CHOREOGRAPHIES OF DISAPPEARANCE: FUGITIVE CHOREOGRAPHIES AND OTHER (NON)PERFORMANCES IN A TIME OF HYPER-PERFORMATIVITY

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Abstract

This practice-led enquiry explores disappearance in performance(s) in the present time. This doctoral project frames questions around the potential of withdrawal, opacity (Glissant, 1997), and (non)performance as fundamental ideas for performance(s). By taking a distinct approach to performance(s) that regards performance(s) as negation, I examine the meanings of this negation to show how specific (non)performances reconceptualize aspects of choreography and performance.

My intention is to dispute presence as a constitutive category of emancipation and transgression in performance. The core question this study asks is what if this apparent professed agent of emancipation called performance – which relies on visibility and presence as pure homogeneous transgressive essences – supports a whole repertoire of devices and methods of suppression, control and reductionism that corresponds with non-emancipatory dispositions, trends or impulses of present-time hypercapitalist culture?

By analysing the work of several artists and my practice-research, I seek to examine the potential of these (non)performances (refusals of calls to perform) in a time when performance collides with hypercapitalism and has become one of its core features. In the works considered here, performance(s) can be understood as refusal to comply with particular expected performances of reductionism (Glissant, 1997), operationality and productivity. I lay out the distinct pattern and forms of intervention of these (non)performances in an epoch of particular anxieties and challenges: the compulsion to perform, coloniality, social justice and our increasingly intimate, complex relation with technology.

By approaching performance(s) from the perspective of disappearance – a refusal to perform – I aim to fill gaps resulting from the exploitative caesura capitalism creates between "Nature" and "Society" (Moore, 2015a). For performance to focus on this caesura, the empty interval between "Nature" and "Society", is to open up performance(s) to other alternative performances, knowledges and concepts often "reduced" (Glissant, 1997) or ignored. From this perspective, this study intervenes in this break to open up the question of how divisions such as white and black, the West and the rest, the civilized and the primitive, and the capitalist and the worker

are arguably underwritten by Western performance. These divisions result from this caesura (between "Nature" and Society) and are at capitalism's core. This thesis entangles performance in these concerns and is interested in excavating these inscriptions in the continuum of the formation of performance.

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All documentation is available online on:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1F5-RaUN4PWLy_9q6LWYJLQb7c89jWjP-?usp=sharing

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Garbage Blues

1. Garbage Blues Film

Backpack-Selfie

Protest Space Score

0. Introduction

> either the freedom to perform or not to perform (or even to be or not to be), which might open up the possibility of another kind of examination of the metaphysics of 'behavior' and 'decision.' What if disappearance is, itself, best understood as a return to the exhausted, futurial sociability by which the one who is not one – as a matter of law, custom and theory but, before these, as a matter of rich entanglement of refusal and consent – has been sent?
>
> (Moten, 2018, p. 250)

This practice-based study explores the potential of withdrawal, opacity and disappearance in choreographic performance in the present time. My task is to approach the "unmarked, unspoken, unseen" (Phelan, 1993) and the "unconnected" (Latour, 2005) in performance(s) through artistic strategies of disappearance by focusing on strategies that trouble the way bodies come into disappearance. I aim to defy the optical, often homogeneous and recurrent, representational forms. Therefore, res(x)isting[1] the production and reproduction of visibility which are at the "centre of contemporary production of value" (Kunst, 2015, p. 10)

I will be exploring performance from the perspective of negation. In other words, I will be looking at performances of refusal; refusal in relation to reductionism[2], operationality and productivity. I initiated this incursion in the light of an episode described in section 2.3.1. of Chapter 2 that occurred while working as performer. It is from this encounter that I took an understanding of how particular opaque black practices (capoeira, African American dance practices) influenced 'new' avant-garde ideas of Western performance without acknowledgment. The implications of this matter have largely been ignored and are reflected in many of the tenets of western performance to the present time.

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[1] I use here (x) both in reference to the word "exist" but also to the choice of Malcom X where the "x" corresponded to a refusal of his slave name.
[2] Reductionism (Glissant, 1997, 193) refers to the imposition of Western-based hierarchies and homogenization that characterized the act of understanding of the other by the West.

Here, I want to consider how the extractionism of the western avant-gardes mirrors the deep entanglements between capitalism and colonialism which have been largely overlooked by performance and dance studies. In my view, there is a strong link between the two (capitalism – colonialism), which is also reflected in the way performance(s) and the choreographic are analyzed, criticized, made visible or erased from history.

I want instead to think with black opaque practices - characterized by strategies of withdrawal – and how these defy "sclerotic" (Moten, 2017, p. 102) categories of western performance. In other words, I am interested in the openings black and Caribbean methodologies bring to the field and how they relate to the present time. This is a move to think how this vector (extractionism-capitalism-colonialism) is at the centre and in relation to the present conditions under which performance happens.

Martinican poet and theorist Édouard Glissant's ideas of 'being in the world' offer an important contribution on how to live, perform together under the present conditions of global modernity. His body of work sets out the Caribbean as a site both of trauma but also a site of highly generative processes of assemblage and negotiations. In this sense Glissant's work functions as a first aid box on how to live together under the present conditions. In a number of Glissant's texts starting with Caribbean Discourse (1989) and moving on to the Poetics of Relation (1997), opacity emerges as a central concept, to talk about the African diaspora history but also on a broader context about the relations between the West and non-West.

In the film *Édouard Glissant: One World in Relation* (2010) Glissant refers to have first claimed the "right to opacity" in 1969 at a conference at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. In many of his talks, conversations, and texts Glissant stresses the rights of people and things not to be understood, to resist full scrutiny by the other. His demand can be seen as rejection to Western ways of understanding, authenticating, incorporating, extracting that characterizes Western relations with the non-West. Opacity is then a call to resist dominant systems of classification, administration or a western partition of the world with irreconcilable differences, binary demarcations, and opposition of species (Glissant, 1997, 189.

This is manifest in the film (2010) where he claims:

"There's a basic injustice in the worldwide spread of the transparency and the projection of Western thought. Why must we evaluate people on the scale of ideas proposed by the West?... As far as I'm concerned, a person has a right to be opaque. That doesn't stop me liking that person, it doesn't stop me from working with him, hanging out with him, etc. A racist is someone who refuses what he doesn't understand. I can accept what I don't understand."

His demand can be seen as a rejection to the "pathological demand to understand" underwritten by "hierarchies" and a "requirement for transparency" (Glissant, 1997) by the West. Opacity means rejecting the Western 'homogeneity of [essence]'. It alleges that the Western gesture of understanding - even if filled with the best intentions – is either a reduction of the other into universal categories or exoticism which Glissant (1997, 193) describes as an act of impossible transmutation into "being other" (ibid). It is a call for a rejection of Western's demand for transparency which he saw as an imposition of Western-based hierarchies and homogenization. Glissant's understanding that what is "barbaric is imposing one's own transparency on the Other" (Edouard Glissant: One World in Relation, 2010) is also key to address unequal politics behind performance. Glissant's work – with the concept of "Relation" (Glissant, 1997) and accounts of the "Creoule garden" (Edouard Glissant: One World in Relation, 2010) – moves beyond binary oppositional discourse, opening space for ideas of difference and assemblage of dissimilars. Moreover, these ideas emerge as deeply embedded in the life and landscape of the Caribbean. In other words, his is an invitation to inhabit the world differently. A world that recognizes and acknowledges the relation and entanglement between different people and landscapes, between the air, the water, plants, animate and inanimate things.

I will turn to Édouard Glissant's (1997) concept of opacity as a key to focus on particular performances of refusal with the purpose of tracing another genealogy of performance(s) – or perhaps an altogether distinct approach to performance(s) – which are in my view in direct relation to the Western edifice of performance, often called performance. I want to trace these (non)performative formations that rely on opacity – as the key strategy for their making – and examine how they inscribe

themselves in a continuum of extractive economies of exploitation and coloniality.[3] To move in this zone, "at the interplay where performance and performances is assumed" (Moten, 2017, p. 101), where (non)performative presence emerges is also, as we will see, to meddle with the binary of liveness and non-liveness. From this perspective, in some instances, performance can be seen in a continuum with ongoing extractive economies, even if not so for its innumerable calculated appropriations and reductive inclusive operations inscribed in its various 'new' modernist movements.

American geographer Jason W. Moore (2015a, p. 1) describes the present time as a new period marked by a turn from one form of capitalism to another where there is a "breakdown of the strategies and relations that have sustained capital accumulation over the past five centuries". It seems "increasingly difficult to get nature – including human nature – to yield its free gifts on the cheap". This break in relations followed the changes produced by colonial independencies, civil rights and feminist movements along with nature's refusal to 'give' more. As a consequence, the alleged separation between "Nature" and "Society" has become more difficult. Moore is referring here to capitalism as a project whose ultimate goal was and is to exploit, make use of and master "Nature" for "economic growth, social development, or some other higher good" (2015a, p. 2). Seen from Moore's perspective, capitalism is a way of organizing "Nature", "a mosaic of relations" (Moore, 2015a, p. 1) deeply rooted in the long-ingrained dualism of "Nature" and "Society". Such dualism – traceable to the 16th, 17th, 18th century – would come to define what is human and what is put under the category of "Nature" and entailed a series of divisions around race and gender. Accordingly, most humans were part of "Nature" which was supposed to be controlled, educated, disciplined and put to work. Divisions such as men and women, white and black, the West and the rest, the civilized and the

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[3] I opted for Maldonado-Torres's (2007) terminology instead of the word "colonialisms" to highlight "coloniality" as a present-day operative formation. He points out that "Coloniality is different from colonialism. Colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such nation an empire. Coloniality, instead, refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Thus, coloniality survives colonialism" (Maldonado-Torres, 2007).

primitive and the capitalist and the worker are directly related to the separation between "Nature" and Society and were at the core of capitalism[4].

This study puts performance in the entanglement of these concerns and is interested in excavating these inscriptions in the continuum of formation of performance and how performance might or might not underwrite these in a time of hyper-performativity – a time where performativity is the central locus of productivity (McKenzie, 2001). It does so by bringing to the forefront the deep entanglements between the formation of what is today called performance, of which presence and liveness are fundamental categories and a wide range of practices of (non)performances.

In doing so, the choreographies – of French artist Boursier-Mougenot, Belgian theater director Kris Verdonck, American artist David Hammons, Dominican choreographer Isabel Lewis and Korean choreographers Geumhyung Jeong – under study here are a stark reminder of the potential forms of intervention that rely on the unseen, or even the political potentiality of remaining or adopting the hidden. They invite us to reassess the direct alliance between visibility and critical potentiality. Under the current times when arts, history and ethics are judged by their ability to disrupt what is visible and sayable, this is of the uttermost importance.

Against this backdrop, it might be feasible to disappear, to leave the stage or to engage with aesthetic operations that rely on the "opaque" as strategic withdrawal. Doing so is to prioritize other relations and formations that are in direct relation with the challenges arising from this new epoch. It is to welcome other meanings and worlds that might translate our present hybrid world, characterized by numerous agencies, numerous affiliations interacting with each other in various constellations as pointed out by French philosopher Bruno Latour (1993). A complex hybrid world made up of ecological concerns, racial inequalities, social justice, technologies, money, genetics, urbanism. A world of numerous agencies, numerous affiliations interacting with each other in various constellations.

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[4] For more see *Capitalism in the Web of life: An Interview with Jason W. Moore* (2015b) where he articulates how issues of race and gender inequality are directly linked to the division of "Nature" and "Society".

For now, I would add that to do so, to approach performance from disappearance, from a refusal to perform is also in some instances to displace "the particular (and sclerotic) notion of presence that liveness is supposed to instantiate" (Moten, 2017, p. 102). Martinican poet and theorist Glissant's (1997) detailed examination of opacity, camouflage and strategic practices of concealment for res(x)isting the west is useful for this study, challenging as it does the structures of visibility, and reductive notions of identity that accompany them. It points towards another genealogy of (non)performances, one that emerges in the work of some contemporary creations described in this project. People historically relegated to the margins often used multiple strategies of opacity, ranging from storytelling, the creation of Creole languages (sounding like European languages but cryptic for the colonizers) to physical practices like capoeira (a martial art often disguised as dance) or even celebratory practices of one's own gods camouflaged as the colonizer's religion (Candomblé). These are forms of resistance in order to claim the right to be illegible and indecipherable in the face of a totalizing universalist agenda that purports to speak in their place. In this regard, opacity is an operation that reverts a vulnerable visibility into a highly impenetrable presence. Hence, it complicates binary definitions of presence and visibility, challenging totalizing ideas of total legibility.

Another way to formulate this would be to understand these performances as a refusal of certain calls to perform or a refusal to perform. That is to say to think about opacity as a refusal to be given to the gaze in a certain way, to be reduced. Here, performance is the manifestation of a refusal to adhere to the terms of an agreement or a promise to perform in particular reductive ways.

Additionally, this study will be looking into performances that refuse to comply with particular expected performances of operationality and productivity. In this case, the focus will be given to (non)performances whose central aspect is a refusal to give into the "radical consumption of the body". "Radical consumption" is understood here in Bojana Kunst's (2011, p. 115) sense as elements such as presence of the body, its consumption, its actions and exploration of capabilities such as physical power and energy. Slovenian theorist Kunst argues that the transgressive potentiality, the power of the "radical consumption of body" in performance is weakened due to

the fact that these elements are "at the core of the contemporary structures of power – the methods of producing and controlling social relations" (Kunst, 2015, pp. 24, 25). Such aspects in the form of "relationships between people, our ethical values, actions, desires, expectations, shameful bizarreness" are today the source of the surplus value of contemporary economics" (Kunst, 2015, p. 25) of the present form of capitalism. Together, these performances form the assortments of refusal, evasion and opacity of what I call choreographies of disappearance where resistibility, intentional disappearance or refusal to perform are given a prominent role. It must be said in advance that this does not mean a rejection of connectivity but rather the contrary (as we will see it is in some cases): they are a way of inviting unexpected guests to perform.

I will be using a reiterative mode throughout this study (Chapters 2 and 4) whereby I readdress particular creations in order to analyse them from a different perspective. This is the case of Chapter 2, where alongside the works of American artist David Hammons and Dominican choreographer Isabel Lewis, I return to particular assortments, thereby discussing them in the light of the methodological breaks they make. Similarly, in Chapter 4, in order to examine particular challenges of working with objects, I return to works introduced in the opening chapter. I used this strategy as a methodological reordering with the purpose of attending differently to these (non)performances and their meanings. Thus, layering, interrupting, remixing, fusing and displacing which are characteristic of black methodologies and practices are used as a strategy in writing for producing alternative meanings.

It is a deliberate and planned methodological shift as it is only through this errancy, loss, dispersion – which correspond themselves to the black experience and its generative performances – that those alternative relations and readings emerge. This reiterative mode produces alternative modes of relationality that call into question sclerotic categories (Moten, 2017, p. 102) and patterns. It flips the script and breaks free of old associations, enabling alternative one's. Such major shift was necessary for producing alternative modes of relationality so as to avoid falling in the traps of the universal(s) or of what Glissant (1989, p. 6) called the "kind of humanism where idiots get trapped". This positioning could be understood as counter aesthetic and non-methodological as understood in the Western archive. Therefore, this also a proposal for an alternative form of navigation where displacement and possible

disorientation into a reordering is called for. Thus, Glissant's ideas of opacity and the "Creole Garden" (Edouard Glissant: One World in Relation, 2010) the latter a substantial methodological influence in the PaR have been influential in the design of this text.

What I want to open with this project is what critical possibilities choreographic performance can unveil by focusing on strategies of refusal, strategic withdrawal and opacity. More, what assumptions about a performance that relies on presence as a fundamental inherently transgressive transformational category might be called into question with such an engagement.

My study will advance by unsettling the deeply rooted presentism in choreographic performance derived from the Aristotelian ideal of metaphysics of presence that privileges presence over absence. But I will not limit this to a differential argument. Without an examination of how transparency, the live, and the universal Western body came to be the central elements of performance without a critical engagement as to why this purifying process came to be central to performance beyond differentiality, I uphold that such a critical operation would leave performance largely untroubled. What I mean is that doing so would fail to trouble a "certain dominant normative formulation within performance studies" (Moten, 2017, p. 101) that relies on particular binaries (presence|absence, live|dead, subject|object), homogeneous essences, intra-human activity and the 'universal body'. All the purifying processes and 'homogeneity of essences' that populate performance and are often viewed as its primary elements. For as American anthropologist Anna Tsing (2005, p. 1) says "the universal, as it, too, has been produced in the colonial encounter".

Or as Foster (2011, p. 85) points out, the "'Universal' is an ideological operation' aiming at making a specific dance practice and corporeality become the norm. This purifying process is behind the construction of the universal body of modern dance Americana[5] and 60s somatic practices deeply embodied in the concert dance of the

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[5] For more on this see *Alien Bodies: Representations of Modernity, 'Race' and Nation in Early Modern Dance* (1998). In this book American performance theorist Ramsay Burt theorized about modern dance americana (Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey) as examples of cultural appropriation and arguably embodied racism.

60s avant-garde and much of the late 20ᵗʰ century Western postmodern dance. Somatics is then, in a continuum with modern dance Americana in excluding bodies, co-opting Eastern and African practices, omitting African American influences and transforming them into the universal (or arguably white[6]). For British dance theorist Duncan Gilbert (2014) the natural 'universal body' embodied in postmodern concert dance of the 60s to the late 20ᵗʰ century is consolidated based on an idealized romantic idea of a return to a body with 'natural' lost capacities – "'pre-culture body' and 'trans-historical'" (Gilbert, 2014, p. 53) . Ideas of primitivism and exoticism of other cultures, stages of human development, Darwinism and romantic ideas of animals, species and children were coupled together into the formation of this universal somatic corporeality. In tracing down and analysing the underpinnings of late 20ᵗʰ-century, avant-garde dances, Gilbert (2014) exposes how deeply embedded its rationale is with the division of Nature-Society. This 'new' corporeality of the Western avant-garde is shaped in opposition to the cultured 'other' and yet it is only these omitted influences[7] that significantly distinguish it as a 'new' genre. It is from this contradiction that the 'universal body' arises.

Not acknowledging this would be to ignore a large body of (non)performances directly connected with extractivism, capital accumulation, exploitation central to the colonial project and its present afterlives. I bring the performances of American artist David Hammons and Dominican choreographer Isabel Lewis in an effort to map disappearance, opacity and withdrawal in performance(s) but also to further trouble the premises of Western presentism and its valued transparency in the making of the edifice of performance. But even more, through this I want to suggest that some of

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[6] For more see *A conceit of the Natural Body: The Universal-Individual in Somatic Dance Training* (2014) by British performance theorist Duncan Gilbert. Here, the author analyses how racialization and whiteness work in dance through the construction of universality of Western avant-garde dance.

[7] For more on the erasure of African Culture by American postmodern dance see *Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance: Dance and Other Contexts* by American Dance theorist Brenda Dixon-Gottschild (1996). Gottschild (1996) points to the influence of the black street forms in democratization of movement and the casual energy dominant traits of the Judson avant-garde, and to the open-ended free jazz movement as influential of open-ended structures that characterize this artistic movement. Additionally, see *Butting Out Reading Resistive Choreographies Through Works by Jawole Willa Jo Zollara Chandralekha* (Chatterjea, 2004) for omitted borrowings from Eastern practices (namely Sufism and improvisational open-ended practices of Kathak) in Western postmodern dance works and the construction of the artist 'other' as fixed in tradition deprived of innovation shaped by Western dance critics discourses.

these fugitive choreographies are in close relation with (even inseparable from) Western modernism and a continued Western performativity, which relies on its rigid reductive binaries (presence|absence, live|dead, subject|object).

For perhaps the ostensible idea of opening the body towards the space and towards other bodies, which is so pervasive in choreographic performance, might not be accessible to all. As I argue in Chapter 2, this might be because the world that some of these particular (non)performances are opening towards is not welcoming but is strange and hostile one. Thus, this leads to the reason behind why these performances draw on aesthetic operations that "challenge legibility, rely upon opacity, and proceed by errancy" (Edwards, 2019). In this respect, I follow the path of Saidiya Hartman's (1997) project of excavating further in order to bring attention to another genealogy of performances, one of (non)performances that relies on opacity for its expressivity and that follows the patternation of Paul Gilroy's (1993) Black Atlantic.[8]

My move into bringing these particular fugitive black (non)performances is not driven by my desire to include and convoke these as external add-ons to Western performance. Instead, my suggestion is to think alongside these performances as formations in close relation to the performance, hyper-performativity and extractionism of the West. With this in mind, I intend to bring attention to another genealogy of performance(s) – or should I say (non)performances. One that requires "another kind of examination of metaphysics of 'behaviour and 'decision'" (Moten, 2018, p. 250). In doing so, I am calling for performance to consider presence as a mediated, non-stable condition and be open to the possibilities this can provoke. But more importantly, I bring opacity, withdrawal and disappearance as the central elements for these (non)performances.

Such an approach troubles accepted understandings of agency that tend to go hand in hand with visible embodiment of subjectivities which have been the privilege of the

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[8] American art historian Robert Farris Thomson (1984) traces African American culture to Angola and Congo. He coined the term "Black Atlantic" in his 1997 book Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy. This would be the expanded subject of Paul Gilroy's (1993) Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double consciousness. Black Atlantic refers to a distinct black Atlantic culture which incorporated elements from African, American, British, and Caribbean cultures that British sociologist Paul Gilroy (1993) traces in Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double consciousness.

few. By approaching performance from this perspective, I aim at filling in gaps resulting from the exploitative caesura between "Nature" and "Society" (Moore, 2015a) created by capitalism. For performance to focus on this caesura, on the empty interval between "Nature" and "Society" produced by exploitative capitalism, is to open up performance to other alternative performances, knowledges and even concepts often "reduced" (Glissant, 1997) or ignored. Moreover, such an approach can prove productive in revealing performance's generative capacity under a time characterized by hyper-presence and a compulsion to perform. As performance becomes a core feature of hypercapitalism, could a refusal to perform or a withdrawal of the performer provide alternatives or critical stance on the way we live today? What other presences, existences, knowledges have been ignored by performance because of the inherited division of "Nature" and "Society"? What openings can result from leaving Western dance's prevalent "body humanism" (Laermans, 2008, p. 7) and 'universal body'? Finally, I ask in what ways are we not as performance artists presently endeavouring in visible resistance but accomplices in the present form of capitalism?

With this study I want to make the case for (non)performance, disappearance, withdrawal and opacity not only as aesthetic formations but also as political value, as strategies for sustaining specific practices and dimensions of existence from regulatory power and normative reductionism. Besides, it is my intention to dispute presence as an inherent category of emancipation and transgression in performance. For what if this apparent professed agent of emancipation called performance – that relies on visibility and presence as pure homogeneous transgressive essence – bears a whole repertoire of devices and methods of suppression, control and reductionism corresponding with non-emancipatory dispositions, trends or impulses of present-time culture that collide with hypercapitalism? Here, I am thinking particularly of the pervasive performativity manifest in the personalization of political life along with a reductionist agglutinative tendency.

American performance theorist Jon McKenzie (2001) speaks of performance not as radical or transformative but as a compulsion that occupies all aspects of society from the cultural sector, management and education to the technological sector ("Techno Performance") having a profound entanglement with new forms of capitalism. In *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance* (2001), he argues

that the present time is characterized by a compulsion to perform. This means that today many of the features traditionally attributed to the field of cultural performance (theatre, dance, performance art) are used as strategies in performance management (collaboration, creativity) and technological performance (interactivity, touch, the relational). Moreover, this compulsion to perform is a fundamental feature and the driving force of present neoliberalism and capitalism. This hyper-performativity, contrary to what many might think particularly in the performing arts and performance art, highlights the normative power of performance rather than its critical possibilities. Cultural performance seems to be dominated by ideas of the 'new', 'presence', 'being in the moment' or 'collaboration'. Many of these features are characteristic of late capitalism[9] and of new production systems. In this new era of hyper-performativity, McKenzie (2001, p. 10) highlights the emergence of new performers: non-human technologies. In referring to techno performance(s) he observes "Who reads bar code? Nobody, really—few, if any, human bodies read it directly; but many, many machines read it"[10].

Under these conditions, a refusal to perform encapsulates a critical aspect in a time where performance seems to cooperate with capitalism. But more, to disappear and leave the stage to an 'object performer' is to give priority to things and to acknowledge the new forms of object-human relations mentioned above. It is to

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[9] In this study, I use the words 'late capitalism', 'hypercapitalism' and 'racial capitalism' to indicate particular traits of capitalism as a formation. The differences in terms of nuances indicate and situate particular conditions under which performance(s) operate(s), or other aspects relevant for the performance being described. Here, I am introducing the term late capitalism to highlight aspects that American political theorist Frederic Jameson saw as characterizing this form of capitalism that crystallized after the 70s oil crisis. *In Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), he highlights the increasing mediatization through television, film and the internet as a relevant aspect of late capitalism. Additionally, he describes the emergence of new forms of business organizations (multinationals and transnational) which produce flight of production into other regions of the world and consequently new forms of labour. But at the core of late capitalism is the integration of "aesthetic innovation and experimentation" (1991, p. 5) into commodity production. This latter aspect results from the "frantic economic urgency of producing fresh waves of ever more novel-seeming goods ever more novel seeming goods at greater speeds" (1991, p. 5).

[10] The fact that new technologies can perform defies dominant ideas of Western performance as circumscribed to human living organic bodies. American performance theorist Philip Auslander (2008, p. 72) stresses, by giving the example of chatbots, that these performances break down the idea that performance is solely a human activity. More, he highlights the complexity of these performances that respond to actions of other performers autonomously and are characterized by unpredictability and an improvisational quality. In doing so, he argues that bots are productive technological entities rather than reproductive.

engage with other hybrid worlds characterized by a growing dependence of the human body on technology pointed out by French philosopher Bruno Latour (1993). Doing so is to delve into an entangled agency where human and non-human interact with each other, even if in some instances (as we will see in Chapter 2) to 'play with dead things', to let these non-humans perform, might entail to 'play dead' risking falling into obscurity. In this game of 'hide and seek', live and dead are shifting concepts, varying, open to mutation and contamination as the extra human figures and the lively presence of few machines in some of the described creations will show us. For it is here, within the entanglements –between live|dead, presence|absence and subject|object – that these performances, these formations operate.

From this perspective, this project is a study of (non)performative presences, its potentialities and the questionings brought by them. In bringing attention to these (non)performances, it is my intention to caution against the risk of inhibiting other possible forms of intervention that rely on the unseen or even of ignoring altogether the political potential of intentionally adopting the hidden.

My choice of written study is to advance alongside particular positionings in the form of a multiplicity of practices, cultivated disappearances and infiltrations articulated with formations of thought that shape the ground of these (non)performances. While engaging transversally across different domains of thought, this study tries to stay as much as possible with these choreographies. It is a gesture towards a plurality of practices, knowledges, voices that speak to my choreographic practice. A positioning that speaks through many other singular artists' trainings and strategies: a practice in relation. It is a consistent and persistent move – patent in Chapters 1, 2 and 4 in an effort to localize my practice-as-research (PaR) within other specific artistic strategies – of including rather than ignoring a continuity of practices and knowledges which focus on fugitivity and withholding as a major strategic intentional performative tactic. My approach will emphasize a number of practices in performance(s) that shape the transversal field with which I engage. Here, practice(s) is used to refer to original modes of 'doing-with' and 'being with' on approaching performance. As such practice encompasses a multiplicity of operations, tasks, readings, excavations even borrowings. It consists but is not limited to: the adherence to acts of concealment, the cultivation of disappearance, the performance of unwritten laws and hidden operations; particular

forms of sociability, the praxis of conversation, hosting preparations, hearing but also unhearing, interruptive operations, readings; call and response procedures, the praxis of reciprocity, mixing, sampling, mashing-up; trickster acts; bodily-performative and written positionalities, refusals; multi-modal performativity; material and immaterial borrowings; the collection of particular materials; olfactory and degustation experiments.

I opt for a navigation inspired by the idea of "study" (Harney & Moten, 2013, p. 110), that is to say a composition that is open to change when performed, where various entanglements are constantly in the making. I do this to highlight the fact that the "incessant and irreversible intellectuality of these activities was already there" (Harney & Moten, 2013, p. 110).

With this I also want to imply the entangled common intellectual practice that these activities involve. Therefore, my use of "study" to refer to this project derives from its distinctive feature of having been written as an open-ended gathering of practices and as a whole, varied, alternative history of thought in the shape of these (non)performances.

Since my task is not one of inclusion but to give full body to concealment and opacity in the formulation of these fugitive choreographies, I emphasize their significance in the elaboration of a complex archive of a network of knowledge-practices, strategies and concepts that defy many of the tenets of Western performance.

0.1. Overview of Chapters

Chapter 1, "Performing in a Time of Mass Art production and Hypercapitalism", extensively describes the particular conditions under which 'we' in the West are performing and the challenges brought by these conditions into the field of performance(s). I do so by drawing primarily on Kunst (2015), Moore (2015a) and Mckenzie (2001). Through this chapter, I lay out the context and reasons beyond my interest in the particular potentialities of approaching performance from disappearance in the present time. I proceed by bringing to light several examples of refusal and evasion by three distinct artists – visual artist Boursier-Mougenot, theatre director Kris Verdonck and choreographer Geumhyung Jeong – that defy these present conditions and rely on the withdrawal of the human performer to explore non-human performativity. While some of these creations exercise a strong internal critique of the performing arts by making their over productivity visible in the form of powerless over-production of subjectivities (through the consumption of presence and of the body), others pose relevant questions about our relation to nature, objects and capitalism by simply giving voice to the non-human performers. In doing so, they reveal hidden connections (Nature- capitalism) and other possible existences beyond use-value latent even under late capitalism. Some of these encounters touch on questions of the permanence of life of objects over human certain death, the intimate links developed between machine and the human (organic) resulting in new living figures. Others, by giving voice to the virtual, raise pertinent questions about our assumptions on the relationship between original and fake or the real and the virtual, echoing traits and concerns of contemporary politics (for example, the role of fake news in the present time).

Chapter 2, "Maliciously Missing", explores the potentiality of the missing performer and various strategies that engage with opacity and the hidden as generative withholdings. Such a move suggests a break in a major aspect of performance: an intentional decentring from the 'human universal' body. I begin by contesting the highly valued presentism in performance. This is followed by a clarification on the distinction between intentional generative withholding and other forms of forced

invisibility, with a focus on the ethical questions arising from this. In doing so, I open space for "the possibility of another kind of examination of the metaphysics of 'behavior' and 'decision'" (Moten, 2018, p. 250) ignored in Western performance that shapes the fugitive choreographies of Hammons and Lewis described here. Furthermore, I elaborate on the ways in which these contemporary (non)performances create an alternative archive of knowledges and practices of resistance that defy legibility and "the pristine self-sameness of an "original" (Schneider, 2011, p. 100) (both highly valued in the Western archive). By relying on frailty and opacity as primal instruments for our experiences, these archives suggest that to form a relation, one does not need to grasp everything (optically or otherwise). Indeed, the opaque might be a passage to develop a relation and accessing an all-different palette of experiences and points of view. As such, these fugitive (non)performances highlight the unusual prolific infiltrative capacity of choreographies that rely on all that is lacking at the level of the visible. Here, I also suggest that to focus on disappearance, evasion and withdrawal in the context of performance(s) entails a significant set of shifts in how performance(s) are generated, enacted and actualized. By looking at the works of Hammons, Lewis, Verdonk and Jeong I focus in detail on three specific strategies for the composition of "choreographies of disappearance": camouflage, orality, acts of hiding or a complete withdrawal of the human performer. I then look at the methodological implications and outcomes of the various possible strategies that can be used to achieve disappearance, highlighting the paradoxical nature of camouflage.

In Chapter 3, "Upside Down", I reflect on my PaR pondering on two strategic concepts – 'being upside down' and 'auscultation' – as fundamental in my approach to disappearance. The alternative positioning of upside-down manifests a re-arrangement of oneself towards the relational that spans across particular operations, practices, studies or 'conversations', connecting them into what constitutes the overall body of this PaR. I describe in detail the alternative tactics explored in the construction of *Maliciously Missing: the Potential of the Missing Performer* (Gala, 2016), *the Table for Upside Down Practices* (Gala & al, 2019a) and the studies *1001 Things* (Gala & Feio, 2016), *Garbage Blues* (Feio & Gala, 2016) and *Protest Space* (2016). These last studies result from departing from a body already contaminated and the encounters with the various assemblages exhibited by non-human entities in

the room. I point towards the significance of an operative relationality with the environment one is immersed in during the making of these performance(s). Hereof, the encounter with the various assemblages existent in the surroundings becomes the device par excellence through which one can become extra-human.

The belief that disappearance, the hidden and opacity can be the enablers of intensive close encounters between self, others and particular collaborative things is behind the setting up of *Table for Upside Down Practices* (Gala & al, 2019a). I describe how under this conversational table, a variety of particular performances are rendered visible by different participants in a diversity of ways: body positionings, orally expressed reflections, disagreements, silences, emotive declared positionings, body experimentations and degustations. In addition, I examine in detail the specificities behind the setting up of the space, the devices for the participants and the (non)performativity adopted by the host. I discuss in detail how this role escapes the expectations of a directive performance or presumptions of particular promised performances but also the challenges arising from such positioning. Finally, I explore how the *Table for Upside Down Practices* (Gala & al, 2019a) points towards an "aesthetics of rupture and connection" (Glissant, 1997, p. 151) where orality and relationality are favoured.

The aim of Chapter 4, "Towards the Critical Performativity of Things", is twofold: to unveil the associations and relations produced by the performativity of things and to focus on the extreme potentiality and implications of objects becoming lone performers themselves. My contribution relies largely on Latour's "actor-network theory (ANT)" (2005), notably his thoughts on hybridity and emphasis on associations. By drawing a parallel between these ideas and the choreographic thought behind several creations, I explore the particular capacity of choreographic thought to expose the specific problematics arising from our current times.

CHAPTER 1: PERFORMING IN A TIME OF MASS ART PRODUCTION AND HYPERCAPITALISM

1.1. Introduction

This first chapter deals with the challenges faced by performance arising from late capitalism. It will describe the conditions under which performance is operating in the present time and its critical potentialities. It will do so through the works of French visual artist Boursier-Mougenot, Belgian theatre director Kris Verdonck, Korean choreographer Geumhyung Jeong. Not only do these works dismantle some of the modernist assumptions in choreographic performance but also, they offer distinct ways of thinking relations between humans and non-humans which are of significance for the challenges brought by late capitalism. My suggestion is that such practices are relevant for performance in advancing unique ways of dealing with the current circumstances. Moreover, performance is in a particular position to do so because of its direct implications in the current order, its contestable, intrinsically transgressive, avant-garde traits and its tradition of working with groupings (including objects).

