The act of repetition functions as the arrogant dismissal of some, presumably traumatic event; and, on the other hand, in its performative zeal to subvert some traumatic incident into aesthetic humorous play, the act of repetition becomes simultaneously a transformation into something counter to trauma. The following two examples are taken from Shakespeare's *Othello* and *King Lear*. I introduce them here, because they demonstrate in an excellent fashion the fracture in the Subject: the subject of *the active voice* of the first reality becomes the altered subject of the *passive voice of the second performative reality*, in which the subject can only speak on behalf of the Other, on behalf of some protagonist of imaginary playful performance, invented by him.

For example, in Shakespeare's *Othello,* the main protagonist is a moor of Venice in the "first" reality. Yet, when the truth is exposed, the culprits are punished and the outcome irreversible, Othello attempts suicide, but he performs this act in a role of an imaginary character invented by him precisely for this occasion. At the very end of the play he pronounces:

> In Alepo once,
> Where a malignant and a turbaned Turk
> Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,
> I took by th'throat the circumsized dog
> And smote him – thus.
>
> He stabs himself (Shakespeare 1975, 1057)

In this case, Othello, the moor of Venice, discards his subjectivity and performs an act of death as another character—i.e., not on behalf of himself, but in the role of a turbaned Turk, whom he himself once stabbed in Alepo. Othello is mimicking both himself as the murderer, and the Turk, murdered by him. Only this is not to simply imitate another person, but to die in the specific regime of repetition, in which one inevitably performs somebody else.

Similarly in *King Lear*, when Lear is abandoned in the midst of the storm after being evicted by Regan and Goneril, he seems to lose his mind and tries to hang himself. But while doing that, Lear

enacts his own suicide via hanging as the humorous trial over his daughters. He thus plays simultaneously his daughters and the prosecutor who hangs them (Shakespeare 1975, 1087–88). Ontically this is an act of suicide (in the play Kent saves Lear from it). But Lear's conduct—an attempt to hang himself as if he were his daughters—unfolds in the excessive regime of repetition as a performing act (Shakespeare 1975, 1087–88). The scene contains mimicry, but what one mimics (punishment of daughters by enacting their execution in person) is not at all the exact contents and intention of the scene of repetition; rather, what is repeated and performed is the leap out of the "first" time of existence into the "second" sublime time of performative repetition, torn away from what had happened.

A very important thing to emphasize in relation to the performing act as repetition is the following: it is not that, when an actor is rendering the written score, such an act of repetition of the score automatically presupposes simply enactment of some life-story, the enactment of the first, normal, mundane reality by means of the second, performed, staged and scored one. Looking upon the logic of performative repetition in the scenes from Shakespeare's tragedies mentioned above, we could emphasize, that the performing act exists not in simply reproducing some contents from life; it subsists in performing only those moments of "normal' life, those moments of the first reality, that could have triggered the syndromatic performative conduct of enacting someone else. Thus into a play would go not simply a drunken man's usual conduct, but the drunken man's specific instigation to enact the crow; not simply a suicide of a person, but Othello's motivation to die by means of mimicking the victim once executed by him; not simply despair of a father with his merciless daughters, but Lear performing his despair by enacting the death of his daughters.

In other words, an actor mainly plays those who had already, in their own turn, been subject to play in real life (Lear and Othello are such characters); the actor plays someone who already underwent the syndrome of launching oneself into repetition and performing while still residing in the first reality. In other words, the actor plays an actor, and only in this case can the regime of repetition and performing be launched. Performing can only perform performing. Repetition repeats repetition. Acting and drama can only repeat something that had already failed to exist in the normal ontic conditions of life, shifting towards the edge of life, manifesting the syndrome of transposition into the conditions of abnormality of performative repetition. So returning to our initial example of the drunken man mimicking the crow, provided by Monastyrksy, the actor would not be interested in playing merely a drunken man vomiting, but would play *only that* drunken man who started to emit the sounds of a crow *despite* vomiting.

As stated above, one can repeat something that has already been brought to the necessity of repetitive subversion in relation to chronic time and mere life. Precisely because the prototypes of Shakespeare's theatrical characters might have fallen into the feat of acting, into the syndrome of repetition, there appears the form of dramatic score that can enact these feats of repetition. This is the reason why performing and acting are not narrative. They can only render reality, which in itself has already become an "abnormal" performative reality.

II. Pleroma of Performing

I will now turn to the title of this paper, to why performative repetition can be considered in light of the syndrome of dying at all. As mentioned above, the second reality in which performing unfolds mocks the self-preservation instinct by repetition and play and is counter to life, even ontically perilous to it. But this second reality of repetition within its own temporal unfolding and anthropometry (topology and ergonomics of distributed action), happens to be an aesthetic pleroma (plenitude). Ontically (in mundane conditions) such pleroma (performative acceleration) approximates death for the performer, the threshold of life, and is even directed towards death. This is because the temporal regime of performing, immersion into the conditions of performative acceleration contradicts self-preservation, both psychophysically and topologically. Yet in the dimension of the second performative temporality, it, on the contrary, unfolds as an ultimate effectuation of a certain excessive sequence of acts. Performative zeal as the excess of existence and a complement to it neglects the necessities of existence. If a performing act were not a limited temporary episode, it would be impossible to survive acting out this performative temporality for longer than a short period of time.

Thus, the accelerative modus of performative repetition (the second reality) happens to evolve in its own right as a form of dying, even independently of any possible story with the topic of death that might form the contents for the performance procedure. Actually we might have the theme of death as a narrative to be played. But the syndrome of dying is caused not simply by enacting the narrative about death, but by the form and regime of performative excess itself. As mentioned above, this is because performing presupposes such a degree of accelerated effectivity that it subjects life to its own expenditure. Performative repetition itself engages the death instinct in addition to any concrete peril or ruin that might be inscribed in the evental contents or a plot to be performed. It happens due to the specific quality of temporality of the second reality. (This could provide a good answer to the following question: how can the regime of repetition be tied to dying, if the situation or the happening—something to be repeated—is not necessarily exceptional or fatal?)

In the regime of the repetition's unfolding, the actor rushes towards the deadly precisely by virtue of performing instead of self-preservation; this happens by virtue of the complete exhaustion of forces instead of their economization. As Lacan puts it in his seminars on tragedy (in which he analyzes Sophocles' *Antigone*), the tragic hero always faces a certain threshold of ruin (*Atè*), which he cannot help but strive towards, given the demands of his own internal, unwritten code of ethics; he voluntarily overcomes this threshold with a decision that is "beyond life." This is not simply a striving towards death, but a striving towards a so-called "second death"—a death that knows neither fear nor self-pity, a death that is already inhuman, in which the ethical act and the aesthetic beauty of this act are fused. Lacan argues that this ethico-aesthetical performance of the striving towards death and overcoming it with an otherworldly act by a tragic hero are manifestations of the beautiful (Lacan 1997, 273–290).[3] What Lacan implies here is that a radical ethical gesture coincides with the performing act, which exceeds life and goes utterly beyond it. It is in this sense that performative acts embody life's "utmost inhuman beauty."

Thus ontically (i.e., in the physical form) the performative regime of repetition approximates death and aggravates mere life, but as performative, aesthetic eventality it exceeds life's chronic temporality. It is only in this directedness towards death that the performative mode or repetition can acquire the due aesthetic dimension, and it is this dimension that Nietzsche calls "aesthetic play."[4]

But let's look again at the temporal construction of performative repetition. Such eternity of the unfolded is constructed out of pure anthropometry of moving forth, of executive evolving "without any mediation" as Deleuze insists (2001, 13). In *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze actually puts forth his critique of Hegel's abstract logic and mediated generality by suggesting instead the unmediated mode of temporality. He talks about the logical movement conditioned by mediation in Hegel's philosophy, and another kind of movement—the discreet one without any mediation—which is actually repetition as against representation, repetition as the discreetness and physicality of movement without abstracted generalizations or "augmentation of comprehension" (Ibid.). Repetition's semiological discreetness should have no generality of semantic breadth and should be ontically different from conventional propositions and their semantic and linguistic conditions (which presuppose temporal conventionality as well).

What Deleuze describes here is quite pathological—pathological from the ontic point of view. Such discreetness is impossible and cannot be accomplished in the regular conditions of time and space; it is *out of* being and time. This mode of repetition unfolds as unmediated actualization (accomplishment), coining anthropometrically one segment with the other. These movements are taking place in ordinal, indexical, numerical time; not the time of "one, two, three," as in counting, but the temporality of "the first, the second, the third," as in enumerating (88–91). It is the temporal mode of verbs and acts, not of qualities and attributes. Such movement is then a pleromatic evolving, a self-replenishment. Charles S. Peirce's semiology has in fact similar traits in terms of its fugitive anthropometry. In it the most important thing is the will of accomplished sequence: the verb, the doing, the itinerary from A to B and then inevitably and irreversibly to C. No introspection, only the trajectory of movement. As Peirce writes in *How to Make Our Ideas Clear, "*This activity of thought by which we are carried, not where we wish, but to a foreordained goal, is like the operation of destiny" (Peirce 1878, 300).

Acting in such conditions means to be *rhythmic,* rather than chronic, metric, or even iterative. Rhythm is the quality that makes time uneven, anthropometric and irreversibly moving towards an end. Non-rhythmic cardinal time stands still; the rhythmized ordinal time moves unevenly, rushes and ends. Consequently, the rhythmic time is the one that exerts the peril of mortification.

The strange converse effect of all this is that not only is an act of repetition the syndrome of dying, but the dimension of death and dying then automatically qualifies performing arts, becoming the attribute of the performative procedure**.** Hence if one formally exerts repetition and its poetics and intonation as a performing act, one automatically acts up dying.

An interesting case in this connection is the influence that the invention of a new musical key—the diminished seventh degree—had at the end of the 16th century on the origin of opera in order to

signify the death drive. This case shows that the syndrome of dying was embodied in the performing style and intonation itself, not simply in the plot. In the musical harmony of Modern Time, its structure of keys since the end of the 16th century has been based on the diminished seventh degree. This change was entailed by the secularization of the church and sermon polyphony and was initiated by the pioneers of opera composition (like Jacopo Peri and Claudio Monteverdi) to establish a special key of tragic musical drama that would literally unfold the procedure of grief and dying even regardless of any contents, simply by formal means of intonation. After the decline of the great polyphonic tradition,[5] since the beginning of the 17th century music was grounded upon the key of the diminished seventh degree right up to the beginning of the 20th century. Hence a syndrome of aestheticized *Thanatos* permeated music, became its syndrome. Interestingly, the so-called "classical" music which we identify more with order and harmony is actually biased by the elements of perilous thanatography, is constructed around the mournful acceptance of death and consequently engages various, more or less grotesque mimicries and performings of the modalities of dying. Thus the invention of opera epitomizes the syndrome of dying. A performer in this case, even regardless of what s/he performs engages in the trope of dying by the token of enacting the procedure of performing.

An appropriate metaphor for the condition in which a performer finds him/herself would be a rope-dancer; a well-known Nietzschean example. The rope-dancer is in no way jumping into an abyss; on the contrary s/he is implementing the most balanced, composed, refined, rehearsed and subtle movements to reach from the beginning of the procedure to the end. That said, its refinement only makes sense above the abyss, only in confronting the peril of death. According to Nietzsche: only the moment that reached its utmost intensity, that leaped out of being and became the climax of life deserves to be repeated innumerable times (Nietzsche, 2011). Interestingly, what is overlooked by the versatile critiques of vitalism is that this utmost intensity of performative reality is not simply the vitality of life and its conatus; hence it is not in any way livable and vital. Such utmost degree of intensity is, on the contrary, unlivable. But paradoxical as it seems, being unlivable, it is nonetheless repeatable in the regime of the abnormality of performing.

III. Three Regimes of Performativity

It is only now, after having said all this, that I will list three main semiological paradigms of performativity. The difference between these three modes deserves broader attention and a separate paper, but let's cite them in the form of a short description in order to specify the modality of repetition I have been accounting for.

One of the main theoretical, social and ideological treatments of performativity and its emancipatory impact is based on John Austin's (Austin 1962) and Judith Butler's critique of ontology (Butler 1988, 519–531) by means of performative acts. According to this logic, what matters is the transformative power of the accident of a performative act, be it an *enoncé*, a social agency or a subversive gesture. According to John Austin's theory, the illocutionary force of speech acts is more important than any constant meaning. This force exists in implementation, in executing a certain

act, a juridical verdict or a ceremony. Examples might be: "From now on I forgive you"; "My jewelry I bequeath to you"; "I swear to do it", etc.

As known from Austin's work, what is crucial here is the success of the pronouncement. Yet such success, as Austin explicitly insists, is about law-making, about juridical legitimation. Such enoncé remains in the domain of mundane conventionality. Austin even insists that nothing that is emitted in the regime of theatre, music, or any other artistically biased performance, can be treated as an illocutive act, because its successfulness is fictitious and imaginary. Fictitious enunciations cannot be truly implemented (Austin 1962).

At first sight it seems that Judith Butler's critique of ontology is more substantial and truly undermines the regime of ontology—the regime of the perpetual metaphysical basis of events and phenomena. But in the end her idea about emancipatory transformation also remains in "being," in the mundane "regular," non-fictitious reality of existence (i.e., in the first reality). Performative behavior for Butler presupposes *hubris* and its accidentality—the contingent, subversive and accidental occurrences as against ontological permanence. But in a similar respect to Austin, for Butler hubris and its accident reside in conditions that are conventional to daily existence. As she claims in "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," there is no transgressive or subversive act that would be irritating or would be out of place on the stage or in prescribed conditions of an artistic gesture. For example, someone in drag can only be noticed as something extra-ordinary in an everyday, normal situation—in a bus or a subway; not on a stage, in an exhibition, or in a film (Butler 1988, 526–528). In other words, the frames of artistic conduct de-realize and neutralize protest. In fact, Butler's approach represents the tendency of the last 15 years in both art and activism, which depart from the performative potentialities of the everyday and locate any subversive gesture in "mere" life while treating the hubris of performance as a democratizing agency of this everydayness. It is true that performative acts—be they speech acts, social interventions or gender performance—subvert the constants of ontology. At the same time, however, they remain in the frame of mundane life; in fact, they retain ontology, because they are stuck in this very "first" mundane reality; and even if reality is modified by means of performative agency, its ontic data remain identical to the temporality of the daily being. Evolving the semiological data in everyday conditions has nothing to do then with the regime of the excesses of performative repetition we have discussed above. This is because a performative procedure does not transpose in both cases (Austin, Butler) mere life into any *other, excessive kind* of temporality. And, hence, it is not able to acquire the syndrome of repetition and does not even attempt to do so. Performativity in this case remains in the "first," non-artistic, mundane reality.

The majority of contemporary performative practices of various kinds (dance, activism, post-dramatic theatre) reside within this first reality in their hope of transformative agency (Fischer-Lichte 2008).

In the *second* mode of performativity, which is rather an anti-performativity—in works by Derrida and Agamben—there is a substantial critique of the transformative power of any performance in general. In this critique, performance or any performative act, including mimetic repetition does

not at all manage to divert from the essences of ontology. Moreover, performative conduct and its accidentality are considered to be mere auto-affection that rather exert the pretension of sovereignty and power than implement any transformation or manifest any agency. Performativity is but an illusion of democracy that the politics of precarious being generates. Derrida's point is not only that performative speech acts or utterances are not able to exert any agency and success of the law, but the doubt that any effectuation can be completed at all ontically. For Derrida there is no sign that could verify that which has happened, the choice, or the act of will. The sign can only trace the difference. All choices are constantly deferred and hence remain secret, clandestine. Derrida dedicates numerous texts to the caesura of repetition: "La Parole Soufflée" and "The Theatre of Cruelty and Closure of Representation" on Artaud (Derrida 2005, 212–45; 292–317), several chapters in *Of Grammatology* (Derrida 1997, Part II "Nature, Culture, Writing").

It should be noted in this connection that Derrida's term *iteration (iterability*) that he uses in "Signature, Event, Context" is not at all a repetition (Derrida 1988, 1–25). On the contrary, his iterability deals with such signification, when the sign does not end or exhaust itself in inscription and therefore can only be dispersed or disseminated, rather than repeated. Such a sign is not implementing the act of repetition either semantically or semiologically. Derrida's iterability undermines the performativity that might be contained in a judgment. As Catherine Malabou emphasizes, for Derrida, "the incapacity of performativity pertains to its iterability." There is an absence in the continuous modification of presence, break in presence, the signature within the performative, which "prevent the return of life or meaning to themselves" (Malabou 2017, 135). Such disruption in life cannot bring it to any point of replenishment.

Iteration is the functioning of the sign as trace that, even when all contexts are lost, allows the sign to be recognized, as iterable. It is the form of polysemy, of the blurriness of any context, which enables the very making of a context out of any syntagm. Iteration then is about reformatting the event into a context. It presupposes the evading of presence, the singularity of presence by means of the polysemy of a grapheme. Whereas the radicality of repetition presupposes that, paradoxically, the repeated can only be something unrepeatable; repetition, despite being repeated, can take place only as something unfolding for the first and the last time.

Thus, Derrida insists on the caesura and termination of the performative and of the repetitive. For him, if anything can be repeated or performed, it is the *impossibility* of repetition or performing.[6]

What is clear from the standpoint of both (Derrida's and Agamben's) paradigms is that the pleroma of repetition in performing is treated as a redemptive claim for sovereignty, as the assertion of power and will, as the illusion and optimism of accomplishment.

Meanwhile, performative repetition—the *third* type of performativity (that we have been describing above)—concerns neither the general transformative power of the everyday, or the juridical success of the statement, nor the Derridean performance of the caesura of performance.

The third mode of repetition surmounts the teleology of the immediacy of transformation—as seen in performativity as the critique of ontology. It surmounts the conventionality of illocution

and is anything but conventional, since it is fictitious by definition. In this case the performed meaning is *not* expected to be sustainable ontically or semiotically but is repeated in the regime of the "as if"—as if it might have been what it means. The regime of repetition allows such semiological magic—when the effectivity of logical judgments, or even the accidentality of hubris in a performative act are subverted by the variabilities of those "as if" acts, including semantics, rhythm, choreography, pitch, modes of resonation. Then, the enoncé, which might literally mean one thing—e.g., "I forgive you," "From now on you are my servant or master, or friend, or brother, or accomplice"—could acquire continuous variability (Deleuze 2000, 245–250). Theatre directors know this condition very well, when one and the same enoncé can be inscribed into such versatility of choreography and intonation that it acquires variable and at times opposite meanings dependent on the maneuvers of action. Such variability is part and parcel of the specific altered temporality of the fugitive anthropometry of performative repetition.

The reason for this is that the modus of playing in repetition treats language as a score, as notated signs, which are performed and played rather than implied to signify, communicate and denote in the regime of logical judgment. Language and judgment are but a small part of the performative semiology of repetition, which incorporates for its implementation pitch, interval, choreography, and rhythm.

For Derrida it is impossible to believe in the "now" of the speech act, an emitted phrase, e.g., the phrase "I forgive you." For Austin, one would need law and the consensus of all agents to make this phrase sustainable. For the continuous variability of performing (Deleuze 2000, 245–250) the logic of the phrase "I forgive you" might mean ten various and controversial things, depending on performative design. Only this design is not about semiotic contingency and relativity: it is about the semiological conditions of transposition from the "first" temporality into the "second" temporality of repetition with its leap out of being.

This pleroma of performative repetition (second reality) unfolds in an ontically different temporality, which Deleuze calls "empty" (Deleuze 2001, 85–103). This is the reason why it (the second "empty" temporality) is amplified only by the anthropometric and discreet sequence of performed segments. As Deleuze argues in *Difference and Repetition*:

> The future and past here are not empirical and dynamic determinations of time: they are formal and fixed characteristics which follow a priori from the order of time. No future or past, but before and after. (89)

As stated above, Derrida discards this third (Deleuzean) type of performativity, since in it the rupture of being, difference and caesura are ignored in favor of the assertion of a sovereign will. Exceptionality of the present moment, the here and now as the recurrent present of a performing procedure is nothing other than the pretension of a sovereign power for Derrida.

Definitely, there is a strong reliance on the will of what has to be accomplished in the regime of repetition. However, the pleroma, the irreversibility of accomplishment evolves there as a paradox

in the form of playful subversion, accepting the rupture and caesura as fate, but exceeding it as well—i.e., paradoxically evolving *despite* the caesura, *despite* the abyss.

This is the reason why the time of such acting is kinetic: it consists of the semiology of physicality, almost as in gymnastics; since no contents can fill it except this repetition of the acrobatics of repetition, which turns even dying into a gymnastic trick, or a pitched, variegated and intonated *ritournelle*.

Such temporality does not supersede rupture in a vitalistic way or catastrophe with *conatus*, as is the main accusation of performance by Derrida. The rupture is accepted in this case as fate. But the act of accepting fate (fatality of death) presupposes at the same time an indifference to it. And such indifference and acceptance become performative and grotesque. Such acceptance of fate does not stick to loss and lack, to the causality of catastrophe, but rather humorously mocks the rupture and the abyss.

If Derrida restrains himself in caesura, the third type of performativity—repetition as the performative syndrome of dying—on the contrary, goes askew from caesura; it does not supersede or ignore catastrophe, but evolves distinctively despite it. The rupture is a negative degree of being, but it still resides in being with all its negativity; it is formatted by means of being. Repetition as the second time of performing transcends ontology. In such a logic of excess Christ's one cheek would be slapped in the format of *being* and the second one would be protruded for Pontius Pilate after the caesura, in the act of performing. This act then takes place already in an aftermath of catastrophe, as an excessive *supremacy of being*, the temporal and semiological logic of which does not belong to mere life.

As Deleuze writes, it is not that repetition contains something new, but the regime of repetition is itself the main news (Deleuze 2001, 6–7). Then it becomes clear how the condition of rhythm in the temporality of pleromatic repetition can at once approximate dying and accomplish itself in performing despite death and dying. This happens by virtue of indifference to death whereby dying transcends into the acrobatics of performing, which, although ontically remains to be dying, now accelerates aesthetically in the "second reality," evolving as "aesthetic play."

Such a form of temporality is characteristic for tragic dramaturgy. Oedipus, Hamlet, Lear, and Beckett's characters exert their play in this emptied (second) time of repetition superimposed on the temporality of mere life. Deleuze says that in this form of time it is not that the Subject dies, but whatever is there at all dies, or rather "it dies," together with the subject at play, quite like "it rains" or "it snows." So the regime of performative repetition demands that one is passively subject to dying to be able to play, to be susceptible to repeating and acting, as a "passive" subject, in the *passive voice* of the verb. Only in the passive voice can a Subject expose herself to the utmost vulnerability and most extreme plasticity in order to launch into the becoming-*other*, into signifying any judgment or enoncé in the variability of the "as if."

But isn't there a contradiction when we say that a passive Subject in a passive voice exerts the pleroma of accomplishment? Why in a passive voice? How can the excess of performing evolve as

passive? The reason is that the subjectivity of the regime of performing is drastically different from the subjectivity of being and existence. The performing procedure presupposes recession of the Self—recession, which is in fact epitomized by the artifice of an actor—so that it is not the active Subject of a logical judgment, but a passive Subject who permits something to befall her or him. Since without this befalling—when something external had been done to "me," then became internalized, and then again the "I" casted this something outward performatively repeating it—no transposition into the performative form of temporality would be possible.

In *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze shows in an excellent fashion the angle from which even a logical judgment can be approached as a performative phrase uttered as the performed repetition. He does this when he analyses Descartes' *cogito, ergo sum* (Deleuze 2001, 85–96). He first mentions Kant's discovery according to which the logical leap which Descartes exerted from *cogito* to *being* is seen as impossible and merely semantic, since this leap would not be possible without the temporal component. But what Kant overlooks here from the point of view of Deleuze is that this phrase is not merely in time; it takes place after caesura, in the new "empty" temporality. It is emitted as the result of the collapse into the specific temporality intertwined with the passivity of the Self. The above-mentioned passage from *Difference and Repetition* is very programmatic in demonstrating what is meant by "empty time" in which nothing happens except performative repetition; why it presupposes the passive voice for a subject, and what makes the sentence the *cogito ergo sum* tied to dying. As Deleuze manages to show, the *cogito ergo sum* is uttered as the played "as if" phrase, in a passive voice, and not as an assertive logical judgment on behalf of a monolithic thinking Subject. One cannot mount the "I" of *cogito* as a horse but can only be an actor that performs the utterance of the "I think, ergo."

Hence "cogito" is seen as the performative outcome of a certain event, which will never be known. Thus, a phrase looks like a logical judgment, but can just as well be seen as a performed repetition.

Such is the temporality in which Oedipus finds himself after his blinding, or Hamlet after staging his play. Such temporality is without content, since it is the force of rhythm itself that forms it.

Within these conditions any phrase, even "cogito, ergo sum," or "to be or not to be," is uttered in the passive voice, in the empty temporality of repetition and after the caesura of the event that intensifies the threshold of dying and transforms whatever follows after that threshold into a playful acrobatic trick.

Notes

[1] I would like to thank artist Victor Alimpiev for sharing with me this text of Monastyrsky.

[2] Pleroma (gr.)—the fullness of divine powers. The term was used in the Christian context, e.g. by St. Paul in Colossians. 2:9. In this precise case, pleroma means striving to utmost performative effectuation.

[3] Lacan (1997), Chapter XXI, "Antigone between Two Deaths."

[4] "The pathological discharge which Aristotle calls catharsis, and which leaves the philologists uncertain whether to count it amongst the moral or medical phenomena, is reminiscent of a curious premonition of Goethe's. He

says, 'I have never succeeded in treating any tragic situation artistically without some lively pathological interest, and I have therefore chosen to avoid them rather than seek them out. Could it be yet another merit of the ancients that even subjects of the most intense pathos were merely aesthetic play for them [...]?' [...] Anyone who can still speak only of the kinds of surrogate effect which derive from extra-aesthetic spheres, and who does not feel himself raised above the pathological-moral process, can only despair of his aesthetic nature." Nietzsche 1999, 105–106.

[5] These were the composers of the so-called Netherlandish School that originated and developed in the 15th and 16th centuries and spanned over five generations. Most of these musicians were born in the "Low countries" in the Burgundian provinces of Flanders, Brabant, Limburg and wrote ecclesiastical choir music for the cathedrals and churches in Antwerp, Bruges, and Ghent. Quite a number of musicians moved gradually to the courts of Italy, Spain, Germany, France, as well as other parts of Europe—Poland, Austria, England—so that by the end of the 16th century the focal point of the Western musical world had moved from the "Low countries" to Italy. The renowned representatives of the Netherlandish polyphonic school are Guillaume Dufay, Agricola, Ockeghem, Obrecht, Isaac, Josquin Deprez, Lassus and many others.

[6] In fact, if we were to define the place of contemporary art performance, it would be exactly such a place of negative caesura, when whatever the body or the voice enacts, it is but litera, a hieroglyphic suspense that is then reified. I would connect such caesura of performativity with performance in contemporary art, with its temporality of time's arrest, total spatialization of time and its caesura. Meanwhile I would in no way place here any contemporary dance, or transdisciplinary performance creativity, social activism, or post-dramatic theatrical practices.

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Biography

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Funded by the European Union

Results incorporated in this publication have received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Sklodowska-Curie grant agreement No 752417.

PERFORMANCE
PHILOSOPHY

THE PERFORMANCE OF TIME (OR THE TIME OF MUSICAL PERFORMANCE)

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Time became a key-concept for philosophy in the twentieth century, mainly after Einstein's propositions on Special Relativity, and the effects of this paradigm shift are well known in all artistic manifestations. However, in music—maybe the art more dependent on time—a myriad of definitions did turn this idea not only into a rich element for musical discourse but also into a conceptual battlefield in discourses about music. Unfortunately, there was an issue for this struggle between theoretical ideas and musical composition that always insisted in striking the debate: the performance. The world of ideas has not much interest in the carnality of musical performance, and for this reason, it was constantly put aside in all that vivid discussion, especially if taken from the standpoint of performers. Thus, this is the aim of this short reflection: to bring performers as actors into the debate, listening to their experience *in* time and *of* time in the momentum of performance. For this, the Augustinian link between Time and Memory is taken as a bottom line for the discussion. In understanding music as a kind of discourse, another important conceptual device will be claimed for this reflection, that is Rhetoric. Along with Rhetoric comes the Aristotelian concept of discursive time not following the Latin dichotomy between Time and Eternity, but after the third category from the Greeks, *kairós*, a concept closer to the definition defended here. The first part of this reflection, therefore, recollects concepts from the Aristotelian and Augustinian approaches on time and discourse, and concludes with a review of the main

PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHY VOL 4, NO 2 (2019):490–509
DOI: https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2019.42226
ISSN 2057-7176

definitions of time by composers in the twentieth century. The second part reviews three theoretical approaches of musical form as process (those of Edward Cone, Fritz Noske and Boris Asafiev), more adequate to the experience of time in performance. This review, thus, attempts to formulate a device for describing this experience in musical analysis, i.e., in the discourse about music. After the conceptual and the methodological reviews, a third section comprises the embodiment of those discussions into practice. The piece of music chosen as the object of analysis and reflection is the *Cello Sonata*, written by German composer Bernd Alois Zimmermann at the same time of his influential text *Intervall und Zeit*, and will be taken as reference for the discussion too. In bringing the performer back as a fundamental instance for music, this article aims, finally, to make a point on the convergence of past, present and future that happens on the stage, where memory relates the last line to the next while performing in the present, which leads to the concept of an *extended present*. This is the core of the argument: that living the performance of a piece of music is the way to have access to its meaning and, therefore, to its singularity of time. For this reason, we suggest that the reader, for engaging in the journey of this article properly, watches the performance of Zimmermann's Sonata by this author (William Teixeira) on YouTube:

Watch and listen to Teixeira play Zimmermann's sonata
🎧 https://youtu.be/9oelej9llQ0?t=137

1. From the sounds of the house to the images of the palace

"In the beginning." The founding myth, where, in an incipient way, Augustine believed, space and matter were instituted (Augustine 2016 [c.400], 11:3, 5). Both created in the primordial temple, the beginning. This is therefore the first creation, the beginning: the time. In fact, the adverbial phrase "in the beginning" is in ancient Hebrew a single term, *bereshít* (בראשית), the first word of the Holy Scriptures. The first letter of them, *bet* (ב), has the same pronunciation of the term for "house," which is the reason why, along with the letter format itself, the rabbis understood time in the Midrash as the "house of creation" (Ogren 2016, 129).

In the house of all the things, cosmos finds its existence. In the same way, music happens in time as the whole world, but somehow it seems to indwell more intensively in that dimension of reality than the rest of creation. If, together with Augustine, it seems necessary to recognize the impossibility of full access to the understanding of what this house is, then it is possible to reach at least its vestibules, or, as he preferred, its palace, the Palace of Memory (Augustine 2016, 10:8, 12).

Time and Memory are binomials of the same reality, concepts separated by perspective rather than by their place in existence. If the former seems to deal more with physical realities, and the latter with cognitive ones, it may be that they deal only with different levels of duration of the movements of reality, as Henri Bergson would suggest.[1] In any case, to such concepts are restricted human action and interpretation, so it is not possible to exempt us from an examination of their nature, or, minimally, from the possibility of knowledge of and relationship with this nature.

Classical rhetoric was born in the philosophical context of Ancient Greece, which understood Time as three different meanings: *aeon*, the time of eternity, or the timelessness; *chronos*, the quantitative and metric time; *kairós*, the qualitative and momentary time. The important thing is that it was exactly on the third concept of time, the *kairós*, that Aristotle situated rhetorical discourse, especially in his discussion on the stage of formal elaboration, the *dispositio*. In the fourth part of the rhetoric, memory receives the place of the *memoratio*, the proper space for its investigation and practice within the discursive act. Although in its first three parts rhetoric already deals with the question of the time and place of discourse with regard to its conception and structuring (*inventio*, *dispositio,* and *elocutio*), its last two parts are dedicated to the performance of discourse (*memoratio* and *actio*). This dimension receives more attention and importance.

In the systematic way the Latins worked rhetoric, the *memoratio* appears not only as a study of argumentative processes but also as an art of oratory. However, even in its development in Ancient Greece, memory was an aspect present in the discussions about the means of persuasion, especially, as Cicero and Quintilian credited, for Simonides, the poet inventor of the art of memorizing things and words. The earliest fragment about memory as a discursive ability is his *Dialexeis*, from 400 BCE, which already seems to contain the sum of what the Latins would sophisticate and systematize, as follows:

> A great and beautiful invention is memory, always useful both for learning and for life.
> This is the first thing: if you pay attention (direct your mind), the judgment will better perceive the things going through it (the mind).
> Secondly, repeat again what you hear; for by often hearing and saying the same things, what you have learned comes complete into your memory.
> Thirdly, what you hear, place on what you know. For example, Χρύσιππος (Chrysippus) is to be remembered; we place it on χρυσό (gold) and Ἵππος (horse).
> Another example: we place πυγολαμπίδα (glow-worm) on πυρ (fire) and λάμψη (shine).
> So much for names.
> For things (do) thus: for courage (place it) on Mars and Achilles; for metal-working, on Vulcan; for cowardice, on Epeus.
> (Simonides cited in Yates 1966, 29–30)

These early sayings from Greek wisdom seem to foretell not only the seeds of what would constitute the art of memory in Latin rhetoric, but even the descriptive knowledge that neuroscience would attain in the Twentieth century about the cognitive functioning of neural mechanisms in their different levels of retention, especially in the practice of memorized content (Lent 2002, 648). Memorization thus begins to gain the airs of technique, from its process of association with images that would entail words and things to be remembered, resulting in its consideration by the anonymous author of the treatise destined for Herenius as "the treasure of things invented" (Cicero [pseudo] [c. 80 BCE] 1953, 83).

This artificial memory, as it was distinguished from natural memory, was not a mere set of mnemonic mechanisms that aimed to record a discourse already conceived, but part of the

process of invention itself; new images and places would reconfigure the existing discourse. Moreover, these processes dealt much more with places and keywords than with the syntactic fullness of a discourse, acting as a guide to improvisation and not as a rule for enunciation. Thus, the practice of composition by memory outside the written medium was emphasized mainly in the Middle Ages, creating discourses from a previous set of structures already known, reshaping them and resetting them. In fact, rhetorical topics appear more like a reunion of these places (from the Greek *topoi*) than as a group of structures of purely referential meaning (Crowley and Hahwee 2004, 318).

This preamble through Ancient rhetoric helps make the point that the same practice could be easily transposed to the musical discourse. In music, *memoratio* also assumed this double role, both as a mnemonic device and as a standard of musical invention. Even in Ancient Greece, such a relationship was similar. Just remember that the Muses, from which comes the term "music," are daughters of Zeus with Mnemosyne, the titanid daughter of Uranus and Gaia, the personification of Memory—music: daughter of god with memory (Gusmão 2016, 10).

Aristotle advances an inquiry on memory in his *Parva naturalia*, understanding it as the capacity to form *phantasmatos*, that is to say, images, mainly from other previous images. But it is not enough to form such images, for it is also necessary to attribute a temporal duration to this image, knowing its before and after, that is, temporally relating it to reality. Not that this relationship is metric, but, rather, that it can relate proportionally the farthest from the nearest, even if one does not know how far one image is from the other. The philosopher gives the example of two triangles (Fig. 1), where both have a vertex A in common. Taking A for granted, one knows that the ratio of A:E is equal to E:B, and that the same reasoning occurs in the second triangle, also allowing the passage from one to the other. To this reasoning, Aristotle gives the name of motion (*kinesis*), this effort to connect two images from a point and to connect such image and the present (Gusmão 2016, 18).

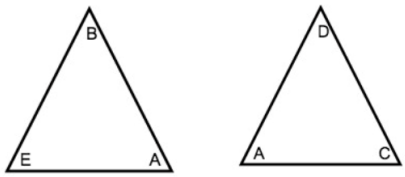

Fig. 1: Representation of Aristotle's proposal of movement from memory

Gusmão (2016) points to an important consequence of this Aristotelian thought for music coming from the contribution of his disciple Aristoxenus, who takes the idea of *phantasmatos* not only for the visual image but also for the *melos*, "the image of sensation" (της αἰσθεσεως φαντασιαν) (Gusmão 2016, 19). From this point, Aristoxenus continues his development already known within Greek musical theory, but it is helpful to remember that the term *melos* does not have a meaning only associated with the melodic aspect of the music; it first designates a part of a body. The *melos* are limbs, just like the *harmos* are articulatory joints. Therefore, it is not necessary

to suggest that the Aristotelian idea of the forces of memory acting in the apprehension of a movement depends, in music, on the existence of melodic structures, but simply on the existence of a part of the music, whether they are sonorities or musical gestures.

During the Middle Ages, *memoratio* was practiced in music in a manner equivalent to verbal discourse. Its mnemonic technique was present as a means of recording and re-creating the music from the succession of places that certain musical clauses inhabit. Perhaps the practice reached its technical apex in the music of the School of Notre Dame in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. This is, however, ironical, because if one remembers the great names of Leonin and Perotin, this was more due to the failures of the students in their process of memorization than by a will or need of them of writing their own music (Berger 2005). Avoiding Eurocentrism, however, it is important to relate the polyphonic creation to dozens of voices of the French school, performed almost improvisationally from the inventive-mnemonic places, to that made by the African people Banda Linda, as researched by the ethnomusicologist Simha Aron in the last century, given its similar complexity and its constitutive normative aspects driven by mnemonic and gestural records.

Even the famous Guidonian hand, a gestural device for recording notes, rising in the Middle Ages for storing the musical pitches and their organization, like so many other hand models, served as support for recording music information as clefs or rules of prosody, just as today one uses the hand to remember how many days are contained by each month of the year (Berger 1981). In the Renaissance, the access to printing and paper minimized the role of memory, and caused the development of musical writing; for this reason, music became more dependent on material support like the musical score (Lorenzetti 2016). Even so, it was expected that the diminution patterns of the many treatises on the subject would be recorded by memory, allowing its application in the most different musical situations, as was the case in the Baroque in relation to ornamentation.

In Romanticism, musical writing emancipated itself as the creative instance par excellence, being the simulacrum of the inspired genius, while simultaneously the performer tried to take for himself this post of inspired genius who magically created the musical discourse he performed. If Beethoven once used the score to play his own sonatas, a few years later Clara Wieck Schumann and Franz Liszt would give it up to instill a new dimension in musical performance by playing music written by another without the other's writing. The presence of the composer in the score gives way to the interpretation of this score, as memorized by the performer, thus creating a practice that would become part of the musical tradition.

There is no denying, of course, that the performance by memory as preconized by musicians in Romanticism has a great effect on the audience, and for that reason, it has remarkable oratorical effectiveness. However, it is possible to question which type of ethics belongs to this set of effects produced and eventually intended by this type of performance. Most of the studies, when in favor of such a practice, argue that memorization frees the performer and allows one to focus on other aspects of performance (Williamon 2002). The question, however, is from what does it set the

performer free? It is clear that a sight-reading is not considered here as an option, but, rather, a stage of preparation that gives to the performer an adequate knowledge of the musical discourse he or she will perform, acknowledging the immense amount of prescriptions that the mean brings.

Thus, Time and Memory reach the Twentieth century as the two faces of a single and vital issue for music. Musical discourse is an eminently temporal discursive stream and, for this reason, triggers various levels of memory in its action. On the one hand, one can notice today in musical performance a disrepute of memorization as a necessary practice, due to the amplification of the recognition of its limitations.[2] On the other hand, the question of time and the possibility of memory are more present than ever in the conception of Contemporary Music,[3] and for this reason it is necessary to investigate its limits and definitions in order to understand how memory acts in the temporality of the performance beyond the mere memorization.

2. The synthesis of times in musical performance

This digression through the Western history of the concept of time may be wearying but it is absolutely necessary to demonstrate that this topic is not a complete novelty and that our approach to time after musical performance is grounded on several parallel notions. However, performers are not usually the first to be listened to on this matter. If firstly we heard from philosophers, secondly are the composers, the ones not only to craft time musically but also to think on the subject conceptually, as follows.

In the twentieth century, people witnessed the human conquest of space in as many spheres as possible, from the consolidation of geopolitical structures to celestial explorations, to the consummation and overcoming of classical mechanics in the new quantum era. The conquest of space, which had once moved thousands to the discovery of continents and territories, gave rise to a greater desire, the conquest of time. People still attempted to achieve the freedom to live where they wanted, but could people achieve equal liberation to live when they wanted and for how long? If Physics has taken important steps towards understanding and controlling matter and space, its postulates about time have further demonstrated how far man is in being able to say anything about it, even less to control it or operate it. Heavens and earth have been recreated, but the beginning remains.

Space was also the great musical achievement of the early Twentieth century, especially when Anton Webern proposed the domain of musical space by means of the parts (*Sätze*) of music, recognizing that the synthesis of parts results in the expansion of space and that "only the union of parts can completely express the [*musical*] idea completely" (Webern 1963, 19). The space of the musical score itself thereby became a territory, and for that reason it required its own policy that prevented parts from destroying themselves and helped them build into a gathered whole.

If Serial Music seems to be the consummation of understanding about the space of musical pitches and textures, in a similar way to Physics it exposes an even greater difficulty, which is to understand and operate musical time. It was in the face of this situation that French composer Olivier Messiaen

began to coin his infamous understanding of musical time from the Thomist categories of Time and Eternity, articulated alongside the Bergsonian concept of duration, thereby starting, if not a space race, a time race for the political domain of this dimension of music, albeit conceptually. By way of contextualization we can briefly list (Tab. 1) the main propositions on musical time in the second half of the twentieth century, mostly influenced to a greater or lesser extent by Messiaen's postulates:

Key concepts of time in 20th Century music			
Authorship	**Theoretical basis**	**Concept**	**Generic description**
Unknown; concepts adopted in the field of electroacoustic music	Radio diffusion from the late Nineteenth century (Barkati, 2012, 8)	Real time	Time relative to the musical practice performed simultaneously to its sound emission (e.g., performance, improvisation, real-time processing)
		Deferred time	Time relative to the musical practice performed extemporaneously to its sonorous emission (e.g., composition, analysis, tape music)
Pierre Boulez (1963)	Louis Rougier; Gisèle Brelet	Smooth time (statistical, progressive or static)	Continuous temporal flow
		Striated time (straight or curved)	Time flow cut by pulses
Iannis Xenakis (1962, 1967, 1988)	Heraclitus; Parmenides; Stochastics	Out-of-time	Time of musical abstractions *a priori* (eg scales, modes, formal structures)
		Temporal	Time of actualization of music in the sound emission (e.g. performance, sound diffusion)
		In-time	Time of the musical structure attributed to an energetic flow (e.g. series, melodies)
		"Irreversible Time" (1988)	Time in constant fragmentation and state of disappearance (e.g. micro-modulation processes)
Gerard Grisey (1980)	Abraham Moles (acoustic engineering)	Skeleton of time	Musical time of the elemental rhythmic structure of a piece
		Flesh of time	Musical time of the sound material of a piece
		Skin of time	Perceived musical time in listening to a piece
Karlheinz Stockhausen (1955; 1957)	Webern	Experiential time	A sense of time similar to lived time as opposed to real time; idea of time experienced by the listener from different levels of material density
B.A. Zimmermann (1957)	Ezra Pound; Husserl; Heidegger	Effective time	Duration of the interval between two bodies, not only within the pitches but within its acoustic and gestural aspects
		Spherical time	A Global time that considers the human experience in history as a unity

Table 1: Glossary of the main concepts of musical time in the second half of the 20th century

Obviously, the risk of superficiality is assumed when presenting such a brief panorama of a profound discussion, but this temerity is incurred only for giving a unifying outlook to perspectives often studied individually. Many other composers worked on the problem of time in their music,

in the twentieth century, but this list contains those who also elaborated on the conceptual dimensions of this issue. Moreover, existing within their work as composers, a large part of these discussions were born within the scope of musical composition and therefore dealt with a reading of time that promoted not only comprehension but the possibility of writing that time. In this way, the interest of the concepts differs from the objective investigated here; namely, to understand not only how time is perceived in listening or how it is possible to do it in writing, but *how the act of performance participates in the listener's experience and understanding of time*.

This seems to be a difference eminently perspectival, but it has important consequences to be pointed out because although the concepts listed above offer themselves different points of view about musical time, most of them do not care about the situation of the performer or with the techno-aesthetics[4] of musical discourse. The place of the performer cannot be simply in real time, because the performance brings within its momentum a series of other information previously studied (memory) and that comes consciously to the surface from the affectation of the score in the movements of the one that plays. Moreover, the performer is totally involved in a physical action and at the same time has to relate to sounds that have just been produced, already anticipating movements that will be done.

At the same time, the physical energy put into performance creates an expense on each long note, each bow change, each breath; there is no purely smooth time for the one who performs music for the simple reason that it deals with information already prescribed (and prewritten), which he must organize into sets of actions that will effectively turn these actions into a sound that may sound like a smooth time-space. And even the pulse of performance is perhaps not so much that of the musical pulse, but that of every new fingering or change of position that scores and guides the arrow of time in performance.

In Xenakis, this reality is somehow contemplated in his concept of *temporal* musical time; however, it is a time that the composer does not develop in his reading and which, as for example in the definition of *out-of-time*, proposes more compositional strategies tilted toward the mathematical bias. Even the idea of an irreversible time seems to have something reversible for the performer who either repeats a structure in his practice routine or who, as said, is anticipating the next movement while producing a sound that related to the previous one.

Grisey, likewise, is still concerned with the division between subject and object, understanding that there is little of the skin of time that can be controlled, since it is of the subjective order of perception, leaving the flesh and the skeleton to be worked objectively in the composition. It may be said that the skeleton of time is largely the type of time in which performance takes place, not that it does not acquire its flesh, but because it is the points of reference used by the performer in his planning order, either be it the time of the metronome studied, or the inner groups of figures and gestures that, however grouped they may be in a larger idea, still persist in being themselves as individual characters of movement and sound, i.e., as individual bones.

Stockhausen is perhaps the one who most ignores the performer; indeed, it was the composer's intention at that point since, from the electronic experience, he proposed rhythmic micro-divisions

on a scale humanly impracticable. It is curious that this concept is close to the definition of Zimmermann, geographically and historically, but considers different directions of the production of musical time; Stockhausen ignored an instance that for Zimmermann was fundamental, which was the physical set of actions put into practice in sound production. And it also poses in an antagonistic way to the positive consideration that the second concept of Zimmermann has on the historical relation integrated with the musical tradition, since Stockhausen proposes a radical overcoming of the past.

For a performer who puts on the same music stand Frescobaldi, Bach, and Cage, history really has an unusual aspect of simultaneity; at once, the performer brings into existence discourses from distinct temporal origins, but which enter actual time together. As part of the bitemporal ontology of music, it really does not seem to make sense for the performer to ponder a musical time that does not consider to some extent the synchrony (and synchronicity) that the entire repertoire has. Perhaps this makes performance an inevitably conservative musical entity, in which composition seeks progress and rupture. However, this tension is precisely what keeps music as music, in its movement to move forward in new ways, without giving up what has already been, since, inevitably, this is also the human way of making its existence ever new, while carrying marks of the previous ways.

With the noted conceptual gap of a musical time for performance, it always seems necessary to return to the one from which this discussion always begins. Augustine, when inquiring on the possibility of memory in the face of the volatility of time, begins to understand that the present is the time in which both past and future find their synthesis. Memory is the possibility of the past to make itself present, albeit as a past, but a past "impelled" by the future that attracted it. Now, even eternity, finally, will be this present, but a present without a past or future, in a constant state of fullness. It seems to be in the present, therefore, that lies the key to understanding how the past and the future are present in musical performance (Augustine 2016, 11:15).

This idea seems to be difficult to conceive because music thought is, in general, used to being structured in the metaphor of space, within the form of the score, where it is possible to see succession as an overlapping of parts. However, from the standpoint of performance, perhaps a recapitulation in the Tonic key may be as new as any new section. And it may be suggested that even listening can behave in a similar way. Edward Cone (1985) proposes something similar in stating that musical performance in its formative attribute is essentially rhythmic, understanding that "It is not, [as] the conventional analysis would have it, thematic, nor, *pace* Schenker, harmonic. Both of these aspects are important, but rhythm is basic" (149). Performance is a constant agency of gestures made in time that group sets of distinct pitches that only enter reality when attacked in time. Hence musical time has a transient attribute as the sound envelope itself in its identity. This is why Cone proposes that the performer is challenged to make real and sonorous the temporal structure proposed by the composer.

Fritz Noske (1976) recalls a question of definition: when music is no longer understood as a type of action, leading to a conception of music as an object, it becomes as every object, having

form. Actions have categories of valuation and structuring but are hardly visible and valuable forms. Thus, musical form is born, by definition, from a music that is not action and, therefore, little or nothing has to do with performance. Noske then presents his thesis, which can be easily transposed from the compositional process to the interpretative process:

> Here we arrive at the vital point. The form of the completed musical work tells us very little about the process of composing. The indisputable fact that music does not really exist unless it is produced in sound implies "its character of being always generative". Music is by definition a present participle. What we hear, what we sing, or what we play is not the form[ed] form, or the *form formata* , but the form forming itself, or the *form formans*. (Noske 1976, 45)

Understanding the time of performance requires, therefore, overcoming a spatial and parametric description of music, assuming it as the *embodiment of movements in time*. The sound in motion is music taking form and therefore the form of performance. Noske proposes three basic and self-explanatory concepts for understanding these forms of movements: *acceleration*, *retardation,* and *stabilization* (Noske 1976, 47). From those basic movements the experience of time expands, but more than that, time reconfigures itself in reality, when one considers the unity of reality.

This proposal has some radical consequences, and not all of them have adequate space to be dealt with here, such as those of a more sociocultural nature. Noske himself suggests that the disobjetification of music is a painful process where much of what the musician brings as formation in the last centuries has to be re-evaluated. He considers, in his analysis of medieval music, that the music of the Twentieth century has the merit of retrieving the notion of music as an activity that structures time and that, as a movement, deals more with time than with space and more with the ethics than with the etiquette of the concert hall.

To consider music as action involves withdrawing it from the merely notational and even from the sonorous realm, and dealing with the human condition which, as such, is integral in its physical and mental faculties. This point is implicit in Noske's proposition but becomes even more evident in the work of the Russian musicologist Boris Asafiev in his influential book *Musical Form as a Process* (1930). Although Asafiev's theory agrees with the point already made here about the time of the performance—a synthesis of past and future in the present—it is necessary to point out that his concept of *musical movement* takes into account more the movement of the musical parts than of the musical action itself (Asafiev cited in Tull 1977).

After the initial question, Asafiev's proposition contributes greatly to the viability of a reading of musical time from the point of view of the performance time defended here as the *extended present*. The Russian musicologist proposes a general theory based on the premise that the musical form is the perception of the musical intonations by the audience, which in his theory of Marxist bias is society itself. Established musical forms are nothing more than intonation patterns sedimented socially by the mechanism of repetition. An idea proposed by Asafiev that helps in describing the temporality of musical performance is to speak of *formation*[5] instead of *form,* thus understanding music as a process of the whole coming to be or a structural becoming. It is an

alagmatic process as proposed by Gilbert Simondon, where the mass of the brick is released gradually, taking shape in time.

The intonations are a kind of energetical transduction, which builds on the initial energy of the composer's writing, where this energy is in a potential state until its actualization into kinetic energy in performance, resulting in the energy of sound. This energy is the force involved in each connection, between either sounds, notes or harmonics, but all this potential energy is only actualized after an *initial impulse*, that is, the friction of the bow, the blowing on the mouthpiece or the pressing of the key. This impulse relates to another concept of Cone's, that of "accent of weight," which refers to points of articulation of the performance time, where movements—and we can use the three Noske categories here—receive a new discharge of energy. For Asafiev, the intonations are organized in three basic moments: *impulse*, *movement,* and *ending*. Within the idea of formation, an impulse is not only the initial impulse but can last for seconds, or even minutes, when a whole stream is made in order to accumulate enough energy to achieve a certain time; this may be a slow opening of a first movement or a *levare* measure; the point is, there are seconds and more "anachronistic" seconds, leading to a vanishing point. Taking the concept of intonation in its ultimate degree, Asafiev concludes that it is the basic manifestation of human consciousness, whether as an instrumental sound stream or as a verbal sonorous flow or even in the sum of both in music.

After the propositions of Cone, Noske, and Asafiev, there seems to be enough conceptual repertoire to be undertaken in an attempt to read the applied music time from the performance data, where the performer actually stands as the "lord of time." Viability exists not only in the philosophical and musicological fields but also in the understanding of the cognitive processes involved in performance, which have been demonstrated to be of an order not only of long and short-term memories but also of the peripheral neural complex, which recruits areas of the order of planning as well.[6]

This is, then, our point: That musical performance thus demands another sense of time, an *extended present* where the whole being is applied in the actualization of a musical action between movement and sound and, at the same time, connects these movements and sounds to those just produced, already anticipating and planning the next technical step, listening internally to the next time or the next attack. But of course, even that description is out-of-time. All these movements happen simultaneously, like an energy that rationalization cannot contain. It is indeed a dilation of the present that promotes the synthesis of past and future in the performative act. Hours of practice, old affections, technical traditions: all joining the image of the next movement, the energy expenditure for the next sound production.

The performer thus operates if not a spatial domain, then, minimally, the control of time. He or she becomes master of that temporal territory, not only shaping experience but time itself. Territorialization overcomes the spatial and controls the time of the interval, but also that of the "single sphere of history," to use the categories of B. A. Zimmermann. The performance is the musical action that triggers the reterritorialization of that territory already demarcated by writing

and that is deterritorialized by the time lapse, or even by the communicative lapse between composer and performer, and between performer and audience. Finally, if the performer is the lord of time, he is a different type of landlord, serving the one with whom an alliance has been established—musical discourse—even though not receiving anything in return but understanding the responsibility to the call that, on the contrary, would only echo empty in the galleries of the palace.

3. The performance of time: a formative reading

"... there is time to every purpose under the heaven." Singular purposes demand singular times. As demonstrated by the three musicological references we have seen, musical time, when analysed after the performative data, is a constant agency of the present, creating different densities of the living moment. As the several concepts of time coined by composers also prove, there are many interpretations of whatever entity or dimension we know as "time," but the fact is that they all produce their own mark through the reality of musical time. There is time for all musical times under the heaven. However, few musicologists or composers have thought in their propositions about the possibility that musical ethics is less a matter of right and wrong and more a relation of either-or. There is time for all musical times to be made into music because music carries in itself a catholic, that is universal, attribute: people make music. From this anthropological universal, it is natural that the plural condition of humanity promotes diversity of interpretation from a given reality. Time is a reality, sometimes measurable, sometimes imponderable, but "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven."

The second part of the first verse of the third chapter of the Biblical book of Ecclesiastes is precisely the subtitle of the solo cello Sonata written by Bernd Alois Zimmermann in 1960, in its Latin rendering *"... et suis spatiis transeunt universa sub caelo."* The verse opens a new section of the book known as the "Poem of Time," a set of eight parallel verses where the idea of a certain time is always contrasted with another concerning an uncertain time (Bartholomew 2009). The text deals with confidence in time even in the midst of temporal uncertainties. How can a farmer, for example, in the organic sense of the profession, rely on harvest time? The farmer does not know the time, nor the day, but safeguards the confidence that there will be a harvest. This kind of certainty seems reasonably uncertain to modern ears, which are disappointed by minutes of delay, since it refers to a cyclical conception of time, typical of the East from which the biblical text comes. This relationship is further clarified by looking at the translation made by the rabbis of the Septuagint when they translated the original Hebrew into Greek as "τοῖς πᾶσιν χρόνος καὶ καιρὸς τῷ παντὶ πράγματι ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανόν": everything has its *chronos* and there are *kairós* for all things under the heaven.

If it is difficult to think of a life guided by the mere certainty of time without being able to control or measure it. Who would dare to imagine a piece of music based on the certainty of time but which ignores the metrification of this time? For it is precisely this reality, or that duality, that treats Zimmermann's sonata in his attempt to translate into music a question that perhaps other kinds

of discourse would not deal with. This duality can lead to two attitudes towards such antinomy: on the one hand rejoicing in certainty, on the other the despair of uncertainty. Zimmermann personally lived for the second reading, a very present image in his music, where six pieces bring excerpts from the same biblical book as the theme but that ultimately lead to the deep depression that culminate in his tragic suicide.

People make music while there is life because life is only in time. Thus, from the gravitational waves to the position shift on the musical instrument, vital energy only finds its wholeness in the affection embodied in the *logos*, in itself and in the other. Zimmermann proposes in the discourse of his sonata a conflict between the times that in the end are one, a time linked to the energetic micro-articulations and another one that concerns the history of human deeds.

This proposition was born in a more consolidated way in his influential text *Interval und Zeit* (Interval and Time), written in 1957. The article is itself the fruit of a conflicting dialogue with Stockhausen, who, around the same years, developed his own reading of musical time, the result of which was quite antagonistic to his. For Zimmermann, the basic unit of time was not in the note and its duration, as Stockhausen would suggest in his theory of Time Unity, but in the connection between notes and sounds, in the *interval*. The interval is the energy of the sound-musical becoming applied in the connection to the next actualization, and so the time itself is actualized. The interval assumes two typologies: *successive* in horizontal (melodic) musical settings and *simultaneous* in vertical (harmonic) musical settings, resulting both in the basic temporal math of the music, or its fundamental form (*Grund-form*). If musical time finds its becoming in the interval, both successive and simultaneous, it denotes an elasticity of time where in reality what happens is a dilation of the present. Zimmermann joins the Augustinian-sounding concept coined by poet Ezra Pound (1885–1972) as *real time (Wirkliche Zeit),* the idea of a time effected in a continuous present, where what separates the past from the future are agency levels and not the reality of actions. Thus, from Bach to Zimmermann the distance resides in distinct temporal agencies that were made in time in the same single mesh, or in the same *sphere* of time.

Music remains with its two basic units: sound and movement; and musical actions have only the both as material means to weave time. Between Palestrina, the Beatles, or the Bororo ethnicity, the distance lies in the way each agency crafts musical materials in their own fabric of reality, which is finally integrated into the same everlasting sphere of time, which had a beginning, but not an end. In this sense, musical actions modulate time through their "*effective temporal durations*" (Zimmermann 1957), not as a chronometric duration, but as the energy of the musical movement reaching its becoming in Time.

Although Zimmermann did not aim at the "monopoly on the theme of 'Time'" (Zimmermann, 1958), his proposition is undoubtedly the one that proposes a more comprehensive understanding of musical time with the movement from composition to performance. For this reason, his discourse fully converses with the performer, constituting a direct relation of performative affectations and, consequently, of a performance time aligned with the time prescribed by the composer, which is

especially notable in his cello sonata where the concept of Time is explicitly the great creative question.

The Sonata has five main sections, each consisting of disconnected and independent systems, as described in the following list:

Movement	Number of systems
Rappresentazione	8
Phase	12
Tropi	12
Spazi	8
Versetto	6

Table 2: List of sections of the Zimmermann Sonata *with the respective number of systems*

Each system is juxtaposed graphically next to the other without any causality between the figurative structures, and the performer must execute them as individual entities, separating each new idea with a pause *ad libitum*, according to Zimmermann's own notes. Perhaps the most notable and important proposal for this analysis is Zimmermann's annotation where he instructs the performer to execute the systems without any numerical order, changing the order between the systems as random execution boxes (Ingenhütt 1983, 11). Although this proposal has been abandoned in the later manuscripts, this is undoubtedly a piece of fundamental information to validate the claim that there is no structural causality within the Sonata's musical disposition. Even so, Zimmermann maintains an almost impromptu timeline, one of the dimensions he most admired in American jazz in its ability to flexibly actualize musical time.

Besides reading the temporal effectiveness of the musical gesture,[7] it is possible to suggest a reading of the time dilations not only in successive intervals of the same written duration but also from the dilations written by the composer in structures. In the second section, *Phase*, there is a succession of gestures whose own written duration already suggests these simultaneous flows of dilations (Fig. 2, next page):

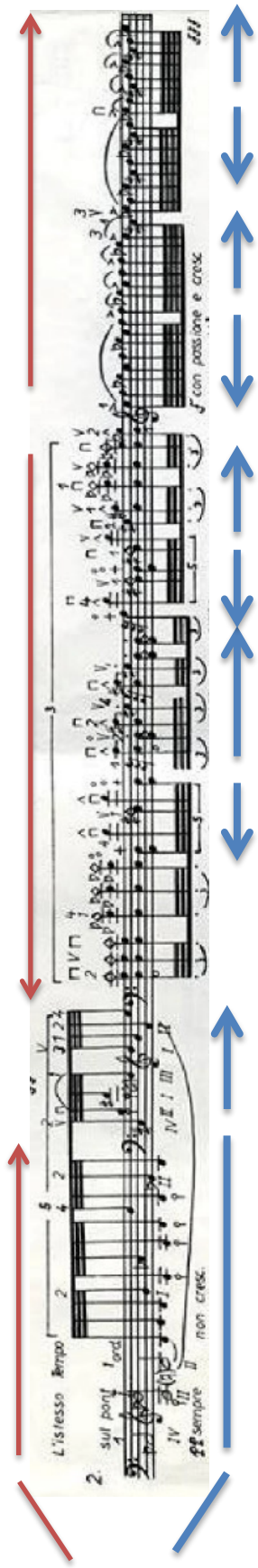

Fig. 2: Zimmermnann, Sonata, *p. 2, s. 2. Upper lines (red): gestural-temporal macro-articulation; Bottom lines (blue): gestural-temporal micro-articulation. With the indication of the movements of Noske, where - = stabilization, → = acceleration and ← = retardation*

What occurs in the time of performance within this system is primarily a stable A-flat that increases the dilation of time when it is succeeded by the simultaneous interval between the A-natural and the B-flat. Afterward begins the profusion of gestures in simultaneous joints here distinguished in micro and macro, where on the one hand there is a great division of the pulse and, at the same time, species of grooves in these macro-divisions that undulate the micro-articulation of the time in small movements often opposite between levels. When finally there is stability, with the groups of thirty-second notes, actually there are changes of impulses through the bow, granting a kind of accelerating motor. This type of overlapping is very common throughout the sections of the sonata, but it may be worth mentioning a case in the manuscript where Zimmermann points out the temporal elasticity promoted by the succession, which at the same time is stable in its durations, produces retardations and accelerations in its exchange of attack modes (Fig. 3):

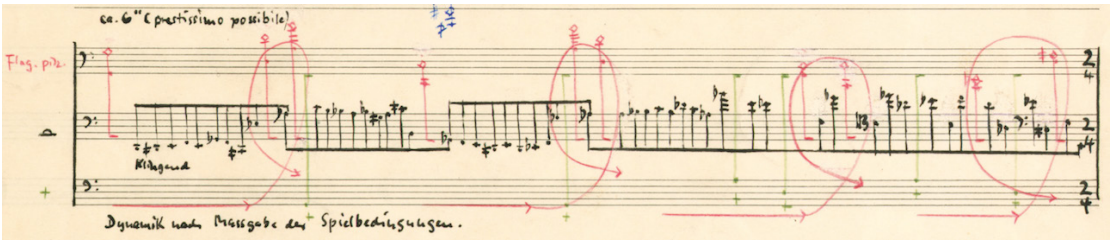

Fig. 3: Zimmermann, Sonata, *p. 4, s. 4, upper line (red): natural harmonic in pizzicato; intermediate line (black): notes produced only by the impact of the left hand fingers on tapping; bottom row (green): left hand pizzicati. (Source: Composer's manuscript/Akademie der Künste Berlin)*

Perhaps the most striking example of temporal effectiveness in the performance dilation of time where the future touches the present through its anticipations is in an excerpt from the Phase section, wherein its ninth system (Fig. 4) there is only one B-flat, played by several different modes. The interesting thing is that even though the pitch is the same, the editor outlines a path, perhaps the best possible, to perform the excerpt, where everything is an anticipation for the next system. This is because the first B-flat is made with the finger 3 on the A-string, the most easily achievable because of its proximity to the natural harmonic. Then finger 3 is replaced by the thumb, which in turn makes it possible to access the same B-flat with the third finger on the D-string, which will also be replaced by the thumb. Such large numbers of movements would seem futile, but, in fact, already anticipate the next system in its demands. In system 10 (Fig. 5), the fact that the thumb is already in the B-flat of the D-string will allow safe access to the D-above that B-flat and the positioning of the thumb in the same position, but in the G-string. This is an evident example of what is said about the temporality of performance, where past and future are embedded in the present.

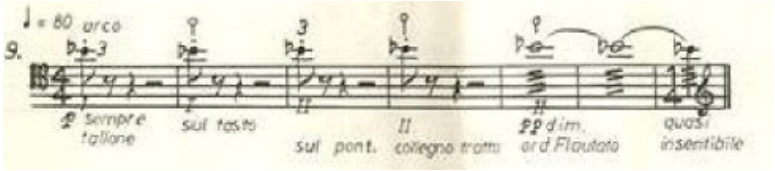

Fig. 4: Zimmermann, Sonata, *p. 3, s. 9*

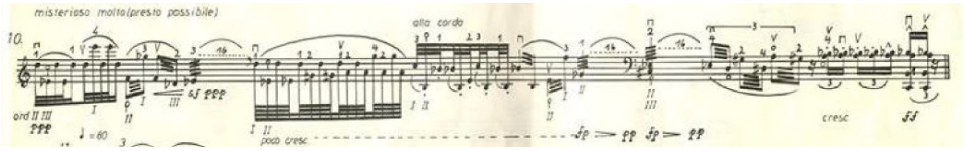

Fig. 5: Zimmermann, Sonata, *p. 3, s. 10.*

By mean of these examples, the mechanisms of time modulation that Zimmermann applies in his writing are somewhat more clear, demonstrating that his conception of time goes far beyond mere theoretical speculation, unfolding into an absolutely sophisticated practice. At the same time, it is fundamental to understand that these levels of time articulation modulate discourse in its totality at even more complex levels than the simultaneity of the system. The same section or movement has several of these overlaps that create, in turn, a succession of these dilations. It would be possible to go further by listing a level still higher where the reading counts the affectation in time between the sections, resulting in a large arc, but this relation seems to inhabit a perceptible plane of a hard application within the performative process. Thus, the way in which Zimmermann deals with the antinomy of the certain time against an uncertain time becomes more and more detectable, as does the ways he modulates the performer through his technical writing of the times. Obviously, the result is a piece of extreme complexity, demanding a great opening of the performer to play all layers as written, a process of slow and gradual development. Fortunately, there is time for every purpose under heaven.

4. The end of time

Much has been said about time, and yet it seems to remain indecipherable as if it were alien to human lucubrations about its existence or functioning. This durability mesh continues in weaving, in a progressive spin where the loom is the present in its energy and intensity. However, among so many temporal and time-making actions, music remains in place of honor, perhaps because it is something closer to an art that makes time sonorous. The fact is that if there is really a time, perhaps there is no more appropriate instance for one to know it than music, especially if one performs it.

Memory, in turn, is the return path to Time, connecting and reconnecting past to present. Even in front of a score, the concert music performer is engaged in an intense activity of retrieving memories of distinct levels and at the same time planning and anticipating what will come in a state of an extended present. The imponderable seems to be on another level in performance, not so much as who does not know what will come, but as the one who does not know *how* it will come.

Perhaps Paul Ricoeur is right in suggesting a certain attribute of monstration to artistic making, an overcoming of historical time that bestows on actions like music an everlasting state, like the angels. As a piece of sempiternal music may be known, but only in what it chooses to show itself, perhaps it reveas distinct faces in different times, while always ministering the affections inscribed therein (Ricoeur 1996, 2).