In the West we seem to live in a world where more intimate relations between humans and objects develop. This aspect is hard to ignore. We hear about the robotization of work, smart phones, supermarket counter machines, driverless cars. Some of us actually might go to work in a driverless train. We interact with each other through devices. We have an increasingly intimate relation with laptops, mobile phones, the internet and 'applications'. Many of these 'objects' speak, react to us and make us react. Latour's (1993) thesis of hybridization of the present era echoes here, as it surrounds us with an increased dependency of the human body on technology. Objects are no longer (were they ever?) mere recipients of our actions; objects influence our conduct and induce practices in such a way that our conduct cannot be solely ascribed to us. Our relation with objects as consumers and spectators is defining new relations that moved long ago away from our simple role of object users. Objects mark the pace of time characterized by intense presentism and obsession of being in the now. Under these circumstances, intensive and unstoppable communication is encouraged. The "right not to be watched" (Berardi,

2009, p. 107) in the West has almost disappeared from current life. Capitalism no longer limits itself to manufacturing; it has extended its scope into "immaterial labor" (Lazzarato, 1996). It is a main provider of experiences. Whether in the sphere of political, the food industry, or education, the focus has shifted to the idea of the experience, making performativity a central locus of productivity.

We live in an era characterized by our obsession with knowing everything in the moment and that trades on immaterial goods (Lazzarato, 1996) – flexible organizational forms, ideas, event creation, affects. As performance becomes a central aspect of these activities, various signs emerge. The examples are many: the USA 2016 and 2020 elections and their direct relation with performativity; curated restaurants that are directed as theatre plays; or education as an experience provider (UK higher education is an example). At the core is the idea of performing and providing a live experience to the 'client/user'. McKenzie (2001) argues that the pressure to perform expands to all human activity. From the economy the knowledge within the academia, the cultural sector, to the political, performance seems central in the formation of power and knowledge. It is performance rather than discipline that is shaping our subjectivities in the 21st century. The uncontested value of presence and the over-privileging of 'the live' and 'liveness' in the performing arts[11] – in line with Phelan's (1993) ontological definition of performance –should not ignore the present conditions of production.

In such a context it might be feasible to explore the prospect of the human body becoming evidently absent from the stage and even the extreme possibility of a choreography without people. As performance becomes a core feature of hypercapitalism[12], could a refusal to perform or a withdrawal of the performer provide alternatives or a critical stance on the way we live today?

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[11] It can be argued that 'ephemeral presence' shaped the ontological status of performance from the 1960s onwards. In *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*, Schneider (2011, p. 94) describes how this view of performance as only happening in the moment and of over-privileging of the 'live 'and 'liveness' became prevalent from the mid-60s onwards with a movement of scholars from New York. These ideas have "determined, to a great extent, how we think about 'live' performance in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries (2011, p. 94).

[12] I refer to hypercapitalism to describe a form of capitalism characterized by the commodification of human experience and time. Under "hypercapitalism" (Graham, 1999) knowledge, thought and the language to convey these become the central locus of productivity. They are the central elements of production, distribution and exchange. This is accompanied by a commodification of human

Such a refusal to perform encapsulates a critical aspect in a time where performance seems to cooperate with capitalism. To disappear and leave the stage to an 'object performer' is to give priority to things and to acknowledge the new forms of object-human relations mentioned before. It is to engage with other possible meanings and worlds that might translate our present hybrid world characterized by a growing dependence of the human body on technology pointed out by Latour (1993). A complex hybrid world made up of technologies, ecological concerns, money, genetics and urbanism. A world of numerous agencies, numerous affiliations interacting with each other in various constellations.

American geographer Jason Moore (2015a, p. 1) characterizes this new world or new epoch as a transition from one form of capitalism to another, where there is a "breakdown of the strategies and relations that have sustained capital accumulation over the past five centuries". It seems "increasingly difficult to get nature – including human nature – to yield its 'free gifts' on the cheap" (Moore, 2015a, p. 1) . This break in relations followed the changes produced by colonial independencies, civil rights and feminist movements along with nature's refusal to 'give' more. As a consequence, the alleged separation between "Nature" and "Society" has become more difficult. Moore is referring here to capitalism as a project whose ultimate goal was and is to exploit, make use of and master "Nature" for "economic growth, social development, or some other higher good" (2015a, p. 2). Seen from Moore's perspective, capitalism is not an economic system nor a social system. It is a way of organizing "Nature", "a mosaic of relations" (Moore, 2015a, p. 1) deeply rooted in the long-ingrained dualism of "Nature" and "Society". Such dualism - traceable to the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries – would come to define what is human and what is put under the category of "Nature" and entailed a series of divisions around race and gender. Accordingly, most humans were part of "Nature" which was supposed to be controlled, educated, disciplined and put to work. Divisions such as men and women, white and black, the West and the rest, the civilized and the primitive, and

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experience and time where instant access to information and knowledge become fundamental objects of consumption. Under this formation, immediacy and ephemerality of experience is highly valued. Consumption of unique user experiences as well as of physical objects is predominant. As a result, "hypercapitalism" (Graham, 1999) is defined by accelerated intense global flows of exchange of both material and immaterial capital.

the capitalist and the worker are directly related to the separation between "Nature" and Society and were at the core of capitalism.

While Boursier-Mougenot's work reveals other possible relations between objects, nature and humans away from instrumental consumption, the works of Verdonck critique the "powerlessness of radical consumption" (Kunst, 2015, p. 22) of the body that marks late twentieth-century choreography and the present overproduction of subjectivities. As for Jeong's creations, they disclose the complexity of our close, even intimate relation to objects, the female body and technology.

This chapter explores what critical possibilities choreography can unveil by focusing on strategies of attending to 'non-human & human' constellations, of hiding the human performer behind objects or the extreme potentiality and implications of objects becoming lone performers themselves, particularly in face of the challenges brought by late capitalism. However, such deserting could be seen as a betrayal by many for whom the performing arts is limited to intra-human activity. Those doing so fail to acknowledge the long tradition of proximity with objects in the performing arts.

1.2. Performing in a Time of Mass Art Production and Hypercapitalism

> Can a business have a mind? A subconscious? A power to store every experience and call upon it through something called intuition. Can a company have reflexes? A nervous system, the ability to react precisely and correctly, faster than the speed of thought. Can an enterprise have a sixth sense a knack for predicting the future? Can a business have a spirit? Can a business have a soul? Can a business be alive?[13]

> (CyberRaiz, 2016)

I will first try to describe some of the conditions we in the west seem to be performing under highlighting the particular challenges they bring for cultural performance. Geographer David Harvey (1990) argues that artistic production in the present time owes its discernible features to the ever-intensifying compression of time and space through technological developments. The exploitation of increased speeds in transport and information exchange by capitalism has made representation increasingly more problematic.

One of the new conditions of this new "economic globalization" is the role of capital. This change in the role of capital occurred after the crisis in capitalism in 1972 coined "flexible accumulation" (Harvey, 1990) which Lazzarato (1996) would designate Post-Fordism. Until this moment, production relied on working on an assembly line with specific equipment and the use of moulds by unskilled workers. The objective was mass production but also higher wages for workers who would be consumers of these goods. This mode of production, first introduced by Henry Ford in the U.S.A., was generalized through Europe by the mid 20s. As argued by Harvey (1990, p. 143), the 70's crisis propelled companies to experiment with more flexible

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[13] SAP HANA film commercial transcript. SAP HANA is an in-memory, column-oriented, relational database management company whose commercial illustrates superbly this aspect where an enterprise presumably has many of the elements of performance (senses, connection between body and mind, awareness, reflexes, sixth sense so often used in release techniques a soul a spirit and aliveness).

forms of organization that could allow for quick changes of production; this was accompanied by a decrease in barriers of global financial system, giving rise to an increase in the creation of fictitious capital. The new role of fictitious capital or the financialization of the economy at a global scale would become central in future crises such as the 2017/2018 'credit crunch'. In these new flexible forms of labour, a shift from manufacturing to services occurs, and the inclusion of new technologies in the production processes demands skilled workers with decision-making faculties who are able to work across different teams and where a degree of judgement is required. As Lazzarato (1996, p. 134) said: "the worker's soul becomes part of the factory". The new form of labour he calls "immaterial" requires workers who are rich in knowledge and creativity, able to cooperate and who are able to participate with their subjectivities in the production process.

Contemporary capitalism has done everything it can to render the word capitalism invisible. Capitalism can tolerate and incorporate anything, except its own demise; it can turn anything into a question of individual liberty, as long as the free circulation of capital and the operations of the so-called free market remain sacrosanct. Slovenian theorist Bojana Kunst (2015, p. 36) points out that capitalism "in its final stage, becomes a system of embracing all profane behaviours (transgression, rebellion, negativity, provocation, radical consumption, etc.)". Human practices, daily actions and ways of doing are at the centre of contemporary production and subjectification. As a consequence, there are uncountable subjectivities available to us, various choices or identities. As roles, these innumerable subjectivities are available to be performed by us. This extreme performativity can be profoundly deceptive and misleading. In *Perform or Else* McKenzie (2001) argues that the present time is characterized by a compulsion to perform. This means that today many of the features traditionally attributed to the field of cultural performance (theatre, dance, performance art) are used as strategies in performance management (collaboration, creativity) and technological performance (interactivity, touch, the relational).

Moreover, this compulsion to perform is one of the main motors of neo liberalism and capitalism. This hyper-performativity (contrary to what many might think,

particularly in the performing arts and performance art[14]) highlights the normative power of performance rather than its critical possibilities. Cultural performance seems to be dominated by ideas of the 'new', 'presence', 'being in the moment' or 'collaboration'. And with them the implicit inherent capacity for the transgressive or transformational efficacy capable of challenging social norms or symbolic structures. However, many of these features are characteristic of late capitalism and of new production systems.

Signs of this urge to perform have made the demand for dance and performance in museums rise. According to Agamben (2007, pp. 83-84) what once defined human's lives has "docilely withdrawn into the museum". Here, he is referring not only to art, philosophy, nature or politics but even the human body, sexuality or language. Thus, the "Museum" (Agamben, 2007, pp. 83-84) designates a dimension where everything that is "done, produced or experienced" is cut apart from themselves and whose only existence is confined to the sphere of consumption. As such, a "Museum" can correspond to a group of people whose form of life they represent has disappeared, or a set of practices no longer in practice, or even a city declared a heritage site, or a natural park assigned reserve status. The contemporary art museum today is not dissimilar in often rehearsing forms of sociability or political practices that have long disappeared from our lives. It is not a coincidence that its emergence is tightly related to the phenomenon of 'creative cities' and world city tourism which "represents the cult and central altar of the capitalist religion" (Agamben, 2007, p. 84).

German visual artist Hyto Steyrel (2009, p. 3) argues that the present museum is a "factory, … a supermarket and a casino" suggesting this same frequent inability to experience any other existence beyond use-value inside of it. The museum is a place

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[14] I am here referring to a scholarly movement from the 70s onwards- shaped by French poststructuralist theory – where ideas of ephemerality of performance (theatre, dance, visual arts and everyday life) as its ontological condition of existence became an influential frame in performance studies. According to Schneider (2011, pp. 94-96) Phelan participated in this scholarly movement from the mid 80s on alongside Richard Schechner, Marcia B. Siege and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett which viewed ephemerality as constitutive of performance. Phelan argued that because performance is ephemeral it cannot be reproduced and therefore resists "reproduction of capitalism" (1993, p. 11). Accordingly, the 'liveness' in real time of 'organic bodies' was a resistant and generative force. This idea is still prevalent in western avant-garde concert dance and performance art. For more on this see Schneider, R (2011). 'Small History of Ephemerality', in *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*. New York: Routledge, pp. 94-96.

where non-existing forms of living or communal practices are re-enacted and rehearsed. A 'factory' that transitioned from a disciplined spectatorship to an incoherent, atomized quiet crowd where labour is "performed by cleaning ladies and cell-phone video bloggers alike" (Steyrel, 2009, p. 3). Under such circumstances, performance has become increasingly present in museums. With the disappearance of the commons and space for socialization, the museum has become a place for sociability and communal processes. Examples vary and flourish even outside the museum: from a theatre play with refugees which recently premièred in Italy where dancing and socializing is facilitated to refugees or a lamp shade workshop in Venice Biennale where refugees work without being paid.[15]The theatre, biennials and the museum are filled with events rehearsing political strategies, yet many of these rarely transgress the limits of the momentary experiment. More than often, the event created offers a participatory experience without confrontation and with limited capacity to establish stable, durable community links.

I have been describing the close association between art and capitalism. This aspect also emerges in the way urban space is being reconfigured by artistic production There seems to be a failure in addressing or acknowledging the involvement, even if oblique, of artists in the disappearance of the commons (an example being the recent Lisbon gentrification operated with the collaboration of artists). Portuguese cultural theorist Ana Teixeira Pinto (2018) points out:

> It remains somewhat puzzling that a country that never had a strong contemporary art scene could witness a contemporary-art-led gentrification. But that probably says more about what contemporary art is, at present, than about what Portugal became. In the last three decades the socio-economic space within which contemporary art circulates has been thoroughly imbricated with speculative finance and gentrification, instituting social and economic dynamics that run counter to the political aspirations of most artists

But more importantly, the idea of capitalism as a process of extracting capital from "Nature" (with its consequent violence upon particular subjects: women, the black population, workers and environment) and the increasingly disputable implicit emancipatory nature of performance arising from late capitalism's proliferation of subjectivities seem to remain largely unchallenged in performance.

It is as if the gallery, the theatre spaces and performance have become a museum for a no longer existing public space where audiences go to rehearse to maintain these long-gone spaces or forms. Performed in this way, such events tend to collude with the liberal idea that the public domain is a consensual space in a post-political democracy where room for 'conflicting alternatives' is inexistent. As Mouffe (2008, p. 8) says "this incapacity to think politically is to great extent due to the uncontested hegemony of liberalism" where "questions are mere technical issues" to be solved only by specialists or technical experts. Liberalism fails to engage with the manifold complex nature of the present world, with the many expressions and agencies that are in relation.

1.3. Other Possible Choreographies: Non-performativity/ Constellations/ Non-Human Performer

With the creation of multiple subjectivities becoming part of capitalism and neoliberalism, the transgressive and profane potential of the new and the avant-garde must be rethought, if not abandoned. Not only that but the 'performative mode' of 'being in the moment' of the ephemerality as an inherent resistant capacity of performance needs to be reconsidered. I am referring here to the experience without residue, a central aspect of the aesthetics and political notions of performance in the 20th century. This presentism, constant actualization of time, without inscription, is characteristic of the way we live today. As Kunst (2009) argues, the past seems to have become limited to a melancholia, a holding back or even a return to the past (as the phenomenon of Trumpism and aspects of Brexit[16] illustrate so well) and the

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[16] I am referring here to the idea of revitalizing the factories and returning to Fordist paradigm. In both cases this discourse is often accompanied by the reference to the 'white working class' in opposition to 'the other(s)'.

future appears to lack any form of inventive or resourceful potentiality. In dance, this 'performative mode' of 'being in the moment' is pervasive.

Under my studies at European Development Dance Centre – Arnhem in the mid 90s (1996) I was constantly told to be 'in the moment' I have doubts that anybody needs such training these days. Many in the West seem to be engaged with no other time than the 'now'. It seems to me that the difficulty lies precisely here. This idea of the new and the ephemeral as radical characteristics of the modernist avant-garde in dance performance persists today. Interrogating it is imperative, if we as artists are invested in the critical potential of performance. Consequently, acknowledging the political dimension of performance supposes relinquishing the idea that to be political requires making a total break with the existing state of affairs in order to create something absolutely new and actual.

But as Mouffe (2008) remarks, this does not mean that any sort of critique has become impossible. To abandon the avant-garde does not necessarily mean that one needs to follow the normative power of performance, but to locate the present conditions and find what critical possibilities performance can offer; to think of '(non)performativity' in a time of compulsion to perform by refusing to give into the "powerlessness radical consumption of the body" (Kunst, 2015, p. 22). To refocus on the remains and move away from the uncritical ephemerality, on the materiality of performance, on past/present/future as inscribed in one another are possible critical avenues. To resist the many modernist binaries of performance presence|absence, object|subject. But this does not suffice: one must focus on the mediation of connection between human and non-human, self and other, human and animal which, as Latour (1993) once mentioned, never really fully entered contemporary public life. The particular potential of the choreographic over this aspect is profoundly relevant for our present way of living. To no longer think of the body, the human, as the centre but to turn our focus into the various constellations which choreography can attend to. To reconsider choreography as operating under these constellations rather than departing from the centrality of the body. This means considering other existences outside of the sphere of consumption. As if choreography follows American theorist Donna Haraway's words: "make with-become with, compose with-the earth -bound". The implications are both conceptual and methodological.

Therefore, the next section will be engaging with specific combinations of refusal and evasion. By this is meant that the following section will be looking at performances that refuse to perform in a particular fashion and refuse certain calls to perform. The questionings and even contradictions raised by them will be closely looked at. It has to be said that such refusal should not be confused with an antagonism towards the idea of connectivity (perhaps even the contrary) or technology. Nor should this be understood as a negation or erasure of human agency.

Kunst's (2005) term here is appropriate for some of these choreographies; they can be seen as a call for "disobedient connections". They interrogate our modes of perception and entertain "places of refuge" (Haraway, 2015, p. 160) or a call out for another kind of connection: a mediated connection based on non-hierarchical relations under consistent ceaseless redefinition.

Therefore, not only does my interest derive from finding strategies that might provoke and interrogate the current presentism of our times but also the modernist paradigm that disables choreography of engaging with things and other entities in particular in a non-instrumental way. This is a sort of invitation; an invitation from choreography to let those in, to open a kind of an entryway to other possible choreographies.

The following section will examine some arrangements present in the works of Boursier-Mougenot, Verdonck and Jeong from this perspective. Haraway's concept of visiting, Cull's ideas of becoming in performance and Agamben's notion of profanation are useful concepts to describe the works analysed here.

What these artists' works, and the scores and practices developed under this research, have in common is that they adopt strategies of refusal of the centrality of the human body. There is a shared interest in the performativity of the non-human, of its possibilities that goes beyond the object-subject divide. As a consequence, what non-humans can do is of bigger concern for these practices than what they ontologically are. This denotes an interest in the sincerity of objects besides their instrumental use. In doing so they reveal hidden connections (Nature- capitalism) and other possible existences beyond use-value, latent even under late capitalism.

1.4. Assortments of Refusal and Evasion: Boursier-Mougenot, Jeong, and Verdonck

1.4.1. Becoming a Visitor: Boursier-Mougenot's Choreographed Devices

Vocation: calling, calling with, called by, calling as if the world mattered, calling out, going too far, going visiting (Haraway, 2016, p. 126)

I thought about how odd it is for billions of people to be alive, yet not one of them is really quite sure of what makes people. The only activities I could think of that humans do that have no animal equivalent were smoking, body-building and writing. That's not much, considering how special we seem to think we are. (Coupland, 1994, p. 12)

The absence of the human performer which is distinctive of Boursier-Mougenot's oeuvre is perhaps fundamental in order to speak about human decentred choreographic performance. In his practice we find a common thread of attending to things and animals in various carefully constructed situations. Plates, vacuum cleaners, dogs and birds are some of the performers featured in the French artist's choreographed installations. In *From Here to Ear* (Boursier-Mougenot, 1999), first performed in 1999, at New York's MoMA PS1 Contemporary Art Center, complex affiliations between human and non-human are made visible. It is a complex network that was set up to take a life of its own, consisting of an environment created by nests, guitars, seeds, plants and amplifiers inhabited by birds. By setting up an environment where birds are free to move as they desire, Boursier-Mougenot steps away from the idea of choreography as an "art of command" (Franko, 2002, p. 108) offering us an alternative: the choreographer as a facilitator. As expressed in his own words: "I simply set up the parameters for the performance to take place", Boursier-Mougenot's interest relies on empowering the non-human performers of his creations to autonomously exist. Here, choreography and music happen because of the free movement performed by the birds which is intertwined with the moves of the visitors on entering "birds' territory" (Boursier-Mougneot, 2016). In addition,

Boursier-Mougenot assembles this device with full awareness of its human visitors. In an interview the artist (Boursier-Mougneot, 2016) would reveal that behind his installations relies his sensitivity towards the human "visitors" presence, and thus "visitors" are always considered "integral parts" of his installations.

It is a specific performativity that is anticipated from them. The artist is not necessarily interested in humans participating or being active in the constructed environment. He seems more drawn by the nature of the relation between all participants involved. It is rather the relation between them (humans and non-humans) that drives his construction. This relation is not dissimilar to Haraway's (2016, p. 127) idea of "visiting" that demands a rule from the visitor: that "one cultivates the virtue of letting those one visits intra-actively shape what occurs". Therefore, the input of the visitors derives more from their engagement in listening and sensing what is in operation rather than the "traditional" centrality of "human performativity" in triggering actions in the performing arts. It is the experiencing of the "birds' territory" (Boursier-Mougneot, 2016) that guides the human dislocations in the space. Moreover, as the artist argues "It is the visitors' presence and their own experience of apprehending my works which gives the works meaning" (2016). This visitors' experience is in evident contrast with the one often offered by many immersive theatre companies where audience members are asked to participate (perform) actively in some sort of 'action'.

Boursier-Mougenot's idea of the visitor resembles feminist theorist Haraway's (2016, p. 128) further descriptions of Vinciane Despret's scientific research encounter with blackbirds and Arabian ballers where "specific practices of observation, narration, and the liveness of the birds were far from independent of each other". What I am suggesting here is that Boursier-Mougenot specifically sets up devices that locate distinct forms of relations between human and non-humans or amongst non-humans themselves that have the potential to subvert many ideas we have about art, "Nature", human and non-human existence(s). Animals have been featured in the creations of various choreographers in the past: Rui Horta (*Danza Preparata* (2012), Saburo Teshiwara (*Green*, (2003)), Jan Fabre (*Parrots and Guinea Pigs*, (2002). However, those works did not, like Boursier-Mougenot's,

suggest another kind of relation or existing mode; they relied on the centrality of the human performer for the choreography to happen. Boursier-Mougenot's creations distinguish themselves by their non-anthropocentric quality, proposing relations that refuse human primacy and control. But this disinvestment in human active participation could be seen by many as inherently apolitical, especially by those for whom politics remains a strictly human domain. Far from what many might view as 'passive' construction by Boursier-Mougenot, I want here to value the intra-active nature of this work and its relevance for our present lives. For while it is true that Boursier-Mougenot casts human participation not as an active voice, he is extremely interested in receptivity. In *From Here to Ear* (Boursier-Mougenot, 1999) visitors become aware of their placement relative to birds, plates and others in the room. The performance is a coproduced event where all the performers (human and non-human) are associated and interweave each other. Rather than actively shape the encounter, human participants allow for the encounter to be shaped by the cooperation and alliances developed between all actors involved in the site.

To be a visitor is thus, for Boursier-Mougenot, to demonstrate a sense of responsibility toward a site and to view all of its inhabitants as elements of a larger ecosystem. Through this the artist suggests that "relations between humans [can] themselves [be] produced through nature" (Moore, 2015a, p. 172). Here, nature appears not as resource but as maker that creates environments, music and prompts human movement. Moreover, receptivity runs against a set of beliefs associated with the arts: a belief that objects and the non-human can be possessed, a belief in human primacy and control and that art is a purely human activity.

Aware of the fact that the development of a performance without a singular defined agent has had troubling or even fallacious aspects in the history of making art, often immunizing work from critique – particularly from white male artists to whom such self-erasure is more accessible; I still want to clarify the potential of Mougenot's *From Here to Ear* (1999)." The reason for this is that the artist's disinvestment in human performers or active human participation is not rooted as the sole intent of human erasure. Quite the contrary, it denotes an implicit desire on the part of the artist for another kind of encounter between human and the non-human. This is visible in the construction of a device that favours a mutual constitution of entangled agencies that together become the composers of the event rather than an active,

participatory, human-generated event. It is through a set up where the human "visitors" (Haraway, 2016, p. 127) are openly exposed to the operational and aesthetic components of the piece that this is achieved. The birds, plates, guitars, sound, visual elements and the human participants are not only in relation to each other, but the responsibility is distributed amongst themselves in the making of the performance. It is within this relation – not outside of it – that the composition of the performance emerges and transforms itself through the duration of the performance. The movements of birds and humans or the sound composition emerging are co-produced within the relationship and they materialize through intra-actions.

Withdrawing from the frame here is acknowledging the potential of being a "visitor" (Haraway, 2016, p. 127) as an act where humans and non-humans shape each other through intra-action. As Moore (2015a, p. 3) notes: "humans make environments and environments make humans". It is itself an act of cultivating awareness and a wider sense of responsibility in the world.

But the refusal of the centrality of the body of the human performer assumes other forms in Boursier-Mougenot's oeuvre. Objects are often the main performers. In *Harmonichaos* (Boursier-Mougenot, 2000) vacuum cleaners play a score with harmonicas; in *Clinamen* (2013) it is bowls and water that are the performers. While their materiality is never concealed and objects remain substantially what they are, they are often divested from their instrumental functions. Clearly, what objects can do is of greater concern for his practice than what they ontologically are. In his descriptions of his creation *Harmonichaos* (2000), Boursier-Mougneot (2016) argues that he sees his works as encounters. I would argue that these "encounters" pose relevant questions about our relation to nature, objects and capitalism. In advancing other possible non-human - human relations, they suggest non-human-human existences away from the capitalist logic. By proposing to us an object performativity where objects are stripped from their instrumental human use, Boursier-Mougenot opens up a world divested of human action or activity. As a result, other invisible agencies and relations emerge. In such a world, relations can occur and be confined to objects amongst themselves. Stripped from their consumption functions away from their human use, the non-human emerges with its creative potential and other ways of being.

Not only are the non-human's operational and aesthetic potentials are revealed but also relevant questions about our relation to nature and matter unfold. By giving us access to a world where objects, nature, animals are 'left alone', one has access to a world where the non-human is extraneous from the capitalist project of 'being put at work' creating an(other) possible existence(s) beyond their use-value. Boursier-Mougenot's nature and the non-human is not a 'resource' open for human consumption and value, but it exists autonomously. In addition, the non-human is actively shaping the world around us and questioning beliefs about its limitations and human centrality.

In Boursier-Mougenot's *From Here to Ear* (1999), birds are performers raising questions about art as a human-centered activity. As such, the work is an elaborate and intricate example of Deleuze's and Guattari's (1994) idea of art. According to Laura Cull (2012, p. 138), Deleuze and Guattari bring forward a "radical notion between art and life", where no separation exists between the two. Theirs is an idea that includes birds' "marking territory" as an aesthetic endeavour and where functionality and the aesthetic co-occur. For Cull (2012, p. 139) their particular approach dismantles distinctions between "animal creativity" and "aesthetic activity", bringing down the opposition of functionality versus the aesthetic. In the making of the *From Here to Ear* (1999), birds' activities such as eating and nesting are involved in both the composition of the sound and the making of the space and movement but they are also essential aspects of nurturing, surviving and reproduction. It is not stagemakers as in Deleuze's and Guattari's (1994) descriptions that are the performers, but zebra finches. Yet, the birds are central in the device set up by the artist. Not only this: the structure is mounted so as to engage visitors in both the operational and aesthetic components of the piece. That the device remains visible in its materiality is Mougenot's purpose from the start. Cleary there is an intention from the French artist to let the non-human performers be 'what they are': nesting, feeding, playing with diverse flights and making their own territory. It is through this particular aspect that the piece emerges as a highly composed sound and choreographed device.

1.4.2. Jeong's Becomings

While in Boursier-Mougenot's creations, objects and birds are performing without human intervention, in Korean choreographer Geumhyung Jeong's performance at Tate Modern the direct tactile proximity between humans and objects is central. Yet similarly, this merging of the human figure with various objects opens up questions about non-human-human relations, particularly our relation to technology, ageing and robotization (reproduction, pleasure, sexuality, ageing, death). Despite the direct contact, Jeong's practice places performativity away from the human figure highlighting the object's performative potential. It does so through a range of strategies: firstly, through a conceptual framework that deliberately presents the objects chosen as performers and collaborators; secondly, by the way the relations between the performer are shared and evolve throughout the performance. *Private Collection: Unperformed Objects* (2017), part exhibition, part performance, is a hybrid creation from the start.

Carefully collected by the Korean choreographer, both "performed" and "(un)performed objects" are present in the exhibition. This compulsion to collect and 'shop' by the artist parallels a Western obsession with excessive consumerism. Some objects perform, some don't, remaining in a 'private collection' that is exhibited in the Delfina Foundation gallery.

Others – in the extreme – even remain behind closed doors; unknown, unrevealed like many secretive works of art, hidden in storage rooms as part of museum's collections or, as in any private human collection at home, in a secretive place. Some out of fear, out of shame, others out of favouritism – handpicked by the artist – some simply forgotten, un-lucrative, unable to draw an audience. Such a choice fully expresses the traditions of both performing and the visual arts and its complex relations with the art market. Moreover, it reveals the many hidden object-companions that make part of our private contemporary lives. The objects collected range from ordinary, everyday objects such as: automated hoovers, automatic toothbrushes, robotic interactive vacuum cleaners, training machines, full body mannequins, mannequins' body parts (heads, legs, arms), clothes, cloths, shoes, medical aids, to anatomy educational mannequins and full-head theatre masks.

Jeong's display at the Delfina Foundation serves to highlight the objects' performativity: side by side lay various objects labelled as (un)performed. In the same room as part of the installation a series of videos show live performances of various objects performing together-with Jeong. The exhibition brings this narrative of 'object performativity' live introducing us to the significance of the many "lives" these objects had, have or will have.

Jeong's choice is characterized by an intentional influence over how performers (both human and non-human) are given to the gaze of the audience. Unlike Boursier-Mougenot she uses the traits of modern classic museum curatorial practices, classic puppetry and modern-choreographic-performance traditions. Although inserted in a bare stage, the choice is of a confrontational facing style of spectatorship predominant in classical theatre. According to scenography expert Arnold Aronson (2014, p. 14) "to designate a particular space as a stage, or to place a frame, literal or metaphorical, around an image or object is, in effect, to create a spectator".
In this sense, one is creating a stage whether one demarcates the performative space through the use of a linoleum and a frontal facing as in Jeong's case or through the movement of a performer such as in a street dance performance or as in Boursier-Mougneot's immersive experience of *From Here to Ear* (1999). All indicate a performing space that is largely inviolable. The main difference is that with Jeong such a space is permanent while in the remaining others, it is ephemeral. It could be argued that such a choice would result in an intra-human-centered style of performance associated with classical theatre performances and inherently in the separation between human and non-human. However, surprisingly that is not the case in Jeong's performance. In fact, to delude ourselves into the idea that an impermanent space where the audience can move or participate in the organization of the site is inherently an act of critique and provides ideas of freedom and anarchy, ignoring the present conditions under which art is being produced.
Such confusion is recurrently common. In an informal show (2017) as part of my research, questions around the choice for a bare performative space with a frontal facing as an inherent act of "non-freedom" or of hierarchic agency from the choreographer - in opposition to a participatory experience where the audience could move around as inherently 'democratic' and 'transformational' – surfaced. As I mentioned in the opening part of this chapter many of the strategies of the avant-

garde are used in present day capitalism. Historically in environment theatre and later in site-specific and immersive theatre the objective was to erase the performer – spectator dichotomy and subvert the notions of spectatorship. Behind similar participatory strategies in both movements of "dematerialization of the art work" (Lippard, 1997) in the visual arts and the Judson Church[17] choreographic procedures happening in the 60s and 70s were questions of rejecting commodification of the art work and democratization of spectatorship.

The agency or centrality of the human performer does not necessarily solely rely on the construction of the stage, as I will discuss further on through Jeong's example. But I would like to point out something significant for the discussion: isn't the participatory experience a current trait of the form of capitalism and consumption practices we live in today? Is it not the same kind of experience we are offered in shopping malls or theme parks or retail establishments such as Ikea? Not only is the kind of participation analogous but also the carefully designed ground plans resemble the devices of many recent theatrical, choreographic, performance creations that guide the audience. One might have to abandon the idea of participatory interactive spectatorship as an inherently transgressive or transformative strategy. On the contrary, as McKenzie (2001) argues, ideas brought about by the avant-garde such as interactive collaborative spectatorship can at times reinforce the normative power of performance.

In the series of works discussed here, what is at stake is neither the erasure of the human nor a complete disconnection with technology and objects. The interest is in finding other possible kinds of connections between organic and (in)organic, human and non-human, distinct ways of performing together or alone that break with the logic brought by 20th century capitalism and indicate other possible ways of living under the current times. Even the choice of a bare stage inside Tate Modern is not a blank or innocuous one; cleared of any agencies, free of any influences or affects. Such a choice carries the space's institutional force and all the immanent ghosts of

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[17] For more in-depth discussion of the practices of the Judson Church see Sally Banes, *Greenwich Village 1963: Avant-Garde Performance and the Effervescent Body* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).

previous performances played there. The resistance of architectural traits and its many hidden forces become prominent. According to scenography theorist Aronson (2014, p. 14), the expression "bare stage" is a misleading one, because it makes all the elements of texture and colour of the performative space visible. Furthermore, it accentuates and reveals the architectural qualities of the theatre revealing the contrasting volumes between the stage and the auditorium.

In the Korean choreographer's case, the choice is for the Tanks inside the institutional space of the most '*modern*' European Contemporary museum, Tate Modern, built to provide an 'experience' to the public in the 21st century and into the future.[18] Both choices: frontal permanent audience and bare stage, acquire an even larger significance. The first opens up questions about the sort of experience provided by an impermanent dispersed spectatorship by running against this particular live experience typical of the contemporary museums. The second foregrounds and accentuates the institutional grandiosity of such an apparently 'democratic museum'.

But more importantly, it leads us to acknowledge what spatial theorist Thea Brejzek (2012, p. 16) argued:

> Our understanding and our perception of space depend on our personal and cultural background, on our social and political conditioning, on cognitive processes of memory and recall, of attention, and of visual and aural stimuli.

This is fundamental for the argument being made in this chapter. I understand Jeong's strategies as critical acts that open up alternative dimensions for experiencing objects, technology, life and death in the present time. Even in its refusal to perform and "make the stage" in a certain way, Jeong's complicated mix of puppetry with everyday automated machinery combining the morphing of the human body with things, gives life to other figures.

Because of this, Jeong's performance finds itself expressing many conflicting directions, desires and orders characteristic of the present time: the permanence of

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[18] For more on this see Dercon, C., Serota, N. (2016) Tate Modern: Building a Museum for the 21st Century. London: Tate Publishing.

life of objects over certain human death, the intimate links developed between machine and the human (organic) resulting in new living beings, the accumulation of purchased items with its posterior abandonment and the disruption of the "border war" (Haraway, 2016, p. 7) between organisms and machine characteristic of 20th century of capitalism.

Whether encountering or colliding with one another (object and human performer) on stage, the result is an event that troubles the centrality of human stability and brings out the many uncertainties of our times. Here, I would like to come back to my initial remarks that despite being openly, visibly touched or moved by the human performer, the object's agency is present throughout the performance. This touch ultimately does not serve the objects' usual instrumental function given by humans but follows a desire of becoming (an)other. Furthermore, the desire seems mutual as when a robotic interactive vacuum cleaner crosses the stage in a diagonal towards Jeong's body. As soon as the two bodies touch, they perform an intimate duet. What is revealed on stage is the many complex performativities that can arise from the various combinations and morphings of the female body with objects and machines. Again, and again, the linearity and homogeneity of the histories of choreography as a human-centered activity is broken and disrupted. In *Persons and things* (2015) Italian philosopher Roberto Esposito speaks about how the use of biotechnologies has made it increasingly difficult to maintain the binary order of object-human. According to Esposito, the fictive individual unity of the human has been broken because it has become frequent – with implants and transplants – for both inorganic and organic human components to be introduced inside human bodies. As a consequence, the human body is more the location of a relation that is not necessarily binary. The presence of various detached human body mannequins' parts or machinery in Jeong's performances and exhibitions could be said to be an allusion to this aspect. But what could be said about Jeong's performative mode? Throughout the performance, the performer's gaze is for the most part blank, deprived of expressive dramatism. It is as if the tonicity of her body is analogous to that of the objects or the mannequins staring at her. As if Jeong's has found herself in an "affective common ground" (Cull, 2012, p. 111) with the mannequins. At times together, they seem to be staring at the audience perplexed.

This is the aftermath of an uninterrupted practice of being with an object that Jeong developed. Some of these approaches might have failed; there's a hint of that in exhibiting the 'unperformed' objects.

But what is meant by "an affective common ground"? the purpose is not that the performers become the objects themselves, that they imitate the objects or even represent the objects. As Cull (2012, p. 111) notes, becoming is an act through which the "performative becoming 'of the performer 'allows the animal – in Jeong's case machines and various collected objects – to become something else". Or as Grebowicz and Merrick (2013, p. 107) say, "When species have encounters, they never merely meet, but enter contact zones, communicative spaces where species can 'entangle each other'".

"Being with" and "becoming with", in this sense, means getting close to what objects might be in order to develop a relation and involves a series of approaches. The ones developed by me throughout this research include paying attention to the objects weight, colour, smell, form, its ordinary use, how it might foreground a place or find a relation within the place or other objects existing in the room. It is through this and other intensive close encounters (feeling the weight of a particular object-or the contact of distinct surfaces between both bodies, sleeping with it, spending long periods of time together) that particular relations might arise.

As Esposito (2015, p. 11) says:

> When things are in contact with the body, it is as if they themselves acquired a heart, leading them back to the center of our lives. When we save them from their serial fate and reintroduce them back into their symbolic setting, we realize that they are part of us no less than we are a part of them.

Moreover, even the change of clothes performed by Jeong, in order for such a-variety of morphings to occur, becomes part of the collection of performers and part of the choreography. They are deprived of their symbolic human "theatrical character making" not only because of the outspoken initial manifesto written in the exhibition but also mainly because of Jeong's performative mode. As such, the change of clothes from a dress to nakedness, to wearing shoes, all these items and surfaces become performers that make part of the creation of the diverse figures. Without them many of the images, figurations created would be inexistent. Their existence is

justified by the desire to "become something else" (Cull, 2012, p. 130). Haraway (2008, p. 221) uses the term "the open", the space in which "becoming with" is possible, the "space of what is not yet and may or may not ever be" (Haraway, 2008, p. 34). Jeong's exhibition and performance together could be described as an opportunity for experiencing the "the open" in that within both events that possibility is performed. The latent potential of the objects, their possible encounters with Jeong and other objects, is intentionally laid bare under the exhibition. As for the performance, it could be described as "making available of events" encounters between beings which have the purpose of "making it possible for something unexpected to happen" (Haraway, 2008, p. 34).

More than often, the human body disappears or becomes concealed by cloths or by body mannequin's parts generating a variety of new figures, as if this desire to morph into (an)other is a precondition for the choreography to happen. Unsurprisingly, often the choice is for the duet format in many of Jeong's interactions with machines. The duet is the most intimate form in Western choreography. In ballet it is the choice of excellence in the representation of romantic relationships. Yet again with the Korean's choreographer the relations are between a female Asian body and machine, both bodies cast aside and ignored by the Western ballet choreographic traditions.

It is not then a coincidence that the elected form for Jeong's performances is the duet often joining her body with objects as if both are of the same nature. But unlike the romantic relationships portrayed in Western ballets, Jeong's duets are not without trouble.

At times the contrast between Jeong and a male puppetry mask transforms a 'romantic' intimate scene into a disturbing relation with a vacuum cleaner, echoing female sexual violence. At others, a duo with an automatic toothbrush with its vibratory movements and noises humorously becomes an allegory of female sexual pleasure. These newly created entities are fantastical, monstrous or even characterized by an intense beauty such as a large ocean where a caravel sails away. Again, such images often result from the withdrawal of the human body, in this case under a blue large piece of cloth. Jeong's performance does not ask her to abandon her female Asian organic body, nor does she long for an inclusion of her body or other non-human beings in the old binary humanist order. What is being proposed rejects old binaries of: Nature/Society, man/woman, white/Asian, civilized and

primitive. It is within these newly created complex figures that one can locate a break with many of the "relations that have sustained capital accumulation over the past five centuries" (Moore, 2015a, p. 1). Through these associations, Jeong speculates a world where it is the relation between human and extra human rather than their binary essences that "coproduce manifold configurations of humanity-in-nature/nature-in-humanity" (Moore, 2015a, p. 5).

This is a significant move away from the Aristotelian mode of privileging entities over relations. Not only do her methodologies follow this principle rigorously by openly displaying the development and even failure of such relations, but relations are at the core of her performative practice. Both human and extra-human perform together. Moreover, the bare stage coexists with frontal staging, frontal spectatorship develops under the roof of a museum designed for participatory acts, puppetry masks, its techniques perform jointly together with robotic interactive machines and an Asian body performs various duets with machines. All of these categories are put in relation throughout the performance. As a consequence, many of modernity's binaries – such as primitive/civilized, organic/inorganic, Nature/Society or white/Asian – are put at stake. The overall approach suggests a disregard for a predominant Aristotelian idea of either/or in favour of both/and of a continuum.

I would argue that the significance of Jeong's creation locates itself precisely in the particular intimate, porous and at times antagonistic relations she develops with the non-human both within her performance and exhibition. They represent a necessary, important move if one wants to let go of the binary of Nature/Society that Moore (2015a) refers to as an essential characteristic of the capitalist project. The resulting extra-human figures express a world where "everything that humans do is already joined with extra-human nature and the web of life: nature as a whole that includes humans." (Moore, 2015a, p. 7). Such figures reveal the permeability of humans with the inorganic and evoke Moore's (2015a, p. 7) ideas:

> It is a relation open to inorganic phenomena as well: plate tectonics, orbital variation, meteors, and much more "make" environments too. So, we begin with an open conception of life-making, one that views the boundaries of the organic and inorganic as ever shifting. It is a multi-layered relation through which there are no basic units, only webs within webs of relations.

Jeong's speculation on how intimate related humans are with non-human(s) has profound implications on the way one might think about agency. If the human is intimately bundled with the non-human, if they are bundled with one another, one might have to rethink agency as "a relational property of specific bundles of human and extra-human nature" (Moore, 2015a, p. 37). To say that matter, things, machines and technology have the capacity to induce change, as appealing as it is, can be problematic. I would like to underline that this move does not mean to simply add machines, technology and many other objects – as the one's that make part of Jeong's creations – to a list of historical agents. At the core of Jeong's practice are the diverse complex relations between human and non-human that demand a fundamental rethinking of agency – one that steps out of Cartesian thought and locates agency in the relations established between the various actors. As Haraway (1991, p. 198) states: "Actors come in many wonderful forms. Accounts of a 'real' world do not, then, depend on a logic of 'discovery' but on a power-charged social relation of 'conversation'". This aspect seems to permeate Jeong's practice where various forms of dialogue and its outcomes are revealed to us. But more importantly the extra-human figures created point towards the fact that human and non-human might be "unthinkable without each other" (Moore, 2015a, p. 37) and to the ongoing persisting porosity between one another. Such practice points towards the idea that human agency is never "purely human" (Moore, 2015a, p. 28) but already bundled with the non-human.

Rather than thinking of human agency separate from matter or machine's agencies Jeong's proposal rejects Cartesian thought and accepts that human and the extra-human are bound to one another. From this follows that the capacity to induce historical change or to reinforce existing arrangements is the product of various configurations of human and extra-human natures. Here, one is thinking agency as both the capacity to induce ruptures or to reproduce existent present-day arrangements. As Moore (2015a, p. 28) example illustrates "Yes, diseases make history, but only as epidemiological vectors bound to commerce and empire".

The fact that some machines and things are not open and fail to co-develop a relation with Jeong is also a consequence of the above. To say that they are bound to one another does not necessarily mean that they agree or that they always join together to

produce change or to reinforce certain specific arrangements. Indeed, Jeong's interaction with objects and machines does not always proceed into a performance; it can fail, as shown in the exhibition, indicating that humans might no longer 'dominate' the organic and the inorganic (energy, matter, machines things). Furthermore, in Jeong's work there seems to be an acceptance of the radical otherness of the non-human which does not impede Jeong's access to it, implying that such an act is always an imperfect and mediated one. I want here to insist that Jeong's relation with the non-human is not characterized by sameness. In line with Haraway (2008, p. 245), her practice seems to reject the kind of humanism grounded on sameness showing preference for an idea of the other as heterogeneous and radically distinct to us. Both exhibition and performance reveal the non-human at times as unavailable, unattainable or even impossible. The diversity of performance relations which includes antagonistic relations seems to point towards the "Other" as "pure unpredictability" (Grebowicz & Mierrick, 2013, p. 97).

As such, Jeong's territory is not necessarily one of consensus or of no trouble. Even the failed attempts at relating with the non-human seem worth exhibiting. Moreover, most undertakings are open to unstable meanings and outcomes and this is of value to the choreographer. It seems that her relation to the non-human, in particular to machines, new and old technologies, is a complex one. In doing, so Jeong disassociates herself from the value of coherence and consensus reinscribing her practice in a sphere where the "political as a space of incoherence, indeterminacy and vulnerability" (Grebowicz & Mierrick, 2013, p. 97) prevails. Through this she underlines the generative power of dissensus. Under the present circumstances such a practice reveals a deep understanding of the potential artistic modes that might unsettle our realm of the sensible.

Hers is a practice which disturbs our mode of perception and opens up space for political gestures that might redefine our capacities for action. It is by moving within a sphere where within a sphere of the sensible new forms of capitalism and where other non-human/human bodies are intertwined without necessarily finding consensus, that a political potential exists. Through her practice she reveals the many complexities of the way we live today and the new political questionings one is faced with. Far from a return to a romantic the idea of "Nature" (Moore, 2015a, p. 4) or

machine as ghost, Jeong's new extra human bodies demand from us a new kind of engagement and highlight the fact that these new machines are both the product and the producers of new forms of capitalism.

As Haraway (2016, p. 7) argues:

> By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism—in short, cyborgs. The cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics.

But what does Jeong's Asian female body say to us? Or what do the separate parts of mannequins, the full-body mannequins or the automated vacuum cleaner tell us? What kind of politics do these new extra-human created figures reveal? I would argue that Jeong's hybrid creation *Private Collection: Unperformed Objects* (2017) poses the question that Haraway (2008, p. 5) asked: who 'we' will become when species meet". Not only does the device mounted in the exhibition exposes the latent hidden potentials of the objects or the possibility of failure with these encounters but it also speculates about what possible becomings can result from such encounters. It is as if Jeong's performance becomes an "encounter between beings which have the purpose of 'making' it possible for something unexpected to happen" (Haraway, 2008, p. 34).

By presenting us with a female human body at times static, or even inoperative, and letting herself be observed by mannequins that stare blankly throughout the performance, Jeong's dance reminds us how "Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert" (Haraway, 2016, p. 11). If until now in the Western tradition of dominant capitalism the "machines were not self-moving" (Haraway, 2016, p. 11), the machines performing with Jeong – like our present machines – are independent, self-reliant, self-sufficient, self-supporting. Jeong's performances lay this aspect bare. It is through the combination of a particular performative mode – morphings creating new extra-human figures or intimate relations between Jeong and machines often in duet form – that the performance articulates the particularities of our present time.

The merging of the human with the non-human suggests a body that transgresses the natural/artificial dichotomy. As Hardt and Negri (2000, p. 216) argued it is the incursion of technologies into natural life that reveal life to be irreducibly "artificial". It is a world where external animal and synthetic hormones circulate in the human body, pacemakers and chips are part of human bodies and where mobile phones and automated vacuum cleaners become extensions of our bodies, identities and lives. Not only that but many of these new machines are powered by light or other organic, green sources and operate through signals or electromagnetic waves. The machines presented to us are mobile, animated, fluid, even free to move in space like the robotic sensorial vacuum cleaner. Many of them are portable, adaptable, transformable, seemingly alive, or might even become expressive like the toothbrush. Because of this we are in the presence of a world of uncertain meanings where nature, live and dead are troubled. "Nature" (Moore, 2015a, p. 4) is irrecoverable. Live and dead are shifting concepts, varying, open to mutation and contamination as the extra human figures and the lively presence of some of machines show us. By exhibiting the "unperformed" objects, Jeong indicates both their unpredictability and possible futurity. Their latent potential resides not only in their nature, but it is always relational. It depends on the diverse relations they might form and the timing of these links.

As a consequence, Jeong's technological world is unpredictable, slippery and open to constant mutations. It can produce extra-human beings, but it might also not. It is open to constant revision outside of human control. There is no assurance: technology can be both emancipatory or aggressive. Hers is a project of investiture in dissensus where the untangling of binaries –Nature-Society, organic-inorganic and nature-artificial – occurs. It seems to me that the political nature of Jeong's work resides precisely where the separation between human and non-human is problematized.

1.4.3. Existences Beyond Use-value: Verdonck

> To return to play its purely profane vocation is a political task. (Agamben, 2007, p. 77)

Below, I will focus on the 'new use' given to the non-human that links the practices of both Jeong and Belgian theatre director Kris Verdonck. Without exception, each artist in this chapter shows us that a toothbrush, an actor's digital double, a vacuum cleaner and a group of birds or plants can have an existence beyond their consumption and their use-value. According to Agamben (2007, p. 81) every aspect of our contemporary lives, everything that is "done, produced, or experienced – even the human body, even sexuality, even language" – are now "separate from themselves" into the sphere of consumption. Through various procedures, the artists examined in this chapter bring various human and non-human actors into new use opening up possibilities, new dimensions of use and modes of existence, bypassing the "separation" (Agamben, 2007) caused by commodification. Agamben (2007, pp. 75-87) designates these operations acts of profanation. He uses the word "profanation" (2007, pp. 75-87) to speak about acts that bring "something to new use". To profane does not limit itself to the abolition of separation of things from themselves, what the artists in this chapter also do is to "learn how put them in to new use and play with them" (Agamben, 2007, p. 87) opening up other potentialities that lie beyond their consumption. Under the current form of capitalism, to profane seems an urgent political task. If as Agamben (2007) suggested in the extreme phase of capitalism we're living in, everything is either destined to be "given over to consumption or to spectacular exhibition", Verdonck, through a series of works, shows us that it is possible to overcome the normative power of performance through a diversity of creations and strategies. Verdonck's practice is characterized by numerous acts of profanation that question commodification in various ways but also by a refusal to give into the "powerlessness of radical consumption" (Kunst, 2015, p. 22) that came to define the performing arts of the second half of the twentieth century. If what capitalism leaves us with is being a consumer or a spectator, *Exit* (2017) offers an exit door by proposing a performance where spectators can sleep and refuse the role destined to them by capitalism (that of being a pure spectator i.e., consumer).

In *Exit* (2017), a solo dancer instructs the audience to get comfortable, rest their heads against a pillow and follow the instructions given in a screen with the

objective of making them sleep. *Exit* (2017) is a performance where the audience gets induced into sleep. Here, Verdonck exercises his refusal in not giving into the consumption of presence, the body or human actions of the performer. The particular choice of a dancer – Alix Eynaudi – to perform *Exit* (2017) highlights this aspect. The dancer executes virtuouso dance movements pointing to nothing but the body's abilities, its physical strength and training. What we're given on stage is pure "radical consumption" (Kunst, 2015, p. 22) in the form of a dancing body performing in front of the audience. However, in defiance of this, what the performance asks from the audience is that they sleep. Sleep becomes here the only form of refuge from the frenetic "neurotic force of consumption" (Kunst, 2015, p. 22). Through this operation Verdonck highlights the powerlessness of dance and performance in the present time. Sleep seems to be the escape, the only 'exit' for humans to negate a way of life driven by consumption and spectacle[19].

According to Kunst (2015, p. 24), performance's "potentiality of radical consumption seems to have been profoundly weakened" in the present time. Verdonck's direct critique of capitalism and the way it presently finds expression in the performing arts does not limit itself to this work. In another creation, *Untitled* (Verdonck, 2016), the main character is a mascot. A dancer performs hidden behind a mascot lookalike costume throughout the performance. Often the character appears tired of its entertaining routines that seem to lead nowhere but to consumption. Perhaps even to his own consumption? But is it the tiredness of the mascot or of the person behind the mascot that we're witnessing? The confusion seems to be deliberate.

Having become popular throughout the 1980s onwards for promoting consumer products, mascots are used primarily for entertainment, excitement and to bring good fortune. Invariably mascots have to permanently entertain and be happy. However, the mascot in *Untitled* seems to be destined to several failures, falling clumsily to the floor or exhibiting signs of exhaustion. There is an element of tragedy as the

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[19] It is true that neither Jeong nor Boursier-Mougenot openly address openly this aspect but their practices in distinct forms bypass the consumption of the presence and the body. In Boursier-Mougenot's case the performers are the birds and the audience. As for Jeong her presence and therefore her subjectivity resides in her relation with other non-human performers.

performance progresses and we become aware that we will never see the person behind the smiling face of the mascot. More and more the main performer prevalent is the presence of a flower on stage but again this flower is itself fake and also exhibiting a smile. In *Untitled*, Verdonck alludes to "radical consumption" (Kunst, 2015, p. 22) or desubjectification by intentionally choosing a mascot as central performer and placing a fake 'smiley flower' in a Blackbox theatre. Often the mascot's labour is executed by unemployed dancers or actors whose work in the performing arts – with the professionalization of the arts and demand for shorter creation times – has increasingly become more precarious. Erased behind the mascot's identity there's a human actor whom we will never know of. The choice for such a figure that often represents a common group is not a coincidence. By placing a mascot in a black box theatre space, Verdonck dislocates a typically outdoor figure used for marketing, turning consumption into an underlying theme of the performance. But what does the *Untitled* (Verdonck, 2016) mascot advertise? What is he doing on stage stumbling on the floor? Who hides behind the costume? Furthermore, has performing today become limited to entertainment or advertisement strategies?

With such dislocation the Belgian director speaks about the current conditions of production in the performing arts but also of the general conditions of labour in the 'gig economy'. Here, Verdonck alludes to the desubjectification we are subjected to. The concealment and thus the absence of the human performer speaks about how the numerous choices available to us can result in effacement because these choices are ultimately destined to consumption which ultimately means destruction.

Unlike Jeong, Verdonck exercises a strong internal critique of the performing arts by making visible their over productivity visible in the form of powerless over-production of subjectivities (through the consumption of presence and of the body). But overall, both revert to strategies where human withdrawal, or even disappearance, are central to their acts of profanation. While in the Korean choreographer's practice, she and her body disappear in order to form new figures which are new productive formations and have the potential for transformation (related to the present times and particular aspects of current form of capitalism namely technology), in Verdonck's case disappearance gives prominence to nature,

technology or other known figures (mascot) and often questions the invasive, harmful or oppressive impact they might bring.

Exote (Verdonck, 2011) is an example of this. Installed in z33, a Belgian art centre (2011) and later in Bilbao Museum (2016) – both countries with a violent colonial past – is a garden made out of a "the most invasive plants and insects in the world" (Two Dogs, 2011). Often designated in science as 'exotic species', these species "are living outside their native origin" (Two Dogs, 2011), and have been brought there by human activity either for economic reasons or accidentally by tourist activity. Verdonck created a visibly dangerous environment for the ecosystem where participants are invited but are obliged to wear protective clothing followed by a decontaminating shower before leaving the exhibition space.

Inspired by a long tradition of royal museums and butterfly collections, the work points to the role of "comprehension of the natural world" (Moore, 2015a, p. 18) in the deaths of human and organic populations which set the foundation for a threatening, destructive environment.

As Moore (2015a, p. 18) states:

> Such comprehension unfolded within a historical project that aimed at rendering nature external – Nature with a capital 'N' – the better that it could be subordinated and rationalized, its bounty extracted, in service to capital and empire

By setting up a controlled environment and previously informing the participants of the contents of this garden, Verdonck is making a direct comment on Nature's central role in capitalism and the violent process used to accomplish it. Verdonck's *Exote* (2011) is the materialization of Moore's (2015a, p. 2) definition of capitalism as a project:

> It may do with Nature as it pleases, that Nature is external and may be coded, quantified, and rationalized to serve economic growth, social development, or some other higher good.

In this creation, Verdonck opts for the total withdrawal of the human performer in favour of casting solely a variety of 'exotic species'. Yet, the human is present behind every detail of the organization of the space with the use of European gardening and museological conservation techniques that express a long tradition of human desire to shape nature. With this, Verdonck suggests the existence of a continuum in the human's Western exploitative relation to "Nature" (Moore, 2015a, p. 4) that prolongs itself to the present day endangering the human and organic worlds.

Moreover, such a choice values nature's agency but also implies that nature itself might outgrow or has outgrown human intentions. By making the observers wear protective uniforms, Verdonck insinuates that the organic can be invasive and source of all sorts of contamination. Despite the radical cut with the European romantic ideal of an organic world, Verdonck does not advance much in terms of speculating other transformative relational forms between human and nature. But he does indeed provide a distinct view of "Nature" (Moore, 2015a, p. 4), one that is co-produced by humans and closely linked to capitalism but that exists outside of human control and existence.

It is also disappearance that Verdonck uses as strategy in *M, a Reflection* (2012). This is a disappearance of a different kind, one that does not rely necessarily on the realm of an observable withdrawal or occultation. This means that at no moment does the human performer materially disappear from the performative space, nor does he withdraw from the audience's view. Oddly, disappearance is achieved not through an extractive or subtractive operation of the human performer but by his duplication in the black box theatre. Despite this often the main actor disappears, his role is taken over or his disappearance happens through a blurring process, where he becomes another. In Verdonck's *M, a Reflection* (2012), the central characters are a man and his hologram.

Staged in a black box theatre and using various Heiner Müller's texts the piece condenses the German theatre director's oeuvre into a single vision. Known for his sampling of text of other authors, Muller's texts often blend the real and the dream.

Verdonck had been experimenting with holograms before with *Huminid* (2011), but here he stages a human and a hologram in direct competition and permanent dialogue with each other. Often the digital double contradicts, interrupts, or tricks the actor. Here, the virtual appears as both a reflection of its original (the human actor) but also as an autonomous actor with its opinions and desires. In Verdonck's exercise, the difference between the machine and the human being becomes blurred. If the hologram is indeed a reflection of the actor on stage – Johan Leysen – with the same voice, body and face, it is 'the/a real actor' also because of the simple fact of performing on stage. As the performance advances, Johan Leysen, becomes undistinguishable from his copy. At times, his digital double becomes the commander of the play, high-jacking and usurping the human actor's role.

Kunst's (2005) writings on connectivity speak about the human fear of connectivity resulting from the blurring of the human being and machines. It is a fear of the human losing reason or of becoming machine-like, of being supplanted or even no longer being able to connect to other humans and behaving like a machine, ultimately the fear of losing his/her humanity or even ceasing to exist.

It is precisely to this hybrid zone that Verdonck's piece alludes: *M, a Reflection* (2012) uncovers the invisible, dangerous, indecipherable or unpredictable effects of such hybridity, of this in-betweenness arising from the role exchange between human and machine. Kunst (2005, p. 42) notes that as connectivity becomes central to our way of living, these unpredictable effects are increasingly masked and disguised by complex scientific, high-tech procedures and economical stipulations. Only under these conventions can we access our connected world. The constant redefinition that Johan Leysen experiences throughout the piece is exactly the same redefinition that we are constantly experiencing under capitalism today. It is not only the unsettling feeling of infiltration of technology in the most intimate human life – in what it means to be 'me' – that the piece reveals, but also its hidden uncovered effects that more than often remain unknown to us.

In Verdonck's manoeuvre, radical consumption is no longer solely located in the human actor's body or performativity but it expands into the field of technology

coexisting in the body and voice of a hologram. Here, the creation reflects the present hyper-performativity (McKenzie, 2001) both fuel for and an outcome of the current form of capitalism. Because of the increased connectivity our own subjectivities are under constant redefinition. Just like the actor Johan Leysen, we no longer perform alone: our existence and subjectivity encompasses simultaneously the material/real I as well as our virtual existences. As a consequence, our own existences are constantly being redefined. At the centre of Verdonck's performance is the idea that what a 'human being is' and a 'thing is' both arise from their relation with other things and human beings rather than from an essence that hides behind either of them. I am purposely using here the word 'thing' instead of machine because *M, a Reflection* (2012) is filled with subtleties. At first glance the stage is composed of two tables and two chairs. However, on closer inspection one realizes that the table and the chair also have their own digital doubles. This fact was perhaps ignored by many in the audience. Verdonck's comment is not circumscribed to technology it bypasses it and suggests a need for "mediation" (Latour, 2005) that acknowledges the role of technology, things, and the non-human in our subjectivities. A mediation of connection between human and non-human and self and other that, according to Latour (2005), never fully entered contemporary life.

But what are the deeper implications of such an exercise? With it the Belgian director questions our assumptions of original and fake as well as of real and virtual. To machines the concept of the original or truth is irrelevant. This sets up a series of dangerous phenomena that we have been witnessing, such as the role of 'fake news' in elections or in other aspects of our lives. It is precisely because of this danger resulting from the hidden protocols that control technology and the opacity of these relations that there is an urgent need for mediation to be acknowledged in our contemporary lives.

To render visible the network of relations that contribute to an entity has therefore become imperative. This is of major importance if one is to take in consideration that experimenting with subjectivity is today at the centre of capitalistic production.

CHAPTER 2: MALICIOUSLY MISSING

"Maliciously Missing", the title chosen for this chapter, is a term used by police forces to describe missing persons that disappeared deliberately. Their withdrawal results from an active hiding, camouflage or of seeking (an)other existence(s) in other desired and at times imaginary environments. My interest has been to investigate this missing performer and various strategies of moving away from the uncritical centrality of the human or the human body in performance. In the present time what would it mean for a performer to disappear?

It is perhaps a divergent approach from the one which many in the performing arts are familiar with.[20] However, such an approach can prove productive in revealing performance's generative capacity under a time characterized by hyper-presence and a compulsion to perform. Moreover, with this approach to performance(s) my aim is to bridge the gaps resulting from the schism between "Nature" and "Society" which capitalism brought about. If performance(s) focuse(es) on this schism, this gap between "Nature" and "Society" produced by exploitative capitalism, then performance(s) is/are opened to other alternative performances, knowledges and even concepts often reduced (1997) or ignored. Here, Glissant's (1997) concept of opacity is foundational for discussing a singular performative intervention by American artist David Hammons. Such an approach troubles simple versions of agency that tend to go hand in hand with visible embodiment of subjectivities which have been the privilege of few. To plunge into the question of disappearance is to open up space for other possible choreographies that emerge from an engagement with opacity and resistance to post-Fordism's presentism. Additionally, it is also to dismantle the primordial uncontested role given to presence and liveness that persist particularly in the performing arts. The first section will deal with this particular aspect and will challenge and discuss this position working with Deleuze and performance theorists Peggy Phelan and Rebecca Schneider.

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[20] As Schneider (2011, p. 94) pointed out ephemerality has come to mark most of the approaches to performance in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Since the "idea of the ephemeral has enjoyed a certain constitutive status in performance studies" (2011, p. 94) there has been a tendency to approach performance from the point of 'presence in the moment' which accordingly would constitute the live.

The ensuing section entitled "The Potential of the Missing Performer" will describe in detail Hammons' performance mentioned above. This will be done with the help of Laura Levin's reflections on camouflage and Moten and Harney's potentiality of fugitivity. Hammons's intervention finds various points of contact with the practices of Verdonck and Jeong described in the previous chapter. The use of camouflage in Hammons's work is as central as it is in Jeong's performance and there is a studied refusal to give into the productivity of the art market. However, its generative capacity relies on a rather distinct mode – the oral – and an almost complete disappearance, even avoidance, of giving oneself to the 'art gaze'. But more importantly, Hammons turns to opacity as a form of productive withholding. Performance, presence have become central aspects of present-day capitalism. What openings can disappearance provoke in performance that can prove useful under the current times? But also, what methodologies might such a distinct departure point demand?

The section entitled "Strategies of Disappearance" will try to answer this question through a close analysis of methods employed by artists Hammons and Verdonck and choreographers Lewis and Jeong. I will then look at the methodological implications and outcomes of the various possible strategies that can be used to achieve disappearance.

By analysing these case studies, I seek to expand on three specific strategies for the composition of "choreographies of disappearance": camouflage, orality, acts of hiding or a complete withdrawal of the human performer. In doing so I also track the continuities of the opaque performances of Hammons and Lewis. My suggestion is that disappearance, evasion and withdrawal in the context of performance have further implications in how we think, do and perform choreographic works.

2.1. Of the Uncontested Value of Presence

> Remaining through performance like so many ghosts at the door marked 'disappeared'. (Schneider, 2011, p. 102)

> Modernism was not an illusion, but an active performing. (Latour, 1993, p. 144)

In this section I will highlight the role of absence, (in)visibility, and disappearance for the critical potential of choreography in the present time. In addition, I will also debate the importance of moving away from the obsessive, at times uncritical, investment of dance in the centrality of the body or in bringing 'the body into presence'. The latter is partly a facet of the persistence of the modernist project in dance that prevailed even after the movement of democratization and horizontality operated and put in march by the Judson Church movements. This move away – from the uncritical centrality of the body – and subsequent focus on the critical potential of absence can be seen as a means, or a tactic, to allow choreography to remain critically valid in the current times. I am here taking Rancière's (2010) idea of aesthetics and politics as two unseparated spheres and seeing art as inseparable from the given present social and historical context. In doing so I am thinking of aesthetics and choreographic experience as a way of experiencing associated with a specific aesthetic regime particular to a period. For Rancière (2010), a work of art is no longer defined by approach to the idea of the truth|original or a skill or practice or by a division of activities in society. If in the visual arts this process was initiated by Duchamp, in the domain of the choreographic this arrived later with the experimentations in 60s with the American avant-garde (Yvonne Rainer, Steve Paxton, and Trisha Brown[21]).

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[21] Rainer, Paxton and Brown were part of the Judson Church, an arts collective formed in the beginning of 60s, in New York. Alongside composers and visual artists this collective experimented with intermedial performances. These experimentations did not rely on the virtuoso technical body often having the participation of non-trained performers and experimented with pedestrian and

However, if the crisis in the modern regime of representation propelled the visual arts into non-medium-centred art practices in the case of the performing arts, several conventions and premises remain partly uninterrogated. In this section, I will focus on the assumed conventions that are of more direct concern to this research: presence, live|liveness and embodiment. The deeply rooted presentism – the idea that things only happen in the present – in the performing arts accompanies Phelan's ideas (1993) of the ephemerality of performance. Phelan's ideas are clearly in line with the Aristotelian ideal of a metaphysics of presence and on privileging presence over absence. Hers is an idea where the political transformative potential of performance relies solely on its ephemerality and non-mediation. For Phelan, the potentiality of performance depends solely on the presence of the performer's living body. This is the condition for the existence of performance, i.e., only "through the presence of living bodies" (1993, p. 148) does performance comes to exist.

This was a prevalent idea in my own training (1989-1992) in particular in improvisation classes where we were supposed to exercise 'being in the moment', 'being in the now' on a daily basis. 'Presence' was also constantly referred in my collaborations as dancer with companies like Les Ballets C. de La B.[22] or Constanza Macras[23].

But what is presence and are we really only present in a precise moment in time? When a performer leaves the stage there isn't a trace of him that stays both across space but also across time. Isn't the presence of the performer (what an audience experiences) affected by the space he leaves and the particular objects, light, noise, audience? The object that lies behind the performer in the performative space: is it present, is it performing? Or is it absent? If we take into consideration that presence (the performer) is affected as much as it affects, we might start to consider presence

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everyday life movement. In addition, they made use of improvisational procedures which would influence much of the concert dance in the West. For more see *Democracy's Body Judson Dance Theatre, 1962–1964* (1993b)

[22] Les Ballets C. de La B. is a Belgian company initiated by Belgian director Alain Platel and consists of a collaborative collective of choreographers, performers and many other artist collaborators. My collaboration as performer with Les Ballets between 2001-2005 involved creations with Koen Augustjjnen and Christine de Smedt. For more see https://www.lesballetscdela.be/en/

[23] Constanza Macras is an Argentinian choreographer developing work in Berlin. Her company named Constanza Macras| Dorky Park is characterized by the collaborative nature of her methodologies.

not as a fixed, stable concept and allow for a thinking of presence(s) that is trans-temporal and in constant change in time and space. In Chapter 4, I will be looking more closely at the conditions that make things come into appearance through the use of Heidegger's concept of "tool-analysis", as well as the consequent legitimization of the autonomous existence of objects, removed from their relation with humans.

Moreover, in line with Schneider (2011) I am calling for the need for choreography to consider presence as a mediated, non-stable condition, open to the possibilities this can provoke. The acceptance that presence and the meaning of an object is never stable opens an all-new set of possibilities for choreography and performance: new compositions, new presence(s). Derrida's (1996) thought of things as not "things in themselves" but "yet to come" and slipping away is useful for deconstructing presence as located in certain point in time but also his denouncement of binaries in Western philosophy of subject – object opposition where subject is presence, and the object is relative to the subject – are of interest for choreography. This might open choreography to a wide new set of presence(s) and assemblages that attend to other forces or things outside of the centrality of the subject of the human body. Therefore, to refer to the potential of absence does necessarily imply to think of absence as an absolute idea that occurs in time and space with the consequent dangers and pitfalls of falling into metaphysical binaries. The same could be said for invisibility or disappearance. What is at stake is to consider the multiple possibilities of unsettling this idea of presence as ephemeral in choreography. Presence distinguishes itself from non-presence or absence, but presence is already instilled with absence; it needs it. Deleuze (1994, pp. 70-128) argues that the present contains past and future – it is this that we must take into consideration: thinking about presence in choreography in terms of a differential. Presence and absence (or non-presence) inscribe one another. It is more a question of intensities, and the difference between those that makes different possible modes of presence. Moreover, liveness and live might not be located in the now as Phelan (1993) argued but we might have to consider that things might perform in a differentiated time that is now but also in the past.