Facing this situation, one only has to wait with Messiaen for the coming of the Angel of the Apocalypse, to whom he dedicated his *Quartet to the end of time*, who will finally pronounce that "there shall be no more time." This quote, which is found in chapter ten, verse six of the Book of Revelation, literally says in Greek such words, although in most translations "time" appears as "delay." Perhaps because of theological fears of imagining a time without time, since only God could inhabit Eternity and be Eternal, translations choose to interpret the text as "there will be no more delay," but it is not what the text says. The original states ὅτι χρόνος οὐκέτι ἔσται, or "there will be no more chronos." Probably the time of the escathon is not, in fact, eternal but neither does it need to be immanentized to be understood. It can be a constant state of now, the fullness of the present that, full of it, does not see another time than that. After that, all the mentions of "time" in Revelation refer to it as *kairós*, the time full of meaning, where the eternal touches the temporal; the almost nothing that becomes in almost everything, having in the music here a glimpse of the world of the end of the times, where time has no end.

Notes

[1] Bergson is a fundamental philosophical reference for the perspective held by the composer Olivier Messiaen, as it is clear in his writings. See Messiaen (1944).

[2] As a journalist in the *New York Times* (Tommasini 2012) noted recently, the importance of performance by memory has been drastically decreased in the world's largest concert halls, mainly because of the recognition of its limitation as "memorization of a reading" in relation to the freedom that the score offers to the performer to have contact with the presence of the other material, in this case, the presence of the composer.

[3] As demonstrated by Brian Ferneyhough (1993) in his key-note lecture in Darmstadt.

[4] We claim here for the concept coined by Gilbert Simondon referring to the aesthetical experience of the one who performs an artistic action and not only the point of view of the one who perceives this action. See Simondon (2012).

[5] Proposed here more in the sense of *Gestaltung* than *Entstehung*

[6] It is mainly considered in the research of Caroline Palmer, in works like Palmer (2006) and Palmer (2005).

[7] An analysis of the temporal effectiveness of the musical gesture in Zimmermann's Sonata can be seen in Teixeira and Ferraz (2017).

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Silvio Ferraz is composer and professor of Musical Composition at the São Paulo University. PhD in Semiotics by the Catholic University of São Paulo, he has participated in the seminars of Brian Ferneyhough at the Royaumont Foundation in Paris, and under Gerard Grisey and Jonathan Harvey at IRCAM. His compositions have been performed throughout Europe and in United States at the Sonido das Americas Festival, at the Carnegie Hall. He is a CNPq Research Fellow and has published four books, beyond chapters and articles. Currently, he researches processes of writing with extended techniques and technological processing.

PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHY

PROMETHEAN AND POSTHUMAN FREEDOM: BRASSIER ON IMPROVISATION AND TIME

DAVID RODEN THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

1) Introduction: Improvisation and the Politics of Technology

One of the four contributors to the 2007 Goldsmiths conference on Speculative Realism,[1] Ray Brassier occupies an important place among a diverse group of thinkers who have argued for realist alternatives to philosophies of subjectivity, finitude and deconstruction that had been core to post-Kantian continental philosophy for some years. Some of these new realisms have sought to combat the reflex anti-scientism of the established traditions. Brassier's book *Nihil Unbound* (2007) argues that nihilism—the modern crisis of meaning—is an emancipatory consequence of scientific reason; one which can inform a transcendental realism predicated on the ultimate cosmic extinction of nature. Brassier's later work engages more closely with analytical variants of Kantianism—particularly via readings of the work of Wilfred Sellars—aiming to develop a naturalism that reconciles materialism with a commitment to truth, conceptual normativity and abstraction.

Brassier has also engaged with radical art practice as a way of developing a materialist account of agency that embraces the artificialization of mind and nature as a form of political praxis. His "Unfree Improvisation/Compulsive Freedom" (written for the 2013 collaboration with Basque noise artist Mattin at Glasgow's Tramway) is a dense but rich example of this side of his work. It is a terse but, I hope to show, fertile discussion of freedom in improvisation and its relation to technological futurity. Here, by relinquishing some of the rationalist constraints on agency imposed by Brassier's analytic Kantianism, I intend to use it as a platform for developing a Speculative Posthumanist ontology of performance.

PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHY VOL 4, NO 2 (2019):510–527
DOI: https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2019.42230
ISSN 2057-7176

"Unfree Improvisation" begins with a polemic against the voluntarist conception of freedom. The voluntarist understands free action as the uncaused expression of a 'sovereign self'. Brassier rejects this supernaturalist understanding of freedom, arguing that we should view freedom not as the determination of an act from *outside the causal order*, but as the self-determination *by action* within the causal order. According to Brassier, self-determination is reflexive and rule-governed. A self-determining system acts in conformity to rules but can represent and modify these rules with implications for its future behaviour.

This is only possible—according to Brassier—if we make the rules explicit through language (Brassier 2013b, 105; Sellars 1954, 226). Brassier's proximate inspiration for this model of freedom is Sellars' account of language and meaning (1954). Sellars reinterprets Kant's claim that concepts are rules for unifying experience as a functional semantics, framed in terms of the role of utterances within social practices that prescribe how speakers move from one position in a language-game to another (transition rules), assume an 'initial position' (entry rules), or exit the game (outputting actions).

Language-transition rules correspond to materially correct inferences such as the inference that *x is coloured* from *x is red*. Language-entry rules are non-inferential since they are made on the basis of reliable dispositions to discriminate the world in inferentially or practically consequential ways (Sellars 1954, 209–10). As Robert Brandom puts it, statements like 'This is red' (uttered in response to red things) are 'noninferentially elicited but inferentially articulated' (Brandom 1994, 235, 258).

Sellars distinguishes an automatic and unconscious rule following from a *metalinguistic level* that affords logical resources for reflection and self-awareness. Indeed, for Brassier's Sellars, thought and intentional action derive from the metalinguistic power to make reasons explicit in 'talk about talk' and not from a phenomenological or prelinguistic intentionality (Brassier 2013b, 105; Sellars 1954, 226–8).[2] Since talk and meta-talk are furnished by such inferential norms, intentional action is likewise constituted. To be free is to be an animal capable of following such shared proprieties. Far from being the expression of a sovereign self acting beyond the causal order, freedom is subservience to collective reasons: 'Autonomy understood as a self-determining act is the destitution of selfhood and the subjectivation of the rule. The "oneself" that subjects itself to the rule is the anonymous agent of the act' (Brassier 2013a).

Since Brassier is also an avowed naturalist, it is important, for him, that this capacity for rule following is non-miraculous; that a material assemblage of pattern-governed mechanisms can be 'gripped by concepts' (Brassier 2011). As he continues:

> The act [...] remains faceless. But it can only be triggered under very specific circumstances. Acknowledgement of the rule generates the condition for deviating from or failing to act in accordance with the rule that constitutes subjectivity. This acknowledgement is triggered by the relevant recognitional mechanism; it requires no appeal to the awareness of a conscious self. (Brassier 2013a)

Now, there are a few criticisms that one can make of this account. For example, Brassier struggles to articulate the relationship between linguistic rules or norms and the natural regularities and behaviours on which they depend. For this reason, I've argued that the normative functionalism associated with Sellars and, latterly, Robert Brandom bottoms out in Davidson-style claims about how idealized interpreters (privy to the relevant facts) might construe a given stretch of behaviour (See Roden 2017). Brassier's position arguably depends, then, on the conception of an interpreting subject it is not in a position to satisfactorily explain. Despite its pretensions to naturalistic virtue, his universe bifurcates between a non-normative material reality and an order of thought that depends on it without really belonging to it.

These metaphysical issues lurk in the background in Brassier's short text on improvisation—particularly in the claim that the act of improvisation involves an encounter between rule governed reason and pattern governed mechanisms. Brassier does not specify how such rules operate in music, or how the encounter between rules and mechanism can occur.

In what follows, I will argue that one reason he does not do this is that such rules do not constrain improvisation or contemporary (musical) compositional practice. Claims about what is permissible or implied in music index context-sensitive perceptual responses to musical events. These responses exhibit tensions between the expectations sedimented in musical culture and actual musical events or acts.

However, I will argue that this account of musical succession provides an alternate way of expressing Brassier's remarks on the relationship between music and history in 'Unfree Improvisation'—one that eschews normative discourse in favour of describing the processes, capacities and potentialities operating in the improvising situation.

This adjustment is of interest outside musical aesthetics and ontology, however, because Brassier's text suggests that the *temporality of the improvising act is a model for understanding a wider relationship with time*: in particular the remorseless temporality explored in his writings on Prometheanism, Accelerationist Marxism and Radical Enlightenment (see Brassier 2014). Given that improvisation involves a kind of autonomy and, *pace* Brassier, is not rule governed or constituted by rules, I hope to show that it exemplifies a posthuman conception of freedom that abstracts from the collective notions of subjectivity valorized by his neo-rationalism. It thus suggests a model for understanding how agents (human or otherwise) can respond fluently to the radically open horizons of being I discuss in *Posthuman Life* (Roden 2014).

This paper can, then, be thought of as a staged encounter between the conceptions of agency presupposed in Prometheanism and my own Speculative Posthumanism.

Brassier's Prometheanism, like Reza Negarestani's 'inhumanism', proposes that *all* reasons are 'artificial': implicit or explicit moves within language games (Negarestani 2014a/b. See Bakker 2014b for a trenchant critique). Consequently, the Promethean rejects all quasi-theological limits on artificialisation and enjoins the wholesale 'reengineering of ourselves and our world on a more rational basis' (2014, 487).

Speculative Posthumanism (SP) does not propose any theological limits to artificialisation. Far from it! However, it holds that the space of possible agents is not bound (*a priori*) by conditions of human agency, including the collective principles of articulation discussed above. Since we lack future-proof knowledge of possible agents based on the transcendental conditions for *human* agency, I refer to such a posthumanism as 'anthropologically unbounded'. Unbounded posthumanism allows that the results of techno-political interventions could be weird in ways that we are not currently able to imagine (Roden 2014; 2018).

For Brassier, the sliver of humanism worth salvaging is a subtractive version of what Sellars calls 'the manifest image'—the conceptual framework in which we understand ourselves as reflective subjects responsive to and evaluable within the 'space of reasons' (Sellars 1962). Brassier argues that the idea of man as 'self-conscious rational agent' is central to any conception of cognition as a 'self-correcting exercise'; even the explanatory project of replacing the naïve manifest image of persons and things with the rectified concepts of a successor science—e.g. junking phenomenology in favour of some cognitivist account of consciousness (Brassier 2011).

In contrast, for Unbounded Posthumanism there is no *a priori* structure constitutive of subjectivity or agency. Thus, the speculative posthumanist cannot appeal to an idea of rational subjectivity to support an ethics of posthuman becoming.

So, what might autonomy or freedom involve from the purview of unbounded posthumanism—or, in a more speculative mode, what takes the place of the normative conception avowed by Brassier and others? What, if anything, counts as emancipatory as opposed to oppressive violence?

I will argue that the idea of freedom embedded in Brassier's text on improvisation can be elucidated and developed within SP by comparing the *mechanistic genesis* of improvisation to the predicament of agents in rapidly changing technical systems. Thus, Brassier's treatment of improvisation retains its wider resonance on this posthumanist reading, though without its normative integument.

2. Harmonic Structure and Succession

I will begin by making use of some analyses of performance practices in post-war jazz and Julian Johnson's analysis of the disruption of the rhetoric of harmonic accompaniment in the work of Anton Webern to support this model of affective subjectivity in improvisation. I aim to show that show that our understanding of harmonic tendencies and melodic succession involves highly contextual expectation and sensations rather than the grasp of norms of harmonic or melodic succession. In the next section I will consider how this 'affective' model can be incorporated into an account of posthuman agency.

Novice jazz improvisers must internalize a large body of musical theory: e.g., they learn modal variations on the Ionian and harmonic minor scale or 'rules' for chord substitution in cadences based on shared tritones. This learning enables musical performance by sculpting possibilities for

action during improvisation. For example, ambiguous voicings involving tritones or fourths decouple chords from a harmonic root, allowing modulations into what otherwise might be distant keys to slide easily over a loose tonal center.

This harmonic know-how consists of recipes for honing expectations and sensations, not the acknowledgement of norms. The statement that a tritone (augmented fourth) belonging to a dominant seventh chord *should* resolve to a tonic reflects listener expectations in diatonic environments where a tonal center is defined in practice. This is not an intrinsic feature of the tritone, though, since each tritone occurs in two dominant chords. For example, the B-F tritone occurs in both G7 (resolving to C) and Dflat7. This provides a recipe for substituting a dominant chord at a tritone remove in perfect cadences.

However, it also allows harmonic series to modulate into unrelated keys. As jazz theorist Martin Rosenberg notes, the use of augmented dominants with two tritones by Bebop players such as Charlie Parker and Thelonious Monk produce multiple lines of harmonic consequence and thus an ambiguous context that is not conventionally diatonic, even if (in contrast to free jazz) some adherence to a tonal center is preserved (Rosenberg 2010).

Symmetrical chords built of fourths (as used by pianists such as McCoy Tyner and Bill Evans) or major thirds have a similar effect, whether in diatonic contexts (where, as 'rootless voicings', they can render the tonic ambiguous by stripping it to the 3rd, sixth and ninth) or in modal contexts where a tonal center is still implied by a pedal bass (239).

Similarly, an alternative model system constructed not from the Ionian mode (conventional major scale) but from the melodic minor scale has allowed jazz musicians to explore more harmonically ambiguous melodic complements to conventional chords. The seventh degree of the major scale (Locrian) is already a 'dark' harmonically ambiguous scale which contains a minor second scale step and a flattened fifth instead of the more consonant fifth (and is often altered minor chords). However, a Locrian mode built on the melodic scale (sometimes known as the 'super-locrian') provides four altered notes with respect to the home key, thus complementing the elasticity of tonal center established by symmetrical or rootless chord voicings (206).

In consequence, the home key in the modal jazz developed by Miles Davis and John Coltrane never prescribes a series of actions but furnishes expectations that can make an improvisation aesthetically intelligible after the fact. As Rosenberg explains, when Coltrane improvises in modal compositions such as 'A Love Supreme' he deploys pentatonic or digital patterns modulated far from the tonal center implied by the 'head' (the tune that traditionally opens or closes a jazz improvisation) and its associated harmonic context:

> During his solos, Coltrane performs constant modulations through a series of harmonic targets or, what avant-garde architects Arakawa and Gins would call tentative 'landing sites' (2002: 10) that become deployed sonically over a simple harmonic 'home' through the use of centered and then increasingly distant pentatonic scales from that home. In doing so, Coltrane seeks to widen what I call 'the bandwidth' of melodic, harmonic and rhythmic relationships possible. He does

> so as he maintains the coherence of the melodic line (or narrative) through the aurally comfortable shapes (from the perspective of the audience especially) enabled by those very pentatonic scales, despite the juxtaposition of distant and dissonant tonal centers implied by this method. (211–12)

This differential/transformative structure is, perhaps unsurprisingly, characteristic of modernist Western scored music in the classical tradition. In his analysis of Anton Webern's *Three Little Pieces for Piano and Cello*, Op 11, Julian Johnson argues that the opening two bars of the first piece allude to the framing and introduction of melody in traditional song and opera. For example, in baroque recitative the onset of a lyrical melody is frequently indicated by an arpeggiated chord. However, the high register chord that occurs in the first bar of the piece follows a single muted cello note and is followed, in turn, by a descending piano passage, bathetically marking the absence of the expressive melody portended by the chord (Johnson 1998, 277, 272).

Culturally transmitted musical structures consist of context-sensitive patterns of expectation—like the chord/recitative framing relation discussed by Johnson. These exist in tension with the musical act and are transformed in exemplary works. Indeed, As David Huron argues, compositional 'prescriptions' such as Palestrina's explicitly articulated rule that a melodic leap should be compensated for by compensating scale step are routinely honored in the breach:

> For hundreds of years musicians have been taught that it is good to resolve a large leap with a step in the other direction [post-skip reversal]. Surely at least some composers followed this advice? The statistical results from von Hippel and Huron imply that for each passage where a composer had intentionally written according to post-skip reversal, then they must have intentionally transgressed this principle in an equivalent number of passages. Otherwise the statistics would not work out. (Huron 2006, 84)

Huron's cross-cultural analysis shows that actual musical practice is consistent with a regression to the mean pattern, whereby melodies tend naturally to cluster around the median of the pitch range (tessitura) of the melody. Thus, leaps tend to be followed by compensating up or down movements where they land at the extremes of the tessitura, but not where they land near the median pitch.

However, the post-skip reversal heuristic is, it seems, *applied by listeners*. The statistics suggest that applying this heuristic will lead to the correct result 70 percent of the time. It is thus 'good enough' and less exacting than applying regression to the mean, since it does not require the listener to infer the tessitura from the melody (85).

It seems that linguistic formulations of musical norms, such as Palestrina's, do not prescribe but indirectly *describe* how musical transitions are modelled and predicted by acculturated listeners—(a thesis that is suggestive in the light of the predictive coding model of mind and agency I will outline in the next section).

When internalized, such procedures offer affordances for manipulating musical material. For example, most novice jazz musicians practice improvising over classical perfect cadences resolving from the second (minor) chord of the major scale to the tonic by way of the dominant seventh (often known as a II-V7-I cadence). This develops a facility for moving through the changes of many standard melodies. However, as Rosenberg reminds us, learning this formula does not prevent one engaging in substitutions that violate such expectations, thereby producing a more harmonically ambiguous environment (e.g., substituting a major seventh chord for a semitone above the tonic—such as, Gminor7, C7, F#Major 7). Indeed, facility with authorized transitions makes it easier to apply these substitutions on the fly.

In the context of improvisation and composition, we are not free in virtue of acknowledging or declining musical norms since these have never been in place other than as loose expectations or recipes. Brassier's neo-rationalist concept of autonomy, then, seems ill adapted to musical contexts, even if we buy into his naturalist dismissal of any sovereign self. If we are to tease out the implications of his text for posthuman agency, we need to formulate an alternative account of autonomy in improvisational contexts that is not predicated on the acknowledgement of musical norms.

3. The Alien Time of Improvisation

An improvisation takes place in a time window limited by the memory and attention of the improviser, responding to her own playing, to the other players, or (as Brassier recognizes) to the real-time behaviour of machines such as audio processors or midi-filters. It thus consists of irreversible acts that cannot be compositionally refined. They can only be repeated, developed or overwritten by subsequent acts.

Improvisation is thus committed to what Andy Hamilton calls 'an aesthetics of imperfection' as opposed to a Platonism for which the musical work is only contingently associated with performance (Hamilton 2000, 172). The aesthetics of imperfection celebrates the *genesis* of a performance itself, its embodiment in a specific time and space.[3]

If improvisation is a genesis, it implies an *irreversible temporality*. Composition or digital editing is always reversible. One develops notational variants of an idea before winnowing them down or rejecting them. One hits Ctl/Cmd + Z in the DAW (Digital Audio Workstation) when a mix goes bad.

An improvisation, by contrast, is always a unique and irreversible event on the cusp of another. An omniscient being would be incapable of improvising because its options would be given in advance. Unlike the improviser, it could never surprise itself. Its act would be represented before it took place and thus reversible.

It follows that an improvisation *must exceed the improviser's power of representation in principle*. The improvising agent must operate with things or processes that s/he/it cannot fully control or know, including her own mental or body systems. Paraphrasing Amy Ireland's discussion of H. P.

Lovecraft and Michel Serres, improvisation necessitates an alien interloper which constantly threatens to disrupt or divert familiar relationships and forms of succession.

This interloper can be understood as a kind of noise or interference that results from the human subject's inability to master or understand itself as a material system, a natural thing. In French, *parasite* can mean both an organism that lives off its host or interference, static. Serres' book *The Parasite* utilizes this homonymy to explore the necessity with which the interference or chance deviation generates reality by interrupting any rational system or ordering: for example the allocation of living creatures into host and parasite, user and used (Ireland 2016, 220; Serres 2007, 10, 19).

For Ireland, likewise, identifying the *noise*—the parasite—is never an innocent operation. It requires that we adopt a perspective on the relationship between an experiencing subject and the unexperienced 'real' which constitutes experience (see also Thompson 2012).

Viewed from the perspective of the Subject, that impersonal, asubjective real is the parasite: the unexperienced 'outside' that constitutes noise, since it is not ordered according to reason or reasonableness. In terms of the retelling of La Fontaine's tale of the country rat who shares a meal with the city rat, with which Serres begins his work, this noise is signified by the rats whose feasting disturbs the Master sleeping in his townhouse. However, the perspective can be reversed by treating the imposition of rational orders or relationships as a distortion of this fundamentally ambivalent process (Ireland 2016, 221). Thus the Master is a parasite insofar as he interrupts the rats feasting on the remnants of his ortolans:

> Who, then, made the noise? The rats, of course. A feast makes noise. Here are the guests, with their little paws; it seems like thunder above the ceiling. Here are the gnashing of their teeth and the scratching of the rodents. All that wakes him up. The noise, then, was called for by noise. (Serres 2007, 66)

By smoothing experience with the imposition of rule governed rationality the human subject constitutes a meaningful world affording manipulation and social interaction: Sellars' manifest image. Yet this subsists within a fundamentally arational nature which does not answer to any normativity. At a cosmic level, it is this Outside that must be repressed in Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythos stories (Ireland 2016, 222) in order to preserve this 'placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity'. Yet from the notional position of reality, the manifest image constitutes a distortion of what Ireland, following Nick Land, takes to be the inhuman, 'uninhibited "primary synthesis"'—that is, the real source and being of Being (224).

What appears (for the human subject) as an addressable human world—the manifest image of persons, values and objects—cuts out the intricate web of the sub-personal or impersonal processes that bring it into being. (For a gloss of this sub-phenomenological domain drawn from current cognitive science, see below.)

Brassier veers towards this quasi-eliminative realism at times. It is implied by his naturalistic proposal for explaining the evolution of reasons in terms of the organization of pattern governed physical systems. The freedom of improvisation requires, as he puts it, 'an involution of [or reciprocal interaction between] mechanisms' to compose the ('not necessarily human') agent of the act:

> The ideal of 'free improvisation' is paradoxical: in order for improvisation to be free in the requisite sense, it must be a self-determining act, but this requires the involution of a series of mechanisms. *It is this involutive process that is the agent of the act—one that is not necessarily human*. It should not be confused for the improviser's self, which is rather the greatest obstacle to the emergence of the act. The improviser must be prepared to act as an agent—in the sense in which one acts as a covert operative—on behalf of whatever mechanisms can effect the acceleration or confrontation required *for releasing the act*. (n.p. My emphasis)

The claim that there is a potential act needing to be 'released' in a given musical setting might seem to impute rule-like normativity to the improvising situation: something that *ought to be*. However, this claim does not cohere with context-sensitivity and underdetermination of expectation described in the previous section *or* with Brassier's realist metaphysics, which assumes only a material reality outside of any subjective givenness or life (see Brassier 2007).

The super-context-sensitivity of harmonic implication implies that the significance of an event for the unfolding of an improvisation is not normatively prescribed and, indeed, not given as such. By way of an illustration, Walton et al. cite an anecdote related by the jazz keyboardist Herbie Hancock about his early work with Miles Davis. During one performance he claims to have been certain that he had played a wrong note, until Davis' deft response made it feel right—exemplifying Brian Eno's oblique strategy 'to honor your mistake as a hidden intention' (Walton et al. 2018, 98).

It could be objected here that such 'feelings of rightness' track normative truths: in this instance, one stipulating that the note in question is a token of some normatively sanctioned type. However, this conflates the claim that the note had a perceived *musical value* with the claim that it instantiated a rule of succession to which Hancock assented after Davis response. Firstly, this is psychologically implausible. Given that the note felt wrong before the response, Hancock could not have already internalized this norm. Had he done so, he would have heard the note as requiring the sanctioned response, not as wrong. But the rule could not have been *derived* from Davis response since we have dismissed the assumption that this instantiated a general type with which Hancock was acquainted. Learning a rule requires training and repetition, whereas Davis response was novel and unexpected.

We can say, then, that there is a perception of aesthetic value here, but all that is registered, in effect, is that the players affirmed an event. If there is any tacit normative judgement, it hides in the background presupposition on the part of the players that their affective responses were reliable (see Döring 2014, 134).

Both the pattern generators and the events they produce are radically asemic; issuing potentialities for action and evaluative affects without prescriptive content (Thompson 2012, 19). Improvisatory events—as in Coltrane's decentered pentatonics—do not legislate the scope for musical gesture by engendering new norms but, rather, offer material with which Brassier's 'covert operatives' overwrite our values and expectations and produce new models of agency.

These generative systems are phenomenologically unavailable, though realized and produced in the social and material assemblages composing the human world—e.g., pattern-recognizers and pattern-generators embodied and enacted by musicians skilled in finessing the affordances (opportunities for action) of instruments and the events they produce. They are also potentiated in technological artifacts (midi processors, digital and analogue effects, granular synths, tools for spectrum analysis or resynthesis using the fast Fourier transform, etc.).

So, if not normatively constituted, what is the nature of the paradoxically 'selfless' freedom compelled by these noumenal interactions? If we exorcise all specters of transcendental thought—Brassier's normative functionalism included—how do we conceptualize 'the subjectivity of the act' or its 'self-determination'?

I think clues about this selfless self-determination can be gleaned from improvising situations we know about. The real of the improvising situation might have the medusa-headed productivity of Ireland's primary process, but skilled agents have techniques for co-opting it using the available world of social and instrumental affordances (Debruille et al. 2012, 1).

For example, in a field study of post-hardcore rock musicians, Alec McGuiness provides a vivid example of musicians using a procedural learning technique to prime a series of musical riffs over which their intentional control is relatively limited. Songs are built by associating riffs with riffs, but, as one informant explains, are varied in performance when it 'feels right' to do so:

> [S]ometimes there'll be moments when we're not looking at each other but all four will either hit that heavy thing, or really bring it down [...] And yeah, those moments [...] it's priceless, when everyone just hits the same thing at the same time. [...] That's when you know that that song's definitely going to work. 'Cause it's obviously sort of pressing the same buttons on each of us at the same time. (McGuiness 2009, 19)

So, as with Davis' overwriting of Hancock's 'bum' note, *releasing the act* can involve a distributed affective response to a 'felicitous performance' expressed via the collective performance act itself rather than by application of formal musical rules of which, in the post-hard-core case at least, the performers are avowedly innocent.

The phenomenology of this act is also *dark*. All experience is, I have argued elsewhere, striated with 'darkness' (Roden 2013; Roden 2014, 82–104). Having it affords only a partial insight into its nature. Indeed, as Scott Bakker writes, my metaphor understates our abjection and its contribution to the reflex anti-naturalism of much post-Kantian thought:

> Darkness actually provides information regarding the absence of information, and we had no such luxury as a child or as a species. We lacked access to any information tracking the lack of information: the 'darkness' we had to overcome, in other words, was the darkness of neglect. Small wonder our ignorance has felt so enlightened at every turn! (Bakker 2014)

Experience seems like a gift through which we engage the world 'transparently'— without a mediating representation or complex cognitive process—because we are almost entirely unmindful of the heavy lifting required to produce it. Under quotidian conditions, we are in the dark about the dark. Techniques like chaining riffs or applying the post-skip reversal heuristic nonetheless allow us to produce and navigate sonic events in the teeth of this metacognitive neglect—in Brassier words, to do 'something with time' even as time 'does something with us' (2014, 469).

This conception of improvisation as the entraining of phenomenologically obscure 'operatives' or 'noumenal engines' coheres with the theoretically fertile Predictive Coding (PC) account of neurocomputation in contemporary cognitive science.

In what follows, I will present a brief overview of the PC approach. My goal here is speculative rather than explanatory: not to suggest that PC is an unassailable or final account of cognition or agency (though it is compelling and rich) but to hint at the functional complexity cooking the improvisor's manifest image. Additionally, an account predicated on the idea that brains are prediction machines will help us to foreground the insurgently 'unpredictable' and open character of improvisation and its pertinence to a posthuman conception of agency.

PC understands perception and action as hierarchically ordered cycles of prediction-error minimization operating at multiple temporal scales and levels of processing throughout animal nervous systems. The predictions are made by generative models (neural networks) in the form of modulatory feedback that gets compared to bottom up 'driving signals' from 'input' layers lower in the processing hierarchy. Where the model fails to predict the driving signal its hypothesis is updated until it issues predictions that match the driving signal, thereby retuning the model to govern the agent's perceptual transactions more fluently.

From the purview of Bayesian epistemology, this updating process is weighted both on the 'likelihood'—how well a hypothesis predicts the evidence (input)—and the 'priors' encoding background expectations which exert their influence from further up in the hierarchy (Feldman 2013, 18). In effect each prior functions as a conditional likelihood in respect of models further up the hierarchy.

Some top-down predictions may code relatively abstract properties of the world in terms of the prior probabilities of coincident features in the environment of the agent, such as that changes in objects are typically caused by changes in other objects. As Andy Clark observes in his surveys of the predictive coding literature, these abstract 'hyperpriors' have organizing features analogous to Kantian transcendental synthesis (Clark 2013, 196, Section 3.3; Clark 2015, 174–5). However, if it

makes sense to talk of 'synthesis' here, it is better seen as the fluent control of agency and self-maintenance than as a conceptual operation whereby a sensory manifold is united under a concept.

One of the most fascinating aspects of the PC account is the way it complicates our folk distinction between perception, inference and intention or will. From this perspective, *intention and perception share the same satisfaction conditions*. In the PC model, actions are predictions embodied as motor patterns at sub-cortical levels.[4] In action cycles, error reduction will involve the realization of more abstract 'goals' through the minimization of proprioceptive errors; thereby moving the organism into a predicted configuration (Clark 2015, 131; Adams, Shipp & Friston 2013).[5]

Thus, when an improvising pianist explores—say—possibilities for sharing rhythmic or melodic lines between hands, she is augmenting her freedom (or functional autonomy—see below) by sculpting 'dark' generative mechanisms. These are not intuitable aspects of her phenomenological world; though, as per Ireland's discussion of the primary process, they are generative conditions for it (Roden 2013, 172–4).

Only their output is phenomenologically available and, as per the PC account, even these embodied processes are subject to the suppression of sensory awareness of the consequences of fluent action. This is explained under the PC model because active inference can only operate if the 'gain' on prediction error from sensory input is attenuated, according functional primacy to the motor system for the reduction of error (Clark 2015, 213–217). J. Limanowski suggests this may explain the standard phenomenological distinction between the lived and objective body.[6]

When things 'click' in a group improvisation, we feel an affective state or groove that seems shared—'pressing the same buttons in each of us'—perhaps because such states are multifunctional elements which can also be used to perceive others' affective states (see Limanowski 2017, 6).

Such shared states seem to be fundamentally affective, rather than essentially involving beliefs about others' mental states which mediate folk theoretical inferences about the group's propensities for action. Firstly, these affects are not paradigmatic emotions evoking stereotypic expressions or feelings—e.g., fear and fight and flight—but transient potentials modulating action; inflexions in a singular process. Even if it were possible for the subject to intellectually ascribe such subtle influences to some individual or collective, their singularity and transience means their influence is entirely non-inferential. Thus, their influence on performance is plausibly due to their capacity to modulate the action-readiness of the performers, as constrained by the affordances of instruments and learned musical idioms (Gallagher and Allen 2018; Debruille et al. 2012). Such affects are not 'had' or 'owned', as emotions are, but produce changes at the interstices of bodies and assemblages (Thompson 2012, 20).

Secondly, these affects issue in complex dynamical patterns in which spontaneous islands of coherence or 'mirroring' may occur, but also considerable divergence. Walton et al. describe statistical analyses of patterns of coherence between bodily (forearm and head) movements and

playing behaviour of pianists improvising jointly against ostinato patterns, swing backing and drones. For example, the analysis of the right forearm movements over the ostinato pattern, with the two pianists improvising together freely, displays regularly spaced pockets of coordination at multiple temporal scales within the duration over which the ostinato was repeated. This contrasts with the far more homogenous stretches of coherence when the pianists were asked to play in unison, but also with far the patchier dynamics that occurred against the drone (Walton et al. 2015, 5). Finally, they also uncovered surprising multiscale coordination between up and down head movements against a swing track, suggesting that the interaction of performers extends beyond explicit musical gesture to expressive bodily movements that do not enact specific intentions, rendering them inaccessible from a folk-theoretical perspective (6).

The preceding examples also indicate that the generative mechanisms or models entrained in improvisation are not primarily predictive but *differentially productive*, spinning out novel sonic and bodily events. This is compatible with the PC account if it is construed less in internalist/representationalist terms but as a mechanism for implementing fluent embodied behaviour. As Clark (2015) and Feldman (2013) point out, the mechanisms posited by PC do not operate in a stable, changeless environment that could be characterized by a single true 'prior' (the 'Lord's Prior'—see Feldman 2013) but a profligate, alterable reality.[7] Models that overfit data sets over a time-slice from a mutable environment may be prone to 'overtuning' to agent-irrelevant noise and less adaptable to future events.

This suggests that the capacity for spontaneously variable behaviour found in improvisors may reflect tactics for exploring novel forms of stable behaviour in highly changeable environments. This speculation is supported by experimental work in robotics that suggests that hierarchically organized neural networks that exhibit chaotic behaviour at larger timescales—corresponding, perhaps, to the modulatory influence of higher cortical regions on action—are more effective in selecting appropriate action repertoires. Clark suggests that this modulus may enact hyperpriors treating the world as intrinsically changeable and unstable (see Clark 2015, 274; Namikawa et al. 2011). In terms of Ireland's speculative aesthetics, one could say that the profligate noumenal reality that the subject smooths into a human manifest image is necessarily involved in its own sub-personal, sub-phenomenal smoothing. In short: *it's rats all the way down*.

I think we can understand how such a capacity for endogenous variation might constitute posthuman freedom better by utilizing a conception of autonomy that is not exclusive to discursive creatures (as is the case with Brassier's conception of self-determination).

In *Posthuman Life,* I refer to this as 'functional autonomy' (Roden 2014, 124–149). This idea helps articulate an *unbounded* speculative posthumanism because it applies to *any* self-maintaining system capable of enlisting values for its functionings or of becoming a value for some wider assemblage. A functionally autonomous system might be discursive and social; it might be a superintelligent but asocial singleton that only wants to produce paperclips. It might be something whose existence is utterly inconceivable to us, like a computational megastructure leeching the energy output of an entire star.

A diminution of functional autonomy is a reduction in power. Arthritis of the limbs painfully reduces freedom of movement and thus the ability to cultivate agency in other ways. Acquiring new skills increases 'one's capacities to affect and be affected, or to put it differently, increase one's capacities to enter into novel assemblages' (DeLanda 2006, 50; Roden 2014, 190).

To be sure, success at improvising is not like acquiring a new skill. However, it requires that the agent embraces and is embraced by a reality and time that interrupts any settled structure of values and ends.

This embrace might seem atavistic, divorced from the Promethean prospectus for engineering nature in compliance to reason. But this assumes that the means for engineering nature are themselves compliant, rather than factors which ramp up the unpredictability and uncontrollability of the real. Far from being socially constituted or constructed, technical systems are inputs to the primary process; 'covertly operating', gnawing the dark beyond the manifest image. Thus, I argue in *Posthuman Life*, the systemic complexity of modern technique precludes binding technologies to norms in the long run. Modern self-augmenting technical systems are *so complex as to be both out of control* and characterized by massive functional indeterminacy—rendering them independent of any social prescription or political order we may care to erect around them (Roden 2014, 150–165; Roden 2016).

As the world is re-made by this vast planetary substance, any agent located in the system needs to preserve its ability to acquire new ends and purposes or pay the price of overfitting in unstable environments. Any technology liable to increase our ability to accrue new values and couplings in anomalous environments, then, is of local ecological value (Roden 2014, 191).[8] This is not because such technologies make agents better or happier—as a non-anthropocentric account, posthumanism has no metric for welfare or flourishing—but preserves them as agents, though not, perhaps, as human.

In this 'posthuman predicament', agency must be febrile, even masochistic (see Bersani 1986). The agent must tolerate and practice a systemic violence against itself and its world; against stable values or identities; performing its intrasubjective equivalent of the deracinative (extra-subjective) noise of modernity's technological and planetary networks.

Conclusions

Improvisation— because it experiments with the 'involuted' mechanisms of the performers body and environment—rehearses our seemingly inescapable tryst with the ontological violence of the hypermodern. It thus provides an exemplar of an agential freedom in late modernity. There can be no posthuman aesthetics (any more than there can be a posthuman ethics) because unbinding relinquishes the position from which the aesthetic could grasped as a generalizable structure. However, this process is *structurally aesthetic* insofar as its nature is formed by iterative experimentation with the limits of what bodies can be or do. Posthuman freedom consists in the

capacity to map and generates the unbounded through ceaseless experimentation with the noumenal sources of agency.

The implications of such agency are paradoxical. Unbound Posthumanism, I argued, places no limits on what an agent or a subject or thought could be. Epistemologically, this can be supported using 'dark phenomenology' arguments to sustain anti-transcendentalist positions (see Bakker 2014b; Roden 2013). However, its implications are post- or even non-philosophical, for, as I argue elsewhere, it forces us to relinquish any constraints on the very idea of agency or thought itself (see Roden 2018). It refuses a position from which to constrain this 'unbounded', which remains open; no longer posed as a space or totality.[9]

Notes

[1] The others being Quentin Meillassoux, Iain Hamilton Grant and Graham Harman.

[2] As an example of such a metalinguistic resource, Robert Brandom cites the conditional (if… then…) statement as 'the paradigm of a locution that permits one to make inferential commitments explicit as the content of judgements' (Brandom 1994, 109).

[3] "Improvisation makes the performer alive in the moment; it brings one to a state of alertness, even what Ian Carr in his biography of Keith Jarrett has called the 'state of grace'. This state is enhanced in a group situation of interactive empathy. But all players, except those in a large orchestra, have choices inviting spontaneity at the point of performance. These begin with the room in which they are playing, its humidity and temperature, who they are playing with, and so on" (Hamilton 2000,183).

[4] Reducing prediction error by changing specific body trajectories or relative positions of body parts.

[5] Thus, constraining the improbability (or more accurately the self-information or 'surprisal') of an environment relative to a probability distribution of environments corresponding to the nature of an encoding agent (See Hohwy 2013, 51–58).

[6] To do so, he appeals to Thomas Metzinger's claim that our phenomenology is generated by a dynamic phenomenal self model (PSM) representing the modeler as a distinct and always present ('untranscendable') part of its world (Limanowski 2017, 10). The phenomenal world model thus includes a phenomenal self-model but neither sub-model represents the processes that implement them—for example error reduction processes or the transient attenuations of input for reallocation of attention or functional role.

[7] Jacob Feldman argues that the intuitive way of interpreting the idea of a single true prior—'The Lord's Prior' is frequentist: the single true prior would reflect the objective frequency of events. Such that if an event h occurs with probability p_h in the environment the prior assigns it p_h. That is that the probability of an event, or a probability distribution over an ensemble of events or continuous variable, reflects the outcome of some ideally repeatable experiment such as random coin tosses (Feldman 2013, 15–16). This conception of probability is at odds with the Bayesian account which interprets probability in terms of degrees of belief. Probability thus understood has no objective existence—'To frequentists, probabilities are facts, while to Bayesians they are opinions' (16). More importantly, Feldman suggests, the Bayesian interpretation seems the only way in which we can accommodate either timeless physical laws or singular historical events, neither of which are straightforwardly susceptible to the

frequentist analysis. If frequencies are merely finite data for testing opinions, however, there is no single true prior and the problem of Bayesian updating is redefined as that of harmonizing behaviour to an uncertain and changing world—'separating agent-salient data from noise' as Clark puts it (Clark 2015, 272).

[8] For example, space technology, nanotechnology, or the use of brain computer interfaces.

[9] Here, we can exploit an analogy with Badiou's set-theoretical conception of Being as an inconsistent multiplicity or void that is 'not-one, nor composable of ones' (Badiou 2006, 56). However, Badiou certainly has a conception of thought—as evinced in his Parmenidean claim that set theory maps the structure of Being. Unbounded posthumanism, it appears, must relinquish such an ontological construal of the unbounded. The voided horizon of the posthuman cannot be pre-comprehended but it can be preempted and performed.

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Biography

Dr David Roden has worked for the Open University as a lecturer and associate lecturer. His published work has addressed the relationship between deconstruction and analytic philosophy, philosophical naturalism, the metaphysics of sound and posthumanism.

He contributed the essay "The Disconnection Thesis" to the Springer Frontiers volume *The Singularity Hypothesis: A Scientific and Philosophical Assessment*. His book *Posthuman Life: Philosophy at the Edge of the Human* (Routledge 2014) considers the metaphysical, epistemological and ethical implications of the existence of posthumans: powerful nonhuman agents produced by human-instigated technological processes.

Other representative publications include: "Radical Quotation and Real Repetition" in *Ratio: An International Journal of Analytic Philosophy* (2004); "Nature's Dark Domain: an argument for a naturalized phenomenology" in the Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement, *Phenomenology and Naturalism* (2013); "Sonic Arts and the Nature of Sonic Events", *Review of Philosophy and Psychology* (2010).

PERFORMANCE
PHILOSOPHY

PERFORMING *WITH* THE MASQUERADE: TOWARDS A CORPOREAL RECONSTITUTION OF SOPHIE TAEUBER'S DADA PERFORMANCES

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Introduction

Swiss Dada artist Sophie Taeuber (1889–1943) is one of the pioneers of the classical avant-garde in the first half of the 20th century. However, her name was hardly mentioned in the abundance of contemporaneous Dada source material such as manifestos, Dada-magazines (*Dadaphone*) and reviews. For a long time, she only appeared off the record as Hans Arp's wife, until scholars such as Julia Dech and Katy Deepwell started rewriting the avant-gardist art history from a feminist perspective. Nevertheless, these valuable studies and even the gender-related publications of the late nineties (Sawelson-Gorse, Felski) remain mainly descriptive: in-depth studies about Taeuber's (dance) performances remain scarce. As it was rather uncommon to record Dada performances at the time, the only documentation at hand are a handful of pictures (usually taken before or after the show) and written testimonies (by fellow artists and spectators), hence prioritizing text and (static) image over movement in live (dance) performances. The consequences of this priority come to the fore in Hal Foster's article "Dada Mime," in which the iconic photograph of Taeuber's dance performance at the opening of the *Cabaret Voltaire / Galerie Dada* in 1916/17[1] is reduced to an illustration of Marcel Janco's[2] mask design, thereby completely neglecting her bodily presence as

PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHY VOL 4, NO 2 (2019):528–545
DOI: https://doi.org/0.21476/PP.2019.42228
ISSN 2057-7176

a dancer (Foster 2003, 170). In Foster's article, Taeuber is merely functioning as "a stand-in for any masked Dadaist;" her "trained dancer's body remains unmarked, even imperceptible" (Andrew 2014, 17).

This contribution aims for a "corporeal reconstitution" (Irigaray 2002, 197) of Taeuber's (dance) performances. Following Luce Irigaray's corporeal philosophy, a corporeal reconstitution facilitates new words, signs and images that allow the body to speak instead of excluding it. As she observes in *To Be Born: Genesis of a New Human Being*:

> In reality speech is produced by our body, but we do not use it to develop shapes from our physical belonging, to enable our body to speak. [...] Such saying is not necessarily articulated in words, but it performs and structures our: I live, I exist, I grow, I become, and even I will, I desire, I love. (Irigaray 2017, 47–48)

The corporeal reconstitution in Taeuber's dance performances entails a double move. First, it implies a rendering perceptible of the trained dancer's body, its particular movements, and the quality of these movements. This demands to re-imagine the movement from the static images on photographs informing the history of Dada art. As Irigaray observes: "We must also find, find anew, invent the words, the sentences [...] words which do not bar the corporeal, but which speak corporeal" (Irigaray in Whitford 1991, 43). Taeuber's static body is put in motion through the few, but detailed contemporaneous descriptions of Taeuber's dance performances, by, amongst others, fellow dancers from the Laban School she attended. Allowing the body to speak for itself, means recognizing that Taeuber is not dancing *behind*, but *with* a mask (and costume). As we shall outline in this article, a corporeal reconstitution *with* the mask inaugurates a particular negotiation with the notion of masquerade as it has been developed by Irigaray in *The Sex Which is Not One* (1985).

Second, this corporeal reconstitution entails, as Irigaray further explains in *To Speak is Never Neutral*, "the production of a new age of thought, art, poetry and language: the creation of a new *poetics* [...] a revolution in thought and ethics" (Irigaray in Whitford 1991, 10). Taeuber's playful repetition of the masquerade or, to put it in Irigaray's words, mimetic strategy, entails a "radically new mode of relating" (Obler 2009, 223) between human and non-human materiality. The revolution in thought and ethics is thus informed by a new mode of relationality in an ethics of mutual encounter. However, as we shall outline in this contribution, Taeuber is not only moving in between puppet and puppeteer, movement and stasis, abstraction and expressivity, performer and mask, presence and absence, but also in between feminine and masculine. The hybrid movements in her mimetic strategy disrupt the binary nature of all oppositional pairs. In this respect, art historian Bibiana Obler points at the "radically new mode of relating" at work in the patchwork of artforms and materials that Taeuber and Arp created. Taeuber was not "bound by conventions of gender," as she abandons the history of gender implicated in the media she uses (Ibid.).

The result is a "radical statement across gender" (Andrew 2014, 19). Applying what Irigaray coined as a mimetic strategy, Taeuber moves beyond stereotypical thinking about gender. Taeuber's

hybrid dancing body is not a female body expressing her essential womanliness. As Judith Butler writes in *Bodies that Matter: On the discursive limits of "sex"*, Irigaray's tactical mimicry occupies "no place between 'his' language and 'hers', but is, instead, only a disruptive *movement* which unsettles the topographical claims" (1993, 36. Italics hers). For Taeuber, the live presence of the body, performing *with* the costume and mask, is a tool for deconstructing stereotypes regarding the female other, while also uncovering the complexity of her experiences in modernist and wartime avant-garde Europe. In dancing the perpetual movement in between dualities, through a patchwork of genres and materials (her drawings, embroideries and tapestries are also driven by kinetic forces), Taeuber not only playfully rebels against patriarchal discourse, but also against the dehumanizing effects of World War One violently raging through Europe.

Taeuber's interdisciplinary *patchwork* of art

Since little "Söpheli" was already confronted with arts and crafts through assisting her mother in fabricating table-cloths and pillowcases for sales (Mair 2013, 17), it didn't come as a surprise that in 1907 she attended the *Zeichnungsschule des Industrie-und Gewerbemuseum*s in St. Gallen (28) to continue her studies at the *Lehr- und Versuchsatelier für angewandte und freie Kunst* (better known as the *Debschnitz Schule*) in Munich in 1910 (36). Subsequently, in 1915, Taeuber, passionate about dance, enrolled at the *Rudolf von Laban School* in Zurich (54), transferring his method to her own artistic needs. As fellow student Ludmilla Vachtova observes: she "learned dance with Laban not as chance improvisation but as a creative game with variable rules that unfolds in time and space as a unique, moving, ephemeral sculpture" (Vachtova about Taeuber in Prevots 1985, 5).

When the First World War raged through Europe, Taeuber fled to neutral Zurich. She joined the famous Dada movement at the *Cabaret Voltaire* in 1916 and shortly after, *Galerie Dada* came to light. During that period, she executed her iconic dance performances to the sound poems of Hugo Ball. In the meantime, she continued working as a teacher in textile art at the Zurich University of the Arts in order to guarantee a steady income for both Hans Arp and herself. Taeuber also joined the *Werkbund*, a German association of architects and designers in the spirit of the English *Arts and Crafts Movement* (Bargues 2017, 103). In 1918 she signed the *Dada manifesto* (although under the pseudonym G. Thauber) and was approached by Alfred Altherr (director of the *Kunstgewerbeschule*) to create the puppets for the theatre play *König Hirsch*. Taeuber's unique way of designing, crossing boundaries between different genres (sculpture, drawing, dance, embroidery, tapestry, performance, painting, jewelry, etc.) and materials (wool, wood, thread, paint, etc.), resulted in an interdisciplinary patchwork of art. She continued working in several cities (Berlin, Tirol, Paris, Strasbourg, etc.), fled the German occupation of Paris in 1940 and died of carbon monoxide poisoning in Zurich at the age of fifty-four (Rumjanzewa 2012).

Throughout her extensive body of work, Taeuber refused to restrict herself to genre and media boundaries. She applied a diversity of materials and art forms in order to maximally explore the "dynamics of space, rhythm and balance" (Andrew 2014, 21). Even when engaging with seemingly static media such as drawings, painting, tapestry and embroidery, Taeuber often referred to the kinetic potential of dance. As such, not only her dance performances, but also her so-called applied

arts are full of dance and movement. As Hubert observes in her drawings: "the harmonious distribution of Sophie's lines, their unnerving flexibility, their modulations and rhythmicality, their refusal to pose vertically within the frame, in sum the graceful traces or designs they inscribe on the paper surface are features pertaining to the world of dance" (1993, 30). After all, Taeuber had distinctive ideas in her choice of material, adhering to the *Arts and Crafts Movement*. Her embroideries, for example, are a clear statement with regard to the more mechanical movement of stitching, and the rise of mass production in modernity (Obler 2001, 221).

Unfortunately, Hugo Weber excluded all tapestry, fabrics, puppets and jewelry in his influential *Catalogue Raisonné* (1948). As a result, Taeuber's art work was only catalogued in a limited way. Arp was furious about the improper reception of Taeuber's art work and wrote: "The serenity of Sophie Taeuber's oeuvre is inaccessible to those devoid of any soul and who live in confusion. Her works have sometimes been referred to as applied art. Both stupidity and wickedness are at the root of this appellation. Art can just as easily express itself in wool, paper, ivory, ceramics, or glass as in painting, stone, wood, or clay," he says (Bargues 2017, 103–104).[3] Hemus linked this problematic selection to the patriarchal structure of the Dada art scene (and of art history itself), as "some materials chosen by women (handicrafts for example) or art forms (dance) are considered less appropriate or trivial" (2007, 100).

A similar superficial reading of Taeuber's art can be spotted in the essay "Dada Mime" (2003) by Hal Foster. Foster uses the iconic photograph of Taeuber's dance performance at the opening of the *Cabaret Voltaire*[4] as an illustration of Marcel Janco's mask, completely ignoring her bodily presence as a Dada dancer. By separating the mask from the body performing *in* or *with* it, the mask in fact remains a "dead" shell without content, neglecting Hugo Ball's vision on "the motive power" (1996, 64) and the unique dialogical potential of masks. In his diary *Flight Out of Time* Ball testifies:

> We were all there when Janco arrived with his masks, and everyone immediately put one on. Then something strange happened. Not only did the mask immediately call for a costume; it also demanded a quite definite, passionate gesture, bordering on madness. Although we could not have imagined it five minutes earlier, we were walking around with the most bizarre movements, festooned and draped with impossible objects, each one of us trying to outdo the other in inventiveness. The motive power of these masks was irresistibly conveyed to us. All at once we realized the significance of such a mask for mime and for the theater. The masks simply demanded that their wearers start to move in a tragic-absurd dance. (1996, 64)

As such, the mask cannot be considered without its wearer, and hence also not without its particular mode of relating to the (dancing) body and vice versa. Referring to Foster's superficial reading of the photograph, Andrew regrets that Taeuber's body remains "a mute enhancement for the Janco mask beside it. […] It leaves Taeuber a stand-in for any masked Dadaist. […] All signification that the photo might derive from its capture of a woman artist and a trained dancer's body remains unmarked, even imperceptible" (Andrew 2014, 13, referring to Foster 2003, 170). Hence, a corporeal reconstitution (Irigaray 2002, 197) of Taeuber's dancing body *with* the mask

(Janco), costume (Arp) and sound poem (Ball) is urgently needed in order to reveal a more profound artistic practice.

The few documents we can rely on for this corporeal reconstitution are one iconic (undated and unlocated) black-and-white picture and some written testimonies of fellow Dadaists and spectators.

Image 1: Sophie Taeuber at Galerie Dada 1916/17. Stiftung Hans Arp und Sophie Taeuber-Arp e.V. Rolandswerth (photographer unknown)

The picture was presumably taken off-stage before or after the show, as there was no tradition of recording live performances. Taeuber's posed posture hence cannot account for an ephemeral three-dimensional performance (Andrew 2014, 14).[5] However, combined with the written testimonies of spectators and fellow Dada artists, the unremarked and even imperceptible body is finally allowed to speak, inaugurating a powerful dialogue with the mask, and—on a conceptual level—with the notion of masquerade. As we shall see, this corporeal reconstitution reveals a playful, but unsettling repetition (as in an Irigarayan mimetic strategy) of the masquerade.

Taeuber's "hundred-jointed body" at the *Cabaret Voltaire / Galerie Dada*

The photograph displays Taeuber in full length, wearing a long, straight, white dress, imprinted with a frightening face: a giant open mouth and dangerous-looking half open eyes ostentatiously addressing the viewer. The print on the dress echoes the frightening rectangular mask that Taeuber is wearing. The mask itself is double the size of her head and was "made of cardboard, [...] painted and glued" (Ball 1996, 64). Its open mouth reveals sharp teeth, and a long, dark tongue in paper or cloth is hanging loose from the suggested opening. On top of the mask are four shiny points, referring to a crown, rendering the grotesque figure as belonging to a royal lineage, or functioning as a suggestion of hair. In his description of Janco's masks, Ball stresses the frightening effect of the oversized masks: "They were designed to be effective from a distance; in the relatively small space of the cabaret they have a sensational effect" (1996, 64).

Being profoundly influenced by all kinds of non-Western traditions in his search towards new, "spiritually and morally purified" forms of expression (Burmeister 2016, 9), Janco also designed this mask with "Japanese or Ancient Greek traditions, yet [they are] wholly modern" (Ball 1996, 64). Through this, Janco rejected the "Western" principles he believed had led Europe towards the trenches (Oberhofer 2016, 29). However, rather than confining itself to the Japanese or Ancient Greek tradition, the painting on the mask depicts a face in a Cubist, geometrical style. As Hugo Ball describes it in his Dada diary: "The mouth of the mask is wide open, the nose is broad and in the wrong place" (1996, 64). The mask addressed the audience with deformed and grotesque facial characteristics and fit with the abstract (textile) designs Taeuber and Arp made at that time. Its diabolic features seem to echo the devastating experience of wartime Europe. As Ball himself observes in relation to Janco's masks:

> What fascinates us all about the masks is that they represent not human characters and passions, but characters and passions that are larger than life. The horror of our time, the paralyzing background of events, is made visible. (1996, 64–65)

"The motive power of these masks" (64) seems to suggest that a body dancing *with* the mask is an evident *conditio sine qua non.* The mask is "brought alive in their performances" and should not be hanging on museum walls as was done in former times (Oberhofer 2016, 33). Inspired by Janco's masks, Ball composed a short piece of music for dance at the *Cabaret Voltaire*. For the dance called *Fliegenfangen* (*Flycatching*), Ball goes on to say that, "the only things suitable for this mask were

clumsy, fumbling steps, and some quick snatches and wide swings of the arms, accompanied by nervous, shrill music" (1996, 64).[6]

Taeuber's notable suit matched the mask and was presumably made by her partner Hans Arp. Taeuber is dressed in a long, bulky costume, with her arms enclosed and extended by long cardboard tubes. The cylinder-like arms have five tentacles at their ends, referring, in a geometrically restrictive form to the five fingers of a hand, described by Krupp as "scissor-like hands" (2016, 52). The five tentacles might further represent the fire being produced by war machines used at the time. In this respect, several scholars referred to the cannon imagery in Hugo Ball's similar use of "carton prostheses" (Burkhalter 2014, 228) in his performance of the Magic Bishop at the *Cabaret Voltaire* in 1916. Andrew, for example, following Janice Simon's ideas, refers to the long rigid tubes "as if in parody of exploding French 75 cannon shells" (2014, 13). As such, the motive power of Janco's alienating mask is in line with the motive power of Arp's costume and calls for a "tragic-absurd dance" (Ball 1996, 64) that echoes the horrors of war. The design of the mask and costume relates to the Dadaist mechanical imagery that was often used to criticize the bankruptcy of both language and logic in times of war (as often translated into the well-known machine portraits of Francis Picabia). The frantic movements that were subsequently being "dictated from the mask and costume," stressed this tendency even more in their striking resemblance to the neurasthenic[7] symptoms of *shell shock*, caused by the highly technological ways of warfare produced during WWI. In this respect, Taeuber's body seems riddled with a neurasthenic imprint, similar to the experiences of soldiers at the front those days: "there came a dance full of flashes and edges, full of dazzling light and penetrating intensity," (Ibid.) but also:

> Every gesture consists of a hundred, is sharp, bright, pointed. The narrative of the perspectives, of the lighting, of the atmosphere brings the over-sensitive nervous system to real drollness, to an ironic gloss. (Ball in Hemus 2007, 98)

In this way, Taeuber's "hundred-jointed body" echoes Duchamp's notion of the "deferred body, broken in pieces and thus severely compromised" as a result of military service (Jones 2004, 62). The fragmented and mechanical visions of the body as illustrated here both by Ball and Duchamp can as such be considered the symptoms of the disillusionments caused by the cruelty of modern warfare, carefully destroying holistic conceptions of body and mind. Obviously, war had a deep impact on all human beings regardless of whether they were actively engaged in war or not. Witness thereof is Hans Arp's testimony after fleeing to Zurich: "While the cannon rumbled in the distance, we pasted, recited, versified, we sang with all our soul. We sought an elementary art, which, we thought, would save men from the curious madness of these times. We aspired to a new order which might restore the balance between heaven and hell" (Arp in Jones 2004, 67).

To Hugo Ball, the horrific background of war was "paralyzing" (Ball 1996, 65). Notice Ball's writings in a letter to his sister: "*Kunst? Das ist nun alles aus und lächerlich geworden. In alle Winder zerspreng. Das hat alles keinen Sinn mehr*" (Art? It has become ordinary and ridiculous. It doesn't make sense anymore. Ball in Mair 2013, 65). The paralyzing effect of war is iconically rendered visible through

the staging of his alter-ego, the Magic Bishop, appropriately dressed for the occasion in a "special costume:"

> My legs were in a cylinder of shiny blue cardboard, which came up to my hips so that I looked like an obelisk. Over it I wore a huge coat collar cut out of cardboard, scarlet inside and gold outside. [...] I also wore a high, blue-and-white striped witch doctor's hat. [...] I could not walk inside the cylinder, so I was carried onto the stage in the dark [...]. (Ball 1996, 70)

Image 2: Hugo Ball in Cabaret Voltaire, 1916

Ball was thus literally paralyzed in his performance at the *Cabaret Voltaire* as the restrictive forms of the cylinders prevented him from moving. Interestingly enough, Taeuber menacingly raises her arms, maybe "widely swinging" them (Ball 1996, 64), while Ball has his arms hanging like weights. Moreover, Taeuber has her legs free for moving, as Andrew aptly observed how, "unlike Ball's Bishop, Taeuber could in fact dance [...] and could do so with fluidity and curves that upset the static geometry of the covering" (2014, 28). In one archive print, with a considerable higher contrast in the left under corner of the photograph, Andrew observed a foot being visible in the otherwise gloomy darkness, "a foot trailing to her side that produces a graceful curve through her leg and waist to shoulder" (Ibid.). As such, she in fact reveals here how the upper part of Taeuber's body seems to be more restricted in movement than the lower part; the arms cannot bend as they are covered with long cylinders, but the legs and feet can, as they are not covered in obstructive costumes. As such, "Taeuber seems to have created a dialectic between the body's palpable form and presence and its disintegration or absence" (Ibid., 19) behind the mask and costume.

A reconstitution of Taeuber's body dancing reveals an interesting tension between movement and stasis, echoing the paralyzing effect of wartime, but also the corporeal desire to rise up again. As such, this corporeal reconstitution puts in perpetual motion the dualities not only between movement and stasis, but also between abstraction and expressivity, performer and mask, puppet and puppeteer, presence and absence. In what follows below, we will unfold these dualities even further, digging into the testimonies of spectators and fellow Dada artists of the time. Of primary importance in this corporeal reconstitution is that not only the mask but also the body has a motive power. In a mutual dialogue, or the double movement of "instauration" as Bruno Latour would put it, an interesting dialectic unfolds in the dance performances, inaugurating not only a new mode of relating with and within the different elements of her performance (mask, costume, and sound poem), but also between feminine and masculine.

The double movement of instauration as a radically new mode of relating

In his philosophical writings on the particularly joint movement of puppet and puppeteer, Bruno Latour unfolds his concept of "instauration" or the double movement of *faire faire* (following Souriau 1943). He unfolds his concept of instauration by referring to *The Secret Life of Puppets* (2002) by Victoria Nelson, observing that "puppeteers will rarely behave as having total control over their puppets. They will say queer things like 'their marionettes suggest them to do things they will have never thought possible by themselves'" (Latour 2007, 59–60). These words remarkably resonate with Taeuber's interaction with the materiality of the mask and the costume in her dance performances. The "motive power" of the mask and the obstructive costume make Taeuber move in tragic-absurd ways. These movements don't seem to be driven by Taeuber's body alone, they are co-created by body, mask and costume.

Wondering who is pulling the strings in the act of instauration, Latour comes to the conclusion that, actually, the puppets do in addition to their puppeteers. He explains this mode of mutual pulling by questioning the logic of cause and effect in movement. "When a force manipulates another, it does not mean that it is a cause generating effects; it can also be an occasion for other things to start acting" (2007, 60). However, attributing agency to things and non-humans in an Actor Network Theory does not mean a reversal of control. Puppets are not controlling their handlers either. In this double movement, or instauration, lies the destiny of human beings; they have to move away from anthropocentric ideas—such as having total control over non-human materiality—in order to embrace with a radically new mode of relating. It is exactly this new mode of relating that Sophie Taeuber demonstrates in dancing *with* the mask.

In relating with non-human materiality, Taeuber seems to transform into a mechanical, yet also human, marionette, put into motion by other forces than a puppeteer, maybe even impersonating both puppet and puppeteer at the same time, playing "a creative game with variable rules that unfolds in time and space as a unique, moving, ephemeral sculpture" (Ludmilla Vachtova in Prevots 1985, 5). As such, Taeuber instaurs a radical new mode of relating between human and non-human. The anonymity that seems to come forward out of her abstract and geometrical costume, almost completely hiding Taeuber's own body behind the masquerade, on the one hand illustrates the dehumanizing ways of warfare; but the presence of her palpable body also shows her resistance towards it. She does not disappear behind her mask and costume. The presence of her body dancing instills the lack of individuality with the possibilities of her own subjectivity. As Bargues explains, Taeuber is "inhabiting a kind of post-human marionette," "which is not mechanical, but quite derisory, and in any case androgynous" (following Obler and Burkhalter, 2017, 99).

Let us now have a closer look at Taeuber's body and the particular movements she made with it as an expressionist trained dancer. Educated by the renowned Rudolf von Laban, Taeuber's body-as-archive[8] was acquainted with specific expressionist techniques. This explains why in his account of Taeuber's "abstract dances," Hugo Ball speaks of "a dance full of [...] penetrating intensity" (1996, 64). Dadaist Tristan Tzara in his turn described an ambiguous figure dancing: "delirious

strangeness in the spider of the hand vibrating quickly ascending towards the paroxysm of a mocking capriciously beautiful madness" (1992, 558). Additionally, Emmy Hennings attributed the descriptions of a "bird soaring, gliding, and a flower blooming" to her dance (Andrew 2014, 28):

> I saw in Sophie Taeuber a bird, a young lark, for example, lifting the sky as it took flight. The indescribable suppleness of her movements made you forget that her feet were keeping contact with the ground, all that remained was soaring and gliding. (Hennings in Schmidt 1948, 15)

Hennings testifies here of Taeuber's corporeal desire to rise up, despite the paralyzing effects of wartime, materialized in the obstructive costume and horrific mask. Taeuber instills an image of resistance in her dancing *with* the mask and the costume. The traumatized body hence does not end up as a paralyzed body. It is still a living body after all, and despite everything. Like a flower that wants to grow, despite the mud.

However, rather than revealing her inner feelings as an "expressive dancing subject,"[9] Taeuber's movements are putting dualities of abstract movement and expressivity in perpetual motion, never allowing them to resolve in a static synthesis. Having a closer look at the testimonies of spectators and fellow Dada artists of the time, the hybrid movements performed by Taeuber come to the fore. As an expressionist trained dancer, she instills the abstract dances with a palpable body. Taeuber's "visceral abstraction" is hence "not merely an extension of Dada's cabaret performance and bodily humor;" it is "an intentional bodily intervention within Zurich's political and aesthetic realms" (Andrew 2014, 14). Moreover, as we will outline in what follows, Taeuber is not only moving in between movement and stasis, abstraction and expressivity, performer and mask, puppet and puppeteer, presence and absence, but also in between feminine and masculine.

Performing *with* the masquerade: shortcircuiting the social codes of gender

War and modernity not only annihilated the body as a whole (through new ways of warfare and the fragmentation of the body by Taylorism and Fordism); it also explicitly upset all gender connotations. The image of the heroic soldier made way for sentiments of disillusion, emasculation and a fragmented sense of reality, since "those on the front witnessed firsthand the physical destruction and bodily mutilation that was at odds with prewar ideals of rationality and restraint" (Hage 2012, 190). Amelia Jones put it as follows:

> [...] a brutal new world in which technology extended men's bodies in horrifying ways—ways that, paradoxically and with cruel irony, feminized the very bodies that were meant to be thus further empowered and phallicized. [...] the great war transformed not only nations but also gender roles and thus the individuals who enacted the effects of both nationalism and gendered subjectivity. (2004, 44)

This transformation of gender roles was also at stake in Zurich Dada through omnipresent genderplay, often intertwined by the metaphor of the machine. Not only known examples such as Duchamp's impersonation of *Rrose Sélavy* and Picabia's (gendered) machine portraits, but also

Taeuber's work actively questioned gender roles while performing live on stage. As Bargues observes: "there was nothing masculine about Hausmann as a dancer, no more than Taeuber embodied a feminine figure. Both of them shortcircuited the idea of gender" (2017, 105). As such, the dialectic she created "between the body's palpable form and presence and its disintegration or absence" behind the mask and costume (Andrew 2014, 19), also concerned genderplay. As we will now outline, Taeuber resisted the social codes of femininity and womanliness through dancing *with* (instead of *behind*) the mask and hence revealing the masquerade of femininity women were convicted to.

Psychoanalyst Joan Rivière introduced the notion of masquerade in 1929 as "womanliness [...] worn as a mask" (1986, 38). On the one hand, masquerade denotes a submission to dominant social codes of femininity and womanliness. On the other hand, the doubleness in the relation of the masked subject also provides opportunities for disruptive agency within these social codes.

French philosopher Luce Irigaray had a rather negative view on masquerade. She insisted that in the masquerade, women painfully "submit to the dominant economy of desire. They are there as objects for sexual enjoyment, not as those who enjoy" (1985, 133–134). As such, masquerade is a painful experience, and a disturbing and uncomfortable position, imprisoned in the visual realm of "voyeurism and self-display" (Castle 1986, 255). As Mary Ann Doane aptly observed: masquerade as such facilitates "an understanding of the woman's status as spectacle rather than spectator" (1988–89, 48). The woman as such is actually resorbed in this function; she disappears in the acting out of prescribed femininity (Irigaray 1985, 76). The woman's body is not allowed to appear in her own right, she is nothing but absence. She is a sex which is not one. Other scholars adopted a more positive perspective. Terry Castle, for example, considered "the anonymity of the mask [...] an abrupt exit from the system of sexual domination" (1986, 255). Women escape, through the masquerade, being "a commodity placed in circulation by men" (Ibid.).