 "Not to Play with Dead Things" (Magion, 2018), an exhibition at Villa Arson, investigated if objects that were part of a performance in the past can be

performative by themselves in the present. If they can be both performing the past and the present at the same time. Schneider's (2011, pp. 90-97) analysis of the 1st American civil war re-enactments further problematizes this where performance happens both here in the now but also in the past. Her analysis provides a distinct view of the temporality of performance away from ephemerality. She articulates this idea by giving the example of a pose which she argues has quality of reiteration implying a "signifying precedent" (2011, p. 90). In doing so, she argues that similarly re-enactments articulate an interval and consequently are given to multiple, layered and concurrent times. Returning back to the question: the object that lies behind the performer – is it performing, or could we even say it is live instead? Can a disappearing body be performing while she/he is away? Is liveness only accessible to the human, the Aristotelian subject? Again, if we abandon this binary distinction of object-subject then probably the answer is no, liveness might be accessible to all things.

By analysing scores, procedures and methodologies that investigate disappearance this study also exposes and challenges the significance of the Western's modernist avant-garde investment in the idea of a particular interiority of the body in dance.

What bodies become excluded because of departing from this form of interiority? This notion is evident in the use of release techniques that became central to some contemporary dance and choreographic practices of today. A question arises: what is the usefulness or radicalness to advance new ideas in the present time, what contribution can this particular form of embodiment give way to new presences now? This same concern can be found in Boris Charmatz's practice and is expressed in his Manifesto for a Museum of Dance when he states:

> The search for the "centre"…For a dancer, this word resonates physically first of all. Not so long ago, the dancer, when he was training, was systematically told to "find his centre". But today, it is generally acknowledged that the body has no centre, and he doesn't miss it. (Charmatz, 2014)

It is worth noting this was sensed much earlier by Meg Stuart, an American dancer based in Brussels, while developing the piece "Disfigure Study" (1991). In Spike magazine (2014) she discloses:

there was always this sort of endless flow. It was hypnotising…I was against this "holistic" thing. I decided to work with stiffness, resistance, to not warm up. There was a lot of pain those first years (she laughs). You took classes related to "opening up spaces in your body", so everything was soft, embryo-like, utopian. I felt I had to invent something else (Linder, 2014)

In this "new world" there is no centre and perhaps there are just transitory constellations, the question of the body (un)centrality arises and of what new roles the body and other non-human realms might play in these assemblages. For it is in the performing arts that the influence of the anthropological machine (Agamben, 2004) is manifestly felt stronger. I am arguing for the need for performance to engage with the sociology of associations (Latour, 2005) if it wants to remain critical. Performance needs to consider the exploitative origins of the dualism of "Nature" and "Society", which is to say, it must think of the particular way in which previously unconnected elements came to be associated. The aim is to move away from the uncritical centrality of the universal human body in choreography, its burdens and current Western obsession with 'presentism' in our lives (this idea that only events and things that occur in the present exist) and find modes of being on stage that can translate the times we are living in. The intention is to find a choreography of resistance, a choreography that has something to say about the present information era, about the times we live in today. In a way, what is being asked is if choreography has this burden of the body and so much 'now desired' ephemerality, that it might also be in a particular position to develop strategies of resistance that might advance new futurities. Can there be political potential in a strategic withdrawal in choreography? What other presences, existences, knowledges have been ignored by performance because of the inherited division of "Nature" and "Society"? How can choreography move away from the aesthetic burden object/subject divide inherited from modernism?

We have long been warned of the traps attached along with representation by art historian Mercer (1990), Indian Post-colonial theorist Spivak (2018) or Phelan (1993). All of them urge us to reconsider the alignment between "representational visibility" (Phelan, 1993, p. 11) and "political power" (ibid). This exists within politics and often re-emerges mimetically in choreographic performance (whether in the traditions of the performing or visual arts); I referred to some examples in

Chapter 1. Both Spivak and Phelan agree that "visibility politics are compatible with capitalism's relentless appetite for new markets" which renders them "additive rather than transformational" (ibid). This is not to say that to engage with strategies of visibility in performance is necessarily engaging with "surveillance, fetishism, voyeurism, the colonialist appetite for possession" (Phelan, 1993, p. 6) or "tokenism" (Spivak, 2018). Other traps await us when engaging with disappearance: that of plunging into obscurity. Martinican poet and theorist Édouard Glissant (1989) in defending the "right of us all to opacity" cautions us of this. What I am trying to say is that even such a category – obscurity – should not remain unchallenged; for engaging with it in performance(s) might have unexpected potential, as we shall see in the next section. My task is to approach the "unmarked, unspoken, unseen" (Phelan, 1993) and the "unconnected" (Latour, 2005) in performance(s) through artistic strategies of disappearance, and by focusing on strategies that trouble the way bodies come into disappearance. I aim to defy the following: the optical, often homogeneous and recurrent representational forms – thus resisting "the production and reproduction of visibility" which are "part of the labor of the reproduction of capitalism" Phelan (1993, p. 11). The aim is not only to oppose the tendency to value performance(s) through visibility, presence and productivity, but more importantly to rethink the unconnected, the unseen and the hidden.

Presence in the West more than often "promises a transparency to an observer of what 'is'" (Jones, 2011, p. 18). The West's promise arises from a "pathological demand to understand" underwritten by "hierarchies" and a "requirement for transparency" (Glissant, 1997). For many – black and indigenous communities – it carries with it an inevitable "reduction"; a reduction based on a hierarchy where difference only exists if it can relate to the Western norm, within its system (ibid)). Glissant (1989, p. 133) urges us "to develop everywhere, in defiance of a universalizing and reductive humanism, the theory of specifically opaque structures". It is a call to accept the "irreducible density of the other" (Glissant, 1997), the opaqueness, his/her/their "right to opacity". Opacity means rejecting the Western 'homogeneity of [essence]'. It alleges that the Western gesture of understanding - even if filled with the best intentions – is either a reduction of the other into universal categories or exoticism which Glissant (ibid) describes as an act of impossible transmutation into "being other".

People historically relegated to the margins often used multiple strategies of opacity ranging from 'story-telling', the creation of Creole languages (sounding like European languages but cryptic for the colonizers) to physical practices like capoeira (a martial art often disguised as dance) or even celebratory practices of their own gods camouflaged as the colonizer's religion (candomblé). These are forms of resistance in order to claim the right to be illegible and indecipherable in the face of a totalizing universalist agenda that purports to speak in their place. In this sense, opacity converts the vulnerable visibility of the one who reverts it to an impenetrable presence. In doing so, it complicates binary definitions of presence and visibility and as such challenges totalizing ideas of total legibility. As a highly productive fugitive form, it is not limited to plain invisibility, hiding or withdrawal, often taking up varied inscrutable performances, codified utterances and cultural forms. Hence, as we will see in the next section, it can be a resourceful concept for performance's resistance and potentiality.

2.2. The Potential of the Missing Performer

American visual artist David Hammons's practice could be best described as a consistent study of strategies of refusal, disappearance and concealment. The idea of 'escape', accompanied by the wish to be transformed, is behind many of Hammons' performances. Here, escape or 'being a fugitive' can be understood as an act of release – from something, somewhere, somewhere – that implicates necessarily a need to be able, at least, to imagine oneself elsewhere, in the future sense. Fugitivity and escaping capture are what best describes Hammons performance *Bliz-aard Ball sale* (1983).

On a wintry day Hammons set up a small blanket on the floor next to other street vendors in Cooper Square. Because the only evidence we have of such performance are the pictures taken by Hammons' photographer friend Dahoud Bey, the performance's existence otherwise relies mostly on stories or rumours – like so many other 1980s Hammons's street interventions or actions performances.

According to art historian Filipovic (2017), from accounts of passers-by, apparently buyers approached the artist, even purchasing items. Some curious or amused others were puzzled or startled at the object of his sale: snowballs. Lying on the carefully placed blanket lay a series of snowballs organised by size and price that Hammons had fabricated with "graduated moulds (the kinds often used to shape putty or butter)" (Filipovic, 2017, p. 66).

But how to measure the value of a snowball? A thing, a substance (rain) belonging to everybody. Or how should – if we should – measure its (use)value? Should we? And how did Hammons measure it? Through its size solid volume or its liquid quantity? Which is to say through its present solidity or absent liquidity? Or through its presence as a liquid and absence of a solid size? Or as an art object?

The place chosen for this performance is not divorced from the last question. He was standing just few yards away from the Cooper Union Art School (approximately 115 metres), or perhaps more, he was a black artist that had a vague if not ephemeral passage through an art institution. According to Filipovic (2017, p. 37) he attended Chouinard Art Institute from 1966 to 1968. Again, it is hard to get the accurate distance between the artist and the Cooper Union building because, as with many other Hammons' interventions, no leaflet, or announcement of the performance was ever made.

What is striking in Hammons' work is that the measurement of visibility does not equate to its measurement of the live and the optical. Quite the contrary. It is a blurred presence which makes itself meaningful through undecipherable aspects, hidden codes that are inscribed throughout his practice. However, this should not be mistaken as an unintentional aspect of Hammons' practice. Quite the contrary, as it is upon this that the foundations for his work rely.

For what is the relevance of intentionally doing a performance without an audience or not witnessed by an art audience? The existence of Hammons' performance relied on rumour and the fugitive sporadic glance. Indeed, it is through rumour and photographs that we access Hammons' interventions. In doing, so Hammons gives prominent a role to the passersby implicating them in the fabrication of the visible and the construction of the performances. It is through their word of mouth that performance comes to existence.

As such, "Bliz-aard Ball sale" (Hammons, 1983) is a highly mediated performance not only through photos but mainly above all its reliance on rumour. Such an intervention defies Phelan's (1993) ideas of an ontology of performance where liveness only happens in the 'here and now' without any form of mediation relying solely on the ephemeral presence of the performer's body. Hammons' performance, on the contrary, emerges from a highly porous territory where the live and the mediated exist in "a relation of dependence and imbrication, rather than opposition" (Auslander, 2008, p. 56).

To enter the terrain of rumour is primarily to interfere with the visible, to play the game of hide and seek, to evade capture. Rumour transforms the visible, confounds it, reinvents it. Through the use of stories, invention, fabulation or imagination it complicates the idea of the real.

Not only that, it travels across various spheres: the outdoors of a street corner, the domestic private environment, the working site and the public settings. Via opaque unscrutinized canals. It is through these passages that the visible begins taking form. A form not dissimilar to snowballs: a form that does not hold still. Because of this we can never be sure if indeed a singular snowball was purchased or if in reality Hammons designed his snowballs with his hands as according to his initial accounts. Here, performance comes to live through storytelling in the form of "wild facts" (Haraway, 2016) where truth and invention are entangled. It must be said that storytelling, fabulation and rumour have often been used by marginalized communities as part of strategies of opacity and resistance to colonial capitalist exploitation (Glissant, 1997) or even in more recent organized anti-colonial formations such as in independent African movements (MPLA – Angola, PAIGC – Cape Vert/Guiné Bissau). These strategies are an important part of black sociability. For Hammons, facts, the truth and transparency are irrelevant. It is the opaque that interests him. Through it he challenges the binary of truth and false as opposing orders and sets opacity as the aesthetics basis for rendering of the works. As a consequence, in Hammons's performance "the pristine self-sameness of an "original," an artifact so valued by the archive, is rendered impossible – or, if you will, mythic" (Schneider, 2011, p. 100).

But this opacity is evident as well in Hammons' choice of place. As a vendor in a street corner the artist is camouflaged, completely immersed into the site and the environment disguised as a vendor risking obscurity. Levin (2014, p. 25) argues that the act of camouflage forges "a productive and permeable relation between the 'self and world' revealing unexpected power in the 'not yet' of the 'placeless'". If we approach Hammons' performance from this perspective, what kind of interpretations might be made from such a positioning? What other binaries are troubled by Hammons positioning as a camoufleur? What might be the possible relations between camouflage and assimilation? What kind of unexpected productivity, if any, is its outcome?

By adopting camouflage, Hammons' performance practice goes into the obscure territory of taking the risk of disappearing, but it is precisely in here that its unexpected critical potential relies. Like Jeong in "Private Collection: Unperformed Objects" (2017), through camouflage Hammons risks disappearance. However, it is through camouflage that both find an unusual generative capacity: that of creating new performances, alternative stories and other unique bodies. In Hammons' case this is achieved through orality and its various utterances. As for Jeong, it is her own body's concealment and even at times disappearance, that advances other body formations and other stories.

Through camouflage Hammons signals a deliberate choice to perform for a group of people chosen to be his conspirators and active agents in the distribution and reproduction of the performance; totally detouring from institutional canals of distribution and accumulation. Hammons refuses completely to integrate his interventions in art institutions. Hammons' unannounced intervention, its chosen site (next to an art university campus) point to an intentional and conscious positioning of himself outside those institutions and a studied relation of refusal towards the art market. Hammons seems all too aware of the difficulty of "any cultural discourse" to "stand outside the ideologies of capital (Auslander, 2008, p. 45). Yet, at the height of Reaganism faced with large commercial gallery art events, the professionalization of the arts and art black movements engaging with representation (Black Art Movement in Britain), Hammons' rejects the visible. In the present, where corporative brands

such as Nike[24] use black celebrity bodies as envoys with the purpose of linking their brand to universal ideas of freedom, humanism, equalitarianism and emancipation, such a strategy seems even more in crucial. Rejecting the visible today is pushing against the prevalent celebrity worship in an apparent world of universal visibility and access. In a massively professionalized art world, the role of an artist is characterized by maximum visibility through all channels as possible: photo opportunities, digital presence, social media, magazines or even fashion high street windows. An artist seems to be above all someone that shows up to mark a presence, someone who is present. To quote the title of Abramovic's recent famous work: "The artist is present" (2012). Taking this further: "the artist has to be present"; if not, he does not exist.

Not only does Hammons' performance resiliently evade being captured by the market, it also refuses to give into the "ideology of the visible" (Phelan, 1993). Hammons is well aware of his condition, he knows that "to be black in an art world as white as the walls of its museums, and in America where privilege and presence and whiteness go hand in hand, is to realize that visibility is something to mess with, to disavow" Filipovic (2017, p. 16). Here, he plays the same game of hide and seek like fellow American artist Adrian Piper, who when confronted with the discrimination faced for being black and female, resorted to withdrawal as a strategy by submitting the following statement for the exhibition "Conceptual Art and Conceptual Aspects" (1970) at the Cultural Centre, New York:

> The work originally intended for this space has been withdrawn. The decision to withdraw has been taken as a protective measure against the increasingly pervasive conditions rather than submit the work to the deadly and poisoning influence of these conditions. I submit its absence as evidence of the inability of art expression to have meaningful existence under conditions other than those of peace, equality, truth, thirst and freedom (Lippard, 1997, p. 168)

Phelan (1993) argues that on reading physical resemblance as a way of identifying a community, representation becomes linear and mimetic, establishing a direct link between visibility and increased power; in doing so representation reflects the

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[24] For more on this read https://www.dw.com/en/nikes-ad-with-football-player-colin-kaepernick-creates-controversy/a-45352575

"ideology of the visible, and erases the power of the unmarked, unspoken, and unseen" (Phelan, 1993). Hammons on the other hand engages and unleashes that power through obscurity and opacity. His is a refusal of not giving into the Western's 'homogeneity of [essence]'.

By engaging with the obscure, Hammons builds a complex archive of knowledges, practices, strategies and concepts that defy many of the essences professed by the west. But more importantly, it's an archive that travels through word of mouth, is persistent and remains.

Hammons knows that reproduction goes hand in hand with exploitation and "reduction" (Glissant, 1997) for black communities. By enacting a systematic practice of refusal, he bypasses the traps inherent in establishing a direct link between visibility and increased power of representation, that of an integrationist and reductionist (Glissant, 1997) agenda. Here, Hammons is well aware that the "subaltern speaks" (Spivak, 1988), but indeed he speaks through codes and following Glissant (1997), he plays with the lack of understanding of those codes by a Western white audience. For it is only through obscurity that he manages to create an alternative archive of knowledges and practices. Hammons' engagement with opacity and even obscurity, in his sale performance, echoes Moten and Harney's (2013) idea of "fugitive study" where "study" as a strategy of resistance against capitalism (the anti-blackness of global capital and its neoliberal system of knowledge) happens not only at university but outside of the institution amongst a small circle of friends, in cafes, in small communities: a fugitive resistance that operates through hidden opaque canals. In their own words: "We're telling all of you but we're not telling anyone else" (Harney & Moten, 2013, p. 68). Moreover, like Hammons, their study is a call for a refusal to integration. As they note:

> we cannot be satisfied with the recognition and acknowledgement generated
> by the very system that denies a) that anything was ever broken and b) that
> we deserved to be the broken part; so we refuse to ask for recognition
> (Harney & Moten, 2013, p. 6)

Even though blackness[25] in "Bliz-aard Ball sale" (1983) does not rely on the figure of a black man/woman nor in the black body, it is strongly present in the choice of strategies (opacity, oral story, fabulation, orality, camouflage) and the choice of materials – often found on the performance's site – (cardboard, plastic, chicken bones, frizzy hair, bike wheels transformed into basketball rings). For this reason, Hammon's retrieval does not equate to passing often associated with submission. This rejection of the institution and the strategies adopted is not surprising if we take into account that Hammons practice partially emerges from a background removed from an institutionalized, professionalized art education. Of important relevance is the influence brought to him by his foster grandfather who collected "everyday objects whose spiritual charge connected them back to ancient Kongo and to Angolan traditions" (Filipovic, 2017, p. 36). Levin (2014, p. 25) contends that non-white bodies that enter into camouflage "complicate facile binaries of figure/ground and onstage/offstage that emerge if one develops spatial politics merely around one aspect of identity". It is no coincidence then that Hammons' performance deals with a complex set of associations that trouble innumerable binaries such as: true-false, marketable-not marketable, presence-absence, live-death, visible-invisible.

At its heart is the creation of a visible but unreadable image. Phelan believes that the only non-mediated performance that evades capitalism is ephemeral, relying on an organic body disappearing "into memory, into the realm of invisibility and the unconscious where it eludes regulation and control" (Phelan, 1993, p. 148). This is strongly contested by Hammons' intervention. On the other hand, "Bliz-aard Ball sale" (1983) aligns itself with her critique of representation of which Hammons's himself was not favouring by opening an unexpected productivity and a strategy of evasion by a nonwhite artist that surprisingly she did not recognize. Hammons not only is prepared to vanish but he does so by transforming this disappearance into a highly productive resistant form both to capitalistic professionalization of the art world, reproductivity, and more importantly, to assimilation. Unexpectedly it is his engagement with obscurity that enables and creates an alternative form of archive.

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[25] Blackness is understood in this study in Hartman's (1997, p. 56) sense as "in terms of social relationality rather than identity". By this is meant that it describes a state of relation thus, it encompasses "subjects normatively defined as black, the relations among blacks, whites, and others, and the practices that produce racial difference".

An archive that remains in the various reiterations of spoken word travelling across obscure passages. In privileging storytelling as a constitutive main factor of performance Hammons creates an alternative archive of knowledges of "other ways of knowing, other modes of remembering, that might be situated precisely in the ways in which performance remains, but remains differently" (Schneider, 2011, p. 98). There is a thread between Hammons' archive and that of American choreographer Isabel Lewis (featured the next section) where the conversational, various black practices such as sampling, kizomba, funk dancing – all practices that often do not feature in the Western archive – are given an arresting significant role. Lewis often disappears camouflaged as a participant throughout the performance engaging in conversations, remerging here and there as a sound sampler (DJ) or as facilitator within the dimmed down light of the carefully created environment. Hers is a permanently blurred disappearing camouflaged presence. Both artists favour the conversational as a favourite method. Both take into account "the inexorable cultural and physical materiality of self and reveal its imbrication within wider worlds, networks, and publics" (Levin, 2014, p. 65). Perhaps Phelan (1993) did not give enough attention to how the problem of disappearance might be experienced by non-white bodies and in doing so she ignored the ways that "performance resists the cultural habituation to the ocular" (Schneider, 2011, p. 98), to the gaze. From this perspective, Hammons' practice is a highly valuable example of how to elaborate an archive that defies the edifice of the "West-identified (arguably white cultural) logic of the archive" (Schneider, 2011, p. 97).

But what other readings can be made of Hammons as a camoufleur selling snowballs? In some senses this sale points towards a close future, the present time. Hammons' inappropriate setting of a sale configuration to trade an unsuitable item such as snowballs as a marketable good is an ultimate gesture of profanation (Agamben, 2007). Moreover, through its proximity to the Cooper Art Union, he is playing also with the gallery system and the art market. By giving something regarded by many as unsuitable for consumption, he points to the extreme phase of capitalism we're living in, where anything and everything is prone to radical consumption. Here, Hammons is like an oracle. First, he is miming the art world, the gallerist by selling art whose price one can only speculate. For what is the true value of an archive that evades both capitalism and its Western gaze and remains through

time? An extensive archive of black fugitivity escaping capture, travelling in space and time? Or what is the price of rain contained in a perfectly moulded sphere of ice? Is it measurable? Both objects of his sale do not hold still. Snowballs are ephemeral, disappearing in the moment into rain at the moment one tries to hold them as his archive is.

2.3. Strategies of Disappearance: Opacity as Generative Withholding in Performance(s)

2.3.1 Choreographies of Disappearance

> On one hand, it cannot be assumed that silence of the oppressed is always the result of imposed silencing. It may actually be a silence of revolt or protest against an imposed silencing. There is a right to voice only when there is a right to silence as well (Santos, 2018, p. 179)

In the following sections 2.3. and 2.4., I will elaborate on the methodological implications of approaching performance(s) from disappearance. My suggestion is that to focus on disappearance, evasion and withdrawal in the context of performances entails a significant set of shifts in how performance is generated, enacted and actualized. For in the Western performing arts, performance starts and is centred around the 'universal abstract body'[26] (particularly in dance) or language (in theatre).

I return to the dissertation of Gilbert - a fellow colleague from my studies at the Dutch school European Dance Development Center – E.D.D.C. – *A conceit of the Natural Body: The Universal-Individual in Somatic Dance Training* (2014) for whom the 'universal body' is the formation behind much of the concert avant-garde dance from the 60s onwards. For Gilbert (2014) the natural 'universal body' is

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[26] Here, the work of American dance theorist Dixon-Gottschild (1996) work in tracing the unacknowledged influence of black culture in the 60's avant-garde dance in the making of the aesthetics of this body is unvaluable. In addition, the both the work of Chatterjee (2004) and Gilbert (2014).

shaped around Darwinist ideas (Alexander technique[27]), different stages of human development (body-mind centering[28] technique), concepts of anatomical structure (Alexander and release techniques) and a deeply ingrained primitivism. This scientific rhetoric provided the ground to consolidate this formation as pertaining to all bodies regardless of cultural impositions. And yet, this purified 'new' 'universal body' takes i.e., borrows consciously without acknowledgement from African American culture. Dixon-Gottschild (1996) traces the unacknowledged influence of black culture in the making of the aesthetics of this 'universal body': from the open-ended improvisation characteristic of the African American jazz movement to the casual energy of the Judson Church style. In addition, the work of Chatterjee (2004, p. 114) gives us more insights into other conscious omitted borrowings of particular Asian practices (Sufism) and further erasures behind its formation. She underlines the unacknowledged influences of Sufism in a famous iconic concert hall dance from American choreographer Lucinda Childs, the unstated disregarded inspiration found by Rainer in Indian epics or the Tai Chi Chuan, Aikido, and yoga appropriations by the Judson Church style. But more importantly, her work highlights the continuities found in the reductive way Western critics analyse creations from non-white artists which exclude them from any idea of innovation along with the omission of structured improvisational forms of Kathak dance. The three authors share a view of the 'universal body' of the Western avant-garde as an exclusionary formation that excludes non-Western bodies and non-white bodies or even and by extension "participates in the construction of whiteness" (Gilbert, 2014, p. 41).

To open performance(s) to the "social" (Latour, 2005), to other knowledges, bodies and relations is to engage with a particular set of methods with distinct departure points. Such a move suggests a break in a major aspect: an intentional decentring

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[27] Alexander technique was a postural technique developed by Australian actor Frederick Mathias from 1890s onwards in an effort to improve voice loss. For more information on the technique see manual used by most of its practitioners *Body Learning: An Introduction to the Alexander Technique* (Gelb, 1981). Additionally, for an in depth analysis of the interpretations of the 60s of this technique see section *Aggregate Social Categories of Nature:Early 20th Century Somatics* (Gilbert, 2014, pp. 60-66).
[28] Body-Mind Centering (BMC) was developed in the 60s by American body researcher Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen relying on concepts of embodiment alongside the "application of anatomical, physiological, psychophysical and developmental principles, utilizing movement, touch, voice and mind" (Cohen, 2001). Cohen opened her 1st BMC school in 1973 in Massachusetts (Hartley, 1994). Additionally, for more on BMC see: *Sensing, Feeling, and Action: The Experiential Anatomy of Body-Mind-Centering* (Cohen, 2012) .

from the human universal body accompanied by an abandonment or even rejection of the prevalent "body humanism" (Laermans, 2008, p. 7) to focus on the relational and mediation.

This decentring is apparent in Jeong's deep relational mode with her objects as a departure point for further investigations into performance or Hammons's camouflage as a street vendor where the conversational is the major operational strategy of the performance. Along with Dominican choreographer Isabel Lewis' discrete presence as a host, these works propose choreographies of a different kind that I would like to call 'choreographies of disappearance'. Behind all of them exists an original mode of 'doing-with' and 'being with' on approaching performance that is manifest in the choice of methods and processes. Even, if this is achieved in distinct forms, there are continuities, similarities in the processes used by the several artists described in Chapters 1, 2, 4 and with my own studio practice. Additionally, in the next chapter, I will elaborate further on the specific method used in my practice - "auscultation" which further expands on the (dis)-continuities with dance avant-garde techniques and methodologies.

In doing so I want to highlight the conditions and strategies that enable these various practices of entering the territory of "choreographies of disappearance". But before extrapolating on the strategies, I would like to expand on two conditions that define these choreographies: the move away from the 'universal body' and a disfavour of "body humanism" (Laermans, 2008, p. 7)

Belgian performance theorist Rudy Laermans (2008) argues that despite radical changes brought to dance by the avant-garde movements of the 60s, the primacy of the human body ("body humanism") in dance practices, dance making, its discourses and more generally in the performing arts, remains uncontested. Contesting it is also a work performed by choreographies of disappearance and hereby my project. If the body has been regarded as the constitutional, central medium of dance, the practice of choreographies of disappearance carries out a mediation between various elements (oral transmission, DJ sampling, kizomba, virtual identities, things, the non-human). These are brought to surface and become a matter of attention of the performances.

The performer's body appears as an element among many other bodies and aspects of the performance, even disappears or undergoes a dimming down to give voice to

other alternative bodies and voices. Not only that, but choreographies of disappearance also put forward an alternative dance-making dependent on context, extraneous resources (oral histories, the conversational, smell, non-human) and less so on human interiorized elements. In addition, these practices challenge the 'human universal body'.

Behind the 'universal body' is an operation a double erasure, one which is dismissive of the African diasporic influence and another at a deeper distinct methodological level. Here, I would like to go further than Learmans in adding that the human body's centrality in Western dance avant-garde made part of a larger project of modernity which with it encompassed exclusions and erasures of practices and knowledges. American dance historian Sally Banes (1993a) describes such body centrality in the practices of the 60s dance avant-garde as source of power but not without its contradictions and erasures. She points to its underlying "positive primitivism"[29] despite its democratic emphasis. In this respect, the avant-garde's dance body emerges and situates itself in continuity with modern dance within the larger scope of other modernity's constructs marked by coloniality. Despite taking from other bodily forms (African American, African) to become itself the 'universal body' of dance, it displays a reductionist attitude towards black culture and black art. Just as in modern dance, the avant-garde dance body as a 'body of modernity'[30] is construed in relation to alien-frequently African-others.

There were discrete questions at times around the unexplained absence of black artists or the influence of their practices on the Judson Church movement in my studies at the Dutch European Dance Development Center -E.D.D.C. ArtEZ (1996-1999). Yet it would be in my practice as a dancer that I would encounter these absented practices and the evidence of their influence on the 60s dance avant-garde and by extension on the Western contemporary dance of today. It is my belief today

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[29] Sally Banes (1993a, p. 206) coined the term "essentialist positive primitivism" to describe the reductionist attitude towards black culture and black art that characterized much of the modernist movement and found its continuity in early post modernism. That is, an assumption that there are particular positive qualities "engendered by race itself, qualities linked to creativity, energy, sexuality and harmony with nature – in short, with the Anti-Enlightenment triumph of the body over rationality."

[30] For a more in-depth study of the modern dance body and coloniality see: Alien Bodies: Representations of Modernity, "Race," and Nation in Early Modern Dance (Burt, 1998).

that these questions only arose in the context of the dance academia (at E.D.D.C.) because of the diversity of contexts the students came from geographically (Africa, Asia, South and North America and Europe) and their diversified alternative practices, experiences and knowledges. It must be underlined that E.D.D.C.'s focus as a school were practices linked to the 'Judson Church movement'. No modern techniques and very little or no ballet, was part of the curriculum. This meant that as student you had an intense, investigative, close contact with practices and mentors originating from the Judson movement. The curriculum focused on release techniques, CI (contact improvisation) and American choreographer Trisha Brown's approach to technique. This last with mentorship from Lisa Kraus and Eva Karczag both ex-dancers of Brown's original company. Open forms of composition and dance making were a cornerstone of the programme. CI was introduced to my class by Lisa Nelson and Steve Paxton to my class. Mary Fulkerson, one of the founders of release technique who had collaborated with Steve Paxton in the first experimentations of what would be called CI, was the director of the school and her ideas of 'open-form composition strategies', concepts of 'responsible anarchy', 'ethical reformation' and 'non-hierarchical' practice-based learning underpinned the school's principles.

On collaborating with Les Ballets c. de La B.[31] (2000-2003) as a dancer I encountered manifold forms of improvisation(s) from breakdance to capoeira that were not transformed or co-opted into some higher 'Western universal' somatic form. This confrontation of different contradictory bodies, and methods (ranging from street breakdance, capoeira, ballet, avant-garde Belgian post-dramatic theatre, performance, Judson Church inspired training somatic practices) made space for deep unexamined questions: a questioning happening in the studio with our bodies, arising from distinct even contradictory trainings and dancer's personal trajectories and stories. I remember the surprise in encountering the use of a circle round constellation by Luxemburgish dancer colleague Sylvia Camarga to learn improvised materials with techniques such as capoeira or breakdance that I had learnt as an original characteristic of the avant-garde American dance. Or the idea of a snaky

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[31] Les Ballets C. de La B. is a Belgian company initiated by Belgian director Alain Platel and consists of a collaborative collective of choreographers, performers and many other artist collaborators. For more see https://www.lesballetscdela.be/en/

body by Steve Paxton drafted in my fellow dancer's colleague popping breakdance body. Both reminiscent of the African American dances dating back as far as the early 20s which virtuoso African American dance artist Earl Tucker made famous with his "Snake Hips"[32]. Camarga, though having a ballet virtuoso background, had been engaging with street breakdance practice in the last few years, performing out in the streets with friends. The capoeira circle constellation was a form frequently used in improvisation and contemporary dance is today a recognized UNESCO intangible immaterial cultural heritage described thus:

> The capoeira circle is a place where knowledge and skills are learned by observation and imitation. It also functions as an affirmation of mutual respect between communities, groups and individuals and promotes social integration and the memory of resistance to historical oppression. (UNESCO, 2014)

I would not be so careful and would point out to the continuous coloniality in many of these erasures to this day in both the performing arts and performance to which Hammons's broader practice indirectly draws our attention to. This unexamined continuity in dance practices points to an avoidance of situating dance under the spell of modernity and its many problematic erasures by extension. Banes (1993a, p. 205) makes reference to these African American influences at an aesthetic level of the body's 'bent elbows and knees', the compartmentalization of the body in various parts, and the importance of groundness to more compositional aspects originating from African American music such as the use of the body as a sound instrument, improvisatory structures, or its 'emphasis rhythm'. These details are often disregarded; however, they carry with them a particular form of the 'universal' that goes hand in hand with the other more well-known universals 'history', 'humanism' and many more which are the back bench of modernity in many other art forms and resulted in knowledge exclusion – some of the exclusions that choreographies of disappearance open performance to.

Some would contend that release techniques, somatics and Western methods of listening to the body developed in this particular time (in continuity with past ideas

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[32] See *Who Earl "Snakehips" Tucker is, and Why We Love Him.* (Jazz, 2017)

of Alexander technique, or Todd's "thinking body" (1937)[33]) are opening towards all bodily cultures and bodies, and are therefore free from modernity's Western exclusions. However, if as I suggested the 60s avant-garde dances and much of the contemporary dance Western practices today suffer from "positive primitivism",[34] what sensorial politics are behind the "being in the world" that accompanies them? What politics of sensoriality are driving the methodologies used by them? Ultimately, what are the ordering systems or hierarchies established through these methodologies?

It is true that such techniques rely on touch and the knowing of the world through the senses that had been and still is relegated to a lower level in the Western academia, finding its expression even at the organizational role distribution order within UK performing arts departments where often somatics are used as a "complement to classic training" (Gilbert, 2014, p. 389). However, at its deepest level, such techniques are formulated under Western formulations of expressing universal human characteristics without accounting for alternative body knowledges, bodily cultures and the variety of social and personal trajectories arising from acknowledging different contexts. Last but not least, they fail to leave space for knowledges we might not yet grasp or are unknown to us. My argument is that despite the rupture with the Cartesian ideal by privileging touch over seeing (which is prevalent in ballet), somatic techniques work under a continuity that excluded and excludes many bodies. French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty is perhaps helpful to understand this, as many of the methodologies used in somatics share affinities with his philosophy of perception. American Mabel Todd's seminal work *The Thinking Body:A Study of the Balancing Forces of Dynamic Man* (1937) could be considered a fundamental work for somatics, the development of Feldenkrais and many of the techniques used by the avant-garde in the 60s. For Todd (1937),

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[33] See Mabel, Todd (1937). *The Thinking Body: A Study of the Balancing Forces of Dynamic Man*. New York: P.B. Hoeber. Todd's ideas would become known as Ideokinesis and later applied and interpreted by Somatic practitioners from the 60s onwards.