Masquerade in these studies refers to a symbolic mask of femininity cast on female subjects by society, highlighting "the sensuality of the visual" (Ibid.). Literally wearing a mask, and dancing *with* that mask, Sophie Taeuber, on the one hand, performs her absence in the acting out of prescribed femininity. At first glance, one might assume that Taeuber falls victim to the "absent" femininity of the masquerade. On the other hand, and looking deeper, the anonymity of the mask might also be considered as an opportunity to re-appear beyond the visual, shortcircuiting the social codes of gender. This re-appearance is in line with Irigaray's concept of the mimetic strategy.[10] By means of a productive, "playful repetition" (1985, 76), woman resubmits herself in patriarchal discourse, making "visible [...] what was supposed to remain invisible" (77). This mimetic strategy is not a reproduction of existing social gender codes, it is a "playful crossing, and an unsettling one" (Ibid.) that is characterized by a dynamic of differential intensities and that allows for the body to speak, for a corporeal reconstitution, "to speak, as women," for themselves (119). Irigaray's mimetic strategy as such is also not a passive mimicking of dominant social codes of gender. It is a strategic mimesis; "it is a game of specular/speculative reflection of the inner logic of phallogocentric discourse [...] redefining the parameters of subjectivity [...]" (Braidotti 1994, 131). It is precisely in her corporeal reconstitution *with* the mask that Taeuber instaurs a radically new mode of relating

in-between male and female social codes. Moving her body through dualities, or rather, dancing the perpetual movement in between dualities, Taeuber in fact moves beyond any categorization within a binary opposition.

On the one hand, Taeuber's hundred-jointed body performs "a lack in the form of a certain distance between oneself and one's image" (Irigaray 1982, 81–82). When Ball observes how in Taeuber's dance performance, "the lines of her body broke up, each gesture decomposed into a hundred precise, angular, and sharp movements" (1996, xxxi), he in fact refers to her foregrounding her inability to fit the solid image of a "normal" woman. Irigaray described a "normal" woman as someone following her presupposed trajectory of subjectification; she can only be in circulation in the phallocentric economy by being absent. In masquerade, woman is reduced to a sex which is *not* one (Irigaray 1985, 185), in the sense that woman loses herself in the socially required masquerade of femininity. As Irigaray observes in *The Sex Which is Not One*:

> Femininity is a role, an image, a value, imposed upon women by male systems of representation. In this masquerade of femininity, the woman loses herself, and loses herself by playing on her femininity. The fact remains that this masquerade requires an effort on her part for which she is not compensated. Unless her pleasure comes simply from being chosen as an object of consumption or of desire by masculine "subjects." And, moreover, how can she do otherwise without being "out of circulation"? (1985, 84)

In fact, while dancing, Taeuber does not inhabit an "appropriate" or "proper" role of "femininity" and "womanliness" assigned to her, as it is prescribed in patriarchal and phallocentric structures at the time. Hemus observes how Hans Richter, for example, maintains a "partial appreciation of Dada's women dancers" in his memoirs, reducing them to "feminine stereotypes of angel and nun" (2007, 96–97). Richter's description follows the appropriate circulation of women in the phallocentric economy; as "objects for sexual enjoyment, not as those who enjoy" (Irigaray 1985, 133–134). He characterizes the (mask-less) "Laban girls" (including, a.o. Sophie Taeuber and Mary Wigman) as "an alluring, sexual presence," reducing their dance qualities to a "pleasurable visual spectacle for the men in the audience" (Hemus 2007, 97). It is therefore telling that Richter regrets that Janco's savage "Negro masks" hide the pretty faces of the Labanese girls in the *Ballet Noir Kakadu*, as performed at the Kaufleuten Hall, and that the abstract costumes cover their slender bodies (Ibid.). His regret reveals that the covering up of female beauty was unconventional at the time. As Hemus indicates:

> He rightly draws attention to the fact that any emphasis on beauty is abandoned but is likely to be aware just how strong a statement this makes in terms of gender roles and expectations. In contrast to their normal performative roles (both on stage and in life), here the dancers' femininity, beauty, sexuality and even individuality are deliberately concealed. The unconventionality of this approach is underlined, through doubtless unconsciously, by Richter's earlier description in which he characterizes the Laban girls as an alluring, sexual presence. (Ibid.)

Even though contemporaneous spectators such as Richter might fail to perceive Taeuber's double movement *with* the mask, creating a perpetual movement "between the body's palpable form and presence and its disintegration or absence" (Andrew 2014, 19), Taeuber's resistant body does not disappear behind the mask. Taeuber does not create the solid illusion of being (of having become) a "normal," sexually attractive woman, thereby losing herself in stereotypes of femininity. In dancing *with* the disfiguring mask, she resists by negotiating the devastating effect of the masquerade. The mask exposes the distance in her role playing, demonstrating the suffocating principles and annihilating the effects of the masquerade. Taeuber thus reveals how she struggles with the required masquerade of femininity in society that demands her disintegration or absence. Richter's spectator experience in this is tellingly one of disorientation, as the solid binary ground that informs his habits of seeing in dominant scopic regimes becomes slippery. Hence Richter's regret that the "Negro masks" prevent the performance to be a mere "pleasurable visual spectacle" Hemus 2007, 97).

Playing with the script of femininity provided by patriarchal and phallocentric structures, Taeuber does not masquerade into a beautiful object of desire, nor does she disappear behind the mask. A second element in the mimetic strategy precisely concerns the resistance to any patriarchal positioning. As Mary Ann Doane observes: "Womanliness is a mask which can be worn or removed. The masquerade's resistance to patriarchal positioning would therefore lie in its denial of the production of femininity as closeness, as presence-to-itself, as precisely, imagistic" (1982, 81–82). "To play with mimesis," Irigaray explains in *This Sex Which is Not One*, "is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it" (1985, 76).

In speaking with her body rather than words, Taeuber resists "the institutional, moral, and cultural controls of written and spoken language, gender, and pleasure" (Andrew 2014, 18). In this way, "performance was key; it located speech in the body, not merely on a page or within an object, but in a speaking subject, one that would live through the new conditions of this language" (Demos 2003, 150). This is in line with the Dadaist skeptical attitude towards language. Pre-eminently, the calling name of the artistic movement, "Dada," has no fixed meaning. Holding together two identical syllables, it directly criticizes the tainted dullness of language in its own meaninglessness. Language was seen as a vehicle for propaganda in wartime, so that (according to Hugo Ball) it should be dispensed with. In this respect, the famous poem *Karawane* was meant to abolish conventional language, "separating speech's signifying units from traditional semantic functions, jarring the subject from the norms of identity" (149). To Ball, to dispense with language meant to be reborn as "manchild." In his Dada diaries, Ball writes:

> Then he is reborn. He is no longer a grown man, but a child. Like a child, he gets milk and honey. He must stand naked before all the company. He can no longer speak; he can no longer understand ordinary language. (1996, 212)

This stuttering language, this juggling with words and sounds, is no regression or a retreat in speechlessness. As Stalpaert has observed in response to Gilles Deleuze's famous essay "He Stuttered," stammering or stuttering can be a particularly meaningful rhetorical device:

> Stammering can also be understood as a movement of words falling forward, based on imbalance in the language. Stuttering can therefore be understood not as a cessation of speech, but as generating a constant becoming. [...] It is not about damaging of language, but about creative progress(ion), having imbalance as its starting point. (2010, 87)

With Hugo Ball's performances, the stuttered word was given a stage, it became an embodied device with Taeuber, embodying linguistic disruption as a kind of physical movement. This is no surprise, as Stalpaert observes: "When language has its linguistic yoke removed, you have room to dance again" (83). Executing her performance on Hugo Ball's sound poem *Gesang der Flugfische und Seepferdchen* (*Song of the Flying Fish and the Sea Horses*) at the opening of the *Cabaret Voltaire / Galerie Dada*, Taeuber affirmed the Dada-principles. As Ball himself describes the dance emanating from this "onomatopoeic lament:" "A poetic sequence of sounds was enough to make each of the individual word particles produce the strangest visible effect on the hundred-jointed body of the dancer" (1996, 102).

This Sex Which is Not One, but Many

Taeuber also created her own corporeal, mimetic strategies for the destruction of language as the most effective figurehead of patriarchal structures. Dancing through her dualities, she performed stutter gestures, literarily embodying disruption as a kind of physical movement. Rather than mimicking dualities, Taeuber in her mimetic strategy in fact performs hybrid movements that disrupt the binary nature of the oppositional pairs. As such, Taeuber's dancing, *with* both the mask and also the obstructing costume, might be considered as mimetic play: Taeuber plays with the role that is attributed to her, as a woman, in art and wartime society. The phrase *This Sex Which is Not One*, as it appears as the title of one of Irigaray's books, in Taeuber's case, does not refer to an absence (this sex which is *not* one), but to a irreducible multiplicity of womanhood in the mimetic strategy. This sex is *not one*, but many. Taeuber's dancing hundred-jointed body hence not only refers to a disruption, but also to "a multitude of new gestures [in] the here and now of her space, engaging the potential of her own subjectivity and the kinaesthetic empathy of her spectators" (Andrew 2014, 21). Her stutter gestures are putting dualities such as feminine and masculine, human and non-human, puppet and puppeteer, performer and mask, movement and stasis, calculation and chance, anonymity and fame, high art and low art, etc... in perpetual motion. These dualities never resolve in a static synthesis. As such, they touch upon a multiplicity as is described by Deleuze and Guattari:

> A multiplicity is defined not by its elements, nor by a center of unification or comprehension. It is defined by the number of dimensions it has; it is not divisible, it cannot lose or gain a dimension *without changing its nature.* [...] *each multiplicity is*

> *continually transforming itself into a string of other multiplicities* [...] (2004, 275, Italics theirs)

It is in Taeuber's mimetic strategy that the dualities transform into a string of multiplicities. As such, As Judith Butler writes in *Bodies that Matter*, Irigaray's tactical mimicry occupies "no place between 'his' language and 'hers', but is, instead, only a disruptive *movement* which unsettles the topographical claims" (1993, 36, Italics hers). For Ball, to dispense with language meant to be reborn as "manchild." For Taeuber, to dance her hundred-jointed body was to be reborn as well. In this light, Henning's testimony of perceiving a blooming flower in Taeuber's dancing gets a new dimension, echoing Irigaray's notion of giving birth to oneself through mimetic strategies:

> The little human gives birth to itself: it brings into the world a singular living being of which it will have to cultivate life, a life irreducible to any other, towards its achievement for itself and for the world into which it takes place. (Irigaray 2017, 5)

Conclusion

The "corporeal reconstitution" (Irigaray 2002, 197) of Sophie Taeuber's dance performances at the *Cabaret Voltaire* and the *Galerie Dada* facilitated words, signs and images uttered by fellow Dadaist dancers and contemporaneous spectators that allowed her dancing body to speak. The double movement *with* (not *behind*) the mask and the costume that comes to the fore in this corporeal reconstitution touches upon a multiplicity that disrupts any binary opposition. Taeuber is not only moving in between puppet and puppeteer, movement and stasis, abstraction and expressivity, performer and mask, presence and absence, but also in between feminine and masculine, redefining the parameters of the presupposed trajectory of a "normal" woman at the time. As such, Taeuber performed and structured her "I love, I exist, I grow, I become, and even I will, I desire, I love (strategically mimed after Irigaray 2017, 47–48).

Notes

[1] Since the picture of Taeuber dancing was left without date and location, art historians have been assuming that her performance took place either in *Cabaret Voltaire* in 1916 (e.g., Foster 2003 and Bargues 2017) or in *Galerie Dada* in 1917 (e.g., Prevots 1985 and Mair 2013), sometimes mentioning both dates as a reference (Andrew 2014) as we also do in this contribution: 1916/17.

[2] Some historians attribute the mask to Marcel Janco (Foster 2003, Hemus 2007, Burkhalter 2014), while other scholars such as Prevots (1985) and fellow Dadaists (Tzara) attributed it to Hans Arp. In this article, we will build on the assumption that Janco produced the mask (Hemus 2007, 93 and Burkhalter 2014, 228).

[3] The omission was primarily a result of Arp's concern that the inclusion of these practical activities (of applied arts) would lead to a devaluation of Sophie Taeuber's artistic achievement, placing it on a par with arts and crafts. The danger of a misinterpretation was seen by Arp especially with regard to the embroidered and woven works and the similarity of the motifs to the early paintings before 1920. In her portfolios, Taeuber herself considered all of her art works as equally important (Hoch 2014, 214).

[4] As already stated in footnote 1, Foster assumes that Taeuber's performance took place at the *Cabaret Voltaire* in 1916 (Foster 2003, 170).

[5] In our understanding, Foster (2003, 170) even goes further in denying Taeuber's bodily existence through the addition of a picture of another Janco mask next to the 'silenced' Dada dancer. In this way, he actively assists in what the Dadaists so much wanted to avoid: minimizing Janco's masks as museum-like objects instead of "bringing the masks (back) to life in their performances" (Oberhofer 2016, 33).

[6] For the second dance, called *Cauchemar* (*Nightmare*), "the performer's arms, menacingly raised, are elongated by special tubes" (Ball 1996, 64).

[7] We consider 'neurasthenia' to be "a complex network of bodily/psychic symptoms that rupture the subject's smooth functioning, propelling [him]/her into a heightened state of irrationality" (Jones 2004, 28). A neurotic response to upcoming modernity (with its mechanization of labour and the human body) and the violence as a result of World War One, "stimulating the individual to the highest degree of nervous energy" (Simmel 1903, 14).

[8] In "The Body as Archive. Dance, Re-enactments and the Pastness of the Future," André Lepecki (2010) wonders whether the body isn't always already nothing else but an archive; the body constantly gathers techniques, movements, habits, bits and pieces of repertoire that are being stored for later use. See also Stalpaert (2011).

[9] Susan Manning describes the dance of Isadora Duncan as a projection of kinaesthetic power. This power challenges the male spectator to consider the female dancer as an expressive subject instead of an erotic object. "The kinesthesia of early modern dance challenged the voyeuristic gaze," she says (Manning 1997, 163).

[10] Irigaray develops her notion of the mimetic strategy in *Speculum: de l'autre femme* (1974) en in *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un* (1977).

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PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHY

"OUT, AND UNDER, AND OUT, AND OUT." SELF-(DIS-)ORGANISATION AND THE STORIES OF LIBERTATIA

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I. Self-Organisation in Performance. An Extensive Introduction

In the middle of the many social and political struggles, which have come to define large parts of the early-21st century stream of events, experimental performing arts in Europe too have been undergoing quite remarkable changes of their socio-political compositions. Subsidy cuts, the attempted closings and privatisations of theatre venues, the institutions' further expansion of their control-oriented operative models of co-production and curation, or the ongoing degradation of women, people of colour, and other non-male, non-white identifying subjects in rehearsals and on stage—these and further trends in European theatre, dance, and performance have not gone unnoticed, to say the least. Quite on the contrary, practitioners have met the multiple challenges with the active engagement in a wide range of projects aiming for the creation of distinct socio-political alternatives, no matter how much of a preliminary or partial solution they might pose. A necessarily incomplete list of initiatives would have to include at least some of the following names and spaces:

There is PAF, for example, the Performing Arts Forum in St. Erme, Northern France, which was founded by Jan Ritsema and colleagues in 2005 and has since been upheld by a wide number of temporary inhabitants who all together continuously engage in non-institutionally framed,

PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHY VOL 4, NO 2 (2019):546–563
DOI: https://doi.org/0.21476/PP.2019.42241
ISSN 2057-7176

autonomous, and inclusive production and discourse; similar residency spaces for collective working include Massia, PAF's offspring in Massiaru, Estonia, and the Bidston Observatory in the United Kingdom. A more aggressive tactics of direct intervention has been the motor for theatre occupations all over Europe, two of them being the 2011 occupation of Embros Theatre in Athens, which, despite phases of severe internal conflict, can look back at years of sustained social and artistic practice, and the group VB 61-12's occupation of Volksbühne in 2017, which, although short-lived, sparked public debate around the political agency of a theatre in a rapidly changing city like Berlin and fostered continuing exchange in social media forums. Still other initiatives have been providing tools for the establishing of social infrastructures necessary for mutual exchange in the artistic communities, as there are, for example, the online and physical sharing platforms Everybody's Toolbox and Nobody's Business, which organised and keep organising artist meetings in various studios and theatre places from different countries, keeping detailed records of their activities on their websites so as to make results available for everyone.

Staying with examples like these, it is interesting to observe that the majority of them has in common not only a decisively radical political positioning, but also, and more specifically, the strong affirmation of the practice and concept of self-organisation. Their engagement in self-organising principles varies according to the specific aims and needs of each situation: it might take on the form of weekly general assemblies as in the case of Embros, it might consist in the collective programming and realisation of a daily schedule as in the Volksbühne occupation, or it might involve the commitment to the three rules "don't leave traces," "make it possible for others," and "the do-er decides" as in PAF (cf. Ritsema/Desideri 2016). It might also come with different languages and vocabularies, ranging from the use of contemporary keywords such as "open-source" and "sharing" (cf. Nobody's Business, n.d.), to framing programmes as "self-initiated" and "ad-hoc" (cf. Bidston Observatory 2018), to explicitly referencing the notion of self-organisation on the occasions of lectures and essays (cf. Ritsema 2017; Argyropoulou 2017). The unifying momentum of all these options, however, is that they are being pursued with the intention of bringing forth a space and culture of equal and equally freeing relations, which is to say that at the heart of these projects is the commitment to self-organisation as a commitment to social and artistic liberation. And most importantly perhaps, in several cases, existing ideas of self-organisation are less applied than experimented with, Everybody's inventions of scores and tasks for different modes and relations of exchange serving as just one example of the generally non-orthodox approach to self-organisation.

The engagement in and experimentation with self-organisation can thus be said to be among the most generative of socio-political activities in the experimental European performing arts scenes these days. Assuming that this diagnosis about the importance of self-organisation is correct, there is the potential for many subsequent enquiries. Relevant questions might address the historical lineage of self-organisation in performing arts—the neo avant-gardes, Living Theatre, or the Frankfurter "Mitbestimmungsmodell" ranging among the possible references—or the contextual similarities and differences between self-organisation in performing arts and self-organisation simultaneously being practiced in the non-artistic realm of political action—the so called anti-globalisation movement and Occupy Wall Street as the most obvious references in this latter case

(cf. for example Graeber 2002). For the purpose of this paper, I decided to choose a different option, though, namely to invest less in a contextualisation or analysis of performing arts self-organisation, and more in a theoretical response. This response-led methodology is stimulated by several concerns, the most important one perhaps being that any conventional analysis as a writing *about*, however valuable it might be, risks to execute, if only on the level of language, precisely what self-organisation most often tries to escape, namely an act of subjection or objectification. The format of the theoretical response, instead, is more of a writing *in relation to* and a writing *for*, a writing, which tries to contribute to the raised issue by adding to it in its very own conceptual terms, aiming to produce knowledge that might eventually benefit those who the writing originally responded to. In other words, I will not, over the next couple of pages, dissect or come back to any of the just mentioned experiments from the performing arts, but I will develop a discussion of the concept, or rather the concepts of self-organisation relevant for them and their further unfolding, and I will do so not least by adapting a likewise somewhat experimental approach.

More concretely, I will deploy a particular fictional narrative with a history of almost three hundred years in order to intertwine with and through it three existing concepts of self-organisation. The narrative in question is the pirate-utopia Libertatia, and the concepts in question are anarchist, cybernetic, and vitalist-materialist self-organisation. The choice of these specific concepts is motivated by mainly three factors: first, they are historically and theoretically among the most dominant concepts in the more general discourse on self-organisation, although many other, often related accounts from biology, feminist theory, the black radical and further radically leftist traditions have equally proven to be insightful (for recent examples cf. Haraway 2016; Lorey 2015, chapter "Care Crisis and Care Strike"; Moten/Harney 2013; Berardi 2017); second, they are to some extent historically interconnected—research on anarchism, for example, having shown that the surfacing of the precise notion of self-organisation in anarchist discourse is most probably owed to the publication of a cybernetic paper in an anarchist journal from the 1960s, which led to a change in the very anarchist understandings of social developments (cf. Schaupp 2017; Duda 2013; McEwan 1963); third, all of them are in some ways present in the performing arts discourse, with Jan Ritsema (cf. 2017), for example, having mentioned anarchist self-organisation and anarchist writer Hakim Bey's related concept of the temporary autonomous zone (cf. 1991) among his influences, and Gigi Argyropoulou from Embros (cf. 2017, 2018) having often quoted from Tiqqun, or the Invisible Committee, as they called themselves later on, a collective that is closely aligned with anarchist discourse and which is well known not least for its fierce criticism of cybernetics (cf. Tiqqun 2001; Invisible Committee 2015).

I should add that my choice of references from within anarchism, cybernetics, and vitalist materialism is certainly selective: in the case of anarchism, I will focus on the social libertarian heritage (for an overview see cf. Chomsky 1970), and particularly on Mikhail Bakunin and Emma Goldman, whereas I will ignore, for example, individualist approaches emanating from Max Stirner (cf. [1844] 1995), which have regained importance in some of the recent post-anarchist debates (cf. Newman 2016; for post-anarchism and its critique cf. Süreyyya/Rousselle 2011; Cohn 2002; Cohn/Wilbur 2003). For cybernetics, I will mainly refer to second generation authors William Ross Ashby and Heinz von Foerster, and for vitalist materialism, I will quote from Félix Guattari. The

choice of the narrative of Libertatia, in turn, is motivated by the fact that its several reiterations over the course of the centuries—involved authors including Charles Johnson, Don Carlos Seitz, William S. Burroughs, and the Cybernetic Culture Research Unit—have made it somewhat of a palimpsest which encompasses all three concepts of self-organisation, and namely in a way that allows me to perform the intended twists in interpretation or the slightly heretical reading that I aim for.

The hypothesis that I wish to develop is that in all three forms of anarchist, cybernetic, and vitalist-materialist self-organisation can be found very subtle or sometimes rather obvious clues suggesting that self-organisation is not just incidentally, but necessarily being accompanied by its very opposite of self-dis-organisation. In other words, the story of Libertatia can help display that self-organisation necessarily brings about its very own subversion, and precisely this surplus aspect can be understood not as a weakness, but as the defining quality of self-organisation enabling change, change that is always, first of all, self-change, as one might say, and change, that, in this function, serves as the very prerequisite for social liberation. This specific accentuation of the concept of self-organisation ideally indicates the essential value of the discussion of self-organising principles for performing arts practice in the present and, probably, the years to come.

II. The Stories of Libertatia. A Combined Narrative

"One world—one love:—LIBERTATIA"—so goes the refrain to the eponymous single "Libertatia" released by Berlin based indie band Ja, Panik in 2014, a post-ironic and playfully naïve prayer of hope for a different future, which represents probably the most recent of references to Libertatia from pop-cultural and literary discourse; and while it is probably nothing but a happy coincidence that the band's name Ja, Panik evokes the very motif of panic that resides deep within the tale of Libertatia (an aspect that I will discuss in my conclusion), it is definitely not a coincidence that Libertatia, in Ja, Panik's song, finds itself to be the subject of yet another retelling of its story. After all, the very first formulation of Libertatia was in itself already a reiteration: in the late 1720s namely, when Charles Johnson (cf. 1728) delivered the original account of Libertatia in the second volume of his "History of the Pyrates," he expressively did so on the basis of another alleged document, namely a manuscript from so called French Captain Misson, or Mission, as the English translation has it, who is at the same time the protagonist of the story. It has long been debated whether, since the "History of the Pyrates" is an otherwise historical account of actual 17th-century pirate events, the reports of Mission could equally be regarded as true, but recent research strongly suggests that Libertatia never existed (cf. Little 2016), thus making the narrative a fiction with nevertheless surprisingly apt historical and geographical coordinates, locating Libertatia on the island of Madagascar in the time around the late-17th, early-18th century.

Despite being situated in this early modern period, which predated the actual development of anarchist, cybernetic, or vitalist-materialist self-organising principles, already Johnson's contribution contains various plot twists and key words that set the scene for the discussion of at least a proto-anarchist self-organisation. In the early 20th century then, Don Carlos Seitz (cf. [1925] 2012), upon rediscovering the "History of the Pyrates," drafted what is essentially a short summary

of Johnson's account on Libertatia, however not without making some minor adjustments, which led to a significant deepening of the anarchist traits of the story. Precisely some of these alterations later reappeared in William S. Burroughs' substantial adaptions of Libertatia in two of his novels and a short story, all of which were published in the period between the early 1980s to the early 1990s (cf. 1991, 1987, 1981). More importantly, however, Burroughs added entirely new characters and plot lines to the existing narrative, thus introducing not only vitalist-materialist ideas of self-organisation to Libertatia, but allowing also for speculation about cybernetic self-organisation in its various forms. The latter was further unfolded by the CCRU or Cybernetic Culture Research Unit in a text from the turn of the century (cf. 2017), in which they referenced still another source going by the name of William Kane, a mysterious character, who maintained that, due to the circular effects of a cybernetic folding in time, Burroughs' writing on Libertatia had landed in the hands of no one other than Mission himself, the main character of the story thus having found himself in the odd situation of reading about his actions before they had even occurred. Additionally, the CCRU reevaluated the literary status of the narrative by holding that Libertatia should be regarded not as a mere fiction, but as a report that was just as real as anything else; after all, from the hyperstitional standpoint that the CCRU persistently applied, reality itself was nothing but the condensed product of fictional events, and in that sense fiction and reality were to be regarded as internally related (for the concept of hyperstition in the CCRU cf. Ibid, 35–36).

The combined narrative resulting from these many intertwined story tellings can be conceived of as an intricate general matrix for the discussion of self-organisation. In its most apparent form, it brings about two intertwined set of relations and events, the first of which could be entitled "the Sea as a Life," a quote taken from Johnson's original characterisation (1728, 2). In a scenario set around 1700, the high time of sovereign power, colonialism, and early capitalism, young Mission hired on the Victoire, a French man-o-war, which, in one of his first trips aboard, took Mission to Italy, where he got to know the young priest Caraccioli. The priest discovered a friend in Mission and, having been sickened from the hypocrisy of clerical power, immediately decided to join him on ship to go across the Atlantic to the Caribbean. The Victoire headed there to accompany a French merchant ship, which was commanded to travel to the island of Martinique, a transport mission like so many others from that time intended to ship goods, arms, and slaves around the globe.

After having securely escorted the trading vessel to its destination, Mission, Caraccioli, and the rest of the crew found themselves in an engagement with an English battleship, which left all of the Victoire's captains and lieutenants killed, an unforeseeable situation, which the remaining men quickly decided to use to their advantage by denouncing all ties to their French motherland and declaring their ship an independent "Republic of the Sea" (Seitz [1925] 2012, 20). Themselves, they gave the names of "liberty lovers" (Ibid.), declaring that, from now on, they were entirely devoted to a "Life of Liberty" (Johnson 1728, 13). In the following, Mission was declared the new captain, although his position came with no individual ruling power, but only with the task of executing the common decisions that the crew had collectively made via debates and direct votes. The rules that the new community imposed on itself determined that private possessions and all prizes from conquests were to be turned into common property, that hostile vessels were to be fought only

for self-defence or with the aim of winning just as much as was necessary for self-preservation, and that slaves from other vessels were to be freed and welcomed onto their ship without discrimination of either nationality or race. This, essentially, is what the first constellation of relations and events in the tale of Libertatia is comprised of, most of which is narrated by Johnson and Seitz: European imperialism including state and clerical sovereignty, movements on sea, the sudden absence of power, and a self-determining community with international and anti-capitalist scope.

A second, more extensive scenery, which is largely introduced by Burroughs and the CCRU, comes into view once the sailors, after a long cruise from the Caribbean across the South Atlantic and down the western coast of Africa to the other side of the continent, voted to leave the life on the sea behind and settle down on the island of Madagascar. In a shift from the "Sea as a life" to a life on land or, one might say, the land as a life, Mission and his men founded, in a somewhat paradoxical move, the anti-colonial colony of "Libertatia," or "Libertalia" as it is spelled in some cases (47). From now on referred to as the "Libertatians" (96), they installed their settlement on the northern coast of the island, with no intention of invading and conquering the rest of the territory, which had long been populated by a tribe of natives living further inland and the many unique animal species of Madagascar, among them the lemurs who predominantly occupied the forests. The lemurs were sacred beings in the eyes of the natives, a specific aspect that became crucially important one day when Martin, a member of Libertatia, killed a lemur, who, as he claimed, had stolen his mango. Not only did Martin single-handedly violate the liberty lovers' law of common property by assuming that the fruit belonged exclusively to him, but more damningly, his killing of the sacred animal equalled war with the natives, which is why Mission, in his function as the captain and leader of Libertatia, immediately took action in expelling Martin from the community. That could not undo the harm that was caused, though, but quite on the contrary, the chain of events only accelerated, when Martin, now an outcast, made his way to the natives to inform them about the incident, without, however, disclosing that it was he who had killed the lemur, thus directing the natives' anger at the other Libertatians. Mission, in a prophetic moment right after the expulsion of Martin, had foreseen that Martin would do exactly that, but suddenly having been overcome by a "paralyzing fatigue" (Burroughs 1987, 52), he immediately fell asleep, which rendered him unable to prevent Martin from spreading his lies among the native community. Soon, then, the Libertatians had to face the natives in a bloody battle; many people died and the fate of the colony was sealed.

An extra level, however, is added to the story when it turns out that Martin actually did not act on his own, but was fulfilling the orders of the so called "custodians of the future" (Burroughs 1987, 52), a secretive board hovering above events in order to guarantee that the status quo on the entire planet remained balanced, or that, more precisely, the "prerecorded and therefore totally predictable universe" (Ibid.) went its course without the slightest of frictions. The true name of this control regime was the "OGU," the "One God Universe" (CCRU 2017, 37), implying that the custodians of the future were themselves only the delegates of a higher, transcendent power, namely God and his son Jesus Christ, who both represented the only substance and voice of everything that there was. Ultimately, it was in their name that the custodians sent Martin to

distract and destroy life in Libertatia, an intervention that had become necessary as the reality of the existence of a resolutely autonomous community defied the monocausal order of the OGU. Mission and his fellows' experiment in self-sustained living might inspire others, the new form of living potentially being as contagious as a virus and altering the prearranged order of events, the custodians feared: "If three hundred man—then three thousand, thirty thousand. It could spread everywhere. It must be stopped *now*" (Burroughs 1987, 52, emphasis in original).

As tragic as the custodians' instructions to Martin turned out to be for the destiny of Libertatia, Mission himself, even before the colony was destroyed, had already directed his interests toward the creation of yet another community, namely an intimate and decisively peaceful bond with the lemurs. Spending more and more time in the forests, he tried to make direct contact with the primates, and thanks to an experienced native supplying him with a potent drug called Indris—its name signifying "*look there*" in native language (Ibid., emphasis in original)—he eventually managed to see the fleeting creatures, who otherwise remained invisible as they only needed to accept a discernible shape when they had to take a breath every once in a while. Finding a close companion in particularly one of them, Mission "often slept with the lemur beside him on his pallet, and had named the lemur Ghost" (Ibid.), which was the term that the natives had chosen to refer to the lemurs in general. Apart from the fact that they were mostly invisible, what justified this naming was not least that they participated in the realm of the "MU", the "Magical Universe" of polyculture (CCRU 2017, 40), in which not only the monocausal order of the OGU, but also the hierarchy of the species, the chronology of time, and the human limits of language were left behind. Instead, life in the MU was characterised by a purely immanent process of forces of becoming, which had present, past, and future as well as all other categories of being continuously expand in contingent ways. While Mission discovered this cosmos, the battles between Libertatians and natives however increased, and eventually he had to realise that, for his own survival, he had to flee the island and sail back out into the sea, an escape that abruptly ended in the middle of a great storm, which buried him beneath the waves. Yet, whether this last known event marked the ultimate end of the Libertatian dream or perhaps just a transition toward another chapter of the story that remains to be told, is an option that depends entirely on the speculation sparked by the CCRU as to whether the waves of the sea might just as well be conceived as only a further expression of the tumultuous, immanent forces of life, Mission getting lost in the sea thus possibly representing an even more intimate bond with the MU (CCRU 2017, 52).

In any case, the return of the powers of the sea can be said to represent both an opening as well as a return to the very beginnings of the stories of Libertatia, which is to say that the sea equally serves as a frame for the many additional sets of relations and events that unfolded in the long in-between sequence on land. Individually recounted, they can be named in the form of an anti-colonial colony, the orchestration of murder and war, a post-human community, and, more generally, a conflict between transcendent, monopolistic power and immanent, plural forces. In conjunction with the initial set of relations and events from aboard the ship, the resulting overall narrative spans an extremely vast array of political and social, religious and metaphysical, ecological and species-related matters, whose interrelations present a singular framework for the discussion of self-organisation that is at work within them. Most obviously, perhaps, it is the

anarchist tradition of self-organising principles that surfaces on several accounts, which is why I will focus on anarchist self-organisation first, before I will then seek to unravel the implications of the sometimes subtler references to cybernetic and vitalist-materialist self-organisation.

III. Anarchist Self-(Dis-)Organisation. The Desire to Rebel

Not long into the stories of Libertatia, anarchist self-organisation shines through in perhaps its clearest form. In the event on sea, when the Victoire's battle with the English enemies led to the killing of all captains and lieutenants on board, the remaining men found themselves confronted with the sudden absence of not only their former leaders, but also the sovereign order that they represented and put in place. The resulting disorder brought about the chance for a re-organisation of social relations, an opportunity that the sailors immediately seized when they decided not to imitate any previous maxims, but to create a new form of organisation, which entailed that everyone had direct and equal voting rights while the appointed captain only had the right to execute the voting result. This distinct course of action aboard the Victoire represents in many ways an anticipation of the very nucleus of anarchist self-organisation, a parallel that becomes apparent by taking a look at the first systematic introduction of self-organising principles by Mikail Bakunin in the early anarchist days from the mid-19th century.

Bakunin's social libertarianism was grounded, first and foremost, on the utmost contempt for the modern state, a political institution, which, in his view, equalled the repression of the masses through a mechanism of top-down-governance characteristic for feudal, bourgeois, and Marxist state interpretations alike, which is to say that the order of representative parliamentarianism or any other popular representation was just as misguided as the order of the king. In either case, the state instituted a body of legislation that took decisions for the masses instead of letting them make decisions for themselves, even if, in its democratic variation, the people were given at least the right to elect those who were to make decisions for them. In a word, the rule of the state was necessarily defined by the rule of a few over the many, and it was this hierarchical and, more importantly, exclusionary relation that the "free organization" ([1873] 2005, 24) or "self-government of the commune" (206), as Bakunin called self-organisation at the time, was supposed to turn on its head: "no state," Bakunin proclaimed, "howsoever democratic its forms, [...] is capable of giving the people what they need: the free organization of their own interests from below upward, without any interference, tutelage, or coercion from above. This is because no state, not even the most republican and democratic, not even the pseudo-popular state contemplated by Marx, in essence represents anything but government of the masses from above downward, by an educated and thereby privileged minority which supposedly understands the real interests of the people better than the people themselves" (Ibid., 24). Hierarchy, to be precise, was not completely rejected in free organisation, but in crucial difference to the state, it was to manifest itself only in the form of an executive hierarchy, in which selected delegates in federations were directly bound to the choices of the many from within the communes.