[34] Sally Banes (1993a, p. 206) coined the term "essentialist positive primitivism" to describe the reductionist attitude towards black culture and black art that characterized much of the modernist movement and found its continuity in the early post modernism. That is, an assumption that there are particular positive qualities "engendered by race itself, qualities linked to creativity, energy, sexuality and harmony with nature – in short, with the Anti-Enlightenment triumph of the body over rationality."

thinking is felt, experienced and expressed through the body. Here, embodiment has to do with tuning oneself to sensory perception and allowing for felt experiences of the body. It is a practice of attention that brings the performer's body into the present moment. This tuning is done by bringing attention to the interiority of the body often by closing the eyes but also by tuning all the other senses (touch, smell, hearing). In some techniques this tuning also accounts for organs (body-mind centring) or for the skeletal structure (Alexander technique). Through it, a person's whole body would be involved in learning and experiencing the world. Such tuning also involves a reduction, dissolution or even erasure often of memory, worries, problems, future and past to focus on the sensory attention of the physical. Being here in the moment with the body is a main task in this technique.

Like Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, somatic techniques speak of and aim at developing a kinaesthetic consciousness, a way of "being in the world", a "body-subject". Although embodiment might be produced in terms of motility, consciousness is not limited to a consciousness of movement. It is a consciousness or subjectivity that is itself characterized in terms of motility, that is, the very ability to move freely and responsively that characterizes many of the somatic techniques. This "lived body" developed with these techniques and by Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is a lived centre of experience, and both its movement capabilities and its distinctive record of sensations play a key role in how we encounter other embodied agents in the shared space of a graspable, decipherable and ever-explorable world. Both Merleau-Ponty and these methodologies find a coincidence between consciousness and being. Coincidence because of correspondence between expression and thought, a thought expressed through the body. Moreover, both privilege immediacy, an underwritten proximity and intimacy of the 'Being here in the moment with my body' a sentence often used in a release-based class. But by privileging correspondence, continuity and immediacy over difference, dissension and untouchability, might not this methodology be excluding many bodies and practices?

Techniques such as breakdance and capoeira use rupture as a productive and creative force; it is not by coincidence that 'battles' are a relevant part of these practices. Could this be perhaps because the world they are opening to might not be a welcoming but a strange and hostile one? Gilroy (1993) describes the kinesics of the

post-slave populations – of which these two forms are part of – as products of brutal "historical conditions" (1993, p. 95). Because of this, these forms "must be invoked by other, more deliberately opaque means" (Gilroy, 1993, p. 36). It is this condition that underlies Hammons's performance in both his choice of context, place and oral transmission as strategy. By not acknowledging distance, untouchability, rupture, or even "the break" (Moten, 2003) somatics exclude several body inscriptions and bodily ways of knowing. Portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2018, p. 171) points out that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology expresses a "universal human characteristic that operates in a monotonic way irrespective of contexts, bodily cultures, and power relations among bodies". Here, Lewis's work "Occasion" is exemplary in countering this by accounting for a variety of bodily cultures (kizomba, release with its horizontal dance), non-human presences (plants) that interrelate in a complex entangled network. Jeong's methodologies are another example as the distance that some objects exhibit by refusing to perform during her studio listening sessions is acknowledged and given voice in the work in the form of the exhibition of "unperformed objects". Not only do her listening methodologies account for a performativity beyond the human body but also a performativity of refusal and discontinuity that becomes part of the work. Both touch and body contact with the objects are part of Jeong's methodologies.

Yet, if in somatics, touch is a coming together, a joining with other(s) bodies underlined by a bonding intentionality, in Jeong touch can be also a mode of distancing oneself from the body one actually is touching. Here, touching is not merely a performance of inner feelings. Jeong's touching can entail withdrawal, separation, refusal even a step backward. Such methodologies distance themselves from somatic ways of listening in that touching encompasses a schism that of connecting and disconnecting oneself from what one is touching. It is only by encompassing disconnection that the contact is indeed a deep, sensitive one. Not to do so would be to assume beforehand that what one is touching is as death matter. Verdonck's intentional embracing of distance in *Exit* (Verdonck, 2011) is distinct by resorting to speech in the form of a request that the audience closes their eyes at the beginning of the performance. For Hammons, Jeong, Verdonck and Lewis dance can also be a dance of distance which bodies perform and exhibit freely. Choreographies of disappearance can then be 'dances of distance', of withdrawal even of 'the break'.

In doing so they open space for the untouchable, the ungraspable and acknowledge the limits of intelligibility. To try to be open to the opaque and to abandon "abstract transparencies" (Santos, 2018, pp. 169-170) is then a task of choreographies of disappearance.

2.3.2. Opacity as Generative Withholding in Performance(s)

Such studied refusal for certain calls to perform draws on different strategies I would like to look into closer.

Camouflage, whether by blending with others in situ, or mingling with the audience or a virtual double, is a common feature of these works. I see this form of embeddedness from the part of these artists as a gesturing towards the relational expressing an awareness of larger worlds. But what larger worlds are these? What 'being in the world' does camouflage as a strategy call upon? Or confess to?

Levin (2014, p. 4) describes camouflage as the act of "embedding oneself, or becoming embedded, in the surrounding environment" through the physical and visual stylization of the body. Camouflage as a strategy runs contrary to the idea of the transparent visible. It engages with the game of hiding by seeking potentiality in obscuration, occultation and concealment. Such embeddedness is characterized by a generative withholding that relies on remaining partly invisible.

Camouflage therefore emerges as a form of embeddedness that uses a diversity of operations of visual and physical stylization of the body, of blurring the environment, making it opaque by dimming down the light or intentionally immersing oneself with one's surroundings. Such mingling is achieved in various ways by simply associating oneself with a crowd or by resorting to masking oneself as another, as in Verdonck's (2012) act of dissimulation performed by a virtual double.

It often demands complicity, even if just with the environment one embeds "oneself with". One is complicit with place, people, objects, smells, colours; with a network of indivisible things, assemblages, a 'mise en scène' that forms worlds within worlds.

In the Western arts it has often been a strategy of choice for those for whom visibility is affordable (white and male) as Levin (2014, pp. 25, 99) noted. However, as Glissant (1997) examines in detail, concealment and camouflage have been tools and relevant strategic practices for res(x)isting the West, challenging the structures of visibility and reductive notions of identity that accompany them. Here, I want to discuss its relevance for choreographies of disappearance and for the particular present time. By privileging the hidden through camouflage, choreographies of disappearance challenge the assumption that the political efficacy resides solely in the transparent, visible and sayable. In doing so these choreographies are a stark reminder of the potential forms of intervention that rely on the unseen, or even the political potentiality of remaining or adopting the hidden. They invite us to reassess the direct alliance between visibility and critical potentiality. Under the current times when arts, history and ethics are judged by their ability to disrupt what is visible and sayable, this is of the uttermost importance. Here, as Levin (2014, p. 15) suggested camouflage functions as a strategic methodology for "a political critique of structures of visibility" or as "mischievous tactic of infiltration".

Such a strategy should not be confused with forced silencing or forced invisibility; it is quite the opposite for, as Santos (2018, p. 179) reminds us, "it cannot be assumed that silence of the oppressed is always the result of imposed silencing. It may actually be a silence of revolt or protest against an imposed silencing". For to choose to remain hidden can also be a protest, a form of dissent, a strategic demur and a manner of res(x)isting in opposition to a disappearance into obscurity[35] (Edwards, 2019) or reduction. But what distinguishes this intentional withholding from other forms of invisibility?

Firstly, its intentionality. In the performing arts this aspect is a matter of less importance as mostly performing for artists in the West is a choice, a chosen act even if under the influence and coercion of the market and other institutional forces or dispositifs. To choose to perform in the West is rarely the product of physical,

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[35] American art critic Edwards (2019) refers to Pope L's performance Cage Unrequited (2013) to address an example of such a disappearance, an unintended disappearance into obscurity of avant-garde composer Julius Eastman. The performance consisted of eighty performers (scholars, musicians, students, and curators that read John Cage's Silence: Lectures and Writings (1961) in twenty-five hours who themselves formed the performance's only audience. Pope L's entr'acte comprised a talk about Julius Eastman "a black gay avant-garde composer, who had a vexed relationship with Cage and ultimately fell into terrible obscurity" (Edwards, 2019).

violent coercion for performing artists. These performance(s) of the hidden is intentional not reactive.

If we look at camouflage as a negation – a refusal to be given to the gaze in a certain way, to be reduced – we must then look closer at the meaning of this negation. Or better we must look at what that refusal negates.

For some of these artists, I would argue that camouflage is a way of rejecting the Western's homogeneity of essence. This is the case of Hammons and Lewis: through camouflage they trouble facile versions of identity that often operate "on principles of an impossible transparency, immediacy, authority and authenticity" (Edwards, 2019). As for Jeong, it is a way of traversing the limited way of listening prevalent in dance and contesting its prevalent "body humanism" (Laermans, 2008, p. 7). In Verdonck's case the reliability of the visual and what we take for real is under scrutiny, pointing to the relevance of technology as a mediator (Latour, 2005). It is through camouflage that these choreographies propose other ways of listening, account for the virtual, trouble simple versions of identity or invite the experience of distinct bodily cultures.

For some of these artists, I would argue that camouflage is a way of "developing opaque structures" in defiance and refutation of a "universalizing and reductive humanism" (Glissant, 1997, p. 133). Their practices are a means of safeguarding certain practices and dimensions of existence from regulatory power, from normative exclusionary constraint. This is the case of Hammons and Lewis, who both trouble simple versions of identity.

In this respect Lewis' intervention at the Tate is extremely rich. If Lewis sees herself as a host (A 21st Ritual | Tate Shots, 2017, p. 01:30) her invitation could be best described as an invitation into the opaque. Occasions (2017) could be seen as a compilation of various ways of putting camouflage into operation in choreography. It is as if Lewis invites her audience into a place where unrestricted possibilities for camouflage are available and exploitable. Yet, this is done more as a suggestion, a facilitation rather than an imposition. This predisposition for blending is facilitated by Lewis' complex construction of the performative place. Lewis is a facilitator of the performance but more importantly an architect and inventor that fabricates a fictive place for the liveness of the hidden to take place.

Distributed along two rooms, Lewis invites performers and audience alike to a variety of experiences with her choreography. There is no front, no audience designated space. One room has dimmed down light, the other is almost completely dark throughout the performance. The latter has forestation (plants, trees, various tree like structures) and is invariably occupied by a regular DJ (Lewis herself). A diversity of soundscapes, smells and on and off sounds brought by the DJ irradiate from this blackened chamber and propagate themselves into both spaces interconnecting them. They highlight the unusual prolific infiltrative generative capacity of choreographies that rely on 'all that is not visible' and transparent. Randomly performers appear to dance without announcement in between the crowd in both locations.

Their performances convoke a diversity of dances. The initial dance performed along both rooms is already happening at audience's arrival sharing elements of contemporary black popular dances characterized by sensual, snaky, and curvy full body movement forms.

Other distinct dances happen throughout the performance alluding to a diversity of bodily cultures; a horizontal dance not dissimilar to the avant-garde dance engagement with floor work also echoing Pope L's crawls[36] or kizomba, a social dance originating from Angola. Lewis's creation echoes Head's and Gravina's (2012, p. 13) descriptions of capoeira as a "a mode of creatively contesting dominant narratives of identity and difference". In their description of capoeira practice as worlding activity, they emphasize its un-normative aspect by privileging variation and uncertainty. It is as if Lewis' construction of place is a large capoeira 'roda' where audience and performers alike are invited to participate in any chosen form. On the dance floor performers and audience alike dance together or engage in conversations while drinking or eating together.

If kizomba is invariably danced in a duo, involving close contact between the couple and vertical transport of the bodies through space entailing hip and virtuous stepping, then the long-fragmented sequence of horizontal dance has a radically distinct quality relying on a linear, direct compact body that uses the ground as a major

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[36] Pope L's crawls consist of a series of performances initiated in 1978 that consist of the artist dressed in distinct ways crawling in the street for a long period of time.

movement generator. Ranging from an 'avant-garde' horizontal dance to a social dance like kizomba, the distinct dance forms performed "interrupt fixed conceptions of identity even as they spur varied and novel forms of identification" (Head & Gravina, 2012, p. 2).

The fact that such a creation occurs inside an institution like Tate Modern is worth some reflection. How can a black artist provide a space for diasporic practices to exist within a space built on slave labour? Within a gigantic white cube? For Lewis the answer comes in the fabrication of a blurred place. Or better, Lewis's answer comes in the form of a darkness. A darkness that invites the audience to experience a diversity of choreographies that range from the audience's circulation of bodies and performer's bodied choreographies to numerous soundscapes, conversations and smells. This blurred zone opens people to a diversity of unexpected situations, generating an unusual network of experiences and relations.

Under such a setting, Lewis favours exchange via conversation, dancing, eating and smelling refuting the primacy of the visual as primordial force for understanding and experiencing. Smell and varied degrees of darkness change perception and reduce the audience's optical capacities in the different rooms. Here, it is darkness, the obscure quality of the room that actually favours conversations, experience and exchange. Contrary to the present tendency to value the ability to disrupt the visible and the sayable, Lewis invites her audience to experience distinct bodily cultures and to account for other experiences in darkness by withholding from transparency. Lewis' investment is in our frailty of perception. By altering the perceptions of the audience, she challenges legibility, and relies on frailty and opacity as primal instruments for our experiences. Moreover, Lewis' own performance never deviates from the one of a host, camouflaged amongst many in the audience disappearing into the crowd, rarely showing up. In this event – if attentive – one might discern her silhouette as a DJ in the midst of the darkened room inviting the ears to listen to an assemblage of soundscapes sampled behind a mixing table. Other than one rare moment when she facilitates a kizomba performance through conversation, her presence is barely visible. If we add to this the fact that Western's contemporary and performing arts have an history of operating on principles of an impossible transparency, often tending towards an idea of false authenticity or a believed

abstraction detectable in creations by black artists, it is as if Lewis is telling us that only in blurring, in the opaque might one access to these experiences.

Lewis is suggesting that to form a relation one does not need to grasp everything (optically or otherwise). Indeed, the opaque might be a passage to develop a relation and accessing an all-different palette of experiences and points of view. Here, she is accompanied by Jeong in favouring the relational through opaqueness.

Verdonck's uses of camouflage in "M, a reflection" (2012), where the virtual masks itself as a human actor and a material table on stage also plays with the optical perceptions of the audience. It asks a similar question, that of what one might perceive in the clear transparent world might not be what it seems. It alludes to the entrapment of the visual, its manipulative and seductive aspects. Yet, unlike Lewis, it is on the visual that Verdonck relies to pass this message. Verdonck's camouflage operates in the realm of the optical. On stage both actor and its virtual play alongside a table and its virtual copy. Here, it is the virtual that gambles on camouflage to mask itself as the human actor Johan Leysen and the table on stage. In this aspect, Lewis's choreography – of all that is lacking at the level of the visible – differs from Verdonck. Hers is a choreography of recognition of the liveliness of all that is undiscernible, even an appreciation of the exceptional generative prolificacy of the unrepresentable and the imperceptible.

In all these choreographies, camouflage complicates notions of belonging and subjectivity. While camouflage is often banded together with politics of submission and assimilation for these artists, strategic camouflage is a way of acknowledging one's subjectivity in a larger social schema. From this perspective, as Levin (2014, p. 4) suggested, camouflage can be seen as a form of addressing the "problem of self-placement", and the ethical questions arising from it.

Hammons' embeddedness entails a sensibility and awareness of the context he as an African American artist inhabits. His choice of embeddedness as a positioning of refusal is deeply rooted in acknowledging his own subjectivity in a larger social historical, capitalist and colonial history with its own histories, trajectories and knowledges. This is reflected in his choices of the performative place, the 'street vendor' figure, the items on sale and on the distribution mode of the performance to circulate. Such camouflage demands from him a distinct choice of clothes, a

fabrication of a selling stand in the form of carpet on the floor or a given arrangement of the articles but as importantly a particular relation with passers-by that relies on the conversational.

It must be highlighted that for Hammons and Lewis, camouflage is a strategic device which is deeply associated and entangled with conversation as a way of facilitating and accessing an unusual new palette of experiences. Contrary to Western modernity's idea of performing arts both artists invite their audience into experiencing performance through free conversation. Lewis favours this through the complex elaboration of the performative site but also by offering various layers of sensations to the audience. These are not reduced to sound, smell or the performer's bodied choreographies. Following the traditional role of a host, she offers food and drinks that favour conversation and exchange. As noted by Santos (2018, p. 188) conversation inverts the "logic of discovery and logic of justification". In Western performing arts, conversation is often regarded as an impediment for experiencing fully a performance.

2.4. The Generative Paradoxical Nature of Camouflage

> Everyone knows how their body is organized and how many of each part they have; this is a given and is never thought about. To become aware of these particulars, one must imagine oneself unwhole, cut into parts. Deformed or Dead. (Kelley, 2004, p. 32)

In section 3 of this chapter, I extrapolated on the ethical elements of Hammons' performance and how it distinguishes itself from submission or self-effacement. But what about Jeong's enmeshment and performances of blending with things? Could Jeong in her "becomings" be at risk of objectification or of her own self-obliteration?

Levin's (2014, p. 141) sharp analysis of camouflage alerts us to its paradoxical nature of containing simultaneously the "potential for harmonizing with nature (an important aspect of Indigenous thought) or the surroundings and that of "preparing for its ruin", by giving the example of soldiers that while blending with the surroundings meet destruction and eventually their own annihilation. It is precisely this paradox that Jeong seems strategically exploring with camouflage as a

methodology of choice for speaking about the complex relation of embeddedness that humans form with objects and technology.

Yet, in doing so is she able to remain? By this I mean in which ways does she in her choreography disappear but remain critically? Her "becomings" present her no longer as an atomized individual moving separately from things but rather as (an)other entity; an existing extra-human figure that moves its own way distinctly. Whereas other artists never fully disappear, throughout the performance Jeong's body disappears entirely from our gaze blended with the thing she is moved by. In no other artist is this paradoxical aspect of camouflage is made so visible. For while it is true that Jeong's performance is highly controlled and prepared, behind it there is an awareness even a belief in the power and vitality of things, as if things cannot be controlled. Jeong (2018, p. 59) speaks of being moved by things, as though her performance and movement are produced and generated into her body by the various things she performs with. Here, she disputes the widespread belief in the performing arts that objects are invariably human possessions always under human control.

To what degree could we then say that Jeong's becomings are transformational and not unethical or exploitative? In a recent interview she refers to herself in these "becomings" as becoming object (2018, p. 62). Yet, I would argue that her "becomings" do not imply her own complete self-obliteration. Moreover, I believe they open an important space for considerations about the complexity of relations between human, things and technology, in particular the ethical problems arising from such relations. If Jeong indeed manages to bypass subjugation and annihilation, this arises from two points. First, both Jeong and the thing she collaborates with disappear together to form a new entity. Secondly, throughout the performance she and the thing reappear again as individuals to continue or not into other morphings.

Here, camouflage becomes the device par excellence through which one can become extra-human. Its paradoxical nature emerges as the ideal method for Jeong's explorations. In his exhibition "Uncanny" (1993), British visual artist Mike Kelley pointed to the fact that one takes for granted how our body is organized. For him in order to be aware of its complexities, its relations and entanglements "one must imagine oneself unwholly, cut into parts. Deformed or Dead" (Kelley, 2004, p. 32). 'Dead' emerges in his exhibition in the form of things that have had a relation with

the human and display an inherent performativity. To imagine oneself as dead, to "be an object" (Jeong, 2018, p. 37) is in many respects what is in operation under Jeong's practice.

It is only by engaging with dead, through 'playing dead' and the play with 'dead' things that Jeong raises important challenging questions about human-non-human agency but also about liveness. For it is her manoeuvres around death that enable her to question human agency and even bring up the possibility of the resistibility of non-human bodies in the form of an exhibition. Of course, dead – here as 'not alive' – is precisely the blurred zone that Jeong's entanglements trouble. If camouflage can be a predicament of becoming space (Levin, 2014), of disappearing and an eventual (self-)eradication,[37] in Jeong's performance it is above all a means to radically become extra-human.

2.4.1. Play with Dead Things: A Game of Hide and Seek

In her encounters with things, Jeong develops forms of conversation that at times materialize into morphings. It is a highly generative risky game of 'hide and seek' that Jeong employs to engage in these exchanges with objects. Yet, it is precisely the inherent paradoxical nature of these encounters and the processes behind them that makes the performativity of objects visible, enabling Jeong to speak of the complexity of human entanglements with things. Moreover, such undertakings suggest the possibility of a shared agency between humans and things. Indeed, I would uphold that Jeong manages to bypass subjugation and annihilation because of the above.

By "playing with dead things" and even with one's own death itself, Jeong reaches a reciprocity, a correspondence in the form of a highly productive "contact zone". One that troubles the binary alive-dead and bypasses the human-non-human division but

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[37] Levin makes several references to the eradication of women: "Woman cannot take '(a)' place since she has been synonymous with 'the place'" (2014, p. 17) or "women are place and simultaneously lack place…" (Levin, 2014, p. 17) . In addition, she highlights the problem of camouflage and annihilation for particular people: "Non-white, lower class, and queer persons, among others, have always occupied the invisible background" (Levin, 2014, p. 25).

also one that is highly generative not limiting itself to the extra-human formations. As a highly productive correspondence it grasps and gives voice to other possibilities either in the implicit recognition of the objects' other worldly status or in their refusal to perform. The result is the possibility of a blurred zone which deeply troubles the usual live-dead binary in the performing arts.

Such a practice implies ways of listening that deviate and defy some assumptions in somatic techniques. It is a rapport no longer centred in the human body, that renounces the temptation of controlling everything around it (space, objects). In doing so, Jeong dissociates herself from operations that rely on taking space and on the centrality of the human body. To 'become object' or to become 'dead thing' equates here to becoming a particular body, a body that is being deferred strategically, postponed, suspended even set aside in order to form a relation.

Camouflage is in this respect a rapport of correspondence, of association and correlation that surpasses entities and privileges relations. A rapport where two or various bodies enter a "contact zone", a communicative zone where entanglement happens. This is a significant move away from the Aristotelian mode of privileging entities over relations pointing towards the idea that human agency is never "purely human" (Moore, 2015a, p. 37) but already bundled with the non-human.

Therefore, my assertion is that Jeong's (2018, p. 62) positioning – of becoming object – in relation to the non-human performers she collaborates with, is more a symptom of acknowledging that in order to listen, to form a relation and establish an encounter she must undergo a "deep self-silencing herself " (Santos, 2018, p. 179). In this respect she notes: "I try to be more still so the object can become more alive" (2018, p. 62). Silencing here equates to a reduction of movement, even stillness at times or a reduction of speeds.

Her own slowness should not be taken as a lack of critical positioning but as a deliberate strategy that she resorts to in order to "help us see the object as a performer" (2018, p. 49). By slowing down, Jeong alters the perception of the viewers. Levin (2014, p. 138) describes strategies of embeddedness as conditioning "the sensory frames through which we comprehend the world". Slowing down is a method often used by animals in camouflage with the purpose of remaining undetectable to watching eyes. In a sense, sloths' preference for slow motion is

accompanied by a profound sophisticated mechanism of camouflage with algae where both bodies (algae and sloth) become undistinguishable. This embeddedness is such that algae grow in sloths' fur. Thus, sloths often go unnoticed by blending in and moving slowly.

By holding time of the human body, Jeong achieves intense generative embeddedness, characterized by a profound imbrication with non-human performers often resulting in extra-human figures. It is in this context that her saying: "I have to practice a lot. I need to be an object on stage" (2018, p. 62) might be understood. What is witnessed on stage is the performance of a shared agency that results from "trying to make a partnership" (Jeong, 2018, p. 62) and "treat[ing] the object as a partner" (Jeong, 2018, p. 58).

Yet, this does not necessarily mean a relation without its contradictions or challenges. The multiple contradictory meanings explored by the various performative morphings on stage and putting together an exhibition of unperformed objects signal Jeong's interest in the ambivalence underlying human-non-human relations. Camouflage emerges as an unparalleled method to articulate such conflicting meanings. Through its usage, Jeong not only complicates ideas of agency, implying that agency is never purely human by highlighting the intricated relation between humans and things, but also troubles gender binaries.

In her description of *7Ways* (2017) London based art critic De Watcher (2017) highlights the troubling of gender binaries behind the "archetypal dynamics" brought by Jeong's performance. The fact that Jeong appears at times as controlling a male puppet who perpetrates an attack on herself is emblematic. Watcher (2017) mentions the moment when Jeong "controls the male puppet while also performing the female submissive" dressed in a mid-halter dress with her inert body lying down with her back over a vacuum cleaner. Here, the formation developed harbours within itself a paradox.

This complex – at times paradoxical – elaborated bundled agency, is achieved by the careful movement study behind the performance. Movement is seen as relational, never univocal or unidirectional as Jeong (2018, p. 59) notes: "I am moving this object, but also the object brings me certain movement". Rather than imposition of movement Jeong allows herself to be moved by the objects and establish a relation

open to contradictory directions. Movement emerges as a process of exchange rather than an imposed human instrumentalization or imposition. Objects appear as potential collaborators in these imbrications. Jeong's interest holds onto the multiple contradictory meanings and relations humans form with things.

The risk of falling into representation of disappearance or of not acknowledging the complexity of gender relations is avoided. Rather than obfuscating or erasing such complexity, Jeong opts for presenting us with the paradoxical or apparent contradictory aspects of relationship(s). Moreover, in allowing the incoherence – of objects and of the newly formed figures – to emerge, she lets those contradictions run their course. Here, the risk of self-annihilation is worth taking.

These are conscious steps, products of the many concerns, questions and contradictions arising from intense experimentation in the studio in 'letting the object perform'. In describing her studio practice, Jeong refers to the project as "collecting the technical possibility and the methods of how I can make the objects alive" (Jeong, 2018, p. 49).

Such detail, care and extension of time, dedicated to close intimate experimentations with objects, have camouflage as a strategic method of choice. In an interview Jeong (2018) acknowledges the difficulties faced in letting the object perform. To overcome this problem, at rare times Jeong does not hide the needed minimal manipulation the objects require on stage, executing it in a transparent visible way. This is the case of the indispensable change of clothes that enable the various camouflages and morphings. It is also in regard to this that her "becoming object" refers to when she states "I have to practice a lot. I need to be an object on stage" (Jeong, 2018, p. 62). In order to find the movement vocabulary that lets objects perform, she needs to become "an object on stage" she needs to understand the specific bodily properties, (weight, smell, colour, mobility, stillness, high, solidity, sound), 'the ways of things' she morphs with. Her studio practice relies on the development of exchanges with objects, almost as a conversation with a variety of unique things. This aspect seems to permeate Jeong's practice where various forms of dialogue and its outcomes are revealed to us. Behind these dwellings with objects there is highly informed way of attending to objects; because of this, "contacts …. take any number of forms - … sexual, emotional, cognitive, … aesthetic, mechanical

or, in principle, just about anything else (Haraway, 1992, p. 91). Moreover, the interactions with things are open to the object's tendencies, dispositions even contradictory or resistant ones.

Such recognition of being "otherworldly" (Haraway, 1992, p. 91) ascribed to objects is made particularly visible in the exhibition with the decision to give a role, a performative 'chance' to the objects that refused to perform with her. Things have distinct "characters" (Jeong, 2018, p. 62) as the things that refuse to perform demonstrate. An unsolvable relation– better yet the resistibility of particular bodies to perform with Jeong– brings about other routes. The object's (non)performance emerges as unexpectedly generative, in the form of a parallel exhibition. Jeong emerges here speculating on the agency even of ungraspable phenomenon. Like Lewis, she finds an unusual vital capacity in the opaque, the ungraspable, one that deserves to be highlighted in the form of a unique exhibition (2017) at Delfina Foundation. But more importantly, the object's (non)performance is not ignored, suppressed or denied the possibility of its expression. Quite the contrary resistibility, disappearance or refusal to perform are given a prominent role.

In this sense, Jeong's encounters with things provides clues to strategic approaches to critically engage with disappearance. An approach that does not eliminate disappearance and neither falls into the frequent trap of a reductive 'representation of disappearance'. Hereby, "the point is not new representations, but new practices, other forms of life rejoining humans and not-humans" (Haraway, 1992, p. 87). It is precisely this that Jeong's approach achieves. And through this it tracks some of the concerns raised earlier on around the question of what a particular refusal negates. In this light, *7Ways* (Jeong, 2017) gives us the rare possibility of looking closer and speculating on the meanings of such refusal.

CHAPTER 3: UPSIDE DOWN

> Before we start our table, I want to propose that all of us here assume a position of upside down as a catalyser of our conversations today in this room. It is and was from the beginnings fundamental …throughout my life it has been useful. The first thought coming to my mind when I saw the title of this event was that I wanted it to be a site, a place to show what such a positioning can be for each one of us, its usefulness, its traps in the present for us.
>
> Or suggesting other positionings that advance new futurities. Because of this I decided to make this table.
>
> I see my role as an artist more as a catalyser of associations, constellations, positionings or questionings about which I ask myself. Doing so in the company of many is also in continuity with a dance practice that is a practice of oral transmission or even a practice of a radical hospitality in a body often subject to languages, unknown processes without evident, obvious, clear protocols or contracts. Knowledge, knowledges still today pretty much ignored in academia. It is also a way of experiencing, experimenting what a radical hospitality can be. (Gala, 2019)

In this chapter I bring attention to the particular strategies, practices and operations that shape this PaR inquiry. They are by all means gesturing towards the strategic use of camouflage and an intentional engagement with the hidden mentioned in Chapter 2. But they also denote a particular positioning that is fundamental: that of 'being upside down'. Here, 'upside down' is understood both as a mundane position(ing) practised both with and within the bodies but also as an overall alternative positioning that spans across other particular operations, practices, studies or 'conversations', connecting them into what constitutes the overall body of this PaR.

The effort to move beyond the many performance binaries is often a process of advancing and returning to the beginnings. Such interrogations were driven by a

move against the many presumptions in the Western history of performance described in Chapter 1. Notably, the centrality of a particular universal human body and the binary absence-presence. At times I asked myself if the term 'performance art' might not be one the latest Western modernity's[38] inventions. Therefore, the reason for me to opt for the use of the plural in the terms 'performance(s)' and improvisation(s).

Additionally, it must be said that such a struggle has developed within and against the constraints imposed by the nature of particular places such as libraries, dance studios inside universities and faculty or museum auditoriums where much of the research took place. Places, sites often connected with a particular history of knowledge and particular performance(s). Therefore, the fragments in the form of photographs, transcripts, video footage should be read against these particular contexts.

In this regard my participation with a performance entitled *Maliciously Missing: The Potential of the Missing Performer* (Gala, 2016) at the ACRU (Audio Culture Research Unit, Kingston University, London) Symposium (2016) at Kingston University should be seen as a decisive turning point in the PaR. This event marks the importance of an alternative positioning of 'being upside down' for what followed in the research.

I will dedicate the first section to this aspect and proceed to describe, further on, other particular studies, trainings or procedures in the ensuing order: the tables for practices, the concept of auscultation and specific scores developed in collaboration with Portuguese dancer Teresa Feio that resulted from approaching the hidden and camouflage.

My work is of a collaborative nature; while some studies have been created with choreographed elements facilitated by me (in particular in respect to time and space), others result from highly improvisational sampling procedures, as in the case of

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[38] Moore (2015a) speaks about modernity's relation in the shaping of the division of Nature/Culture but here it is also useful to note what operations of modernity within art have occurred. The emergence of performance art was often accompanied by exclusions of particular performativities of which specific aspects were co-opted to become integral part of its formation under the movement of Western modernity.

Protest Space (Gala & Feio, 2016) and of *Table for Upside Down Practices* (Gala & al, 2019). Therefore, the different roles are recognized accordingly.

In referring to my practice I will use the word trainings to refer to the training of particular positionings and procedures that grounded and proved vital to the approach pursued. Namely auscultation, being upside-down and conversational performative tables. Scores are tasks, propositions or even clues towards particular performances. A study is a composition that is open to change when performed. The change put in operation results from the existent compositions, the various formations and assemblages displayed in the performative room where it will happen. With the use of this word, I also want to imply the entangled common intellectual practice that these activities involve. In addition, the word is used to define the written dissertation for owing to its character of having been written as an open-ended gathering of practices and alternative histories of thought.

3.1. Upside Down

> Instead of projects of inclusion, then, it would attempt to turn transparency thesis on its head. (Da Silva, 2007)

The head stand, being 'up-side-down' is particularly interesting position to start thinking about the simultaneity of traditionally mutually exclusive binaries like (up/down) (theory/praxis) (live/dead) (animated/unanimated) and many other that populate the performing arts. An upward tendency happening simultaneously with a pulling predisposition downwards, has this potentiality, and can help us thinking about ideas of in-betweenness and moving away from metaphysical binaries.

In the same way a headstand can proportionate a different engagement with the world through being upside-down and causing other relations, assemblages with our own surroundings. It is my purpose to do the same: to destabilize presumptions that have characterized modernism in choreography for so long.

In this sense the adoption of this position is a signalling of a fundamental aspect of this research; without it the fugitive choreographies developed would not have taken place. This positioning of in betweenness means a re-arrangement of oneself towards

the relational. As such, the 'being upside down' is a particular positioning that of 'being of in-between' and is in itself a "being of relation" (Massumi, 2002, p. 70) already pointing to particular terms of relation(s).

To dive into the critical potential of choreographies of disappearance is to put a change in operation, one that demands more than simple rupture or transgression as pointed out in Chapter 1. Negation, deviation or rupture alone do not rarely fall into reduction (Glissant, 1997, pp. 189-193) or Aristotelian binaries (presence- absence). More, as pointed out in my introduction chapter, rupture and negation are not intrinsically transgressive moves in contravening the present hyper-performativity: the uncontrollable urge to perform that the present form of capitalism demands. Nor does rupture in itself allow for performance to open up to other alternative performances. Here, it is important to stress what Canadian philosopher Brian Massumi (2002, p. 70) insisted upon that "a relation has an ontological status separate from the terms of the relation" and that such condition is "an indispensable step toward conceptualizing change as anything more or other than a negation, deviation, rupture, or subversion" (Massumi, 2002, p. 70). Therefore, before we move forward it is important to note that particular terms of relation might call for another type of relation. This condition proved to be an indispensable step "toward conceptualizing change as anything more or other than a negation" (Massumi, 2002, p. 70) and to open possible routes for fugitive choreographies. This escape is what I would call trainings or more precisely trainings of a particular positioning. It is a positioning pointing towards an "aesthetics of rupture and connection" (Glissant, 1997, p. 151).