Regarding its underpinning socio-political mindset, anarchist self-organisation can be said to be an expression of what Bakunin called the "*desire to rebel*" ([1882] 1970, 9, emphasis in original), an

inherent human tendency never to accept any form of subordination, which in 1910 still resonated in Emma Goldman's phrasing of the anarchist "spirit of revolt" ([1910] 1969, 63). On a side note, it should be noted that Bakunin's characterisation of the desire to rebel as a natural instinct might be regarded as a form of essentialism (for such criticism cf. Newman 2016 and further references of post-anarchism), but a close reading of how he derived the concept from the myth of the Fall of Man, or more precisely from the insinuation of the snake (cf. [1882] 1970, 1–2), might stimulate the interpretation that the desire is to be seen as rather prompted, or "soufflé," as Derrida would have it with Artaud (cf. Derrida [1978] 2001), and thus as much more of a construct than an essence. Regardless of such finesse, one of the most trenchant formulations of the anarchist desire or spirit is definitely owed to John Henry Mackay, him having once written a short aphorism, which figured as the epigraph of one of Goldman's essays and which ends with the following words: "I am an Anarchist! Wherefore I will Not Rule, and also ruled I will not be!" (cf. Goldman [1910] 1969, 47). Whereas Mackay, in this exclamation, spoke in the singular form, the deeper social libertarian implications are, of course, that neither should anyone rule over the commune nor should the commune rule over anyone else, or differently put, neither should anyone rule over us, nor should we rule over anyone else. On that account, the "self" in self-organisation can be said to refer, first and foremost, to this very "we," a self-determining we claiming that it is only they who should organise their ways of life, not any other superior power reigning from outside or above.

The fact that the formation of such we presupposes not least an affective dimension has been highlighted perhaps most strongly in recent anarchist and anarchism-infused debates, the Invisible Committee, for example, having declared not without a touch of pathos that "[t]o organize is not to give a structure to weakness. It is above all to form bonds—bonds that are by no means neutral—terrible bonds. The degree of organization is measured by the intensity of sharing—material *and* spiritual" (2009, 15, emphasis in original). There is no we, in other words, without social connections and ties based on a shared experience of intensity binding everyone involved together.

The realisation of a rule from below, the desire to rebel, and the forming of affective connections all being more or less explicitly present in the "Republic on the Sea," it seems that the tale of Libertatia provides an almost paradigmatic example of anarchist self-organisation, but a number of inconsistencies suggest that Libertatia is, at the very same time, its subversion, and this is where things start to get really interesting. For one thing, in Johnson's early draft of Libertatia, Caraccioli, who, despite having fled the clergy, was still a firm believer, had the crew solemnly declare that they fight "*A Deo a Libertate*, for God and liberty" (1728, 16, emphasis in original). This implied that the "Republic of the Sea" was taken under the guidance of the Lord, but in anarchism, the figure of God most certainly does not promise liberty, as Caraccioli wanted to believe; instead, it is presented as just another transcendent power that is designed to infuse subordination. Bakunin insisted that the acceptance of the mere possibility of God contradicted human freedom, one of his most unapologetic theses, in this respect, reading that: "God being master, man is the slave" ([1882] 1970, 24). Indeed, from his materialist standpoint, it was only logical to assume that the idea of God led to the degradation of everyone else, because if the omnipotent spirit was the primary source of all things, then all human beings, but also all other matter-bound beings necessarily had

to be secondary, inferior, and therefore unfree (cf. Ibid.; for a reaffirmation of this deduction cf. Goldman [1910] 1969, 53). It is only through Burroughs' variation, then, that the stories of Libertatia implicitly realigned with this anarchist critique, namely when Burroughs decided to completely obliterate all positive references to God.

More importantly, though, it is the further development on land that has the stories of Libertatia perform an alteration of anarchist self-organisation. Crucial impulses come from the murder of the lemur and subsequent events, that is, from Martin killing the monkey after he had allegedly stolen his mango, and Mission being unable to stop Martin from then spreading his lies about the murder among the natives. In initially equal ways, both Martin and Mission's behaviours reveal how anarchist self-organisation, although intended to be a realisation of maximum social freedom, is nevertheless, in some sense, dependent on the limitation of the freedom of every member of the community or the community as a whole, and the specific way that this becomes apparent has to do with the fact that Martin and Mission both essentially display acts of failure: very concretely, in Martin violating the rule of common property and peaceful conduct, and in Mission violating his responsibility as a captain to not just condemn the murder, but also make sure that the danger of the murdering subject was contained, the two men failed to apply the rules of the colony to themselves, precisely this form of *ex negativo* affirmation indicating how much self-organisation is, despite all of its liberating intentions, still strongly based on governance or rule, only that the subject and object of rule are one and the same. Be it with regard to one or many, anarchist self-organisation is likely to amount to a process of internalisation of power much rather than its deferral or absence, and this quality of internalisation can be named, quite specifically, with a notion otherwise used to denote a very different, bourgeois form of power, namely the notion of self-discipline (cf. Foucault 1977). The historical irony of this insight, then, is that anarchist self-discipline is not entirely different from the discipline of their very enemies, the bourgeois class having represented, of course, one of their biggest counterparts in the time of the 19th and 20th century.

Now, while this interpretation of Libertatia's narrative suggests that its combined story undermines anarchist self-organisation in disclosing its intimate relation to power, the resulting argument of which would be that anarchist self-organisation equals order in a most rigid sense, the ultimate lesson that can be drawn from Libertatia is exactly the reverse; namely, anarchist self-organisation can indeed be extremely liberating, but only if it becomes porous vis-à-vis the more precise implications of its own failure, or of Mission's failure, for that matter, which, at a closer look, has to be differentiated from that of Martin. The difference between them is that, despite both representing behaviours of non-discipline, Martin's failure to discipline himself equaled him applying discipline or sheer brutal force against someone else, whereas Mission failed to exercise discipline or force no matter against whom. What Mission did was that, instead of forcing himself to act out against Martin, instead of perhaps violently preventing him from reaching the community of the natives, he gave in to a sudden fatigue, and thus, in simply accepting to fall asleep, he neither ruled against anyone else nor against himself.

Although it might be counter-intuitive, precisely this moment of sleep can be said to be the most radical and indeed the only logical consequence of anarchist self-organisation. After all, if anarchist self-organisation is fuelled by the desire to rebel, that is, if self-organisation is supposed to be the implementation of the refusal to rule no matter who or be ruled no matter by whom, then the only consistent interpretation of self-organisation is indeed that it must include the refusal to rule or be ruled not only by others, but also by the self—making the failure to discipline oneself the paradoxical completion of self-organisation. Thus, in the same way that anarchist self-organisation implies the folding of power, in the same way that it implies the identity of the subject and object of power, it equally implies the folding of the refusal of power, or the identity of the subject and object of the refusal of power, and of course, in its most immediate social-libertarian sense, this conclusion does not only concern the subject and object as an individual, but also the subject and object as a community. In short, this is how anarchist self-organisation is always already self-dis-organisation, a programme that is paradoxically both a programme for the liberation of the self *through* organisation and a programme for the liberation of the self *from* organisation.

Certainly, in the case of Mission, the individualist aspect of his complete refusal might suggest that at the centre of this paradoxical divide resides predominantly an unresolvable conflict between the many and the one, but again, the self in self-organisation and self-dis-organisation can refer to an individual just as well as it can refer to a community, and more importantly, it refers predominantly to the organisation within that self, not between different individual or collective selves. Finally, with respect to Mission, it is worth adding that his behaviour was guided not least by the impulse to go through the demise of Libertatia only to see the emergence of a wholly different community within the MU—and this latter aspect brings me to discussion of the cybernetic concept of self-organisation, in which the MU will, in some ways, play a decisive role.

IV. Cybernetic Self-(Dis-)Organisation. Noise from Order

Strictly speaking, cybernetic self-organisation fully enters the narrative of Libertatia only when the authors of the CCRU decide to engage in it, but already several relations and events constructed by previous voices can be said to be of great cybernetic significance. The first of them is the initial event on sea, which only just served as an example for the formation of anarchist self-organisation, but in order for this to become comprehensible it is important to mark at least three basic axioms characterising cybernetics in general.

First of all, as opposed to anarchism, or many other philosophies, for that matter, cybernetics understands agents not in terms of subjects and objects and their internal structures, but in terms of systems and environments and the processes unfolding within systems as well as those unfolding between systems and environments. Adapting arguments from behaviouralism and technical engineering, cybernetics holds that, no matter if one has to do with a machine, an organism, or a community, the defining category of agency is that of a system continuously reacting to the effects of its own behaviour both inside it and between itself and the outside, the recursive mechanisms thus installed as feedback loops being supposed to guarantee the system's stability over time (cf. for Wiener/Bigelow/Rosenblueth 1943). Secondly, the interactions within the system

and between system and environment are conceptualised in terms of the interrelation of communication and control, which is to say that the better the information transfer within the feedback loops in the system or between system and environment, the less there is a chance of noise or information disorder undercutting control (cf. Wiener [1948] 2013). While this second aspect is clearly derived from communication and information theory, the third stems from the theory of thermodynamics, cybernetics namely having adopted specifically its second law according to which the entropy within an isolated system necessarily increases over time, entropy being the measure for the irreversibility of processes of temperature transfer from warm to cold, or, if very loosely translated into more applicable terms, the measure of the irreversible rise of noise or, again, disorder (cf. Wiener [1950] 1988).

With that being said, the conflict on sea can be reevaluated as the event of a system, the Victoire, having had to face an interaction with another system from its environment, the English vessel, which resulted in an entropic increase of noise within that first system. More precisely, with all captains and lieutenants killed, the previous order of information aboard the ship was no longer in place, the rules of communication installed by the captains as well as the feedback channels from crew to captains and back had been undone, and thus the crew found itself in a situation of uncontrolled relations, which potentially threatened its existence.

The cybernetic analysis of the subsequent formation of the "Republic of the Sea" on the very basis of such situation of noise demands for self-organisation to come into play specifically. Very briefly put, in the light of the theory of self-organisation presented by Heinz von Foerster in the 1960s, it can be stated that noise possesses its very own internal dynamic, and the surprising factor of this dynamic is that, without any external interference, it automatically tends to transform into relations of order, meaning that noise has the capacity to let order emerge from within itself, a principle that Heinz von Foerster gave the name of "order from noise" (Foerster [1959] 1981, 15; cf. also Mersch 2013). In this sense, it can be said that Mission and his crew's invention of the new order of liberty was a form of self-organisation in that it emanated directly and precisely from the high level of noise having been caused aboard the ship. Without noise, there would not have been a new order. Importantly, one of the main differences between this and the anarchist concept of self-organisation is that the "self" in cybernetic self-organisation refers less to a subject, be it collective or individual, and more to the mechanical quality of a process. To an extent, the "self" in cybernetic self-organisation stands in for "by itself," and in consequence, the entire anarchist paradox discussed under the notions of self-discipline and failure does not present itself in cybernetic terms—which is not to say, however, that no other paradoxes are involved.

A properly cybernetic paradox starts to come into view by looking at yet another event from Libertatia that has been discussed before, namely Martin's killing of the lemur and Mission's reaction to it, a case that, from a cybernetic perspective, evokes Ashby's experimentation with the homeostat from the late 1940s and 1950s (cf. Dany 2013, 52–56; Pickering 2005). The homeostat was a machine designed by Ashby in the interest of modelling the homeostatic mechanisms of the organism and particularly the human brain; a simple example of such organic mechanisms is the regulation of body temperature at a constant level via sweat. Very quickly described, the

homeostat's technical architecture reproduced such mechanisms by transforming electric inputs into outputs while constantly maintaining a certain level of voltage inside it, thus making sure that a certain predefined order, a norm, or rather a certain interval corresponding to that norm was never exceeded. The latter aspect of a normative interval is also called meta-stability in cybernetics and can be traced back to its very early beginnings (cf. Vogl 2016), but Ashby's work on the homeostat not only aimed at meta-stability, it aimed at "ultra-stability," as Ashby termed it (cf. Ashby 1954), a state of equilibrium which was supposed to guarantee total control even if, for some reason, meta-stability was completely disturbed. The essential twist came from the introduction of a specific feedback mechanism into the machine: whenever the normative interval was transgressed through some random input drastically lowering or increasing the level of voltage, the homeostat automatically activated a relay which, by means of inverting the polarity of the electrical power or, for example, by modifying the resistance of the electrical circuit, immediately led to the restoration of order. And in case the first attempt at reestablishing inner balance was not a success, the relay mechanism simply got repeated until it finally was.

The more general consequences of this experiment can be said to imply an extension or intensification of Foerster's principle of "order from noise," even if Ashby's research historically preceded that of Foerster. In a nutshell, Ashby's homeostat not just confirms the theory that information disorder can evoke order, but more than that, it shows how disorder can evoke order exactly via injecting even more disorder. Because that is what the homeostat is essentially about: whenever the order defined by a norm respectively a normative interval is being undone, the relay mechanically fights the caused disorder by inserting yet another dosage of disorder, which works by essentially neutralising the original shock. The extended definition of self-organisation that can be derived from that argument is that not only can disorder automatically create order, but in case of a disturbance of order, further disorder can automatically restore it. In the stories of Libertatia, the event of the murder of the lemur exemplifies just that, but only if regarded with respect to the OGU, which, in cybernetic terms, too can be perceived as a self-organising system: from the standpoint of the custodians of the future, the existence of the new system of Libertatia represents a momentum of disorder in the system of the OGU, and the way to control this deviation is to insert more disorder into the universe by having Martin kill the lemur, the calculation that this distraction and its further effects will eventually bring Libertatia down and inversely restore order within the OGU eventually playing out just like they thought.

Having come this far, it again seems that the stories of Libertatia, also in the case of cybernetic self-organisation, fulfil primarily the function of exemplification, and furthermore, it seems that they exemplify only how extremely flexible and rigid cybernetic self-organisation can be at the same time, even the paradox of fighting disorder with disorder leading only to more stability. Yet, just like with anarchist self-organisation, an essential detail from the narrative turns everything around, revealing suddenly how cybernetic self-organisation too is an inherently self-dis-organising process. The specific aspect in question is that, although the custodians of the future successfully managed to wipe out Libertatia and thus seemingly let the OGU re-organise itself, what they did not manage to undo was Mission's excursions into the forests which made him engage in a new community with the lemurs. More to the point, it was only and precisely after Martin had killed the

lemur that Mission started to fully commit to a life in the forests, which invites the interpretation of there being a correlation between the two acts, a correlation in the sense that the intervention of the custodians, like a feedback mechanism gone wrong, unwillingly turned out to be the very impulse for or cause of Mission's relation with the lemurs and, in consequence, also his stepping into the MU. Within the MU, in turn, both time and personal identity completely spiralled out of control, with circular recursions of time resulting in time rifts, which even made it possible to think of Mission and Burroughs as the two faces of one and the same person.

All of this was caused or at least intensified by the intervention of the custodians of the future, a peculiar inconsistency which, against the backdrop of Foerster's and Ashby's concepts of cybernetic self-organisation, leads to the assumption that fighting disorder with disorder, although intermediately leading to a restoration of order—after all, Libertatia was indeed destroyed—eventually invokes only further disorder—the flourishing of the MU. In other words, there is no creation of order without the simultaneous creation of more disorder, even if that order comes from fighting disorder with disorder. And interestingly enough, in some way, Foester's theory of self-organisation anticipated just that, namely when, in strictly applying the second law of thermodynamics to processes in isolated systems, Foerster stated that: "if one assumes that [the adiabatic] envelope contains the self-organising system proper, this system turns out to be not only just a disorganizing system, but even a self-disorganizing system" ([1959] 1981, 4). In the case of the all-encompassing OGU as an isolated system, the blooming of the MU paradoxically situated within it equals exactly such entropic self-dis-organisation. Other social systems, which are generally non-isolated, might not be self-dis-organising in this strict sense, but they are still disorganising insofar as their generation of order creates disorder in their environment and thus a further potential for change. In sum, cybernetic self-organisation is the principle order from noise, but at the same time it is the principle of *noise from order*.

V. The Curiosity for Panic. Vitalist-Materialist Conclusions

Readdressing the original question of self-organisation and liberation, the stories of Libertatia so far have elucidated how both the anarchist and the cybernetic concept of self-organisation implicitly project its potentially liberating opposite of self-dis-organisation. In the case of Libertatia as a self-organised anarchist commune, Mission having given in to the impulse of sleep precisely when he was supposed to discipline himself in order to fulfil his obligations for the community indicated how anarchist self-organisation as a refusal to be ruled or rule implies self-dis-organisation in the sense of refusing particularly internalised rule; in the case of the OGU as a self-organising cybernetic system, Mission having been provoked to fully enter the world of the lemurs and the MU and thus increase the level of disorder within the OGU precisely by the custodians' attempts to reinstall order within the OGU indicated how cybernetic self-organisation implies self-dis-organisation in the sense that more order necessarily provokes more disorder.

To conclude, I intend to add, just very briefly, a final reading of the tale of Libertatia as containing, in addition to anarchist and cybernetic self-organisation, a third option of vitalist-materialist self-organisation, one of its decisive advantages over the other two being that it not just implies, but

indeed rather embraces processes of self-dis-organisation, thus accentuating the liberating aspect of self-dis-organisation in perhaps its most obvious form. Not surprisingly, vitalist-materialist self-organisation is present not so much in the commune of Libertatia or the system of the OGU, but in the forests, among the lemurs, and more precisely in the MU. Burroughs indicated the MU's vitalist-materialist implications most clearly when, in describing how Mission went looking for the lemurs for the very first time, he wrote that "Captain Mission did not fear panic, the sudden, intolerable knowing that everything is alive" (1987, 50). This peculiar characterisation of panic was elsewhere expanded on when Burroughs alluded to its etymological roots of "panikós" and the Greek God Pan, the god of nature, the forests, and wildlife, who, in Burroughs' own reasoning, further represented a world of multiple healing powers opposed to the Christian monopolisation of powers in the figure of Jesus Christ (cf. Burroughs 1991, 23–28). Thus, in stating that Mission did not fear panic, Burroughs portrayed his protagonist as someone who is open to or indeed actively seeking contact with the plural and wild powers of Pan, with the forces of life that reside everywhere, with the forces that, once he got in touch with them, might fundamentally change him. That is exactly what happened when Mission got to know the lemurs and decided to live with one of them, the relationship to his fellow Ghost equalling a form of self-organised inter-species living through which Mission's life is transformed particularly by getting directed toward the radical processes of unorganised becoming in the MU. Borrowing from Johnson's original characterisation of Mission as a man defined not least by his "Curiosity" (1728, 2), Mission's lack of fear and his actions can ultimately be translated in terms of a *curiosity for panic* that proposes an ongoing becoming-other through the welcoming of the self-dis-organising powers of the self-organisation of forces. In the MU, self-organisation is no longer a matter of subjects or systems, but a matter of forces and their continuous merging and falling apart.

This, at least, is what a vitalist-materialist interpretation on the basis of Félix Guattari and Donna Haraway might conclude, the latter, of course, not strictly being a vitalist materialist, but still definitely a materialist. Mission's relationship with the lemur might serve as a prime case for Haraway's reformulation of self-organisation, or auto-poiesis, in terms of sym-poiesis, a neologism, which she introduced in order to emphasise the primary relationality as well as the "making-with" and "becoming-with" in self-organisation, which included the possibility of unexpected change (cf. 2016, 58–98). Interestingly, Haraway mentions a wildlife preservation project designed to aid the survival of lemurs in Madagascar as one example of human-animal sympoiesis (Ibid., 81–85). More fundamentally, though, it is Félix Guattari's concept of auto-poiesis as chaosmosis that highlights the core consequences of a vitalist-materialist interpretation of self-organisation (cf. 1995, cf. also Braidotti 2013). In a critical reading of Francisco Varela's auto-poiesis according to which the concept defines the machine's capacity to produce and reproduce its own organisation as well as its regulating limits and thresholds, Guattari derives the immanence of auto-poiesis, which has it that every process of formation is always already pregnant with the forces of disorder or chaos ready to dissolve it: "Formations of sense and states of things are thus chaotised in the very movement of the bringing into existence of their complexity. At the source of a world's constitution there is always a certain modality of chaotic discomfort in its organicity, functionality and relations of alterity" (1995, 80–81). This chaosmosis of auto-poiesis lets self-dis-organisation appear as a co-

originary force independently of which self-organisation never exists, a quality of the chaotic relations of forces that inscribes change in every order and that one cannot but affirm.

Mission's curiosity for panic is exactly this affirmation, it is a life within the immanence of self-(dis-)organisation. Not just in the MU, but in the entire narrative of Libertatia, his character is itself nothing but a self-(dis-)organising force: he was involved in every self-formation of order only to open up escape routes that led to further self-dis-organisation, from the "Republic of the Sea" to Libertatia to the life in the forest to, ultimately, the Sea, which meant his death or perhaps yet another life. He was the actualisation of a voice which, as Burroughs noted, repeated "'[o]ut, and under, and out, and out'" (1987, 54) in his head, a voice, a ghost, perhaps, or a vector, a movement constantly driving for change. Similarly, the stories of Libertatia, in a more abstract sense of a dramaturgy of reiterations, are also but a continuous process of self-organisation and self-dis-organisation, with every new author altering it from within, with every new draft adding to the previous one and so further liberating its forces. From the liberated ship that, in Johnson, was still guided by the Lord, to the abandonment of God's influence via Burroughs, to the settling of the liberty lovers on land and the subsequent destruction of the colony of Libertatia which only reinforced the creation of the connection to the lemurs, to the introduction of the MU and chaotic time rifts in the CCRU, the narrative of Libertatia transformed with every new turn. The writings of the stories of Libertatia themselves performed the curiosity for panic as a constant affirmation of self-(dis-)organisation, and far from of having come to an ultimate end, the process is only waiting to be continued in the future.

I would like to thank Agnes Quackels, Silvia Bottiroli, and Daniel Blanga Gubbay for having given me the opportunity to present a very early draft of this paper in the framework of the conference The Return of the Fantastic Institution *which took place at BUDA, Kortrijk, Belgium, in February 2018.*

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Biography

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PERFORMANCE
PHILOSOPHY

TA'WIL: IN PRACTICES OF LIGHT

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Image 1: Narjis Mirza, Light Installation 2018 (photo credit Sam Hartnett)

Light in its unqualified sense bears many meanings according to the multitude, some meanings are equivocal, some literal and some metaphorical, such as light of the sun, light of the moon, light of the lamp, the light of intellect, the light of faith, the light of piety, the light of a ruby, the light of gold, the light of turquoise. (Sadra 2004, 35)

PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHY VOL 4, NO 2 (2019):564–575
DOI: https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2019.42242
ISSN 2057-7176

It is through light that we are able to reach out to the not-yet known, to the indistinct potential and the unrealised. Artist Derek Ventling suggests that light is a source for "continuous negotiation with our surroundings" (Ventling 2017, 19). The ephemeral force of light contours our perception and defines our physical and spatial surroundings. Light is significant for both art practice and philosophy. In the book *The Practice of Light*, Sean Cubitt ruminates on the performance of light and the "potential that lies curled up inside." Light begins in the invisible black and performs as a mediation between the known and unknown world (2).

Sadr-ud-Din Muhammad Shirazi, famously known as Mulla Sadra, a 17th-century Persian Muslim philosopher, begins his exegesis on the "light verse"[1] of the Quran by contemplating the multitude of meanings of light. Sadra draws light away from its physical temporal meanings towards a divine spiritual entity (*al Munawwir*) "that realizes all existence" (Sadra 2004, 43). Sadra equates existence with light by saying "the reality of light and existence is the same thing" (21).

There is a long history for the use of light to present God's presence towards creation. Cubitt tracks a genealogy of such a light in early artworks dating as far back as the 1400s. He writes, "Light was a perfect symbol of God illuminating everything yet itself invisible" (Cubitt 2014, 46). As a contemporary artist, I use light as a research tool to trace the resonance of the unseen. For me, light is a medium of immense potential, that structures our perception of the visual world. Light is in constant movement, transient and transcendental.

This paper is titled, "*Ta'wil*: in Practices of Light." Practices of light are my art installations (as part of a practice-led PhD program at Auckland University of Technology) and ta'wil is a method I derive from the Quran for my creative discourse. To understand this method, it is important to grasp a few concepts. Firstly, the discussion of *zahir* and *batin*, because ta'wil is a movement from zahir towards batin. I use ta'wil in my art-practice to shift light away from its zahir (physical appearance) towards batin (metaphorical interiors). In the Islamic philosophical paradigm, "all appearance, every exoteric meaning *zahir,* has an esoteric meaning *batin*" (Corbin 1969, 28). Laura Marks presents the discussion of zahir and batin as two ends of a continuity. Batin is from the etymological root word *batn*, which means the inside of the stomach or womb. An Eastern woman might say, "I am carrying a baby in my *batn*," meaning in my womb. Alongside batin is zahir related to *zuhr*, the back (Marks 2010, 15). Every existent has a zahir and a batin of a certain intensity. Marks beautifully describes the embodied meaning of zahir and batin in this way:

> Think of how a fetus develops with its back, the spine curved, protecting the soft interior organs. These organs gradually mature, and the body unfolds, as the fetus develops. Indeed, when we sleep in the fetal position, or in dangerous situations curl our bodies to protect our organs from blows, we are embodying the meanings of zahir and batin: we make manifest the hardened part of our bodies in order to hide the vulnerable parts. (Ibid.)

With this general understanding of zahir and batin, I would like to open a discussion on ta'wil, and how ta'wil as a method can be rendered into a visual and creative discourse in my art-practice with light, form and text.

What is Ta'wil?

Ta'wil is from the Arabic etymological root word *awl* which means "to return" or "lead back" (Al-Tabatabai 1976, 7:30; Corbin 1962, 12). Ta'wil is a method that Mulla Sadra uses for his philosophical writing and commentaries of the Quran. Corbin describes ta'wil as a hermeneutic method, as the "carrying back of anything to its principal, for instance for a symbol, to what it symbolizes" (Corbin 1969, 12)

It is important to acknowledge that there are two views on the meaning of ta'wil: 1) a textual esoteric exegesis; 2) a real event or happening. The former is a general understanding of ta'wil, and the latter is not so common, but it also has a Quranic basis, as I shall explain. In Chapter 3 and verse 7 of the Quran, ta'wil is introduced as a literary exegesis and ta'wil of the Quran is esoteric knowledge that is with Allah and those who receive God's wisdom and are firm in knowledge. This kind of ta'wil is an interpretative method, that returns the zahir (apparent meaning) of the verse to its batin (hidden meanings). In contrast, when an image in a dream becomes a reality (*al Haq*), as in the story of Joseph (Chapter 12 Verse 100), this transformation is also called a ta'wil. Put another way, the physical manifestation of the image is the ta'wil of that image. It is from the story of Joseph that I infer ta'wil as not only an esoteric/verbal exegesis, but the transformation or material manifestation of an image into a reality. From here I set the basis of art to function as a ta'wil, as I transform an image from a mental form to a physical form. While I acknowledge the traditional association of ta'wil towards the Quran, I suggest that ta'wil can be practiced outside the interpretation of text. It is a unique method of interpretation that performs in both physical and metaphysical worlds.

Ta'wil is not Tafsir

Henry Corbin, in the *History of Islamic Philosophy*, denies the Western notion that there is nothing philosophical about the Quran, by addressing Muslim philosophers as "*Ahlul Kitab*: a people in possession of a sacred Book, a people whose religion in founded on a Book that came down from Heaven" (Corbin 1962, 1). Islamic philosophy cannot be separated from the Quran, since Quranic hermeneutics is placed alongside philosophical meditations as a guiding path. Corbin defines Islamic philosophy as a philosophy which developed its modalities from an essentially religious text (Quran) and a practice of spirituality. The hermeneutic (as in interpretative) methods used for the Quran also outline a set of stages in the acquisition of knowledge. The methods or stages of knowledge have a hierarchal tendency that can be presented in parallel to Henri Bergson's analytic and intuitive methods of knowledge.

The first and most general method of interpretation of the Quran is called *Tafsir*. Tafsir is a hermeneutic perspective considering the historical, social and current placement of the verse. Tafsir, is close to Bergson's first form of knowledge—an analysis that is relative to the perspective and the symbols used to express ourselves (Bergson 1999, 1). However, tafsir, when exclusively undertaken for the purpose of accessing the Quran, is a form of analysis and a literal exegesis that is guided by Prophetic tradition and expert knowledge (Corbin 1962, 9; Marks 2010, 244).

The second method used to interpret the Quran, or stage in the process of knowledge acquisition, is ta'wil:

> Ta'wil (etymologically speaking means to 'lead back' or to 'bring back' something to its origin, to its *asl* or archetype) is a science whose pivot is a spiritual direction and a divine inspiration. This is the stage reached by moderately advanced philosophers. (Corbin 1962, 9)

At this stage, I would like to introduce a specific *Mufasir* (someone who does tafsir of the Quran): Allama Al Sayyid Muhammad Hussain Tabatabai (1904–1981). He was a contemporary of Henry Corbin, an expert in the Quran, and author of a celebrated tafsir titled, *Al Mizan* (20 Volumes of literal exegesis of the Quran). In *Al Mizan*, Tabatabai defines ta'wil as not just an esoteric exegesis (like tafsir) but a real fact found outside the imagination:

> When we say that this verse has an at-ta'wil, we mean that the verse describes a real fact (past or future) or a real happening, which in its turn points to another reality—and that is its at-ta'wil, or final interpretation. (Al-Tabatabai 1976, 7:39)

Here, ta'wil is more than a literal exegesis; it is described as a real fact, a happening in the past or future. Ta'wil has an affinity to Bergson's discussion of intuition, a philosophical method aiming to "recover contact with real" (Bergson [1896] 1908, 75). Both ta'wil and Bergsonian intuition are methods for recovering the real: the latter suggests "entering into the real" (Bergson 1999, 1) and the former is "returning to the real." At the same time, ta'wil is also at a distance from intuition as it does not lay claim to absolute knowledge. By contrast, Bergson's intuition is the act of placing oneself within the object such that absolute knowledge is acquired (Bergson 1999, 1). I would like to quote Bergson, as he clearly distinguishes intuition from analysis.

> By intuition is meant the kind of *intellectual sympathy* by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it and consequently inexpressible. Analysis, on the contrary, is the operation which reduces the object to elements already known, that is, to elements common both to it and other objects. To analyse, therefore, is to express a thing as a function of something other than itself. All analysis is thus a translation. (Bergson 1993, 2)

Similarly, ta'wil is not tafsir, a translation or a literal exegesis. Ta'wil leads to union with the real event. In my art practice, ta'wil is the method that generates artwork, that unites the image with its object or actual event.

Ta'wil in my Art Practice

As an artist, I treat text, form and light as a medium to create a ta'wil, for my understanding of reality. My research explores reality beyond what appears in the zahir, by transcending towards a batin. I play with light and shadow in an attempt to bring into visibility (*shahada*) the invisible (*ghayb*)

concepts that reside in an unseen world. My attempt, understood as practice-oriented research, is to explore the potential of my medium—light—and to ta'wil (as in return) the zahir to the batin.

In my studio practice, I started with writing the word *al-Haq* (the Real—one of the names of Allah), in Kufic Arabic, inspired by Sadra's most celebrated works *al-Hikma al-Muta `aliyya fil Asfar il Arbaa*, translated as *The Sublime Wisdom in the Four Intellectual Journeys* (Ernst 1999). In brief, these four journeys are: *from* the Real, *towards* the Real, *with* the Real and *in* the Real. Sadra says he has structured these journeys in correspondence to the movement of Saints and Sufis, hoping to illustrate a continuous movement *around* the Real through these four journeys (S. H. Rizvi 2009, 30).

My installation *Asfar* is an interpretation—a ta'wil—of Sadra's sequence of journeys around the Real (al Haq). This light installation is in the form of a cube that has one journey written on each side of the cube, and the word "Al Haq" repeated on the top and bottom panel. For this installation, I write in Kufic calligraphy and laser cut the patterns. Experiments with various Islamic aesthetic forms in studio quickly led me to Kufic calligraphy, a writing form that takes its name from Kufa, a city in Iraq. Kufic is the first canonized form of writing, primarily performed as a sacred act of copying the Quran to bring God's speech into the phenomenal world, into a body without flesh and blood (González 2015). There are many variations in Kufic writing, and I chose to write in Square Kufic (*Kufi murabba'*), which is also known as *banna'i*, a masonry script (Medlej 2015). This form of Kufic can be seen on the exterior of buildings, interiors, coins and objects for decoration. Square Kufic can also be seen as a precursor to the computer pixel, as argued by Azadeh Emadi (Emadi 2014). Mamoun Sakkal also writes extensively on the renaissance of Square Kufic in the last century, particularly with the rise of computer generated images (Sakkal 2010, 3–4). Square Kufic style does not demand legibility to admire its beauty and purity of form. Although Kufic aesthetics are austere, they offer endless possibilities for creative exploration of geometric relationships in my installation practice.

Laura Marks, in her book *Enfoldment and Infinity*, presents the genealogy of new media art, rooted in Islamic Art and philosophy. Marks highlights the "aniconic" qualities of Islamic Art, i.e., "when the image shows us that what we do not see is more significant than what we do" (Marks 2006, 4). Aniconism is practiced throughout the long history of Islamic art-making, where the zahir (as in calligraphy and ceramic tiles of mosques) suggests the presence of a batin (the hidden meaning beyond the objective forms of calligraphy and ceramic tiles). Abstraction in Islamic art is an invitation to go beyond what is shown, to ta'wil (interpret) the unseen and unknown.