It has been this persistent training of 'being upside down' that enabled me to avoid such traps. For the in-between does not reduce itself to "a middling being but rather" is "the being in the middle – the being of relation" (Massumi, 2002, p. 70). Because of this it is an essential move to open up performance to other alternative performances, knowledges and even concepts often "reduced" (Glissant, 1997, pp. 189-193) or ignored.

In being upside down I am then deliberately gesturing towards Glissant (see more below under section 3.2. Table for Upside Down Practices), avoiding the reductive trap of representation and "staying with the trouble" (Haraway, 2016) of gesturing

towards many plurals. It is a gesturing towards a plurality of practices, knowledges, voices that speak to my choreographic practice. A positioning that speaks through many other singular artists' trainings, strategies: a practice in relation. It is a consistent and persistent move – patent in the other chapters in an effort to localize my PaR within other specific artistic strategies – of including rather than ignoring a continuity of practices and knowledges which focus on fugitivity and witholding as a major strategic intentional performative tactic. And not less important: avoiding modernity's trap of the 'new' or the 'original'.[39]

Figure 1 Kim, E. (2016) Maliciously Missing: The Potential of the Missing Performer in Choreography. Clattern Lecture Theatre Kingston University [Photograph]

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[39] One of the facets of modernity in art is a constant need for actualization, for being in the present. As Osborne pointed out on the temporality of the postmodern, "The central problem faced by all theories of modernity, in any substantive socio-historical sense, is not that they cannot think decline, but, rather, the reverse: the fact that modernity/modernities grow old" (1995, p. 20).

It was with these thoughts in the background that, at the beginning of my performance-lecture in the ACRU (Audio Culture Research Unit, Kingston University, London) Symposium at Kingston University (2016), I intentionally performed this position with and within my body a few steps away from a lectern in an academic auditorium. Indeed, this was the result of a prepared consistent training put into operation from the beginning of the research (since September 2015) in two libraries. The series "Library Series" (Gala, 2016) in the form of a photographic archive performed in Kingston University library Penrhyn Road and the British Library attest to this. Standing against these particular sites (university auditorium or library) this positioning acquires other meanings, that of a persistent practice of refusal (refusal to give into the normative aspects of lecture presentations or on the other hand 'dance presentations' and contesting the normative place of a library, its exclusions and the limited scope of the Western library archive mentioned in Chapter 2). Such positioning signals a failure to adhere to the terms of an agreement or promise to perform in these particular ways in certain places.

It might have been my awareness of myself as someone shaped by a consistent practice as a female afro-Portuguese[40] dancer and choreographer with a consistent practice of improvisational performance practices[41] that led me here. Or inevitably as mentioned in Chapter 1, the practice of choreographies of disappearance, the exercise of these fugitive choreographies, calls for a positional shift of this kind.

To perform such a positioning in an academic auditorium next to a lectern can result in an act of unimportance, being taken as frivolous. One could also say that such an act lends itself to ridicule or at best be read as an insignificant empty act. A body upside down next to a lectern lends itself to such readings: a joke or an empty device. An insignificant joke, a prank, a plot, a trick, a stratagem. Or in the extreme:

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[40] The choice for the term afro-Portuguese is shaped by my own personal geography and dance trajectory of work within various European countries. Other acronyms BAME or POC or 'negridade' (blackness) have been disfavoured here following recent discussions amongst activists in Lisbon where those terms seemed to be less operative in activist terms for uniting people towards common struggles in Portugal.

[41] My practice strongly grounded on improvisational practices developed with my initial dance studies at E.D.D.C- ArtEZ (1996-1999) that relied solely on release and improvisation(s) techniques from the American Judson avant-garde as major modules of body training. This expanded with my collaborations with Les Ballet C de la B. with exposure to break dance and capoeira improvisational practices and Constanza Macras; both marked by collaborative experimental methodologies. This has been further explored in my creations and subsequently in collaborations with visual artist Sonia Boyce (2011 – 2016) and theatre company GRIOT (2019).

ridicule. Such danger I share with Hammons (1983) in the absurdity of selling snowballs in an outdoor market.

Yet, it can at the same time serve as a generative gesture that goes against the normative logic of particular presence(s) or appearance(s) creating space for other possible choreographies.

In this regard it is worth considering the position 'plantar bananeira' in capoeira. Plantar bananeira translates to English as 'planting banana tree'. It refers to the act of planting this particular fruit tree. Unlike many other plants, the banana tree has no seed – it is the very foot that must be planted upside down. The only way to be generative is the act of planting it upside down. It is a useful metaphor as it is only through performing upside down the act of planting that another life, other worlds are generated. Such particular positioning in capoeira echoes remarkably this same idea: the generative potentiality of such positioning. The only way to be generative is to plant upside down.

But in a larger sense upside down in capoeira is tied up with the cosmology of Kalunga. American black studies and African historian T. J. Desch-Obi (2008) notes that the upside-down positions in capoeira mirror the image of the inverted world of the ancestors. Engolo or Ngolo in Kikongo (one of the national languages of Angola) - the specific name of the martial art that exists in Angola and in the African diaspora in South America - is deeply embedded and inseparable from kalunga, a cosmological view that "invokes an inverted world where the ancestors walk with their feet up" (Desch-Obi, 2008, p. 4). Therefore, the martial art relies on supporting "one's body with the hands and kicking while upside down" (Desch-Obi, 2008, p. 5). These cosmologies can be encountered in the Black Belt in the American South in graves "often marked with iconographic representations of the kalunga with items placed upside down, in continued appreciation of the fact that the world of the dead was an inverted one" (Desch-Obi, 2008, p. 139)[42]. In the same line, American art historian Robert Franrris Thomson (1998, p. 62) refers to the influence of Kongo

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[42] It is understood that there are other ways of understanding cosmology that relate to technology and science. However, this is not the focus of this project which is more centred around black opaque practices emanating from non-western spiritual world views (i.e. African) and forms cultural resistance.

culture on African American culture, in particular visual art (yard and grave art with Hawkins Bolden and Cyrus Bowens respectively) where:

> "Things turned upside-down, from the vantage point of the living to the vantage point of the other world, express their own hermeneutics, their own concealed power".

Upside down emerges as a productive positioning in creating other possibilities, other ways of doing and being in the world, of worlding[43] (Haraway, 2016, p. 13). It is this generative sense of 'plantar bananeira' that is signalled in various ways in the tables for practices described in detail below in section 2. It materializes in the path taken into the performative space (using existing paths situated in back-stage of the auditorium of Gulbenkian Modern Art Museum in Lisbon), the initial map of the world displayed upside down, the scores the participants are invited to take part, or the kind of clues given by the initiator of the table. A variety of devices invite the participants into generative speculative positioning always in relation. The relational is enhanced by conversation and closeness of the participants facing each other in-between the table.

By maintaining a 'wall-flower' position throughout the event as the original proponent of the conversational performance I invite the participants to take other (im)possible roles. It is perhaps this aspect that is fundamental: a host that at times resists or refuses to perform and intentionally engages in (non)performance (Moten, 2017, pp. 101-107). The clues given by the original host are fundamental to activate such predisposition in the participants, by maintaining this 'wall-flower' position the host encourages the guests to undertake other roles, the host's role or even other

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[43] Here, I am pointing towards Haraway's articulation of "worlding" which suggests worlds in which "Ontologically heterogeneous partners become who and what they are in relational material-semiotic worlding. Natures, cultures, subjects, and objects do not preexist their intertwined worldings" (2016, p. 13)

(im)possible roles.

Figure 2 Thomas, R. (2016) Preparations for Performance Maliciously Missing: The Potential of the Missing Performer in Choreography. Clattern Lecture Theatre Kingston University [Photograph]

On the other hand, there is an underlying logic of inversion in the upside-down positioning that is worth elaborating on. For 'upside down' is one of English expressions that refer to things being inverted. Inverting the logic of something.

In the performance at ACRU what follows the initial inverted position is a series of actions aligned with such a positioning. Hence, what succeeded the initial performance of the upside-down position was a moment of getting back to normality in starting to read the paper behind the lectern with the title: 'Maliciously Missing: the potential of the missing performer'. Taking into account that in the symposium I was one of the few performers or the 'supposed performer' in the room, standing at the podium, the 'missing' that the title referred to was probably the 'performer': me. But also, the many opaque fugitive performances ignored by the Western archive.

Figure 3 Thomas, R. (2016) Preparations for performance Maliciously Missing: The Potential of the Missing Performer in Choreography. Clattern Lecture Theatre Kingston University [Photograph]

The reading was interrupted by the act of turning a projecting device towards the audience, projecting them in the flat screen as a power point presentation as I disappeared and left the elevated podium to join the audience (lying down on the stairs next to the audience) constituted mainly of academics. In doing so I am inverting the logic of presence, putting it into question. Additionally, by turning the projector towards the audience I am turning the space inside out. Through this act the role of the witness and that of the one who is witnessed is troubled. Lying down on the stairs next to the audience the performer is mediated through a device and is seen by the audience through it and as somebody amongst the audience. The performer's performance becomes mediated through a device.

Figure 4 Kim, E. (2016) Maliciously Missing: The Potential of the Missing Performer in Choreography. Clattern Lecture Theatre Kingston University [Photograph]

Here, I am reminding the audience of perhaps other ways of giving oneself to the gaze: through my own disappearance or withdrawal from the proscenium and through others gazing themselves present in that absent proscenium. Or perhaps, even speculating that the only presence allowed in such a place might be that of a flat projection in the screen? Might there be other ways of being, of appearances that can exist, if so in which forms?

In fact, by leaving the central space of the 'stage' I am inviting other ways of seeing, knowing and exchange often not present in academia or the institutionalized space of the proscenium. But also, I am signalling presences, improvisations and knowledges often ignored under these contexts.

On the other hand, this action can be seen as an intended provocation in a highly hierarchical normative place. In Portuguese, my birth language upside down is 'de

pernas para o ar' or 'de cabeça para baixo' which means with 'legs up' or with 'the head downwards' pointing already to various possibilities encapsulated within one position. In addition, it is used as an expression to imply the causing of radical shift such as in 'virar a vida de pernas para o ar' as 'turning your life upside down'. Here, it refers to a shift, a radical turning point in a life or even an upsetting of a larger order. Thus, also in the English language upside down can mean to upset or even to bring things to disorder.

This upsetting is present through many of the scores and practices created in the PaR. Performed under the setting of a library (in a series of four different performances) such a position might acquire such a reading: that of upsetting. To upset was also the intention behind a series of scores developed in collaboration with Portuguese dancer Teresa Feio.
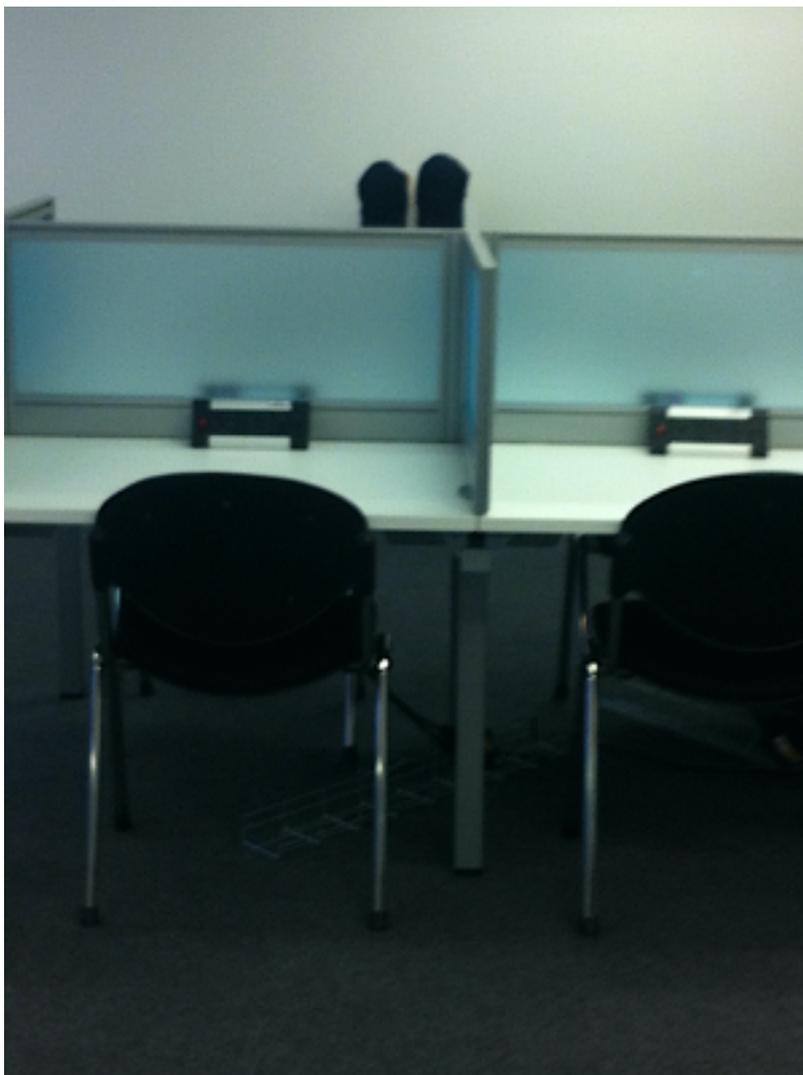
Figure 5 Gala, V. (2016) Library Series. Kingston University Library [Photograph]

In the Belgrade Dance Institute, the study *1001 things* (Gala & Feio, 2015) included putting down all the ballet bars existent in the studio as part of the performance. Or in performing the same study in the Laban Studio Theatre (2016) various chairs and lamps are turned upside down and scattered on the floor. As if things had revolted against their instrumental use that often sets them under a characteristic particular position: the chair standing on its four legs or the lectern in a vertical position. Here, the specific often unheard frequencies of that particular performative place – a dance studio in Deptford Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Dance and Music – are picked up and emitted live through the speakers. In this later score the sound consists of feedback of the particular original frequencies of the room in that moment.

But to be upside down is also to upset the many presumptions that a dancer has when entering a studio, that one of starting from the centrality of the body exempt from any other influences, contaminations divorced from everything else.

Figure 6 Gala, V. (2016) Library Series. Kingston University Library [Photograph]

Somebody aligned with the logic of relation will enter a site in a distinct way, upsetting many of the assumptions of an abstract extrication one has as a characteristic of Western avant-garde dance.

In the conversational table *Table for Upside Down Practices* (Gala & al, 2019a) the lectern (where the head of the museum and previous speaker had been speaking) is lying horizontally on the floor upsetting the implicit hierarchic vertical positioned order of an object linked to the hierarchy of knowledge. Throughout these various scores there is the idea of things upsetting their instrumental use and the position often for being 'of use'. Away from such instrumental positioning and disposition, what is the relation that these things can have within the performance? What performativities or relations might emanate from this unusual (pre)disposition of things?

If in some cases, they are making a point and upsetting the particular normativity linked to the hierarchy of knowledges characteristic of modernity, then in others, their own presence is a reminder that such an upsetting might open other possibilities, other relations, or unknown possible constellations, even highly generative ones in the form of figures such as the ones created in the respective scores of *Garbage Blues* (Feio & Gala, 2016) or *1001 things* (Gala & Feio, 2016) (more on this in section 4 and 5).

In attending to things beyond their use value, a disconcerting opening is made available. Doing so signals a refusal to adhere to the terms of an agreement or a promise to perform in particular ways.

Such upsetting transverses the various scores and performances described in points 2, 3 and 4 of this chapter. From the setting up the space with a lectern in horizontal position on the floor in major Portuguese museum – the Gulbenkian Modern Art Foundation Museum – to the setting up ballet bars horizontality on the floor at Belgrade HE dance education institution where a variation of *1001 things* (see section 4.) was performed. This sense of upsetting or of the place and its things going against a normative logic traverses many of these performances. This upsetting often was the result of auscultation procedures that allowed for a deeper understanding of a 'performer in relation' with things and with a place. Things

include both material objects but also substances (air circulating, ginger root, banana tree leaves) or particular existing sounds (sound frequencies).

But what other questions might a positioned being, central, middling, or marginal, as a term of a relation poses? What devices, forms or transfigurations can emerge from it? Through what settings, conditions, situations or contexts does this positioning manifest itself through? What is a being of relation when performing conversation? I will develop this later aspect in further detail in section 2.

Figure 7 Gala, V. (2016) Library Series. Kingston University Library [Photograph]

3.2. Table for Upside Down Practices

> The reason is that this book is grounded in the experience of the unseen listener. Speakers are seen when they speak, whereas listeners recede into the background of the scene dominated by speakers. Listeners spend a long time listening to that around them and hope to maintain their wall-flower position when they speak—their speech having no need to take front row or appear in the spotlight. The title of this book conceals its subject in a desire to protect the listener from returning to the spotlight once he or she has left it.
>
> (How to Disappear, 2018)

Entitled *Mesa para Práticas de Cabeça para Baixo ou De Pernas para o Ar* (Gala & al, 2019a) is a conversational performance that was part of the programme "Where I Stand", an event on black feminism which invited relevant Portuguese Afro-descendent artists and international Portuguese speaking scholars. The particular performance(s) performed at *Table for Upside Down Practices* (Gala & al, 2019a) are in this sense rehearsals of the particular positioning of upside down and a web of other various positionings and performances that emerged under this context.

The table had the duration of one hour and thirty-seven minutes, although as stated in the programme note (Gulbenkian Foundation, 2019), it was initially supposed to last only one hour. Such performances were performed and choreographed by all the participants involved around a long table. Here, I am including as participants both humans and non-humans. By this is meant that special attention has been given to place, substances, various forms of devices, and materials. They were all performers and part of larger conversation(s). The believe that disappearance, the hidden and opacity can be the potentialisers for intensive close encounters between self, others and particular collaborative things is behind the setting up of these performances, of which various devices at the disposal of the participants are a fundamental part.

In this regard, the performative table echoes Glissant's (2010) sensibility in a belief that things, concepts, ideas do not necessarily follow a transparent deductive course but are often the product of intuitively complex networks in relation. In other

respects, these performance(s) reflect a relevant aspect of dance practice. As a praxis – without forgetting its highly oral facet – dance is characterized by "a radical hospitality" towards unfamiliar "languages, unknown processes without evident protocols or contracts" (Gala & al, 2019) and in many respects opaque. Opaque to the body, the performers and other various intervenients under choreographic performative processes or trainings.

As a collective singular choreographed assemblage, the conversational table operates as a constellation of correspondences, positionings of particular performances that result from attending to a diversity of practices proposed by the participants. In contrast with attending to the singular presence of one performer whether in the form of a speaker or a host – the master of the house – often found in conference or theatre settings, the intention is that of attending to an intertwined set of performances and practices. These particular performances are rendered visible by the different participants in a diversity of ways: body positionings, orally expressed reflections, disagreements, silences, emotive declared positionings, body experimentations and degustations. They distribute attentions, exchanges, repay debts in return or surrender participants to attending to the significance of silence(s) and its performance. Some of these manifestations supply information, even restore the body or in turn provide ammunition in the form of expressed dissensus. This later aspect served for disputed conversations around dissensus, disagreement, in its expressed emotive form or if some other particular forms of its expression should or should not be part of such a table. As one participant rightly said non-violent heated contention is part of daily family dinners so why should such expressions be eradicated from a performed conversation in an arts environment? Her interpellation questioned the aesthetics, (a)methodologies and practices erased under the guise of supposedly democratic consensus.

Perhaps difference, struggle, should not be limited to particular forms of expression always monitored by a master or a higher order? Earlier on in Chapter 1, I referred to the importance of dissensus in the current climate but also to how transparency and consensus can or have become themselves forms and sources of regulation. Often corresponding to a negation of particular expressions or forms of existence.

The setting of pre-destined roles does not allow for other ways of conveying knowledge or experience and places fixed roles even perhaps unwanted ones (in my case) on people. It is not a surprise that my choice from the beginning in adopting a non-performative (Moten, 2017, pp. 101-107) positioning as a host found resistance.

My aim with these collective performances made together in the moment has been not only to oppose the tendency to value performance through visibility, presence and productivity. It is also above all to reconsider the unconnected, the unseen and the hidden. To perform in the gaps (Moten, 2003) is more off limits than one is led to believe, particularly in institutionalized art spaces. In this regard it is worth noting a particular episode in a Facebook exchange with "the presumed chair" of the section I would be part of, after sending all the materials (see Appendix I) to the organizers regarding the *Table for Upside Down Practices* (Gala & al, 2019a).

The need for a fixed host or a directed fixed guidance in a table to set up conversations was assumed as a necessary condition by the person to whom the chair role had been attributed a priori. This was inferred and expressed in Facebook with the following words:

"I need to know what you are going to speak about and its order" (Lança, M, 2019). To which I (Gala, 2019) replied:

> I will not 'be speaking about', I don't know what I will be speaking about as we will all be performing together there is no 'me speaking'. All the participants will be speaking there is no speaker or chair in our performance. I will set up devices and particular positionings will be surely performed as we go along.
>
> (Translated from Portuguese)

And yet even upon my insistence that the table was about opacity and upside down as a positioning, it was difficult to convince this person that in my performance "we were all speaking" and no one had pre-fixed roles or favoured knowledge about what would be happening as described in the detailed programme note sent in advance:

it will be written, generated and developing in similar fashion to the experiencing of my tentative practice. Interrupted by scores, aleatory procedures and other unexpected interventions (Gala, 2019)

Such an idea seemed unconceivable, unfathomable, impossible to be imagined. The difficulty in letting go of a role and imposing particular roles on others was evident already then. Without further disclosure on this issue, I deliberately hid the fact that even myself as the event proponent would not know what devices would be actioned and as a consequence what materials (screen projections, uttered performances, positionings, body experiments) would be activated and performed.

Figure 8 Gomes, S. (2019) Table for Upside Down Practices. Multi Use Room, Museum of Modern Art Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation [Photograph]

The idea of transparency as expressed in this Facebook exchange is also a form of controlling specific discourses and formatting speeches on people by ascribing them a particular reductive visibility in institutionalized structures. Even when the invitation and formulation behind an event is one of a supposedly opening, of an opening towards alternative voices.

Often the inspection and regulation put in operation is larger than one is led to believe. This was a clear example to me how visibility can also be a source of regulation. Regulation insofar as it selects a few unique aspects of knowledge of their subjects and sets the particular performances and the terms of relation deserving consideration and permitted to be performed. This is a reminder that visibility might signify a reduction (Glissant, 1997) or a negation of particular dimensions of existence.

Ultimately, *Mesa para Práticas de Cabeça para Baixo ou De Pernas para o Ar* (Gala & al, 2019a) is also a proposition for alternative performances and positionings. My intention from the beginning with such a set up was to call for other kinds of hospitality or hosting in the form of a performance. An experience that:

> belongs to another order altogether, beyond knowledge, an enigmatic "experience" in which I set out for the stranger, for the other, for the unknown, where I cannot go. I do not know what (Derrida & Caputo, J., 1996, p. 112)

For this purpose, I decided to bring in devices of which I myself had no control or knowledge of. A variety of dispositifs were included in these preparations such as the cardboard pieces distributed on the table with written words or an unknown language to me. Thus, even the actual positioning and distribution of the cards on the table was given to different technicians and curators that helped with the preparation of the space.

Such a deliberate set up is an invitation for an unconditional hospitality (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000), a hospitality characterized by the consistent practice of upsetting and frustrating the expectations of a directive univocal performance(s) or presumptions of particular promised performances. A performance open to inward disturbances, failures, unexpected tensions; punctuated by much needed provocations. Doing so opens hospitality up, it avoids the traps of normativity and fixed roles. It welcomes unknown guests, practices and ways of doing; aspects rarely acknowledged, tolerated or deserving consideration.

This manifests a radical openness to an absolute, indistinguishable other and it is only through such an approach involving distinct trainings and procedures that a particular shared multiple disposition is kept alive, open and loose.

The role of a host is deferred strategically, not even held up in sight in order to form a relation, as if the keys are given from the very inception to the guests. This is the case from the onset of the performance for instance the walk leading to the performative space relies on the participants own initiative. Here, the host of the table is camouflaged amongst the participants, anonymous. Participants were grouped outside and welcomed to walk towards the back of the stage through a sinuous badly lit corridor leading into a stage door. Rather than the habitual large, bright entrance of the actual auditorium the choice was for a subterranean-like passage into the performative place. There, a table measuring approximately nine meters occupied the central area of the stage. Some guests sat down on the chairs at the table, few in the auditorium seats, others on the floor, while many took time having a look at things and particularities of the site, they were in. A sense of open choice is signalled from the very beginning where heading to the room is open to the initiative of the participants without any sort of guidance given.

Moreover, by giving the choice to establish the mode, direction of the performance or even a complete diversion of paths through a game with written cardboard pieces a significant decisive relevance is given to the visitors.
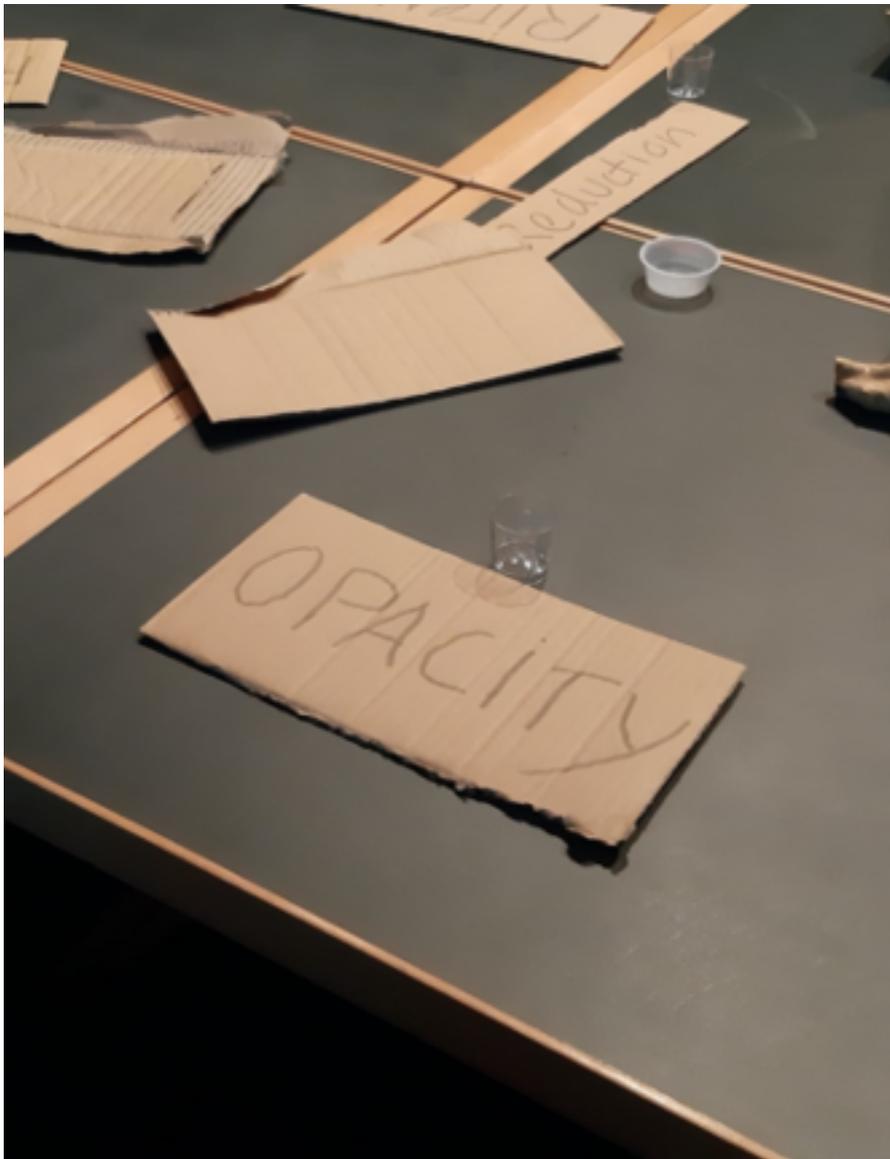
Figure 9 Gomes, S. (2019) Table for Upside Down Practices. Multi Use Room, Museum of Modern Art Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation [Photograph]

It is worth noting the several signs of upsetting upon entering the performative space; perhaps the most noticeable is the image of the world projected upside down. So, in this initial opening into the conversational table, the idea of a call for other kind of terms of relation is signalled. This setting prepares the ground for a series of strategies or operations of refusal to perform fixed roles and upsetting comfortable positionings.

If often a host occupies the place of the master of the house in the conversational table, the host is camouflaged under a non-performative (Moten, 2017, pp. 101-107) mode.

In adopting such a nonperformative (Moten, 2017, pp. 101-107) positioning, and in my failure to adhere to the terms of what that role is supposed to be, I am also

upsetting and frustrating the expectations of a directive performance or presumptions of particular promised performances. Here, I highlight the written presence of Cape Vert Creole language pointing towards a knowledge that the host is expected to perform. Clues like this are a recurrent part of the table. They form an important part of the devices at the disposal of the performers and set in motion the various performances, positionings or personal evocations that constitute the conversational table. As a result, there is a recurrent upsetting of roles but also the adoption of an "unconditional hospitality" (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000) that insists on taking away the ground from the participants, prompting them to consider and imagine other knowledges, positionings or parts, even the one of hosts.

Such an aspect emerges in the repeated practice of failing to fulfil a promise of particular expected performances by the use of several devices: a card game, proposed physical positionings, images projected in the screen, objects at the disposal of the guests and ginger for degustation, visualization, touching or any other utilization. Additionally, this manifests a refusal to comply with particular expected performances of operationality and productivity.

Before the participants there is a host that lends herself to losing her positioning. A host that allows herself to become other, (an)other here in the sense of losing the role of the "master of the house". Better yet a host, a speaker that maintains her 'wall flower' positioning and urges the awaited guest to venture inside as "the host *(hote)* of the host *(hote).*" (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, A., 2000, p. 125).

Figure 10 Gomes, S (2019) Table for Upside Down Practices. Multi Use Room, Museum of Modern Art Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation [Photograph]

As mentioned before, the direction taken by the conversation is mediated through the cards. It is not the initial host who chooses what is spoken – this results from the participants aleatory choices. Sampling emerges as a prominent practice exercised through the cards but also through a 'detox rhizome' (ginger) inside several tiny containers, and through conversations, interruptions, silences or other various choices at the disposal of the participants. Of particular importance is the fact that the meaning of some of the words on the cards is itself unknown to the original host, while some of the participants might hold that knowledge. In displaying an

unfamiliarity and incapacity to speak Cape Vert Creole I am not only frustrating the presumptions of particular promised performances but also gesturing towards the opaque. I, we, together continue following the initial darkly lit path, the ginger subterranean root on the table raw or peeled in containers exhaling the fragrance of its stimulating properties. Hereof, the intention is to excavate at the margins "making and attending to the cultivated silences, exclusions, relations of violence and domination" (Hartman, 1997, p. 11). Putting them in relation to the particular performances happening before our eyes in the room within our table. It is a persistent reminder of the opaque as a source of vitality as well as a strategic resistance and a way of withholding and transmitting practices.

Additionally, by frustrating expectations this singular device opens questions of reductionism and how easy it is to fall into the trap of hasty presumptions about others. The first time this is prompted, two participants throw similar synonyms in Portuguese, aiding the performers, helping me and others around the table with the meaning(s) of the word: "rabeladu".

Initially, I am not found out. My incapacity remains undetected, unexposed I proceed to explain my incapability to speak the language by asking participants to contribute, many respond and get involved partaking new roles.

They open up a world of different significations and translations: leading to a reflection on the meaning(s) of that particular word which can translate as recalcitrance. For the guests in this language, it refers to the slaves who ran away, fugitives who constructed new communities and practices in Cape Vert. Inadvertently, our guests already occasioned us to delve into the margins of opaque languages and practices. In a sense the game with the cards is a challenge in how words are put to work differently, what they do, what they can lead this performance, this event to. What performances, articulations, associations can be made from them.

But the opaque emerges again later with an excerpt of a video *Occasions* (Lewis, 2017) by choreographer Isabel Lewis. Or in the presence of Hammons selling snowballs projected on the screen. Further on, there is a word few people know, only one participant hesitantly suggests a translation, others are unsure, disagree. In preparation for our performance, I had asked Apolo de Carvalho to translate

particular words as materials for the table. These are the words written in three languages (Portuguese, English and Cape Verde Creole):

opacity – encoberto - secret - disappeared - (non)performance - withdrawal - recalcitrant - resistant - fugitivity - camouflage - reduced- refusal - withholding - ginger - foot - upside down - upside down - hospitality – radical – paraontology

opacidade - encoberto - secreto -sumido - (não)performance - retirada - afastamento - retiro - recalcitrante - reluctante - resistente - inconformante – fugitividade - camouflagem - reduzido – recusa - retenção - gengibre - caule - de pernas para o ar - de cabeça para baixo - hospitalidade - radical - paraontologia

opasidadi- Musdjegadu - Subi pintxa - disfasadu - sen performance - saida - risguardu - rabeladu (rabez, Matxiridadu) - indisisu - risistenti - inkormanti - fujitividadi - kamuflaji -indjutudu - nega - iper pirformatividadi - ritenson - jenjibri - pe di planta -di pe pa riba - di kabesa pa baxu - ospitalidadi/gasadju - radikal

Undisguised, I openly check my improvised personal 'dictionary' and the meaning is not the same. In form of provocation, I raise the possibility of Carvalho having tricked us. As a punctuation he left in the form of a trick to alert us. Perhaps he is reminding us that accessibility might have rules, that there are steps required in every relation. After all, there is a kind of caring or generosity, a reciprocity involved in the fostering of any relation. In doing so, the question of the right to opacity is brought to the table.

Figure 11 Gomes, S. (2019) Table for Upside Down Practices. Multi Use Room, Museum of Modern Art Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation [Photograph]

In pointing out my not-knowing how to speak Creole, I am gesturing towards the idea that just because I do not speak it does not mean I am not allowed to form a relation to it. But more, I imply another kind of relation, one that does not fall into exoticism and that allows for the author of those words to be opaque. As I refer at the table, I do not know if Carvalho did in fact lie to me when he translated the particular word that somebody affirmed to have a different meaning to the one given by him. In doing so, I am calling for the right to opacity and raising a series of ethical questions around the terms of the relationality proposed at the table. Non-performance here emerges as a refusal (from the part of the host and perhaps from Apolo de Carvalho) to perform what is expected to frustrate those expectations and by doing so opening questions of reductionism and exoticism.

But just as importantly, the incapacity of the host to speak this language lays bare other means of knowledge exchange and is a key for some us to realize that even faced with the unknown perhaps one can form a relation with the opaque. This is a perfect example of Glissant's idea that ways of knowing do not emerge in a transparent or completely comprehensible path. Ideas often arrive to us rhizomatically, subterraneously, and in intricate steps of intertwined relations. As a consequence, an incapacity to speak a language does not necessarily mean one cannot form a relation which can be conducive to significant understandings or knowledges around it. This engagement with the hidden showed itself beforehand in the choice of materials at the disposal of the audience but also in the possibility of adopting a Creole language or of speaking between two languages rather than the usual traditional option where one has to opt for a single language to express oneself.

As a result not only there is a recurrent upsetting of roles that come with 'place', or with the instrumental use given to things (e.g. lectern, writing board) but also the adoption of an "unconditional hospitality" (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, A., 2000, p. 83) that insists on taking away the ground from the participants in order to encourage and prompt them to new roles, even that of the host. Therefore, my interventions are punctuated by "a giving which gives beyond itself, which is a little blind and does not see where it is going" (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, A., 2000, p. 112), by being led at times by a "not-knowing". Or on the contrary, interventions emerge in the form of provocations or deviations towards other paths or practices.

A diversion of this kind occurs literally within the body. The invitation to assume an upside-down position introduced straight after all the participants had assumed a comfortable role at the table is a shift of this kind. A shift in a practice. A diversion, opaque in the sense of not verbally articulated as a conversation around a table as expected. But it is perhaps in its unanticipated opaqueness that its potentiality resides. Here, such mediation between practices advances non-evident kinds of understandings and alternative ways of accessing knowledge often disregarded in the Western archive (Schneider, 2011, pp. 99-102). If that had been signalled already through these various devices (lectern, image projected, white board facing backwards to the audience seats) now performers were invited to bring themselves into new roles, imagine or experience what these can be.

The difficulty in assuming such positioning or the instability of experiencing verticality and gravity exposes the body into an unstable positioning, one where how one sees things is radically different. Not only does this position exposes the body into an unstable disposition where gravity and verticality are radically different, it sets the participants into arrangement(s), distribution(s) and sightings of a totally distinct order. To adopt a more fragile unknown positioning is way of opening up other ways of knowing and avoid normative formations.

In this respect, to "take away the ground", to literally materialize this position within bodies, is also an invitation to realize the discomfort or unfamiliarity of such formation just as the first image of the world upside down or the horizontally placed lectern where the director of the museum and previous speakers had been speaking into an inclined auditorium. Such a proposal was verbally introduced by me through the following lines:

> And what I would like to invite us to do actually is to experience it in this room get out table and just go into a space. And try to find what that position can be. I would like to invite you before we continue with our table that we find a place in the room to find this position. To assume this position in your own way. What can be for us, for my body to be upside down… if your practice is more writing and this is really hard for you, I invite you to think what writing is, what it can be to write upside down for example. With whom to make associations in the space. What I would really like us to experiment with is what type of associations emerge from seeing, experiencing the world upside down? How is it to see this room upside down? What do we see differently? What associations do we want to make? What networks of being together can we built/emerge from such a perspective, what can we find from this/ where can it leads us? What kind of resistance do I need to use? What kind of strength is needed to assume this position? What does it mean to use the gravity force to be upside down? What is the significance of using this force to find this positioning of being upside down? … I can find a new spot and change position and if I need the support of the wall… I can use the support of the wall or if I need the support of a chair, I can use the support of a chair. (Gala, 2019b, 00:05:52-00:08:34)

Figure 12 Gomes, S. (2019) Table for Upside Down Practices. Multi Use Room,
Museum of Modern Art Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation [Photograph]

The various cues in the form of body propositions, cards, things upside down in the
room and rhizomes play an important role in opening space for other ways of
knowing.

They prioritize sampling, assemblage, embodied positionings and impressions
verbally expressed or propelled by the degustation of an aromatic rhizome as
privileged modes for knowing.

In doing so, they foster a distinct form of care: a demand for attending to a network
of practices and senses. But as importantly, its manifestation(s) is/are also diverse in
form, content and matter. Hence, its performance making demands a constant

mediation from all participants. Such attendance is not dissimilar to that of a gardener in a continuous process of mediation.

As a gardener one is always in a continuous process of mediation. This kind of 'making' is one that demands learning to listen, ability to read what the table or the moment requires. Just as in a garden where there is a constant process of back and forward, between attending to human needs or desires, and those of the plants. Here, the mediation is between different worlds, practices, performances. Glancing at the image of the carboard cards (Gomes, 2019) dispersed on the table one cannot avert thinking of Glissant's idea of the "Creole Garden" (Edouard Glissant: One World in Relation, 2010) "Jardin Creole" in the French original. As a network of practices, the performance resembles the garden in the sense that various positionings in the form of a multiplicity of practices, modes of expression, and cultivated silences, are articulated and constantly in the making. Glissant's "Creole Garden" refers to small clandestine gardens created by slaves on their own initiative away from the enslaved work as a source of nutrition. These arrangements were cultivated and tended in such a way that dozens of different trees and scents mutually protected one another.

In the garden, subterranean roots interconnect, mix and help each other. The table for upside down practices emulates this idea in its multiple calls for tending to a network of distinct practices and knowledges. It opens up the possibility of "difference without separability" (Silva, 2016), just like the position of 'upside down' in that it articulates within itself a relation between quite distinct forces ideas – 'the up', the down' – inseparable within the same plenum and in relation. The idea of a difference through exchange without losing oneself. Such cohabitation of practices calls for articulations of various orders of the visual, oral, bodily, smell, colour, tactile or even taste. But this also implies a mingling of distinct timings that cohabit side by side.

American anthropologist Anna Tsing speaks of a "polyphonic assemblage" where multiple rhythms cohabit side by side to describe a cultivation process that contrasts with that of commercial farming. There, different plants grow together within distinct timings creating "world-making projects, human and not human" (Tsing, 2015, p. 24). It is also this non-synchronous temporality that opens up the possibility of generative encounters, in one experience where the negotiation of incommensurable differences creates a tension.

Figure 13 Gomes, S. (2019) Table for Upside Down Practices. Multi Use Room, Museum of Modern Art Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation [Photograph]

Here, ginger root plays an important role at the table. It is placed on the table bare or peeled cut in small pieces ready to be tasted, releasing its aroma. It is a minor but an important detail. When unpeeled its colour is not dissimilar to the cardboard pieces lying on the table. Its fragrance is mainly due to gingerols which are one of its components.

Ginger's origins can be traced to the island region of Southeast Asia. According to Chinese and American biologists Zizang Dong and Ann Bode (2011, p. 132) ginger

has been produced and used in the treatment of several conditions in India and China for over 5000 years. From India, it was carried by traders into the Middle East and the Mediterranean from around the 1st century CE. By the sixth century, ginger was widely used in Morocco and Andalusia. According to American Lebanense ethnobotanist Gary Paul Nabhan (2014, p. 155) in the 13ᵗʰ century, ginger entered trade networks through "Arabian ships that carried the rhizomes or the potted plants into the east coast of Africa reaching Zanzibar" and later Madagascar.

Ginger has been used as an aromatizing agent "long before history was formally recorded" (Dong & Bode, 2011, p. 132). Like many medicinal herbs, knowledge of its healing properties has been orally transmitted. The first written Chinese record on ginger, dated c. 500 BCE, is attributed to Chinese philosopher Confucius. In the Analects (Confucius 10:8, p. 68) ginger is mentioned in the section related to dieting, providing details of its usage and warnings on its excessive consumption.

Famed for its several medicinal properties in treating asthma, nausea, and the teeth, it appears that gingerol is the primary component responsible for these beneficial effects. Its "in vitro antioxidant" (Dong & Bode, 2011, p. 135) properties have been established in scientific health research. This suggests a possible role in the prevention or delay of the deterioration of cells caused by free radicals, the molecules produced by the body as a reaction to environmental stress and other strains. In addition, ginger is effective in the treatment of nausea and vomiting.

Ginger is a sialogogue; in other words, it stimulates the salivary gland, inducing the production of saliva with its antibacterial properties. As a sialogogue it is known for its anti-bactericidal and anti-inflammatory properties protecting the teeth and preventing enamel demineralization by neutralizing acids and other infections. In Angola it is also chewed for its stimulating cognitive properties. I was myself introduced to this practice by my father in our long nights playing chess in his favourite room at his home in Luanda. In the session at the Gulbenkian museum this was proposed to the participants. Ginger's reputation as cognitive stimulant, as a detoxifying and restorative agent is another reason for its presence at the table. It operates as an emergency kit, indispensable in a gathering that invites dissensus. The rhizome which is the stem of the plant that grows horizontally under the ground

producing roots is the major part that is ingested or applied in these various situations.

But perhaps the most unusual thing about ginger and another reason for its participation at the table is its actual origins. These are uncertain, by this I mean that ginger 'does not grow wild' so its 'becomings' are unknown.

Its existence attests to and is a manifestation of the entangled lives of human and non-human, suggesting perhaps (un)intentional human selection. As such, it blurs the dichotomy between the artificial and the natural. Ginger's presence bears witness to how biological and environmental change, techniques and practices, anthropological trajectories and sociocultural choices are inseparably linked. The complex entanglements of its becomings remain obscure until this day.[44]

Ginger is opaque both in its process of coming to existence but also as rhizome. It is a subterranean plant in a plurality of senses; its becoming is opaque and its existence rhizomatic. Additionally, ginger's medicinal restorative healing capacities are inseparable from all the other food intake. Dong and Bode (2011, p. 147) note that gingerols or any other ginger components operate in inter-reactivity to or dependency on any other food sources to induce their positive effects, and that without relation their benefits are unsubstantiated. It brings to the table a distinct rhythm, a secret delicate note. As a root it inter-connects many of the concerns performed at the table, functioning as an opaque subterranean presence operating at many orders. It performs an opaque infiltration, in many respects unresolved.

Only through an encounter where mixed-up contamination is performed, "new directions may emerge" (Tsing, 2015, p. 25). This aspect is suggested in the initial moments by the host; by manifesting that my articulations would be done in an in-between language (between Portuguese and English) as this was the language, I expressed myself in: "my first language is Portuguese but right now I might be able to speak more one language than other and I mix them all" (Mesa para Práticas de

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[44] The complex (non-human-human) entanglements of ginger's becomings seem to defy the botanical binary taxonomy categorization of "indigens-cultigens". For some under this binary ginger would be a cultigen, a plant altered or selected by humans. One can trace the origins of this type of taxonomy to the division between Culture and Nature that Moore ((2015a, pp. 17, 18) refers to. However, the opacity surrounding its venerable ancient longstanding cultivation practices and processes defies such categorizations.

cabeça para baixo ou de pernas para o ar, 2019, p. 00:13:32). At this very moment a refusal of fixidity is suggested. Better yet, this hints at the possibility of a language 'in becoming', in formation undergoing training, unassembled; a language in the making as the table itself. Together with 'being upside down', both devices propose that "we release thinking from the grip of certainty and embrace the imagination's power to create with unclear and confused, or uncertain impressions" (Silva, 2016). Both express a refusal for fixity, drawing on diverse ways of doing. Both gesture towards the prioritization of multiplicity to the detriment of stable 'universals'. As Tsing says, "everyone carries a history of contamination; purity is not an option" (Tsing, 2015, p. 25). This suggests that even before this encounter, we are mixed up with others but more, that the diversity amongst all the participants human, non-human, and extra human, emerges from histories of empire and the annihilation of human and non-human populations, imperialism, extermination and exploitation.

In addition, as suggested in Chapter 1, contrary to what many artists might believe, we are all mixed up with projects with damaging effects and often reinforcing the normative power of performance.

The *Table for Upside Down Practices* (Gala & al, 2019a) is not so pre-determined as it is composed of questions or tasks to which participants respond in real time it; is a call and response principle beyond conversation that guides the performance. Indeterminacy is the underlying principle along which the table moves.

However, to withstand unexpectedness, volatility, incompatibility, disturbance and non-simultaneity, without intentionally directing the ground according to a model, and materially shaping it, is extremely challenging. Should under any circumstances the 'master of the house' role reappear enacted by the proponent of the event? It is all too easy for normativity to slip back, be it in the form of performativities that have the desire to shut out multiplicity and distinct forms of expression – as one participant mentioned (Gala, 2019b, 00:33:16-00:35:02) – or other blurred unrecognizable forms. If the principle of multiplicity is to guide us perhaps other diversions and experiments of differing natures need to have their operationality rethought.

Paths into these diversions need to be opened, in similar ways to the darkly lit initial corridor into the performative space at the opening or the detox emergency kit box. These are vital to reorient attention(s).

Interruptions by bringing attention to particular non-human presences or even slight changes in the room such as alterations in light might provide other generative contaminations and guide us through a shared training that is intensely bound up with the emergence of difference. For instance, the darkness installed during the viewing of a video could have been maintained or reinstalled in other occasions.

This being said, the non-determinacy given to the participants, the call and response in real time should remain the driving principles of the performance. This should be done in distinct appropriate ways – taking into consideration the variety of non-human 'more than human' natures at the table is the challenge. "Patterns of unintentional coordination develop assemblages" (Tsing, 2015, p. 23); the mastering and fostering of the (un)intentional should be pursued. Such attending might demand from the proponent of the event a strategy to bring attention to particular non-human presences (scenographic element inside of which various objects are placed, lectern, unpeeled ginger, white board) in the room through other call and response games inviting a dialogue with the participants. This is done by maintaining the door open to the emergence of difference and dissensus, and the choices given to the participants is the main task. Participants thereby liberate themselves of the idea of attending to 'other' as singular presence and attend this event as a rich web of practices inseparable in their multiplicity, inseparable from the opacity they emerge from.

The "creative, productive play—of science, as well as emerging ecologies, happens in patches" (Tsing, 2015, p. 227). It is in the attending of these patches that new assemblages and relations are made. Yet, this demands an extremely attentive involvement from the original proponent of the event and the participants. But above all this offers a distinct path towards multiplicity and its distribution. To follow, to stay with this principle, to stay with this trouble means to avoid the trap of a universal horizon. It is a call to look at difference differently, one that perhaps makes players aware of their role in the construction of (an) upside-down practice(s).

Additionally, it makes one aware of its particular positionings and surrounding opacities.

In doing so, it is necessary to pay attention to the trajectory through which disturbance emerges "as disturbance matters in relation to the way we live" (Tsing, 2015, p. 161). Incompatibility or dissensus in the form of disturbance brings much needed multiplicity of voices and experiences; however, this requires "awareness of the observer's perspective" (Tsing, 2015, p. 161). For instance, silences come in many forms, hearing them and realizing what relations of discomfort they might produce is vital.

Disturbances emerge in various dispositions, orders, states and expressions. Inscrutable, inaccessible silences, habitual roles and patterns of domination or performances towards the universal are some configurations that surfaced in this shared performance. Attendance is also care. What articulations or performances are chosen to be attended? What traps and roles and performances are to be avoided? Which disturbances should go unattended, avoided and deviated from or on the contrary followed? To be attentive and foster a multiplicity of voices that are often not heard. Here, it is the principle of multiplicity that such gardening should favour. It is perhaps only its repeated training that will enable the cultivation of such a multitude.

Figure 14 Gomes, S. (2019) Table for Upside Down Practices. Multi Use Room, Museum of Modern Art Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation [Photograph]

The bringing to the table by the curator of the museum of a microphone at the end of the event (which was not part of my initial instructions of the table) is an interesting element rightly noted by some participants. It is only because such a device was not there during most of the conversations that it was noted. And yet it demonstrated that certain performativities are ingrained and that an awareness of them through hearing can be developed is of utmost importance.

From this perspective, the conversational performance can be seen as an open-ended training to bring into operation a multitude of positionings towards new futurities. On another note, this encounter is also a 'demonumentalizing' move regarding knowledge(s).

Firstly, it brings to the forefront practices and knowledges (conversation, medicinal agents, sialogogue, everyday practices, ginger, other unexpected vernacular

knowledges) often disregarded and rarely featured in the Western archive. Secondly, by doing so through conversation (an important, often ignored trait of dance practice) it privileges contamination and refusal of the universal as modes of knowledge making. As Tsing (2015, p. 218) points, there is little attention paid to "messy process of translation as jarring juxtaposition and miscommunication" in knowledge making. I would also add that there is little attention paid to the particularities of the choreographic when it comes to discourse about dance making. Its opaque transmissions, hospitable contaminations, mistranslations occurring through conversation, interrupted silences are frequently avoided, if not altogether rejected from the Western edifice of knowledge. Most focus on its productivity and operativity. As a shared training, the conversational table is grounded in a belief that it is only through contamination that transformative encounters are performed, and new directions may emerge.

Attending this event as a prolific constellation of practices inseparable in their multiplicity, inextricable from the opacity they emerge from, disturbs the habitual orderly patterns of attendance, and thereby opens space for redefining other modes of doing and seeing without necessarily finding a consensus. It shifts the ground, signalling ways into the opaque and sets terms into other ways of doing that include assemblage, embodied positionings, or verbally expressed impressions caused by degustation of an aromatic rhizome.

By refusing the use of a lectern, by intervening in an institutionalized space with conversation and a shared training, I am gesturing towards the conversational as performative. Doing so in contexts dominated by written knowledges and modernity's performative formats often manifested in attending to 'other' as a singular presence under particular formats the 'dance-performance' solo in an auditorium or proscenium is also a de-monumentalizing task. Such a task, as Santos (2018, p. 187) affirms:

> is a precondition for opening argumentative spaces where other ways of knowing may be able to show their possible contribution to a more diverse and profound understanding of the world.

My choice for conversation, for orature is an intentional one, as Santos also warns, "scientific knowledge abhors oralization" (Santos, 2018, p. 186). It is also often the

case with dance discourses, the disregarding of oral aspects, opaque messy processes that the choreographic goes through are rarely mentioned, performed, approached or altogether acknowledged as vital in knowledge making.

Figure 15 Gomes, S. (2019) Table Upside Down Practices. Multi Use Room, Museum of Modern Art Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation [Photograph]

This is a preference for oralization over reading a written paper and in detriment to a performance with a univocal attendance to a singular presence. Moreover, instead of proposing a practice separated from non-methodical processes and contaminations the choice follows dance's inherently messy intricate dimension. Here, the interest is more in what choreographic performance does, what it performs in performing. It is an invitation to a performative choreographic encounter where the focus is on "what it does and how it does what it does" (Santos, 2018, p. 189). The conversational table does this by focusing on doing the work itself, performing it during the encounter. In other terms, at the table the emphasis is on how such knowledges are put to work during the encounter.

Following the subterranean rhizome can lead us to many of these entangled assemblages where human-non-human, capitalism, colonialism and erased performativities are intertwined. Moreover, as Tsing (2015, p. 220) notes, lively and productive spaces are opened in the "dialogue between the vernacular and the expert knowledge". To perform it inside institutions marked by modernity has been my intention from the beginning. Such a move points to the significance of these particular training(s) and the distinct nature of such knowledges both in their non-methodical routes and in their inextricable links to the opaque.
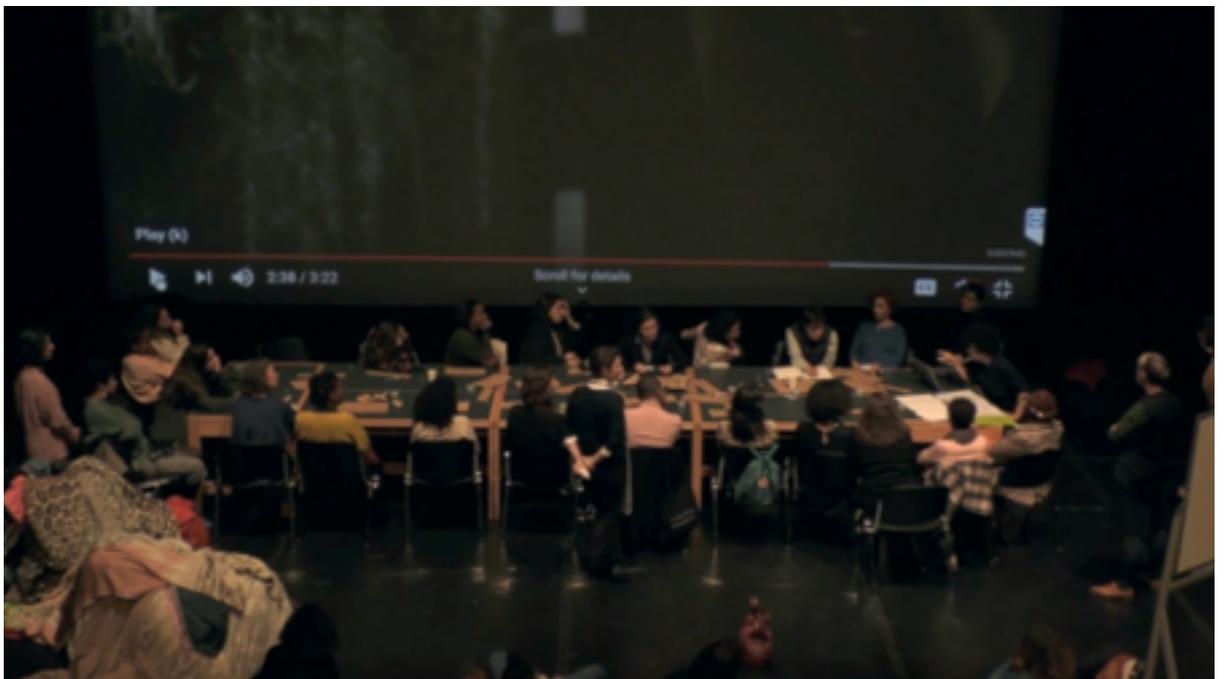
Figure 16 Gomes, S. (2019) Table for Upside Down Practices. Multi Use Room, Museum of Modern Art Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation [Photograph]

Here, I stress that even within culture there is a pervasive pattern intimately linked to modernity where particular aspects of 'culture', culture that is around us, are ignored or not taken into consideration to be performed (as I mentioned in the beginning of this section). That these messed-up worlds are equally significant in the making of culture and open choreography to other performativities and possibilities is a significant aspect of this table. As Haraway points out, fabulation and storytelling i.e., "thinking with", are essential for "tentacular thinking" (2016). In tracing the

etymology of the word tentacular Haraway suggests that it is also 'to feel' and 'to try', implying the making of unexpected "attachments and detachments" (2016, p. 31), not only knots but also cuts. But at the heart of "tentacular thinking" (Haraway, 2016) is the idea of thought built collectively through storytelling, fact telling and confounded unknowns. What is suggested are ways of knowing that unfold from the unknowns that might have been told but are still to come. Haraway's tentacularity suggests an – activated storytelling – a collective knowing and doing that entails invention, nurture and a multitude of practices of improvising together ways of "living and dying well with each other" (2016, p. 29). This implies the rehearsing of a "response-ability" (2016, p. 34). As noted by Haraway, it is a mode of "thinking with a host of companions" (2016, p. 31). With this, I want to suggest that the table advances through patternings drawn by the participants following trajectories, lines and networks shaped collectively.

A few last words about the choice of materials essential in the setting up of the performative space. The writing board is a frequent presence in higher education institutions, the knowledge-making edifices par excellence of the western archive. As for the choice of cardboard, it relates to its specific uses: transport product container, demonstrations, homeless sleeping or as a disregarded object. In this performance it was obtained in a supermarket but in previous performances its source has been the street or higher education institution's garbage departments. Inside the scenographic element, placed at the left side of the space, various objects remained in a dormant inoperability: these were bidons for collecting petrol, jewellery elements related to extractivism.[45]

The museum of Calouste Gulbenkian is the main and the oldest institution dealing with contemporary art in Portugal. This refusal to perform or 'make the stage' in a particular way by using an encounter where conversation is central and by "turning the performative space upside down runs against the expected performances in a

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[45] Moore (2015a) refers to extractivism as a fundamental aspect of an historical project that "aimed at rendering nature external-Nature with a capital 'N'-the better that it could be subordinated and rationalized". According to him the wealth extracted was "in service to capital and empire." (2105a, p. 18). For more on the description of the scenographic element see the proposal of "Mesa de Práticas de cabeça para baixo ou de pernas para o ar".

contemporary museum. It opens up alternative dimensions for experiencing a choreographic performative event. In assuming a 'non-performativity', a refusal of expected 'performances', it also questions the alleged openness of the museum to other presences, alternative or divergent approaches and entryways into the performative.

As a result, this shared encounter performs conflicting positionings, performative silences, ignored practices found at the intersections between the vernacular and knowledge formation and human non-human entanglements. The driving force of the conversational table resides in the potentiality of these opaque performativities. It is within this shared opaque sensibility, performed without necessarily finding consensus, that the potential for dissensus and the political potential of other possible choreographies emerges.

3.3. Auscultation: A Strategic Concept

> the weakness of many men is that they neither know how to become a stone nor a tree (Césaire, 2017, p. 431)

Earlier on I pointed out that to be upside down is also to upset the many assumptions a dancer has when entering a studio – especially that one of starting from the centrality of the body exempt from any other influences or contaminations, divorced from everything else. In this PaR I have resorted to a series of strategic operations pointing towards a performer already contaminated by the room, objects, and her surroundings which I have decided to call *auscultation*. Auscultation assumes the form of distinct steps, tasks and procedures that have the aim of developing a rapport of association with the surroundings one is inserted in. Auscultation is a fundamental operational strategy for choreographies of disappearance consisting of a whole set of operations explored in the creation of the conversational tables, the library series, or the particular studies and scores involving objects or substances in this PaR. As a training it could be said to be an art of noticing or acknowledging contamination in

order to 'be with', involving a number of strategic operations that enable the development of an embeddedness.

Introduced by physician René Laënnec (1816), the term auscultation refers to the act of listening to internal sounds of the body, using a stethoscope. Auscultation is to hear what is behind something, a body, an object behind a building; to hear different rooms, entities, imaginary or real, behind walls. The concept of auscultation has the element of invisibility: to hear things I cannot see, even imaginary things; it opens space for the possibility of their existence and the development of an association. The concept offers the possibility of thinking of objects and spaces as alive. It dislocates the 'alive' aspect beyond the human body but also into another room perhaps behind the doors of a room creating other alternative spaces (live spaces outside of the proscenium), or even the possibility of 'being contaminated by' or of a body being taken over by an object. Auscultation is the interrupted practice of 'being with(in)' a room or an object and it is an entry point for the scores and choreographic performances of this PaR. Beyond auscultation is the idea of being opened to the manifestation of the imperceptible nature of things and places and our relation with them.

At its core is the persistent uninterrupted training of spending time with rooms, enveloping surroundings, sound frequencies, colours, objects, invisible substances, and of acknowledging their presence in order to account for a performativity beyond the human body. It is a training towards a performativity of contamination and refusal, leaving behind the idea of the centrality of a 'purified' performer's body.

Methodologically it assumes a diversity of practices and procedures. At times it takes the form of simple eavesdropping techniques. The use of a microphone placed outside the rehearsal space was a frequent daily routine used in rehearsals with the dancer Teresa Feio to develop a particular relation with the performative room, one that "…perceive[s] elements of the site as potential collaborators" (Levin, 2014, p. 10). Often, the present performing spaces (studios, theatres and museums) have been built and constructed to protect them from any disturbances or contaminations, whether urban noise or natural influences with the aim of creating an allegedly 'free space': free of contaminations. And yet, here one seeks and yearns for those contaminations while acknowledging the impossibility (but also undesirability) of

modernity's utopia of 'free', 'pure' space. In this sense, auscultation is also a methodology of discontinuity and refusal, one that no longer departs from the human body alone or a belief in a universal continuous transparency. As a practice it involves ways of listening that deviate from and defy some assumptions in somatic techniques concerning interiority. It is a rapport that proceeds through opacity, "exteriority and spatiality" rather than by "a 'being and meaning' as effects of interiority and temporality" (Da Silva, 2007, p. 4).

But this complicity with a room does not limit itself to sound: it involves the practice of being with the texture of the performative room, the particular floor, wall irregularities, hardness or softness, and most notably the colours and light or darkness of the space. It is auscultation that makes the imprint of a building accessible, allowing for other readings of the performer in that particular place and the development of an inscription of such relations in a singular performance along its occurrence in a given place or room.

In the case of *Table for Upside Down Practices* (Gala & al, 2019) and in the *Library Series* (Gala, 2016), the architectural qualities, contrasting volumes and elements of the room played a relevant part in the kind of relation developed and performed. Here, auscultation consisted of devices that brought attention to the particular way in which previously unconnected elements happen to become associated (the verticality of a particular door in *Protest Space* (Gala & Feio, 2016) or the surfaces of a wall in the *Library Series* (Gala, 2016).

For instance, the darkly lit path chosen for getting into the performative space and the verticality of the lectern both point to an institutional architectural relation of the performative place where the *Table for Upside Down Practices* (Gala & al, 2019) took place. Both developed from auscultation procedures. Likewise, the particular sites chosen for collection of cardboard or for executing the library positionings result from similar operations.

"Being with" and "become with", in this sense, mean getting close to what a place or an object might be in order to cultivate a relation involving a number of approaches. These include paying attention to the room's, or object's, weight, colour, smell, form, its ordinary uses, and how they might foreground a place or find a relation within the place or with other objects existing in the room. Only through such

uncommon orientation of immersing oneself with one's surroundings from the outset does a range of generative embedding possibilities emerge. By implication, this meant that the approach to further tasks or propositions already departed from a human performativity decentred from the body and that seeks relationality.

Such orientation was developed by the persistent daily practice of tasks of 'reading' the performative space. This involved 'readings' of the room with the various things, substances, writings, present presences or traces left by past presences. In order to do so we did not limit ourselves to eavesdropping techniques. In addition to the routes mentioned, I resorted to an exercise in pairs where one performer maintained her eyes closed and navigated and 'read' the space (through touch, smell and any other sense-perception). This was followed by a transfer of that reading to the other partner. Such transfer would consist of guiding our partner through 'my room' giving 'my reading of the room' to my partner by directing her to the particularities of the room I had previously encountered. At times this consisted of making my partner, who had her eyes closed, sense the darkness, a particular smell, touch a small crack in the floor, or feel an invisible air source coming from a particular area of the room.

Figure 17 Gala, V. (2016) Garbage Blues. Kingston University Dance Studio [Still from Film]

Beyond these interventions, it must be noted that often 'spending time with a room' meant finding possibilities of embedding oneself with it. In attending to a room as a prolific constellation of architectural features, sound frequencies, objects, colours, air currents, or light sources inseparable in their multiplicity, auscultation prepares the ground for a distinct performativity. It is a performativity decentred from the human body: a distributed performativity that seeks the relational and the formation of a variety of assemblages, even at times assuming a transformative figuration. It is therefore a performativity tending towards the already existing compositions in the room that engages with performativities of the existing actors (colours, things, textures). This resulted in formations embedded in the space, such as positions in libraries, often camouflaging the body within the existing surfaces of the room and surrounding objects, such as concealing the body under a red patterned Vichy shirt in *1001 Things* (Gala & Feio, 2016), or using colour as camouflage with particular objects within the space in *Garbage Blues* (Gala & Feio, 2016). Above all, auscultation follows an understanding of place where performers are already contaminated and seek relation with their surroundings. *1001 things* (Gala & Feio, 2016) is such a case: it explores the assemblages of one performer with a specific

room. What collaborations can develop? What generative transformative performativities arise from such collaboration? What associations unfold? As Levin (2014, p. 110) pointed out, non-human entities generally viewed as "inanimate" (she cites stones, advertising posters or architecture as examples), hold a performativity that operates "through visual morphology (colour, form, pattern)", often articulated through the language of camouflage. In this light, auscultation can be seen as an operation of opening towards patterns or "'compositions' that are being displayed" (Levin, 2014, p. 110).

Figure 18 Gala, V. (2016) 1001 Things. Theatre Studio, Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance [Photograph]

This 'openness toward' often found generative collaborations with objects in the room. Thus, various possibilities of embeddedness and of developing a relation with existing objects were explored. When a reciprocity or some form of correspondence emerged from this encounter, I suggested to the performer to take home that specific object home and spend extra time or even sleep with the object. Ultimately, I proposed that she explore other tasks to further associate herself with the specific patterns exhibited by that particular object.

Auscultation was the fundamental practice for occasioning the blurring of the body with the environment, by finding formations that allow the performer to become embedded in the space, as in *Protest Space* (Gala & Feio, 2016), which adopts a positioning that follows the verticality of an existent door and intentionally immersing oneself with one's surroundings. Alternatively, such blurring emerges by adopting qualities (volatility, fleetingness colour, volume, form) of a specific object – a black plastic garbage bag – *Garbage Blues* (Feio & Gala, 2016) found in the rehearsal space (which I will describe in detail further on). In the score *Protest Space* (Gala & Feio, 2016) at Deptford Laban studio, auscultation assumes the act of literally hearing and recording the specific frequencies of that room in the moment of the performance. *Protest Space* (Gala & Feio, 2016), as the name indicates, is the result of investigating the possibility of a particular performative place protesting. It is one of the outcomes of the extended time spent on the daily routine of experimenting with a variety of auscultation procedures. But the score is also a response to the proposition of creating a scene where the idea of 'protest' is *in the space* rather than in the individual performer. Protest in and as space. A protest that manifests itself in through the actual space which would become part or observed partly in the study *1001 things* (Gala & Feio, 2016), where various objects are displaced into out of the ordinary and un-common positions.

Yet, these performances still proceed by an errancy, that is by an openness that deviates from a direct course and refuses fixity. By this is meant that such operations follow the principle of particular expressive patterns or of the 'compositions' that are being displayed" (Levin, 2014, p. 110). Namely, the scores are opened to be developed in other rooms preceded by particular auscultation procedures in those concrete performative spaces. In this sense, auscultation functions as a frame to provide a structure for a performance that "allows multiple worlds to communicate in their own material languages" (Levin, 2014, p. 102). For instance, *1001 things* (Gala & Feio, 2016) has been performed both in the Laban theatre Studio (London) but also at the Belgrade Dance Institute (Gala & Feio, 2015). In the latter, the score made use of ballet bars rather than the light rigs (as in the Laban performance). Scores can be changeable by following specific localized patterns, it is for this reason that *1001 things* (Gala & Feio, 2016) is a study which is adaptable to other

sites. Here, assemblages are understood as "*open-ended gatherings*" (Tsing, 2015, p. 22).

It must be noted that in order to refuse fixity, another task was central for auscultation: the daily 10-minutes raffle task. This sampling procedure was tacitly introduced as a daily practice in the initial rehearsals so as to avert falling into habitual patterns of attendance. Not dissimilar to the game with cards that is part of the *Table for Upside Down Practices* (Gala & al, 2019) the performer participated in a daily raffle of small pieces of paper with words. Through the raffle, the performer Teresa Feio was invited to elaborate a 'scene', a 'mise en scene' related to the word inscribed in the piece of paper and at the same time never deviating from the idea of an immersed relationality. Here, a 'scene' meant a short miniature performance involving many actors: the room, particular objects, colour, or other performers that emerged from it. Because of the instant immediacy demanded from the performer, such a procedure is a means to let the place perform, opening up canals for the multiple manifestations of specific material languages of place.