I encode my interpretation of the journey around the Real in Square Kufic calligraphy. I choose this abstraction so that my audience is not tempted to comprehend the Arabic words. Kufic calligraphy needs ta'wil—an interpretation that leads us to the batin—because not every Arabic speaking person can interpret Square Kufic; for many the abstraction is useful to see beyond the text.

Image 2: Panel of Square Kufic with the word Al Haq, The Real

This abstract quality of Square Kufic helped me create multiple layers of interpretation in my installations. Square Kufic enfolds in its batin (interior) higher meaning, and in its zahir (exterior) it is a labyrinth of words and letters that emerge as images and designs. Square Kufic invites the viewer to interpret and decipher the austere construction of lines. In an attempt to soften the austerity of square Kufic—and to invite movement—I incorporate light into my installation. Light mediates between zahir and batin and generates a visual multiplicity through the fall of shadow.

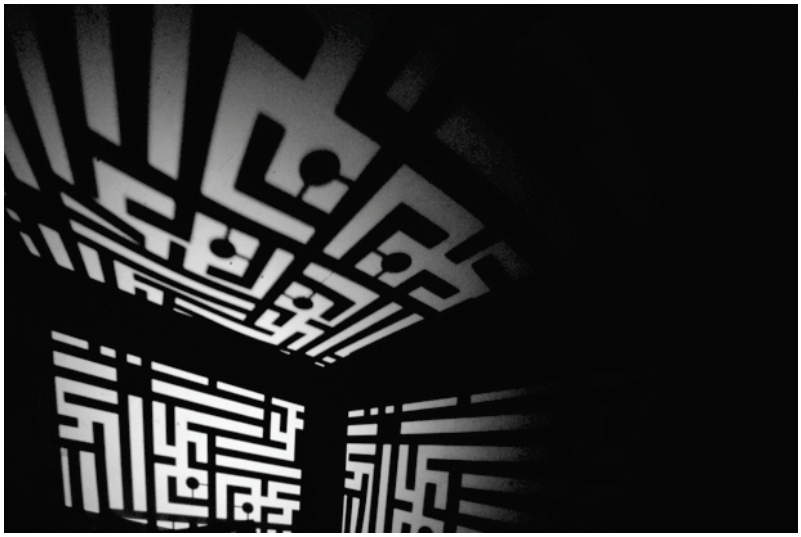

Image 3: Experiments with light, through laser cut panel of Square Kufic

I believe ta'wil is a twofold methodology for the embodiment of concepts into material forms and for the enfoldment of forms back into the spiritual realm. My art practice is informed by the crossover of ta'wil in material and immaterial modes. According to the author of Tafsir al Mizan,

"at-ta'wil (interpretation) is the reality that is allegorically represented by words or expressions; those words or expressions must be 'returned' to the realities which they represent, if one wants to know their true significance" (Al-Tabatabai 1976, 7:38). In the diagram below, I draw a circular wave for the process of ta'wil—that is essentially—heading towards the batin.

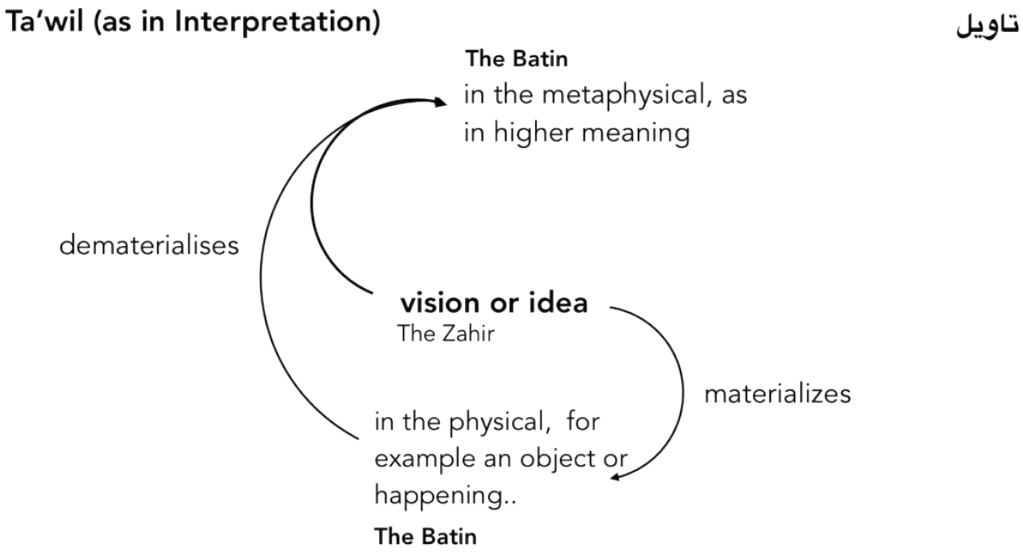

Image 4: Ta'wil Diagram

If the key feature of studio-based enquiry is to produce knowledge "with the action of making art," as Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt propose (2010, 7), ta'wil returns a vision to its actual reality, enabling the artist to discover hidden meanings, by going beyond the zahir (as in exterior). Ta'wil is an invitation to reach beyond the concrete form of an artwork towards layered philosophical interpretations; the journey from the seen to the unseen, and vice versa. The determining factor and objective is to reach the batin (as in interior reality). This creative and hermeneutic approach of travelling from zahir towards batin tilts my artistic practice toward a concern with the spectrum of realities we engage with, in our everyday lives.

Ta'wil as a creative method

Ta'wil comes into my practice when I choose to create my interpretation of reality with light. The creative outcome is in the form of an object or a light installation. Taking the object into a gallery space and inviting a community to interact, question and have conversations, opens a conceptual engagement with the object, *a collective ta'wil*. In turn, this form of collective ta'wil leads towards a collective understanding. The artwork becomes a catalyst for conversations, affects, thoughts and experiences. I am interested in how the audience forms a reciprocal relationship—collective ta'wil—with the artwork, through their own understanding of reality. I embark on this practice-

oriented and philosophically informed research, to share an Islamic understanding of the world by tracing movements of light, with an open spirit of reciprocity.

The experience for the viewer is important for me and my work. Art historian Rosalind Krauss's theory of passage (Krauss 1981, 29) provides an insight into what I aim to achieve through my installation work. She presents passage as "a catalyst for a collective memory, an echo in the background, a metaphor for the faith in art to change people's perception" (Krauss 1981, 141). Passage for Krauss is not a spatial material structure; it is a bodily, epistemological and temporal movement of the viewer. Krauss does not refer to the artwork as an object but links it to the viewer's experience. As such, the theory of passage is about the "the performative participation with the artwork that is integral to the idea of passage" (Petersen 2015, 29). While the shift in attention from the artwork towards the participation of the viewer happened (for Krauss) in the 1960's when sculpture was seen as "a medium peculiarly located at the juncture of motion and stillness, time arrested and time passing" (Petersen 2015, 29), I believe this notion is still important in the present.

My installation *Asfar* also has a sculptural feature, that invites the viewer to have a performative view. I chose to install my work in the dark narrow barrel store of a gallery. The organic feel of the tunnel-like space, and the darkness that occupied it, tempted me to light my lamp here. The cube form of this installation created its own space, the shadows drew new corners and the light highlighted the texture of the brick and concrete walls. Infinity, geometry and repetition, three elements I created for this installation, all show themselves through the sculptural quality of the work. The spill of light through the laser cut was so strong that it enveloped every surface it touched. *Asfar* is enfolding the viewer in the labyrinth of light and shade and imprinting itself on the textured walls and ceiling. The physical movement of light when the cube was nudged created the illusion of movement all around. The contrast of light and dark created a sense of mysticism and sacredness. The barrel vault would occasionally vibrate with sounds of a nearby train that crossed the tracks on the road above the site; this unintentional addition of sound also added movement to this installation.

Video link: *Asfar*

https://vimeo.com/267344644

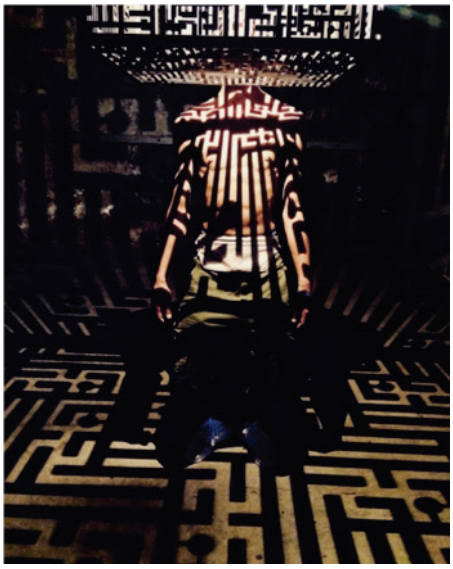

Image 5: A young boy walked into the barrel and was excited by the sharp casting of shadows on his body, almost like a tattoo. Photo by Narjis Mirza.

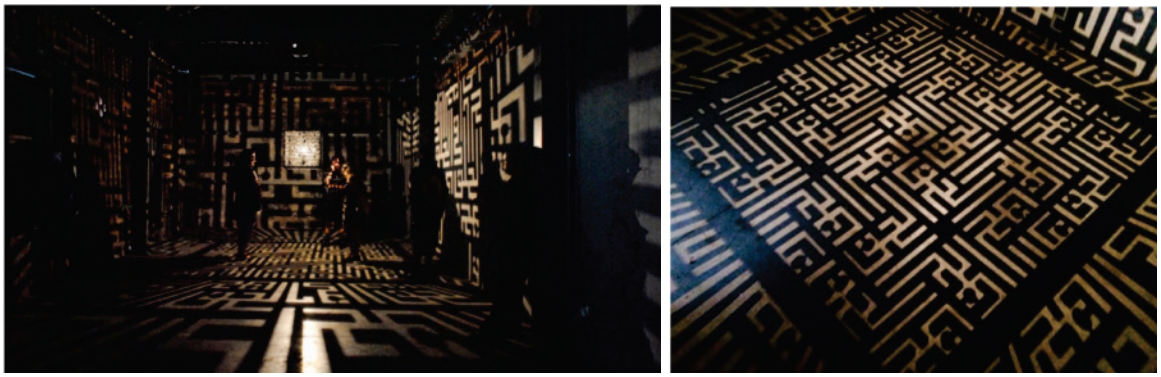

Image 6: Asfar, 2017 at Corban Estates Arts Center, photo by Narjis Mirza

Islamic Art: Ta'wil of the Ghayb (Unseen)

Islamic art is an invitation to return an image to its actual reality. For example, I see geometric tile-work in mosques as a ta'wil (a material form) to divine concepts. Calligraphy and geometry in Islamic art are not for the compensation of figurative art but act, rather, as the only means to manifest a logocentric faith. The repetitive tile work has an underlying purpose to mark the infinite. This is why Marks generates a parallel between the abstraction of Islamic art and computer-based art: "Islamic art, abstract and computer based art are especially concerned with showing through the image how information tells us something about the infinite" (Marks 2010, 10).

Islamic art played an important role in bringing the *ghayb* (unseen*)* concepts into *shahada* (seen) art forms (Ogunnaike 2013). In Islam, text has significance; it is the chosen medium of communication by God. Revelation, in its original oral form—as speech—was exclusive for the Prophet and text was given to everyone else. The text in the form of a book still holds precedence as the medium most equipped to inform others about the reality of creation and its purpose. In this respect, the Quran is the highest form of art (Ogunnaike 2017) and a ta'wil—a physical form—of God's speech. The writing in the Quran exhibits the image of God, the purpose of creation and the secrets of unseen worlds. Alongside commentaries and philosophical writings on the Quran, Muslims over the years worked on advancing the scriptures with beautiful calligraphies that unfolded as abstract images coalescing with geometry and countless repetitions. Islamic art resides in the house of God, on domes and minarets of mosques, as a veil of appearance over the world of ghayb, hinting at the presence of the unseen. A veil that has that double effect, while it intends to hide that which it veils, is also ta'wil-ing the hidden.

To see the unseen, the invisible, you put something over it, thereby outlining its contours. A similar effect happens in the case of calligraphy in the Islamic world. Writing and calligraphy is an effort to make the unseen (ghayb) ta'wil into the world of the seen (shahada). Shahada also means "to witness" and *shahid* is "the witness." The oral recitation of a sacred text is called shahada, a witnessing. The repetitive tile work with geometrical and floral mosaics and fluid calligraphy, are in themselves a shahada, a witnessing in chorus as a *zikr* (remembrance of the Divine). It is said in hadith (the sayings of the Prophet), "God is beautiful and loves beauty."[2] Mosques, the houses of God, reveal the calligraphy and geometry that illustrate the beauty of the ghayb in shahada (Ogunnaike 2017), functioning as a zikr for remembrance.

Islamic art in zahir (i.e., its visual expression) is an intricate repetition of patterns, but stored in its batin (i.e., its spiritual interior) are signs of infinite contemplation. In their discussion of Islamic calligraphy, Abdelkebir Khatibi and Mohammed Sijelmassi describe the function of Arabic calligraphy in this way: "The written word inscribes the estranged ephemeral symbolism of the separated being whose double nature Arabic calligraphy expresses" (Khatibi and Sijelmassi 2001).

Christopher Vitale explains the transition of Quranic speech into writing, also suggesting the potential of recitation, its performative nature, and the agency of writing. He also connects this with an analogy of digital coding in a productive way for my practice of ta'wil:

> Text can be seen as both information and interface, an enfolding of the virtual potentials which are emanations of God's eternal creative power. The Quran (literally, 'The Reciting'), as God's active word, literally then functions as an algorithm, a code that makes things happen, for it is not merely a writing, but a doing. And for a human to recite the Quran is then to participate in him and his work, to sync with it, in a sense, even if the agency for it and yourself all comes from God in the first place. The Quran is therefore, a sort of master code for actualizing in the world. (Vitale 2011)

In this sense, Islamic art is a ta'wil, an echo of the infinite, in repetitive display of tile work. On a much smaller scale, my art practice—which takes its inspiration from the Quran and philosophical texts—is ta'wil in a visual and spatial medium.

Notes

[1] Chapter 24 verse 35, is the only verse where the Quran presents an allegory for God, "Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth..." This is to draw the minds closer to the image of God, and to tempt philosophers to speculate. Mulla Sadra Shirazi wrote an entire book of esoteric exegesis on this verse called On the Hermeneutics of the Light Verse of the Quran

[2] This is a famous tradition from Prophet Muhammad—peace be upon him—that has many sources, to quote one source: Moujam al Ausat Al Tibrani, Volume 7, page 78

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Biography

Narjis Mirza is an installation artist and a PhD candidate at Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand. Her practice-led research brings together philosophy and spatial experiments of light, highlighting the transcendent philosophy of a Persian Muslim philosopher Mulla Sadra Shirazi. Narjis plans to expand the dialogue through concept films and light installations. Narjis completed her masters' degree in media and design from Bilkent University, Turkey. She also received distinction for her Bachelors in Fine Arts at the National College of Arts in Pakistan. Narjis lives and works in Sydney and Auckland.

PERFORMANCE
PHILOSOPHY

FAILING TO THINK: THE PROMISE OF PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHY

JAMES CORBY UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

Thinking performance philosophy

To use a contemporary colloquialism, Performance Philosophy 'is a thing.' And with related associations, conferences and publications, it is fast becoming a thing of impressive proportions and complexity, especially given how recently it has emerged from the interstices and confluence of theatre studies, philosophy and performance studies. This is perhaps not surprising—*performance* has, in recent decades, emerged as a theoretical and practical site of possible renewal and development not only of theatre but of the arts more widely, and the emergence of performance philosophy is a recognition of this potential in relation to philosophy.[1]

The relationship between performance and philosophy is long, multi-faceted and occasionally fraught, with philosophers through the ages frequently both harnessing and suspecting performance's power. Plato's dialogues famously show one way in which philosophical thinking cannot be separated from a certain performance, and yet a fear of the potential of performance-oriented mimesis, freed from a service to truth, leads Plato to exclude poets—the performance artists of their day—from the polis.[2] This closely imbricated relationship between performance and philosophy continued throughout the philosophical tradition, emerging as particularly important in the work of thinkers whose work is not in any obvious way affected by the so-called anti-theatrical bias characteristic of Platonism.[3]

PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHY VOL 4, NO 2 (2019):576–590
DOI: https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2019.42239
ISSN 2057-7176

Performance Philosophy marks a more explicit and concerted recognition of the connection between philosophy and performance and the potential affordances of that connection.[4] The performance philosophy movement marshals relevant energies in such a way as to suggest that we stand at the threshold of a new disciplinary formation. Not Performance *and* Philosophy, but Performance Philosophy—the paratactical momentum of the term seemingly directed towards an artistic, intellectual, and disciplinary miscegenation, where neither performance nor philosophy would remain distinct and intact and neither would be subordinated to, or conditioned by, the unchanged disciplinary genealogy and underpinnings of the other. As Esa Kirkkopelto remarks, 'Performance philosophy opens up a field in which performance, performance makers and performers can make contact with philosophical thinking without the advocacy of intermediary disciplines and in equal dialogue with them, learn to think in their own terms, and become understood by others' (2015, 4–6). This is perhaps the promise of interdisciplinarity in its truest sense, if that institutionally ubiquitous word can momentarily be recovered from its bland overuse in countless funding applications, impact reports, and worthy PhD proposals. Here, interdisciplinarity would be the extension of knowledge and academic practices beyond their presumed native territory, precisely by virtue of the interaction and mutual provocation of at least two academic disciplines. This new knowledge and transformed practice can then be assimilated into either discipline, thereby modifying that discipline, or it can detach from its parent disciplines, forming a new discrete discipline or, more modestly, a sub-discipline in its own right.

This could be what is in prospect for Performance Philosophy. Already there is a Performance Philosophy research network with almost three thousand members, a Performance Philosophy book series published by Palgrave Macmillan, numerous closely related conferences, and the *Performance Philosophy* journal launched in 2015. But it is still early days, of course, and the focus on defining and shaping what Performance Philosophy might become continues to dominate. In 2013 at the University of Surrey there was the conference 'What is Performance Philosophy? Staging a New Field.' In 2015 in Chicago the conference 'What Can Performance Philosophy Do?' took place, in 2017 in Prague there was the 'How Does Performance Philosophy Act?' conference, and there have been several other large-scale conferences and smaller symposia on the relation between performance and philosophy. So, there is a good deal of institutional momentum, and many of the trappings of a distinct academic field, but conceptually Performance Philosophy is still characterized predominantly by an attitude either of exploration or, less positively but no less understandably, uncertainty and hesitation. As Rüdiger H. Rimpler puts it, 'as long as the field of performance philosophy is still emerging, definition-making seems to be accidental' (2016, 23).

While it is not yet a very clear what Performance Philosophy is, or will become, there is a very strong sense of what it ought not to be. Principally, it ought not to be a proliferation of examples of how particular performances apply, illustrate or demonstrate pre-existing philosophical ideas. This positions it against a broadly Platonic conception of the appropriate relation between philosophy and art, which would reduce art to being a kind explicative or illustrative handmaiden of philosophy—stained glass windows for the Gospels, as it were.

The general hope seems to be, in ascending degrees of ambition: first, that performance can be understood as extending existing knowledge; second, that performance be recognized as a kind of thinking in its own right—whatever that means; and, third, that Performance Philosophy might 'transform [...] our very ways of conceptualising.' That's an extraordinary claim, but it is raised as a possibility in the call for papers for the 2015 conference 'Thinking Through Tragedy and Comedy: Performance Philosophy and the Future of Genre,' for instance. Freddie Rokem, more moderately, in what has been taken up as something of a rallying cry for Performance Philosophy, articulates the situation thus:

> how can artistic practice be considered a form of research? and what kind of thinking is produced by such artistic and creative practices? These are some of the most urgent issues on the agenda of today's institutions of higher education, in particular in those where the humanities and the arts still play an important role. (2010, 5)

These hopes for Performance Philosophy are admirably bold, and their motives understandable, but they need to be sounded a little further. Is the distinction between illustrating pre-existing ideas and the creation of new ones as clear cut as it might at first appear? What is meant by the creation of ideas in performance and in what sense should that be thought of as a 'thinking' not reducible to a philosophical procedure or explanation? To put this another way: if performance philosophy is indeed now 'a thing,' as I suggest at the start of this essay, is its thinghood (*dingen*, to use familiar Heideggerian terminology) equatable in some way with a singular thinking (*denken*)? And how does this bring into play the reciprocal possibility, namely that philosophy can be understood as performance? Is the implied distinction between thinking in philosophy and thinking in performance a valid one? How should embodied thinking be understood? Are we to understand philosophical thinking as disembodied in some sense? Or are there genre- or practice-specific forms of thinking that resist translation from one medium to the other? In the hybridized dream of performance philosophy, is there not a risk of philosophical expectations inadvertently serving to limit and thus weaken performance's creative efficacy? To address these questions fully is beyond the scope of this essay, but as a prolegomenon to that work I would like to explore what might be claimed for Performance Philosophy and how this departs from or parallels similar interdisciplinary ventures also involving philosophy. Towards the end of the essay I will explore the possibility that the potency of Performance Philosophy's relation to thinking lies in its capacity to have a negating effect, wherein the failure to produce knowledge as such (typically considered the successful culmination of thought) might be considered a valuable cognitive procedure particular to performance that is valuable in its own right.

I would like to think a little about what philosophy might be taken to signify in the articulation 'Performance Philosophy.' What, that is to say, does the word 'philosophy' bring to the Performance Philosophy equation? There are, no doubt, many possible answers to this question—it is arguably *the* question of Performance Philosophy—but let us start simply, perhaps naively, and assume philosophy is a form of rational enquiry concerned with knowledge and truth. If that is the case, one would expect Performance Philosophy to involve focusing attention on the possible ways

performance might give rise to knowledge—insights into truths about ourselves and the world. A related question would then be whether the method and means by which performance leads to knowledge and truths are in some way the same as philosophy's? Characteristically, philosophy is thought of as leading to knowledge and truths by means of thinking—does performance lead to knowledge and truths and, if so, should the process by which this happens also be understood as 'thinking'?

Of course, there is much about this question, and the way that I have set it up, that is contestable. One might disagree that philosophy is a rational enquiry concerned with disclosing or establishing knowledge and truth. And even if one were to agree with that, there are likely to be different claims about what is meant by 'thinking,' 'knowledge,' and 'truth.' Let us take 'knowledge;' it is a more capacious term than 'truth' and is traditionally perhaps more recognizably the concern of philosophy than 'thinking,' which might simply be considered the means by which we attain knowledge (though it would be valid to ask whether performance can be understood as a type of thinking that leads to something other than knowledge and truth—and this is something that we will explore later). What does it mean to speak about knowledge in relation to performance? This question immediately begets another, of course, because how we answer it depends in large part on what we mean by performance. One might reel off a list of loose traits, qualities, and family resemblances that can indicate performance: liveness, embodied action, relational, durational, witnessed, socially engaged, ephemeral. 'Performance's only life,' argues Peggy Phelan, 'is in the present':

> Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations *of* representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. [...] Performance's being [...] becomes itself through disappearance. (1993, 146)

Shannon Jackson is surely right, though, when she claims that the term performance remains 'resolutely imprecise' (Jackson 2011, 13). It might be helpful and illuminating to ask the same question—about the relation with knowledge—in relation to *theatre*, which, as the supposedly more conventional relative of performance, perhaps offers a comparatively rather more stable and easily graspable referent. So, what might it mean to speak about knowledge in relation to theatre? But this move simply makes apparent the need, first of all, to understand more clearly what is meant by knowledge.

Performance and forms of knowledge

Epistemology is a complex and disputed field of study, but philosophers generally tend to agree that there are three basic forms of knowledge: propositional knowledge, acquaintance or familiarity, and practical mastery or 'know-how' (Williams 2001, 15). Epistemology is principally concerned with propositional knowledge. As Raymond Geuss explains, '[p]ropositional knowledge or "knowing that" takes its name from the usual grammatical form in which such a claim to knowledge is expressed: the use of the verb "know" plus "that" plus a propositional clause' (2005,

185). An example would be: I know *that* elephants are larger than mice. If we are to get to grips with the possibility that performance is a form of thinking that gives rise to a form of knowledge, one first of all ought to ask whether performance can be understood as conveying and being concerned with this sort of knowledge. And I do not mean in any incidental way, but in a way that can be understood either as a significant part of what performance—and by extension theatre—does, or as constituting a relatively minor aspect of performance, albeit one that produces significant propositional knowledge. Would this be something for Performance Philosophy to focus on and explore as a possible way of understanding the relationship between performance and thinking? It seems unlikely. There is of course a long tradition of broadly didactic theatre that mixes instruction with pleasure in various ways. It is a notion that can be traced back to Horace's *Ars Poetica*, where he writes:

> Poets aim either to benefit, or to amuse, or to utter words at once both pleasing and helpful to life. […] He has won every vote who has blended profit and pleasure, at once delighting and instructing the reader. ([c.19 BCE] 1942, 479)

This idea proved influential on Renaissance humanism: notably, it informs Sir Philip Sidney's *An Apology for Poetry* ([1595] 2004), and is the *raison d'être* of morality plays. A little later, Ben Jonson, in the Prologue to *Volpone*, tells his readers that his aim is 'to mixe profit with your pleasure' ([1605] 1998, 221). Subsequently, it remains a common motivation in the development of drama, from Brechtian *Lehrstücke*, to thesis drama, to *agit-prop*, and so on. It is impossible to conceive of such drama without an animating intention to convey propositional knowledge. And it is no doubt possible to extract propositional knowledge from drama that is not in any obvious sense didactic. For example, for several years I gave lectures on Tom Stoppard's play *Rock 'n' Roll* (2006) to an undergraduate class, and it was clear that for many of the students the play offered a history lesson about the Prague Spring and the Velvet Revolution. As a result of having watched or read that play, at least some of those students came to possess propositional knowledge such as: 'I know *that* in Czechoslovakia in 1968 Alexander Dubček attempted to implement a series of modernizing, liberalising reforms.' This meets a typical expectation associated with propositional knowledge, namely that once formulated and accepted it becomes discrete content. That is to say, such knowledge is not tied in any particular way to the instances of its articulation—once 'extracted,' it can be asserted without further propositional contextualisation.

But I would hazard to claim that this sort of propositional content is hardly what people value about theatre. In fact, the conveyance of propositional knowledge seems irrelevant (or, at the most, incidental) with regard to the perceived success or failure of a piece of drama or other type of performance. And, as I have already said, proponents of Performance Philosophy have already stated quite clearly that they are not interested in the mere performative illustration of pre-existing (that is, detachable, propositional) knowledge, which, to reiterate, is precisely the sort of performance that Plato, dismissing Homeric tragedians from the *polis*, sees as the only acceptable use of performance. But what if performance, rather than simply illustrating propositional knowledge, were able to generate new propositional knowledge? Would this be significant and perhaps of interest for Performance Philosophy? Well, drawing on theatre again, let us go back to

the Stoppard example. Some of my students—not all by any means—enjoyed that play so much that they completely accepted the grand architectonics of the play, which invite us to see parallels between rock 'n' roll, acts of political resistance, revolution, love, the Greek god Pan, and Sapphic poetry. One of those students might, to this day, be carrying around what they take to be propositional knowledge based on this. They might say: 'I know *that* a common anarchic, erotic spirit animated Sapphic love poetry, rock 'n' roll, and revolutionary movements in the late twentieth century.' The truth or otherwise of this knowledge is not really what is important here. What is significant is that the play has offered an insight that can then, potentially, be taken up and treated as propositional knowledge. As far as I know, this is not the articulation of a pre-existing idea, despite it possessing a certain generic familiarity, and it seems likely that although it can be treated as detachable content it retains some sort of tie to the site of its initial articulation, insofar as that site, the play-in-performance in the case of this example, put forward the idea in question convincingly. Where would Performance Philosophy stand on this? And is it so very different to what philosophy, even on a rather conservative estimation, does? Let us take a classical example. It seems fairly uncontroversial to say that Plato is concerned with propositional knowledge (what, in the classical context we might think of as *epistêmê*, as opposed to *technê*, which would be a different kind of knowledge—something more akin to skill or know-how). It is on the basis of this propositional knowledge that Socrates, in the dialogues, corrects the mistaken opinions of his interlocutors about what it means to be virtuous. But, like Stoppard's play, the dialogues are the sites of persuasion and artifice. Having read the *Republic* one might be convinced *that* pleasure, divorced from knowledge, is inherently dangerous. There is, of course, content there that can be extracted, but it continues to retain much of its authority as truth (if that is what one takes it to be, of course) thanks to the rhetorical force of its original—or, to be safer, its classical—articulation in the *Republic*. Viewed in this way, the dialogues in the *Republic* are as much performances and performative as they are philosophy and philosophical, with truthful propositional knowledge only emerging and possessing traction via a sort of drama of ideas.[5] The distinctions do not seem at all sure.

But I doubt this would satisfy the hopes that there seem to be for Performance Philosophy. Once a Socratic dialogue, or a Tom Stoppard play, establishes knowledge, though the association between that knowledge and the performative site of its definitive articulation might persist, there is no reason to think that there could not be an equally compelling account of that knowledge given elsewhere in another form—in a lecture or an essay, perhaps, or even, conceivably, in a dance performance or installation work. I suspect that for something like propositional knowledge to be acceptable as the principal focus of Performance Philosophy research its more ardent adherents would ideally want to be able to say of it that there are certain truths to which access can be had only through performance. The temptation is to see this as an inclination towards a kind of medium specificity, but it makes little sense to think of performance as *a medium*. Perhaps a practice specificity? Or maybe Performance Philosophy could be concerned with instances of performance-specific knowledge? It is not at all clear what such knowledge would look like, though, and it seems unlikely that common notions of propositional knowledge would help define it any more clearly. We would end up with a formulation of a proposition that remains explicitly and irredeemably tied to, and conditional upon, the site of its articulation or disclosure: '*In the context of z* I know *that* x is

y,' though even that kind of articulation, which assumes that the experience of knowledge can be translated in this way, might be seen as betraying the wish for performance- or practice-specific knowledge. Then there is the additional consideration that propositional knowledge makes sense in the context of a tradition that believes in and values clarity, objectivity, truth, the accurate representation of reality, and so on. If one had to generalize, one would say that art, particularly modern art, actively tends to challenge these sorts of biases and assumptions.

So much for propositional knowledge, then. What about other forms of knowledge? What about knowledge as know-how or skill? Knowledge understood, that is, as *technê* rather than *epistêmê*. This would be articulated by 'the use of "know" plus "how" plus an infinitive' (Guess 2005, 185). For instance, I know how to play guitar, I know how to cook an omelette. Does performance, or theatre, give rise to that kind of knowledge in any particular way? It seems unpromising. Elaborating on this kind of knowledge, Geuss writes:

> We speak of a person having a skill only if he or she is able to be reliably successful in bringing about a certain result. The person who has the skill must be able to bring about something *others* can recognise as a successful outcome according to relatively clear socially recognised criteria. (191)

We might make the argument that classical tragedians knew how to produce catharsis and that is not uninteresting, but it seems quite exceptional, and in terms of the acquisition of knowledge it neglects the spectator: it seems too much of a stretch to say that by watching tragedy one acquires the know-how, the craft, of the tragedian. Moreover, in the modern era theatre and performance have tended to be committed to originality and innovation. Art, since the end of the eighteenth century, if one can generalize, tends not to aspire 'to be a success by preexisting criteria, but to create new criteria by which works are to be judged' (192). It is therefore hard to see how the reliable transmission of know-how or skill, which depend upon expected patterns and repeatability could be construed as a significant feature of performance.

That seems like another dead end, then. What about another understanding of knowledge—knowledge as acquaintance-with? Here 'know' typically takes a noun or pronoun as the direct object (186).[6] So, I can say I *know* the poetry of W.B. Yeats, or I know suffering. Is theatre or performance tied up with this sort of knowledge in any significant way? It seems more promising than the other two types of knowledge we have considered. Having watched a particularly affecting performance of *Othello*, one might say 'I know jealousy,' meaning that the performance of that play has given me a fuller and more deeply felt understanding of jealousy. Or one might watch J.M. Synge's *Riders to the Sea* and conclude that now I *know* grief. Or, in the context of contemporary performance art one might watch Ontroerend Goed's *Sirens* and conclude that one knows—that is, has become acquainted with—the trials of contemporary sexism and misogyny. Or one might have experienced Marina Abramovic's *512 Hours* and have concluded that one knows stillness or whatever it was that that performance was felt to have imparted. All of these claims to knowledge are just about plausible, though they tend to sound rather hyperbolic. The real difficulty, though, for anyone attempting to make strong epistemological claims about performance, is that once again there is

nothing practice- or performance-specific about this type of knowledge. There are likely to be other, more effective, ways of becoming acquainted with jealousy, grief, sexism, and stillness.

None of these understandings of knowledge seem promising foundations for Performance Philosophy research that seeks ways in which performance might be a kind of embodied thought, a performed thinking or a thought performance that would give rise to its own type of knowledge, its own truths. So perhaps for performance to be understood as a kind of thinking that produces knowledge, we might have to think of it as producing a new, special kind of knowledge not accounted for by traditional ideas of epistemology. If this is the case, then performance would have to be understood as also creating the conditions for the recognition and acceptance of the knowledge it produces. That is to say, there would have to be some sort of process of self-validation in performance's 'thinking.' How would that mechanism of self-validating knowledge—performance's thinking—operate? One fairly obvious avenue to explore would be the idea that performance can grant a kind of intuition through feeling. In other words, particular emotions are provoked; these emotions are by their nature self-validating—a feeling, an intuition, will be judged appropriate if it *feels* appropriate (195). Now, if this is to be understood as a type of *thinking* associated with performance, giving rise to a type of associated *knowledge*, where knowledge might be understood as a significantly—that is, non-trivially—appropriate emotional attunement to particular situations or experiences, then that would seem to imply the claim that 'there is (finally) an absolute set of correct, suitable feelings and emotions that are appropriate responses to the world' (197). These responses may not be exclusive to performance—they may not be practice-specific, in other words—but insofar as they would be produced only in a non-discursive context (whether that context be performance or some other artistic experience), and would be understood feelingly rather than in a rational way, reducible to propositional knowledge, they might still serve to justify a claim to a non-traditional form of thinking and knowing associated with performance that could be a focus of Performance Philosophy.

This position, often associated with Romanticism (194), cannot, however, be an answer to the search for a different kind of knowledge particular to performance. It simply does not square with the diversity of responses that performance, theatre, and art more generally provoke. Furthermore, it draws on a rather undertheorized and popular version of Romanticism, of the sort that would suggest that it is only through the right emotional or intuitive acquaintance with the world that we can 'know' it aright. Perhaps more appropriate would be a consideration of a more thoroughly theorized version of Romanticism. German Romanticism, the site of the most philosophically sophisticated articulation of Romanticism, might prove a particularly illuminative parallel here insofar as it sought to establish what, emphasising the parallel, we might call 'Poetry Philosophy.'

While seeming to answer Plato's rejection of poetry as capable of operating as a philosophical organon, the immediate prompt to the development of German Romanticism was a perceived crisis in philosophy. Since Descartes's thought-experiment of radical scepticism and the consequent positioning of a reflective, self-certain subject at the heart of thought, questions of epistemology became increasingly entangled with questions of subjectivity. If the self is in a constant, reflective relationship with itself in all its cognitive operations, it can seemingly never free itself from itself in a manner that might allow it to know either itself or its totality, or any other things as they might be in themselves. If thought cannot, without remainder, think its own reflective ground, a split opens up between the thinking subject and the thought object, and it is out of that split that the threat of scepticism—and, indeed, nihilism—can emerge. These apparent limitations to philosophical thought led J.G. Fichte, who supported Kant's critical endeavours, while judging them inadequately expressed, to posit a self-positing I that underlies and make possible all thought. However, he was unable—precisely because of those limitations—to give a full and adequate account of that self-positing I. Reacting to Fichte, the early German Romantics took as their starting point this conflict between the realisation that reflective consciousness is inherently limited, and therefore bound to taint all putatively objective knowledge, on the one hand, and the continuing desire to know the unifying absolute that would transcend these limitations, on the other. Torn between what Fichte called 'the incapacity and the demand' ([1794] 1982, 201), the Romantics came to think that although this absolute cannot be accessed by philosophy, it might be possible that the artistic performance of the *failure* of reflective thought could rupture the subjectivism of thought's finite, conceptualising grasp sufficiently for a space to be created in the artwork in which that which exceeds ordinary consciousness may in some way become apparent, even if only indirectly. Of course, this rupture would not provide a substantive alternative to rational, reflective, everyday thinking, and it risks being immediately co-opted by the subjectivity of rational thought. And so, in the wake of philosophy's seemingly futile endeavours, the most that can be achieved for Romantics like Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis, using terminology influenced by Fichte, even as they reject him, is an alternating proof (*Wechselerweis*), a wavering (*Schweben*) between the world as we know it and an imagined pure world beyond, uncoloured by our thinking—a wavering, that is to say, between subjectivism and a pure objectivity, which translates in our experience as a wavering between determinacy and indeterminacy. Unable to get beyond one's subject/object perspective in order to grasp the world as it is in itself, this sense of something beyond, something utterly different, is, for the Romantics, as close as one can get to the absolute, which, as Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy point out, should in this context be understood as the unconditioned self-making (that is, *autopoietic*) whole from which reflective thought seems to alienate us (1988, 48–9). It is this context, and these ideas, that form the basis of what might be called Romanticism's aesthetics of failure. This widely influential understanding and configuration of art emerged in the belief that in response to the apparent limitations of philosophical investigation, a sort of heightened experience or apophatic insight might be achieved by means of artworks that somehow perform artistically and productively the failure of reflective consciousness.

For Schlegel, the moment of indeterminate otherness in the artwork constitutes the 'real' in contrast to the idealism of one's subjective perspective ([1799] 1968, 83). It was to be the task of poetry to hover, alternating between the real and the ideal. In the *Athenaeum* fragments he calls this 'transcendental poetry,' which would make manifest a moment of absolute indeterminacy in an otherwise determinate artwork, so that the work alternates undecidedly between the two, teetering on the verge of collapse ([1798–1800] 1971, 195). This is the moment of the work's self-critique: the dynamic between determinacy and dissolution would be the critical *unworking* that is the *work* of the Romantic work (Blanchot [1974] 1993, 357). In this critical moment the work ruptures its (that is to say, our) subjective, conceptualizing grasp of the world. Ironically, therefore, it is precisely this rupture, this dissolution in indeterminacy of the seemingly objective, that constitutes an objective moment in the Romantic work. As such, in the apparent breakdown of the artwork, we are momentarily carried (by the work) beyond ourselves and our perspectival finitude. In this brief moment, the self-critical work opens us to *what we are not* by performing its own failure, which is also our own failure. Failure, then—and this is perhaps the central paradox undergirding early German Romanticism—is something to be achieved. In this sense, the Romantic artwork should be both complete and incomplete—indeed, incompletable—where 'it is everywhere sharply delimited, but within those limits limitless and inexhaustible' (Schlegel 1971, 204). The fragmentary ideal of the Romantic work is to be endlessly becoming in self-critical dissolution. This is what Schlegel means when he argues that Romantic irony should be employed to bring the artwork 'to the point of continuously fluctuating between self-creation and self-destruction' (167). Similarly, he also writes: 'An idea is a concept perfected to the point of irony, an absolute synthesis of absolute antitheses, the continual self-creating interchange of two conflicting thoughts' (176). As Maurice Blanchot makes clear, the point of the self-critical Romantic fragment is not to realize the whole but to signal it by suspending it (Blanchot [1974] 1993, 353). '[O]nly what is incomplete [...] can take us further', as Novalis wrote sometime between 1797 and 1798 ([1802] 1997, 65). In this context Romanticism constitutes the moment when '[l]iterature [...] suddenly becomes conscious of itself, manifests itself, and, in this manifestation, has no other task or trait than to declare itself' (Blanchot [1974] 1993, 354).

This early German Romantic understanding of the function of poetry, and literature more generally, though never again articulated so rigorously, went on to shape profoundly modern thinking about the literary arts. The notion that the written word, in its failings and inadequacy, can somehow be interpreted as bearing witness to a type of knowledge that cannot be grasped directly—a sort of literary *via negativa*—has proved hugely influential. It is an understanding of Romanticism that is no doubt not as readily identifiable as the sort of broad cultural understanding of Romanticism associated with authentic emotional and intuitive attunement, as discussed earlier, but, acknowledged or otherwise, it continues to inform contemporary theoretical discourse, and it perhaps offers a useful lead in thinking about how an artform can be understood as a form of thinking. It is certainly the case that the legacy of early German Romanticism can be seen informing discussions of literature's relationship with thought. An early intervention in the contemporary debate on this topic is Pierre Macherey's *À quoi pense la littérature?* (1990), translated into English as *The Object of Literature.* Pursuing the question 'What form of thought is contained in literary texts, and can it be extracted from them?', Macherey writes:

> Literature and philosophy are inextricably entwined [*mêlées*]. Or at least they were until history established a sort of official division between the two. That occurred at the end of the eighteenth century, when the term 'literature' began to be used in its modern sense. (1995, 3)

Tellingly, he suggests that '[t]his modernity is illustrated perfectly by the mythology of the absent Book (or the "book to come") which, from the poet and theorists of the Athenaeum to Mallarmé and then Blanchot, commemorates the lost community of literature and philosophy' (13). Recently it is this Romantic line of thought that has led Ben Lerner to conclude that '[t]he poem is always a record of failure' (2016, 13) and that '[p]oetry isn't hard: it's impossible' (14). For Lerner, it is the failure of poem which holds open the place for a poetry-to-come: 'There is no genuine poetry; there is only, after all, a place for it' (18), and '"Poetry" becomes a word for that possibility whose absence we sense in [...] poems' (91).

Stathis Gourgouris, in *Does Literature Think?*, sees early German Romanticism as marking the emergence of literature as 'an interrogative, self-reflexive, theoretical practice':

> In their influential treatment of German Romanticism, Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe explicitly propose researching what they call 'theoretical romanticism' outside of any periodizing notions of Romanticism (as school, movement, literary tendency, etc.), in order to disentangle what they identify as literature's first theoretical instance. (2003, 5)

Interestingly, Gourgouris characterizes literature's theoretical mode as performative (11), suggesting that as such it 'challenges our usual definitions of knowledge in strict conceptual terms':

> Instead, it demands that we account for the implicit, the nonpalpable, the ineffable, the perfectly contingent. It demands a nonalgorithmic, nonpropositional, 'noncognitive,' but nonetheless *expert* knowledge [...]. (18)

As Terrance Cave puts it in *Thinking with Literature*, 'literature is both an instrument and a vehicle of thought. The kind of thinking it affords may in some cases be close to philosophical, ethical, or political thought, but it is never reducible to those modes' (2016, 12).

Performance philosophy: failing to think?

The broadly Romantic example of how literature has been theorized as an organon of thought might provide cues for how Performance Philosophy might conceive of performance as a type of thinking. What seems particularly pertinent is the way in which Romanticism mapped out an aesthetics of failure wherein the experience of *not-knowing* serves a philosophical function, bringing us closer to truth. This does not result in knowledge *per se*, but, the idea goes, it renders us less deceived about the world. Although this is hardly thinking in any classical sense, it could be understood as an implicitly cognitive operation, albeit one that is integrated into artistic practice.

Except that it never really was. The problem with Romanticism as the theoretical self-realisation of literature is that it remained too theoretical and was never properly integrated into artistic practice in the way that it was envisioned. As Blanchot puts it, early German Romanticism was 'rich in projects,' but 'poor in works' ([1974] 1993, 252). Simon Critchley expands on this judgement:

> [R]omanticism fails because neither Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis, nor the other romantics, made good on their promise for an artwork, a new mythology, a literary absolute that would reconcile the crisis of post-Kantian modernity and overcome nihilism. (1997, 94)

Hegel—no fan of Romanticism in any case—likened Schlegel's poetry to 'the flattest prose' ([1835] 1975, 296). Ultimately, then, the 'interrogative, self-reflexive, theoretical practice' announced by Romanticism remained too artificial, too extraneous, and too programmatic. Viewed from a broader historical perspective it seems to remain implicitly too accepting of the Platonic division of poetry and philosophy, from which position it then attempts to articulate a rapprochement. Ironically, although the attempt to delineate a primary philosophical function for art might seem anti-Platonic insofar as it would appear to overturn Plato's proscription of the poets, by putting poetry into the service of a philosophical objective established *a priori*—that is, to bring us closer to the absolute—Romanticism simply reinscribes even more deeply the Platonic instrumentalization of art for the sake of pre-existing ideas. The theoretical moment of Romanticism, therefore, to reiterate, remains extraneous.

Therein, however, perhaps lies performance's crucial difference, and perhaps provides the justification for Performance Philosophy's fixation upon it as possibly constituting a distinctive form of thinking. Performance seems to offer a model for a more integrated self-realising variation of an aesthetics of failure, where the demonstration of the inadequacy of existing knowledge and ways of articulating the world and our experience of it is not the primary motivating force (as it was with Romanticism) but is, instead, simply the result of the way performance manifests, through its determining capacity for playful and self-reflective creation, a rejection of the hegemony of the *a priori* and the tyranny of the given.[7] Conceived as such it might, in fact, be understood as naming more accurately than the word 'poetry' does precisely what it was that Plato feared in the art of ancient tragedians, namely unbounded mimetic performance that manifests a fundamental *irresponsibility* towards established ideas of knowledge and truth. The sort of imitation, in other words, that has the power to create its own original, a process that, as Socrates admits, we find inherently pleasurable and compelling. Rather than producing a faithful copy, then, exaggerated, unbounded, performative mimesis is sufficiently removed from any *a priori* model for its productions to be viewed as something new and alternative. Indeed, it is perhaps the fundamental irresponsibility of mimetic performance, its exuberant autotelicity and disclocation from *a priori* conceptions of truth and knowledge, that makes it valuable as an essentially creative act.[8] Like Romanticism, then, at least as far as it was imagined, performance would have the capacity to *unfix* ideas, but not, crucially, as a consequence of an *a priori* philosophical judgement about the world and our relationship to it, but rather as an epiphenomenon of its own self-motivated practice. This

is not to say that literature itself is not capable of operating in this way—I would argue that it certainly is and that that capacity should be understood as performance too. The fault of Romanticism was to explicitly put that quality into the service of a distinct theoretical agenda, thereby diminishing it. If this autotelic, performative unfixing constitutes *thinking*, then it is a form of thinking that does not result in any positive knowledge. On the contrary, it is precisely only insofar as it demonstrates a *failure* of knowledge that it can be understood as any sort of thinking at all. In so doing it might be understood as clearing the way for more conventional philosophical knowledge to follow. Performance, then, would constitute a 'thinking practice' that simultaneously opens the space of philosophy while challenging it to respond.

Hasn't that always been the case, though? Which, in itself, is not to doubt the importance of Performance Philosophy's efforts to explore this side of performance further. In this regard it is certainly an important development for anyone with a theoretical interest in performance—and performance, through the execution of an aesthetic procedure of failure, may well be understood as involving a cognitive operation. But if it holds that performance at its purest manifests a disregard for the tyranny of the *a priori*, then one ought to be wary of any framework that, implicitly or otherwise, and to whatever degree, sets expectations for performance. That would be, even if only in a small way, to restrict the radically inventive freedom of performance and make it beholden to the *a priori*. That way philosophy, not thinking, lies.

Notes

[1] Shannon Jackson (2011, 1–3) remarks that '[i]n recent decades, artists and art critics have tried to make sense of a variety of performative turns' and suggests that 'one way of characterizing the "performative turn" in art practice is to foreground its fundamental interest in the nature of sociality.' Tracy C. Davis (2008, 1) seems to position the turn as more recent and as part of a more general transformation of the arts and humanities: 'Since the 1970s, we have marked the "linguistic turn"' (emphasizing language's role in constructing perception), the 'cultural turn' (tracking the everyday meanings of culture, and culture's formative effect on identities), and more recently the 'performative turn' (acknowledging how individual behaviour derives from collective, even unconscious, influences and is manifest as observable behavior, both overt and quotidian, individual and collective).' Erika Fisher-Lichte (2005, 237), however, argues that the recent performative turn is not the first of its kind: 'The new performative turn that emerged in the 1960s and early 1970s is, in some ways, reminiscent of the performative turn that happened at the turn of the twentieth century [...].'

[2] The relation between classical Greek poets and performance is something I explore in another article published in *Performance Philosophy* (2015, 37–8).

[3] For more on the anti-theatrical prejudice see Jonas Barish (1981) and Martin Puchner (2010).

[4] The word 'affordances' is worth pausing over. Terence Cave (2016) asks of literature some of the same questions I am asking of Performance Philosophy regarding 'thinking.' Cave refers to literature as 'an animated affordance' (9), extending the usage of James J. Gibson's (1986) coinage of the word in the context of 'affordance theory' as 'what the environment offers the animal, what it *provides* or *furnishes*, either for good or ill.' As such, Cave argues, 'it becomes possible to redescribe the relationship between form and its particular instantiation not as a relation between vehicle and content, but as an ecological, adaptive, and ultimately innovative interaction' (56). A 'cognitive engagement with literature' would therefore focus on 'the kinds of thinking that are afforded by literature, where "thinking" means cognitive activity that includes emotion, imagination, kinesic response, and (not least) interaction with other humans and the world at large' (155).

[5] The reference here, of course, is to Puchner (2010).

[6] A more complex picture of knowledge by acquaintance, see Bertrand Russell's 'On Denoting' (1905).

[7] However, it is worth noting a decidedly more Romantic conception of the relationship between performance, failure and thought as noted in a particular experience by Stephanie Husel: '[T]he first time I came across the idea that performance could be described as a "thinking process" was when I got to know the Sheffield-based theatre company Forced Entertainment; I saw their first piece *First Night* in 2001. In this show, eight entertainer-characters present a vaudeville show, full of laughter and glamour, stunts and skits. And everything goes awfully, desperately, wrong. Playing out this very ironic scenario of failure, showing the frame of theatre almost breaking down over two hours playtime, this show taught me a great deal about performance as such. It made me feel very involved with the piece and with its figures. What struck me was that *First Night* directed the attention of its spectators towards the very situation of the performance. In doing so, it presented me/us with a "thinking about the here-and-now" that was actually happening in the "here and now"' (2013, 89).

[8] For a fuller treatment of this idea, see my previous article in *Performance Philosophy* (2015).

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Biography

James Corby is a Senior Lecturer and Head of the Department of English at the University of Malta, where he lectures on literary theory, poetry, and philosophy. He is the founding co-editor of the academic journal *CounterText*, published by Edinburgh University Press, and is a founding member of the Futures of Literature Network. He has published on literature, and philosophy, including articles on romanticism, modernism, phenomenology, performance, politics, and contemporary American literature. He co-edited *Style in Theory: Between Literature and Philosophy* (Bloomsbury, 2013) with Ivan Callus and Gloria Lauri-Lucente, and edited a special issue of the *Journal for Cultural Research* on "Critical Distance" (Taylor & Francis, 2017).

PERFORMANCE
PHILOSOPHY

BREAK UP VARIATIONS: AN ANNOTATED SCORE

GENERATIVE CONSTRAINTS

Break Up Variations *as a project performs ideas about romantic break-ups as well as political and ecological ruptures. Each multi-scalar variation of the project articulates relation and defies equivalence through emphasising difference. The creativity of division emerges between each variation. Thinking ecologically,* Break Up Variations *asks questions about consensus, nonalignment, community-led conflict resolution, and dissolution as ways of building solidarity at times of crisis.*

This annotated score documents and rethinks the performance of Break Up Variations *by Generative Constraints Committee at the International Federation for Theatre Research in Belgrade 2018, itself a variation of a performance presented at 'Dissolution or Division: Conscious Uncouplings and Collaborative Collapse' in London 2017.*

Break Up Variations: An Annotated Score *flags the importance of positioning practice research separately from either research or practice. The break up makes an exit from fixed disciplinary subjectivities. The two columns are separate registers that continue on each page. The left is the score; the right is the annotation. Spoken text is indented while stage action is in bold.*

PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHY VOL 4, NO 2 (2019):591–600
DOI: https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2019.42227
ISSN 2057-7176

Scene One (Three Minutes)

1 walks up, puts on a poncho and then a t-shirt, and unwraps an ice lolly. 2 walks up and repeats. 1 and 2 place the lollies in each other's t-shirt pockets. 3, 4, and 5 walk up and repeat. Committee forms and holds a huddle.

4 breaks away from the huddle and plays a video of two albatrosses courting. Committee negotiates this exit and watches 4 leave.

https://www.youtu.be/GmQmIxDL8is

Committee watches the courtship. 4 returns and rejoins the huddle.

Notes on Scene One

1. Strategies for collectivity include: whispering, huddling, sharing, wiping, replacing, sweating, holding, chanting. These are most visible with the following geometry: line, semi-circle, circle, square.
2. Following Caroline Levine's call to broaden the definition of form to include social arrangements as having immediate methodological implications —can we think of the break up as a form of relation? can we think of brokenness as a form of variation and a strategy for survival?—form moves beyond the arrangement of elements to 'patterns of recognition and difference' (2015, 3).
3. Albatrosses' complex visual and vocal dances are considered some of the most developed mating displays in any long-lived animal.
4. Synonyms: throng, flock, herd, swarm, press, pack, assemblage, gaggle. 'A huddle of barns andoutbuildings.'
5. 'This is the dense erotics of arrangement, the whole of the text working like the whole of the body working like the whole of the orchestra—a miraculously autoexpansive, invaginative, erotogenic zone. The sexual urge of the text, like [Duke] Ellington's music, like Ellington's sound of love, develops out of successive contributions, out of the asymmetrical differences of individual players, pictures, metaphors that are also sounds and bodies—particular erotogenic zones' (Moten 2003, 30).

Scene Two (Four Minutes)

Video ends. 1 and 2 break away from the huddle; 3, 4, and 5 remain.

Image of ice sheets crossfading into image of committee.

https://youtu.be/Oi-uHVY7hyw

2 whispers into 1's ear; 1 repeats, speaking loudly to the audience.

> Yes. I made up my mind and I'm not sure if it is the right thing to do but I am definitely doing it and even though I might regret it I'm definitely doing it. I'm breaking up with you. It's over. I have loved you so much and now I hate you so much. Or it's not that I hate you it's that I don't care about you anymore because there are so many things to hate. When you're happy I feel annoyed and when you're sad I want to be somewhere else. Our break up isn't any worse than any of what our relationship made better. Everything is totally equal and completely cancelled out. We're all on the same playing field in really different sports and my game is slightly different to yours but you aren't even playing a game you're just mowing a lawn.

1 and 2 switch positions.

> Everything I invented to get myself ahead is exactly what those I got ahead of use to erase me. And then we'll all be happy, because erasure is perfectly between. As long as I'm right after, and right before, and right now, the whole world is a part of our lives, and

Notes on Scene Two

1. To see the relation between research and break up: a series of formal differentiations or collapses, with political weight. I am interested in the ways in which language shapes the communicative capacities or aesthetics of the break up, and how the body gestures in relation to that: the break up of the iceberg, the stiffness of the body that feels itself under question, the muteness of the body that is being displaced. The break up also makes me think about leaks—about the things that are left with multiple identities once a rupture happens, about the processes that complicate rather than demarcate a settling.
2. What did it look like? How did the ice melt? What happened to the plastic? What changed in the space? What if the albatrosses were present? What flew in and out of the room? What landed in the performance? What is being broken, and is the break up ontological (in the Anthropocene)?
3. How is the committee constituted, through performance, in relation to the audience? What is the pattern and dance of audience acknowledgement and non-acknowledgment, inclusion and exclusion?

we're having a chance to get all worked up about every dimension of pain, and how we lost each other, and how we went looking, and every single sentence is something, something that I wish could be spoken by no one, but someone has to say it, now I am saying it, and I have to love that by saying it you have to hear it, because then it isn't mine anymore, and what we have is the fact and the fantasy of a total era all around us. We cry as we come.

1 and 2 return and rejoin huddle. Committee negotiates proximity.

Scene Three (Two Minutes)

3, 4, and 5 break away from huddle. Repeat directions from above.

Joining the EU is like a marathon. When you run a marathon you are not competing against anyone else but yourself.

You can see—the EU is here to support you. With this strategy, we provide you with the perspective and the instruments you need. This will by no means be an easy ride. Far-reaching and unpopular reforms might be required. Tough choices will have to be made, and will have to be made *now*. This will require the work and input of all of you — not only the political leadership, but the opposition, academia, civil society, media, and business.

Notes on Scene Three

1. We encounter this in performance: the notion that ambiguity (aesthetic, formal, narrative) necessarily means a relinquishing of control; that ambiguity stands for a lack of intent; that ambiguity refers to authorial leaks. We instead think of ambiguity as a place of held dissonance, and the result of a plural authorial process (holding process in suspension). We think of plurality here in Hannah Arendt's work, meaning politics: 'our plural existence.'
2. Before this scene begins, we wait for longer than is comfortable and listen to the rumbling of traffic outside the window, and our own breathing.
3. Before the relationship has even been formalised, the language already sounds like a break up. Where's the honeymoon period?

Scene Four (Three Minutes)

Committee stands apart, looking away and facing outwards.

1: She said: 'getting lost is about letting the unfamiliar appear', as if | leak

2: Replace: loss

3: Replace: double truth

4: Replace: hope

5: Replace: (compelled to) dance

1: Replace: noise

2: I have made a pledge | leak but also, I know you shared these damaged landscapes

3: Replace: bodies

4: Replace: ruins

5: Replace: conflicts

1: Replace: waters

2: Replace: politics

3: Other avenues for collective illiberal democracy include:

4: Crucial moments

5: Duty of representation

1: Sisterhood

2: Dissolution

3: Forgery

4: Other tools include:

5: Hinging

1: Teetering

2: Edging

3: Splitting

4: Continuing

5: I know sometimes life can be a struggle 1: Replace: leak

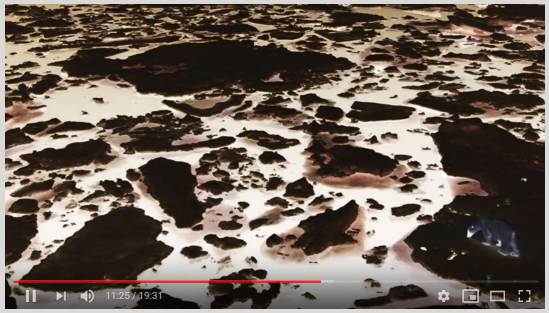
2: I know sometimes life can be a leak

Notes on Scene Four

1. When we say it's over we know exactly what it means (sing your song or read it like a sad poem).
2. 'Subscendence' is Timothy Morton's idea for a system in which the whole is less than the sum of its parts. Not that the whole is less real but that the parts are ontologically more than the whole. There is a radical equality to existence, but a not an equal claim to existence. Morton is not saying that the HIV virus is equal to a person infected with it, but that each exists equally and not in service of some more important teleology. Subscendence is holism as heterogeneous collectivity, not a whole that consumes its parts.
3. Could the constitutive break up speak to a unit of language that is less strong and stable than it appears? States, for example, leak. This does not mean that states are weak. States are weak for thinking that leaking is not an ecological mode of existence. In a sly reference to the sign works of Mladen Stilinović, ideological speech is being interrogated for its constant rupture with specificity. As any fan of action movies knows, walls are best for breaking through.
4. The broadcasting of questions without answers. The affirmation that hearing is taking place, and understanding. More than that, that feelings are being heard. The sense that sentiments continue until the leak is stopped, which correlates sentiments with leaking and crystallises (for me) in an image of leaking tears. The crying will stop when the leak stops. (I'd like to link sentiments to pop songs—the sentimental but ultimately useless—the sentimental as empty gesture on the one hand, as commodity on the other.)

Scene Five (Three Minutes)

Image of ice sheets inverted.



https://youtu.be/Oi-uHVY7hyw?t=679

Committee swaps numbers & applies fake blood to faces and exposed flesh. Stands together, forming a semi-circle, looking and facing inwards. Drops pages of script while speaking.

during the implementation period *what should I?*
a registration system – an essential preparation for the new regime
so many things seem filled with the intent to be lost existing structures resolution mechanisms
is no disaster
there should be a clear
CONSIDER VALUE WHOLLY STOP
BENEFIT EXISTING RESIDENTS BETTER STOP
– IT IS NOW MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER THATWE HAVE THE RIGHT: STRONG AND COMPETITIVE
STOP
double lock: a guarantee
how should I?
this will not go on forever lose something door keys
that if our collective endeavours
farther, faster, places, names
and look! my last what
should I?
STOP IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD WHICH WE EXPECT TO BE AT LEAST TWO YEARS STOP / MAY ALSO WISH TO TIGHTEN / IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD / THE DEFINITION OF A FAMILY / IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD / FROM ITS CURRENT MEANING

Notes on Scene Five

1. 
2. D: 'Weaver birds that had taken refuge in a nearby tree fell to the ground. Car alarms went off. The few unbroken windows around the block shattered' (Okorafor 2014, 167).
3. B: 'The cinema was still on fire and in the scarlet light of the flames that occasionally shot up, three groups were seen hanging about the pavement, still as statues, watching the fire with a look of disgust' (Krasznahorkai trans. Szirtes 2016, 218).
4. The more playful, 'irrational,' less translatable, less semantic and informational aspects of the language, serve to emphasise and celebrate the vocal interplay which, as Adriana Cavarero suggests, constitutes a 'reciprocal invocation' of embodied uniqueness, or, to put it another way, a means of social bonding (2005, 170).
5. During rehearsal, this section had to be constantly stopped due to intense fits of laughter. The horror of legislating a break up is rendered bureaucratically. Could the laughter speak to the need for comedy in the current political situation, specifically the UK leaving the EU? Or has the current situation become too comedic itself, voiding the notion of citizenship into satire?

the vision

a continent *I miss them*

NOT FOR A RELATIONSHIP
THAT ENDED BUT ENVISAGE THAT NOW,
SATISFACTORILY: WE WISH TO IMPOSE AS SOON
AS, IN ANY CASE
FREE MOVEMENT WILL END
two rivers, a continent, the joking voice
IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD
MOVEMENT LAW
WILL NO LONGER APPLY IMPLEMENTATION
PERIOD AND THE EXTENDED FAMILY MEMBER,
PROVIDE VALID RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN
IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD WE PROPOSE
REASONABLE, BUT SPECIFIC, THRESHOLDS
STOP ENSURE THAT THEY SUPPORT THEMSELVES
IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD STOP
REDUCING THE OPPORTUNITY FOR WORKERS
SETTLE IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD
STOP *it wasn't a disaster*
not for a relationship that ended but
not for a relationship that ended but
a registration system — an essential
preparation for the new IMPLEMENTATION
PERIOD IMPLEMENTATION regime
SETTLED PERIOD IMPLEMENTATION
PERIOD STOP

Committee is silent for 30 seconds.

6. In a talk at the Neue Slowenische Kunst National Pavilion at the Venice Biennale 2017, Slavoj Žižek suggested that while it would be tempting to see the NSK as a postmodern joke of a state, the NSK is a real state whereas states attached to land have become jokes. In this scene, an attempt to make bureaucracy into poetry speaks back to the political work of Generative Constraints as a whole. What are the ways that our artistic practice can pay attention to the world?
7. In *Le Rire*, Henri Bergson writes of the social function of laughter as a correction to misbehaviour, such as the unwillingness to adjust one's trajectory despite the approach of an obstacle. This scene asks whether triggering article 50 is a joke or not. The laughter in the rehearsal room is in a way the inability to keep a straight face while doing this work of paying attention.

Scene Six (Two Minutes)

A song plays. Full sugar fun, vocoder synth-pop with a funky two-step beat.

Committee speaks/sings together.

We intend to heartbreak all | true blue citizens | real life is a dying dream | let's walk away, true citizens

But when we leave, we fade to grey | leaking colours for this change | after exit, after me and you | there's no more dancing to this change

We are extended family no more | they said: limit the distance | relationships need valid proof | they said: re-define distance

Look for the rainbow, citizens | we're dancing in the market | labour, study, dream to earn | graduating in the market

Goodbye is not the end of income | our love will self- suffice | if you think you're good enough, dance with us | you'll always be someone's self-suffice

They said: your dream will never work | but we're making this opportunity | no more dependents, never settle down | time won't change this opportunity

Notes on Scene Six

1. This scene is haunted by karaoke…
2. i feel /
   in unison, sometimes
3. Play with the lack of specificity of the pronouns in love songs, with their potential for capacity and expansiveness (totality) — they might include everyone, they might be about everything! They absolutely *do not* and *are not*, and we know that, but the songs themselves don't seem to know that—they operate on the basis that no-one has discovered their truths, that they are exclusive, cold, cruel tools of Capitalism, that they are shiny sugary commodities designed to keep us desperate.
4. Jérôme Bel explains his use of pop songs as an attempt to find a commons between performers and spectators within the social situation of performance. Pop music, specifically the kind that is at risk of encouraging dance, follows the laughter of the previous scene. Perhaps the laughter was the beginning of the party. This is not accelerationism, and Generative Constraints is not advocating for the market to completely consume all forms of government. This is rather the pleasure of the possibility of beginning again, in the sense of Gertrude Stein, to see the break up as a way forward.

Scene Seven (Two Minutes)

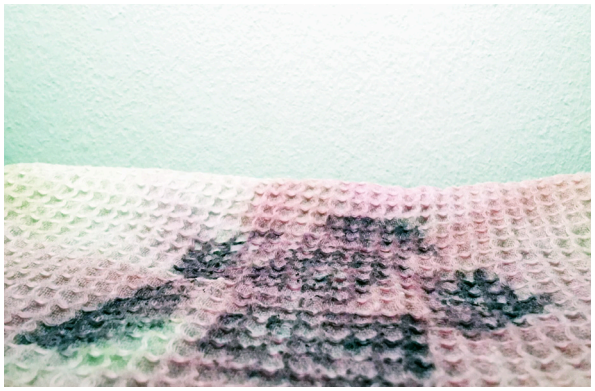
Video of a solo albatross, its return to land.

https://www.youtu.be/fXQV5kYOsjs

Committee carefully wipes blood off each other, removes costumes, and tidies up stage. Picks up and holds onto performance detritus, scripts, wipes, ponchos, etc. Stands close together as 1 speaks.

> What we've got in common is this break up. That is our relationship, that we are broken up. We will be broken up forever and that is the most romantic thing there is. We'll never always be together. We'll always be always apart.

Committee watches video until it ends. Holds silence.



Notes on Scene Seven

1. There is a fragment of time just before the end of the scene, in which we all wait for something; we are together in waiting, before the fabric falls apart.
2. as if there's more danger in the | idea of flight than in staying | home, as if laying back where | you stay precludes flying, as if | the symposium were theirs alone (Moten 2014, 63).
3. Charles Baudelaire's collection of poems *Les Fleurs du Mal* contains a poem entitled 'L'Albatros' (O large white migratory bird! O burden!) about men on ships who catch albatrosses for sport. In the final stanza, he goes on to compare poets to the birds — exiled from the skies and then weighed down by their giant wings, till death.
4. About entangled ways of life: 'third nature, [that is], what manages to live despite capitalism. To even notice third nature, we must evade assumptions that the future is that singular direction ahead. Like virtual particles in a quantum field, multiple futures pop in and out of possibility; third nature emerges within such temporal polyphony' (Lowenhaupt Tsing 2015, viii).
5. We come back to naturalism. This is theatre in some way, but it is skewed. The realism is performed outward with the audience, just as political speech is so often rendered in the fine brush strokes of fake news mimetic representation. Yet this is hopeful because it is sad.
6. The stage is cleaned at the end. The trace of this performance is the fact of it having been cleaned up. Bundled plastics, laundered T- shirts, laundered guilt. There is no such thing as leaving no trace. Lots of love.

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Biography

Generative Constraints is a committee that practises open-ended collaborative research into art, politics, and theory. We experiment with processes and structures of criticism, performance, poetics, and writing. Our activities include organising conferences and public dialogues, teaching, making original creative works, as well as digital publishing and exhibition curation.

Committee Members: Diana Damian Martin, Kate Potts, Nisha Ramayya, Nik Wakefield, Eley Williams

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