But most importantly, the particularity of approaching performance using these operations from the outset meant that there is an understanding in rehearsals of a continuum between the visual, the sonic and the bodily. This was not only in the nature of the specific proposed scores where the proposal always addresses not one unique element alone (such as only movement or the body), but always in several unseparated spheres. But it was also in the specific scores that were translated and contaminated into another medium, provoking an engagement where the dancer is asked to engender simultaneously with a person-body, an environment with its specific things, clothes, sounds, entry doors, outside rooms and architecture. Here, place, people, objects, smells, colours, their various groupings and productive assemblages are equal accomplices in the making of a performance.

As such, 'being with space' also covered aspects of colour or airing peculiarities of the rooms. For instance, the score *Garbage Blues* (Feio & Gala, 2016) is the outcome of a series of intensive detailed auscultation procedures in combination with chance procedures related to camouflage. Like the card game in *Table for Upside Down Practices* (Gala & al, 2019a), a daily raffle was proposed with a series of papers (with written words related to the research) inviting the performer to create a

miniature performance in a short amount of time (10 minutes). In one of these an interest in colour developed.

In *Garbage Blues* (Feio & Gala, 2016) there is an engagement with the colour of garbage bags which were found to be constant presences in the studio building. This engagement extends beyond colour into the textures and volatile qualities of the material, which make the air currents existing in the studio visible. By moving away from the centrality of the human performer and by relying on devices of reading the space, and operations of being with things, a whole set of compositions emerged. These rely on the specific performativity of various assemblages, of the particular nature of each thing(s), or of particular groupings. Camouflage is in this respect a rapport of correlation, affiliation, and reciprocity that surpasses entities and privileges relations. Here, reciprocity returns in the form of a blue moving bag at the end of the performance. But more, the specific dark and plastic materiality extends to the performer's figure through the garment worn: a black nylon bomber jacket with a hood inside out.

Figure 19 Gala, V. (2016) Garbage Blues. Kingston University Dance Studio [Photograph]

The hood covers the performer's face completely, a face not disclosed through the performance. As a consequence, we are in the presence of a 'more than human' figure that at times oscillates between material (plastic), thing (garbage bag) and persona. Through camouflage, the human performer transcends categorization, becoming a hybrid figure. Such hybridity allows for intense embeddedness, where the performer's figure becomes at times indiscernible from the garbage bag. Throughout the performance, the performer's intentions, movements, pace and actions are blended with the plastic, colour, form, and other specific qualities of the garbage bag. In one of these moves, the performer falls next to a garbage bag on the floor. With her back to the audience in a foetus-like position, after a period of time this hybrid figure becomes undistinguishable from the real bag lying next to her on the floor. It is as if the performer becomes part of the environment that was set out right at the beginning of the performance when she placed a plastic garbage bag on the floor centre stage.

In its refusal to give into "body humanism" (Laermans, 2008, p. 7), in the performer's refraining from the compulsion of controlling everything around her "Garbage Blues" (Feio & Gala, 2016), a transformative encounter emerges where unexpected performers happen to perform. For instance, the air current emerging from a ventilation source in the room performs a duet together with a blue bag.

The materiality of plastic and its distinct characteristics as combined with the performative space emerge when the performer takes out a smaller blue plastic bag from the back pocket of the nylon bomber and places it on the floor. The lightness of plastic manifests itself: free to fly, the bag follows the air current in that particular spot of the room. It moves, freely dancing unpredictable choreographed moves dictated by the air flows. From this encounter (bag and air current) an unexpected open-ended choreography emerges.

Figure 20 Gala, V. (2016) Garbage Blues, Theatre Studio, Trinity Laban
Conservatoire of Music and Dance *[Photograph]*

Other than that, auscultation procedures have often been used in lecture
performances in the form of creation of an acoustic 'space playlist' where the
presentation occurs. At times, this surfaces in the form of a sound recording of traces
found on the walls (written elements, particular objects, posters on the wall,
ventilation pipes…) that might be played to the audience. In other instances – in the
lecture-performance *Maliciously Missing: The Potential of the Missing Performer*
(Gala, 2016) – as highlighted in section 3.1, the interest was in the specific nature of
the audience. More specifically, how the audience's nature was an important part of
the place I was in.

In *1001 things* (Gala & Feio, 2016) the performer is transfigured by various objects:
a door, a shirt. In these encounters the human performer develops modes of
conversation that emerge in the form of various morphings. These arise in a variety
of unexpected formations from a particular kind of stillness to the exchange
developed with a t-shirt and its particular elasticity.

At the opening of the *1001 things* (Gala & Feio, 2016), the performer writes on four
pieces of paper "'not' 'in' 'my' 'name'" raising questions about the agency of what

is about to be performed. The provocation is set in this initial moment, with the suggestion of other actors' involvement in what will be performed.

Whether in the elasticity of a brown T-shirt that transforms the two bodies (performer and shirt) into a stretchy rubber-like figure, or in the disappearance behind a red Vichy flannel patterned shirt, the performer Teresa Feio undergoes a series of morphings and transformations that result from her encounter with particular things. Throughout the performance, the verticality of a door, its flatness, its solidity, the hyper-flexibility of the curves of a chair, are all suggested. The institutional nature of the space is revealed by the engagement of the performer with specific objects – light rigs – encountered in the space. It is more that the body assumes the stillness, the malleability, flexibility, the rubberlike quality or even the volumes various objects present on stage. So, even here the stillness is of a specific quality that is given agency by the object's autonomy. The disappearance behind a shirt transforming the human performer in more than a human figure becomes part of the assemblage on stage. Here, the encounter with these various assemblages becomes the device par excellence through which one can become extra-human.

Figure 21 Gala, V. (2016) 1001 Things. Theatre Studio, Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance *[Photograph]*

CHAPTER 4: TOWARDS A CRITICAL PERFORMATIVITY OF THINGS

In the following chapter I pick up the subject of the performativity of things to examine particular challenges of working with objects. My aim is twofold: to examine the methodological challenges arising from the associations and relations produced by the performativity of things, and to focus on the extreme potentiality and implications of objects becoming lone performers themselves on stage. The latest aspect remained partly unexplored in the previous chapters.

In the first fragment I consider the multiple roles things have played in recent history of Western performance, the diverse associations between humans and things developed beyond the representational that share elements with some of the methodologies described in earlier chapters. As previously pointed out, beyond any ethical concerns, the practice of "an object performativity" has its obstacles: resistances from the performer and the creation of methodologies far distant from a training that relies on "body humanism" (Laermans, 2008, p. 7). In order to analyse these issues, I will describe strategies of disappearance and the consequent inter-medial potentialities of choreography emerging from these operations. The intersections of these with Massumi's concept of "part-subject", and with present conditions of contemporary life, will be addressed by analysing processes and concepts of a number of artist's creations, as well as other distinct scores explored in my studio research.

In this instance, I will also address the challenges posed by an approach to objects that focuses on the relational and mediation. Here, my contribution relies largely on Latour's ANT theory, notably his thoughts on hybridity, and de Landa's emphasis on associations (2005, pp. 50-67). Here, I seek to untangle resistances or questionings that might still persist concerning the performativity of things in the performing arts.

By drawing a parallel between these ideas and the choreographic thought behind several creations, I explore the particular capacity of these creations to expose the specific problematics arising from our current times. Lastly, I bring the works of Verdonck and Italian choreographer Christian Rizzo to explore the extreme possibility of a choreography without people.

4.1. Things Go (Un)Noticed

The uncritical centrality of the human body in choreography parallels the schemas and binaries in Western philosophy of subject-object opposition where subject is presence, and the object is relative to the subject. The presence of objects on stage in choreographic projects or in performance is recurrent and historical, from the use of objects to create effects to the use of objects in its own instrumental way. By using an object in an instrumental manner, the performer is in a sense being defined by it. For example, when in Pina Bausch's *1980 a Piece by Pina Bausch*, a woman opens up a bag and lies down on a beach towel on the floor this act informs us about herself, about the place she frequents, about a leisure activity (having sun in the garden) she's able to take part in. In short it localizes the performer, who she is, her subjectivity. In much of the European dance creations of late twentieth century, in particular in dance theatre, we seemed to witness the use of objects on stage for their utilitarian aspect, one complementing the centrality of the presence of the performer. A preference for realism and psychological representation is evident in the use of objects throughout this period. Not only are objects often used to carry out everyday activities by the performers, but their role serves also as an amplifier of a symbolic order, giving us signs directly related to the performer. Presence here is delegated to the human performer most of the time and objects are mostly consigned the role of background props.

However, the conviviality of humans and objects in performance is a long one, and other types of interactions have existed where roles are blurred and non-hierarchic activities between human performers and things are put forward. Various twentieth-century avant-garde movements (Italian futurism,[46] the Bauhaus, Dada) with non-hierarchical ideals were invested in the rejection of all forms of realism or of psychology on stage as well as the transgression of conventional ideas of time and space. It is worth noticing Dada's particular use of the marionette as a fundamental aspect in blurring the frontiers between object and actor. Here, the marionette had a

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[46] For more see Apollonio, U. (1973). *Documents of 20th Century Art: Futurist Manifestos*. Brain, Robert, R.W. Flint, J.C. Higgitt, and Caroline Tisdall, trans. New York: Viking Press, pp. 19-24.

powerful emblematic presence in contrast with the human performer. Similarly, non-hierarchic ideals were a major part of Polish theatre director Tadeusz Kantor's theatre. In his pieces, action no longer develops around the actors but is distributed amongst various elements. In the Object – 1944 essay the Polish artist expresses the nature of his radical investment in objects:

> the object ceased to be a prop used by the actor in his act. Simply [the object] was, [it] existed on equal footing with the actor. [The object] was the actor! The object-actor (Kantor, 1993, p. 72)

His experimentations with the series *Emballages* (1957-65) consists of the process of packaging several objects (and later humans) to reveal the invisible and hidden material qualities of the items and further highlighting the relevance objects and things in his artistic practice. About this series Kantor would say:

> I realize that for the object to begin to exist, I had to do something with it, something that had nothing to do with its normal function, that a ritual was necessary[...] I found the thing [...] bags [...] bags spontaneously placed the object in this situation [..] they hid it, disguised it (Kantor, 1993, p. 280)

Kantor's words allude to a process whereby, through the action of packaging – wrapping materials – objects become things. It is through hiding and the covering up of the object that its particular materiality, its thingness is revealed. Here, a thing is relational, it is a being that exists through the relation of packaging, it is process rather than a static essence. These acts of packaging echo Heidegger's (1962, p. 98) idea of being "present at hand" as it is through the process of packaging that the objects manifest their nature beyond their utilitarian meaning originating in humans. These things demand that human performers in this encounter face themselves on their material terms, forcing humans to be aware of their material relation with them. The nature of such encounter is therefore radically different from the one brought forward in the use of objects to support character representation. As a consequence, in Kantor's plays and happenings, objects become performers and human performers appear often to be performing under their influence. Moreover, Kantor's theatre is one that preferred 'non-acting' and an interrupted plot. Human performers and things all perform, becoming things among other things.

Some of the creations described in Chapters 2 and 3 are of a similar operative nature, in that the performativity of things arises paradoxically only through an engagement beyond instrumental use and often through operations of concealment. This is the case of Jeong's performance, and my own *1001 Things* or *Garbage Blues*. It is through an engagement with the object's materiality, through hiding and covering it up, or through different strategies of camouflage that new materialities in the form of figures can be experienced. Even in the *Table for Upside Down Practices*, both covering up items under a cloth as a scenographic element and using cardboard packaging material for the cards share a similar disposition to the one behind *Emballages*.

But perhaps a fundamental figure in transforming performativity beyond the human and expanding the notion of performer by inviting all things to perform is American artist Robert Rauschenberg. His collaborative performances included various materials, objects (such as parachutes, beds, tires, roller skates, radio, tennis balls), dancers (Trisha Brown, Steve Paxton, Simone Forti, Alex Hay, Deborah Hay, Lucinda Childs and Yvonne Rainer) and living animals (birds, turtles equipped with flashlights). Very much like his *Combines*, in these live works each element was equally important. Rauschenberg's close collaboration with dance can be traced far back with both Cunningham and Paul Taylor but it is in his collaborative performances with the Judson Church that this aspect was amplified, becoming all the more visible.

His piece *Open Score* (Rauschenberg, 1966) was both environment and situation. Performed in October 1966, it consisted of a tennis net, one tennis ball, two racquets, a complex light system connected to the racquets, contact microphones, two aides, audience and two players. In such an environment each element is an agent. After the game, approximatively 500 participants gathered together in the performance space, where they were filmed by infrared cameras set up on the balcony. Each participant was required to move around in accordance with a series of memorized tasks provided by Rauschenberg. The sequence of instructions, and hence that of the people's actions, was signalled by numbered panels and flashes of light. In this "work" – a word Rauschenberg preferred to use to define his practice – the tennis ball is the mover that mobilizes and sets the performance in motion. The pauses, the accelerations, the live soundtrack, the suspended silences, the different moving

directions across the space by the players, are all induced by the ball. The ball assembles all the people together around it – both performers and audience follow its trajectory and changes in speed, noise and direction. It is the ball that sets the motion of the work. Massumi's (2002, pp. 73-75) concept of part-subject is useful here. Following the ideas of Serre's and Latour, in his description of a game with a ball he describes the ball as the catalyser. The ball is seen as an autonomous actor with its own agency that moves the players. In doing so, Massumi ascribes a kind of materiality and object-hood to the human players that is often reserved for inanimate entities situated or imagined to be under their control. Additionally, the author's ideas of in-betweenness and of becoming are evidenced in other aspects of the piece. They are noticeable in the changing roles assumed by the audience, where audience is a category of a relation rather than an unaltered essence. The audience's displacement to another area of the room alters the terms of its relation, turning audience into performer. Such an operation puts the interconnection between audience-performer in evidence, rendering the necessary co-presence of both categories of such a relation visible. Audience and performer are categories of in-betweenness, and this particular aspect is put in evidence in *Open Score* (Rauschenberg, 1966). But by including the voice and the name of each audience member to be spoken out by a recording device, another aspect of the making of an audience is disclosed: the individuated and individual diversity of what makes an audience. This alteration is a strategy I used in the performance lecture *Maliciously Missing: The Potential of the Missing Performer* (Gala, 2016): after a series of positional actions adopted by incorporating the placement, the material aspect and the specific physical properties (particular stiffness) of a large cardboard piece amongst the auditorium stairs, I returned to the conference podium and turned the camera onto the audience. The audience image was projected onto the screen. In doing so the audience became both performers and spectators of their own role in the space of an academic lecture theatre. To locate both performer and audience as inter-changeable beings or categories is to give prominence to their relation, to view them as a process of a relation. In doing so, we are thinking of these as elements in a continuous act of creating associations that make space and time through co-authoring, co-experiencing materialities and atmospheres.

4.2. Thing: Performer and Collaborator

In one of my performative tables at the FASS (Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences) Kingston University Conference in April 2017, a guest proclaimed that objects cannot perform. At the time responded I with two examples of Boursier-Mougenot's oeuvre which are described in detail in Chapter 1. Before advancing here, though, I would like to give this matter further consideration.

This alarmed, self-assured conviction does not arise, I believe, from only the embedded tradition of body humanism (Laermans, 2008, p. 7) in the performing arts addressed in the Chapter 2. Such a thought is founded on the idea that objects are merely commodities, objects 'over there', outside, detached, without affect, in opposition and in an existence that relies on us as the 'subject'. Marx's concept of commodity (1970, p. 85) is manifestly incomplete to acknowledge the more complex relations developed between subjects and objects. His idea of commodity is one of total commodification in which objects are objects solely because they are produced so as to be exchanged for value and instrumentalized. Categories and activities such as slavery opened specific questions which blurred the distinction between subject and object, and which deeply trouble the idea of presence as an inherent emancipatory category in performance(s). As I have exposed, though, these ideas have been ignored by Marx as well as a whole tradition in Marxist approaches to performance. American black studies theorist Fred Moten argues that Marx's theory disregarded the voicing, utterances and resistances of "commodities who spoke" (2003, p. 14) – "laborers who were commodities" meaning that they have an "intrinsic value" outside of the system of exchange advocated by Marx. Because of a totalizing idea of object located solely under a system of exchange that fails to situate performance(s) within a context in regard to specific forms of domination, Marxist theory – and by extension Marxist approaches to performance – failed to acknowledge categories where such object|subject distinctions become unclear and with that the performativities and problems posed by them.[47] As Moten argues:

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[47] Here, Hartman's (1997) study of the practices emerging from the 'the particular status of the slave as object' (1997, p. 54) in particular her attention on tactics of everyday practices of the dominated as practices that do not "reinscribe the terms of subjugation" (Idib) are of importance and related to the analysis in sections 2.2., 3.2. and 3.2. of this study. These are complemented by her critical considerations on 'facile assertions of slave agency' (Hartman, 1997, p. 55), pointing instead to the

> The speaking commodity thus cuts Marx…this by the way of an irruption of the phonic substance that cuts and augments meaning with a phonographic, rematerializing inscription. That irruption breaks down the distinction between what is intrinsic and what is given by or of the outside; here what is given inside is that which is out-from-outside, a spirit manifest in its material expense or aspiration. (2003, p. 14)

Moten's ideas break down the separation between interiority and exteriority, live|dead, presence|absence, opaque|transparent to propose an altogether alternative fugitive performativity that performs in the gaps.

But what has been proposed in sections 1.4.2 and 2.4. regarding the performativity of things is not that things can think or interpret a choreographic score in the literal sense of the word, nor have I been making a case for fetishist, symbolic powers or spiritual powers of things. For the moment, what I am arguing for is that objects can make us do things, they can affect us, move us and move with us, 'they do' move us and therefore they perform.

Yet, another argument could be made is that things do not perform because they do not have interpretative skills. However, a close look at the history of performance and dance will reveal that many of the scores do not rely on the interpretative skills of the performer but focus more on the execution of a particular succession of actions or tasks. And as we have seen with the example of Boursier-Mougenot's *From Here to Ear* (1999), human performers are not always conscious and aware that they are performing. So, the idea of the necessity of consciousness as a necessity of performance per se is not an absolute requirement for performance to take place. Finally, to those who are deeply entrenched in limiting the choreographic to motility, much of the dance of the 90s, which Lepecki (2006) drew attention to in "Exhausting Dance", has demonstrated the critical capacity of choreography to develop beyond motility. Moreover, Mark Franko's (2002) study demonstrated the close link of dance motility with the industrial revolution and the birth of the American nation. In

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relevance of practices of "becoming or belonging together in terms other than those defined by one's status as property, will-less object, and the not quite-human" (Hartman, 1997, p. 61). In doing so, she highlights the significance of such practices as effective forms of "establishing other terms of sociability" (Hartman, 1997, p. 61) thereby creating "alternative visions and experiences of subjectivity, which, however, contest dominant constructions of blackness.

the West not only is the correspondence between the choreographic and motility much more recent than we are led to believe, but also the current technological revolution might imply other possibilities for the choreographic.

Rauschenberg referred to materials as his collaborators. Such an idea can be fundamental in moving away from the instrumental mode that partly characterizes the performing arts. It opens up space for an object's performativity by suggesting a democratic non-hierarchic endeavour that extends to all things, objects, sounds, animals or beings.

Some of the scores which I explored looked into the possibilities of collaboration between things and performer. They speak directly to Massumi's concept of part-subject (2002, p. 73). Created in 2016, *1001 Things* (Gala & Feio) is a score dealing with the de-centring of the subject. Here, the relation with things is amplified and not only the human performer follows specific objects but is also moved by their particular assemblages or groupings, specific material properties, their placement in space. The bending properties of a folded chair existent in the space lead the body into rubber bending positions beyond human forms. The verticality of a door is adopted by the body of a performer hanging upside-down using his feet in the actual door. A series of inverted positions, foldable rubber like forms are adopted by the human body throughout the duration of the score and in multiple places in the space. This influence of the 'things' in the performer is also translated in what is written by her on a piece of paper – 'not by my name' –implying that the authorship and what is moving her is outside of herself. Even in this act of writing the performer assumes a non-human characteristic as the writing occurs behind her back with her face and body hidden as if the hands stretched towards her back have a life of their own. Or even as if the writing on the piece of paper occurs by itself.

Rauschenberg's ideas of collaboration, originating from his involvement with Black Mountain College – John Cage and Cunningham – extended to materials. His idea of materials as collaborators is worth exploring both as concept and methodology. Such ideas potentialize not only the development of a non-hierarchic, non-instrumental relation and inclination towards things but more importantly the idea of letting oneself be choreographed or moved by things. This is one of the most profoundly difficult aspects to ask from a performer: to tone down her/his intensity and engage

with a distinct performative mode, one that is attentive to the suggestive nature of things. It is though perhaps a fundamental methodological shift that characterizes the approaches described in this study. How to find an "affective common ground" (Cull, 2012, p. 111), how to adjust tonalities of different things, humans, agents within a space, how to let yourself be choreographed amongst these diverse assemblages, to express a particular idea. This de-centring of human-agency unsettles the untroubled binaries mentioned before that the performing arts seem to fall prey to; the Subject (the performer) and Object (stage props).

In the next section we will examine the particular methodological challenges arising from working with things as part of larger relational assemblages. The issue was briefly problematized in the Table for Upside Down Practices section, but my aim is to expand on this.

4.3. Choreographed Assemblages: Locating Agencies, towards a Choreography of In-betweenness

> We live in groups that seem firmly entrenched, and yet how is it that
>
> they transform so rapidly?' 'We are made to do things by other agencies
>
> over which we have no control and that seem plain and mundane
>
> enough. (Latour, 2005, p. 21)

> For mediators, the situation is different: causes do not allow effects to be deduced as they are simply offering occasions, circumstances, and precedents. As a result, lots of surprising aliens may pop in between. Such a distinction affects all agencies (Latour, 2005, p. 59)

2nd April 2017. Tanks Foyer and East Tank, Tate Modern. I watch *Occasions* (2017) by Dominican choreographer Isabel Lewis or perhaps I should say I participate, or I perform? Any or all terms could serve the purpose that the artist seems to desire with the piece. Lewis, with a background in contemporary dance, sees herself as host and her piece as an invitation. The choice of this particular example derives from the similarities it bears with the ideas I have been proposing in this chapter but clearly highlighted the challenges such an endeavour can pose. Creating a performance with

assembled objects, olfactory devices, food, light, contemporary Western dance language, social Angolan dance (kizomba) and dancers with differentiated backgrounds in the particular institutionalized space of a museum demands a meticulous sentience from each one of these collaborators. Otherwise, the resulting venture might end on the other side of the line, further reinforcing essentialist ideas about each one of the actors involved. Having contemporary dancers performing on the horizontal plane, mainly executing slow motion movements on the floor, against the backdrop of an immense installation with plants oriented towards the vertical and at times touching the ceiling – all of this can seem questionable. However, this vertical 'forest' accompanied by loud music proved to be a highly unlikely collaborator with the contemporary dance performers. It opened all sorts of questionings around agency and objectification which I believe was not intentional on the part of the artist.

The horizontal plane in which their detailed dances developed found itself strikingly in an ambiguous place when they moved into the large East Tank space. There, loud 'kizomba' music and dance (Angolan popular music and social dance in duo form), 'a forest' and an Angolan diasporic clubbing atmosphere had been installed. The fact that both the plants and Angolan social dancing develop in the vertical plane contributed to the objectification of the dancers. Their slowness could not compete with the locale and their dances and presence dissipated in the immense profusion of all the other elements. The delicacy and slowness of these dances could have found a vital accomplice in the plants. Plants have a time of another order; they grow within a time frame almost imperceptible for humans, their slowness could have been the valuable lively collaborator enhancing a distinct notion of time and of materiality shared by both. The slowness of a vegetal world is in extreme contrast with our experienced accelerated time from hypercapitalism. Such a temporal engagement would have provided an alternative to this accelerated time and a critical opening to other possible temporalities and subjectivities.

However, the majestically imperial plant & kizomba dance constellation assumed a loudness that did not allow for the detail and the slowed time frame to be revealed.

Lewis seemed too imbricated in the intensity of the presence of each separate element. To collaborate is too associate yourself in all manners with your

collaborators, to let yourself be choreographed by them, to let yourself be scripted by sensing them, to associate yourself with different assemblages and constellations. Moreover, one needs to accept their lively nature and their differentiated, even contradictory intentionalities within a whole. Such an enterprise moves in opposite directions to those of letting go or on the contrary of resisting following particular assemblages.

Perhaps, the idea of non-intentionality that Latour (2005, pp. 57-61) hints at would have been of the utmost importance. By locating intentionality neither in humans nor in non-humans, Latour draws attention precisely to the heterogeneous associations of humans and non-humans. In doing so, Latour locates agency neither in humans nor non-humans but in the varied associations that emerge from their relations. Lewis's piece surrendered to the force of each separate individual element without being attentive to the associations created, their tonalities and their intensities. The critical potential of the assemblages in "Occasions" is immense from a proposal of an alternative temporality to the one we experience today, to questions of bringing 'the social' into the museum and debates around the black experience. As kizomba dance developed, several unexpected Latin American trained styles – tango and salsa – surfaced in the bodies of the Kizomba virtuoso dancers. The exhibited virtuosity – often resembling competitive ballroom dances – had an intimidating effect on an audience already unfamiliar with duo/couple dancing. Unlike, the seminal Piper work *Funk Lessons* (1983) the invitation to dance disappeared; and with it its critical potential. Instead, by becoming a backdrop, the static scenery exoticized the kizomba dancers. The fact that the steps performed by the couples had elements of Latin American forms (tango and salsa) contributed further to the exoticization reducing the moves performed to "dances of the other". Rather than resembling everyday diaspora nightclubbing, the style was marked by the virtuosity of a dance *academy*. This exoticization was intensified by the performative space: the museum. The museum scripts a particular mode of expectancy and participation. It is the place where we go to see 'dead things', encouraging a particular mode of looking at 'objects' and of objectification. If one is not careful, this suggestion from the space becomes an irreversible command. What would have been needed to realign this work to the logic of relation?

The invitation or opening of a door to a complex hybrid world like the one we live in is present in Lewis' piece overall. A world where high tech innovations are constant, of intense engagement with objects (iPhone and other electronic devices), where groupings and various even contradictory affiliations coexist (ecological concerns, Anthropocene, gender fluidity). This hybrid world calls for other choreographic modes that might translate how action collaborates with materials to produce new meanings.

An attentive engagement with the relational which embraced the emergence of other properties resulting from interactions between each element would bring out the critical potential of some of the assemblages mentioned before. Several assemblages that were left behind could emerge and their generative potential to form or destroy others would have been possible. De Landa's (2006, p. 10) ideas echo here: "a whole is the result of the actual exercise of the component's capacities and not of the aggregation of the component's properties". Assemblages demand a particular kind of attention, and even immersion, focused on relations of exteriority, on the capacities of interaction of each element with other properties or the capacity to form other associations. To let yourself be choreographed by the 'in-between' means to align yourself with the relational and to be scripted by sensing the associations one is immersed in. To do so opens up possible movements of deterritorialization. It allows for the elements or a particular combination of elements to destabilize the uniqueness of another assemblage. Because of the richness of the associations existent in Lewis' piece, the potential for change, transformation, or even to generate unexpected new associations, is immense.

The piece manifestly reflected the increasingly hybrid world we live in. A variety of possible associations come to mind from a critique of present temporality (plants slow dances), verticality horizontality, its readings and implications in the choreographic and the political. Politically, I am referring to all those bodies that are marginalized, unable to participate fully in various spheres of society. Perhaps the closest example of a critically inscribed horizontal performativity is American artist Pope L's series of crawlings. Additionally, "Occasions" brought to light the complex relation between contemporary and social dance and the implications of bringing 'the social' to the museum. All of them were imbricated with ideas of blackness,

participation, social space, and its materiality. Such an invitation on Lewis' part is remarkable for its potentiality.

Similar challenges are posed by Boursier-Mougneot's installations: under carefully constructed situations, things and animals become the performers. These performances are known for bringing out the acoustic potential of plates, vacuum cleaners and birds in environments created for this purpose. On his series of performances Mougenot (2014) says:

> It's like a device, a plan I create. It's a piece impossible to be played by humans…Going beyond…that often interests me going beyond the human but not always in a technical way. Giving a role to the imagination

In *From Here to Ear* (Boursier-Mougenot, 1999) the gathering of human, things, animals, sound is so inter-related and blended that audience becomes simultaneously audience, performer, active choreographer and composer in the piece. Not surprisingly Boursier-Mougenot's own background is in the performing arts; for several years he used to compose music for theatre plays by Pascal Rambert Theatre Company. While doing so, he noticed that at times actors overloaded the play with their interpretative skills which made him interested in the 'honesty' of other elements. In describing *From Here to Ear* (Boursier-Mougenot, 1999) the artist expresses his interest as one of creation of an ecological theatre:

> I like to create an ecological theatre…You don't need to have text just the presence of the body moving slowly into the space can be enough to create fiction I like the idea to have all these concrete elements (2012)

Boursier-Mougenot sees his practice as "indirect choreography" and suggests a refusal of the representational, pointing out that "we're not on stage we are in the real". It is important to notice in such a rejection of the fabricated or staged, the role he ascribes himself as a "creator of conditions". This is a role described as involving both the creation of "a specific fluidity" but also "perhaps even obstacles" (Boursier-Mougenot, 2016). It denotes a manifest interest in the aleatory and on "letting go", implying that other elements and categories function as collaborators with their own will and force, but also, an acknowledgment of the elements' live(ness) with a drive of their own, functioning in a meticulous assemblage. His participation involves

inventing or bringing together these groupings and opening a space for the interactions that might arise from them. In this a role of designer of assemblages he suggests contradictory moves – of being both a facilitator of fluid movements and of limitations even hindrances. There is an attentive concern in enabling the differing forces at work to perform. It seems Boursier-Mougenot is not only aware but invested in creating "conditions" that incorporate components that might be working in diverse or opposing directions, leaving space for change: perhaps even change in the nature of the assemblage he created. Although in most of his works the nature of the assemblages does not experience radical alteration, this idea is suggested in some of the constellations created. Their reliance on fragile looking open structure makes space for this allusion.

4.4. Critical Possibilities| Critical Absences: Devices, Machines, Personas and Other Hybrid Associations

A refusal to perform encapsulates a radical aspect in a time where performance seems to cooperate with capitalism. To disappear and leave the stage to an 'object performer' is to give priority to things and to acknowledge the new forms of object-human relations mentioned before. It is to engage with other possible meanings and worlds that might translate our present hybrid world characterized by a growing dependence of the human body and technology, as pointed out by Latour (2005). However, such deserting could be seen as a betrayal by the many deeply entrenched ideas of the performing arts as being limited to intra-human activity. Those doing so fail to acknowledge the long tradition of proximity with objects in the performing arts. The series of works described below explore the creation of hybrid figures resulting from hiding or strategies of objects becoming solo performers. The performers in these works move in a world beyond the subject-object divide by exploring a performativity that shuffles between subjects and objects, humans-non-humans, but also between figure, object, and persona.

4.4.1. Critical Absences: Figures, Personas and other Hybrid Associations

Backpack-selfie (2016) was first created by me to be part of a presentation at ACRU conference 2016 at Kingston University. It arose from an investigation of ideas of 'camouflage' or hiding the performer. It came from a desire to answer the following questions: What if the human performer would withdraw? What if we don't really see her/him? Or even what if somebody or 'something other' is speaking through her/him? In addition, the score opens questions about the sort of performativity a paper presentation on 'the disappearance of the performer' might require. As such, backpack-selfie – the performer – is an in-middling being: between thing and person, with or without a face, academic human/academic thing, speaking through a device. It/Her/His face is of a brown backpack. *Backpack-selfie* (2016) is an entity close to the idea of figuration advanced by Latour (2005, p. 54) as in to "give a figure, a form, a cloth, a flesh to an agency forbidding me or forcing me to do things". It is a persona whose head is a backpack and whose main action, even compulsion, is to take selfies while speaking. A backpack also implies moving, travelling, carrying stuff – precarity. Initially, this backpack-selfie takes selfies in the auditorium lecture theatre before starting to speak. As *Backpack-selfie* (2016) evolved and moved into the studio space its selfies became more elaborate, adopting a number of poses on the floor: reclined or supporting one of her arms on a wall. In backpack-selfie, the everyday 'mobile phone' is used to take selfies. However, these selfies are taken of a hidden face rather than an explicit face or environment. What are the meanings of a performer that retires or that hides behind a backpack in order to execute one of the most contemporary practices of self-display 'the selfie'? The *Backpack*-selfie (2016) is a contradiction in itself as it is the act of taking a selfie hiding your face, or of taking a selfie with *a* face not conforming to 'selfie' standards. It is a selfie of a hybrid human/object. It grasps the hyper- performativity sustained by McKenzie (2001, p. 13) that extends to all aspects of life and things. In a sense, it is capturing the relations many of us engage in on a daily basis, our intimate relation with things and the complex significances behind these activities.

Much of the new technological innovations are merging technology with human and thought with the body; *Backpack-selfie* (2016) captures this in one figure. The paper (about disappearance of the performer) is performed with the help of headphones

that are invisible inside the backpack enabling the 'academic-backpack' to continue the presentation. In some sense here, the real origin of the sound is not seen. Yet, because there is visibly a persona created, the acousmatic effect is troubled. It is as if the persona could be a trickster. This particularity echoes much of the issues we face today: doesn't much of the information we have access to originate from sources we don't entirely know or even control? Aren't many of the voices we hear today robot generated, even in music? The recent predictions on elections have recognized algorithms and their autonomy at work.

4.4.3 Critical Possibilities: Devices, Machines

In the choice of title of exhibition *Not to Play with Dead Things* (Mangion, 2008) Villa Arson curator Eric Mangion alludes to the idea of the danger inherent of involving oneself with things. The exhibition engaged with the post life of objects that were part of performances once. Born out of the curator's desire to investigate the performativity retained and held by those objects it questioned ideas of live and dead of things. This section is dedicated to a similar endeavour – that one of things as lively solo performers.

Belgian theatre director Kris Verdonk's oeuvre is of discernible interest for this segment by moving beyond the subject-object divide and even complicating ideas of life and death in the context of the proscenium. If the introduction of humans in the museum opens space for their objectification as Isabel's work shown before (section 4), the introduction of objects into the proscenium can open space for their performativity and liveness. Firstly, the simple act of placing objects as performers in the theatre space opens potential territory for their possible performativity and liveness. The institutional characteristics of the proscenium transform its inhabitants: occupiers become probable performers. But this engagement with Verdonk goes beyond anthropocentrism because objects are removed from the presence of human performers or of any sort of interaction with the human. Objects are the solo performers of some of these works. In one the creations *DANCER#3* (Verdonk, 2010) a robot is the 'soloist' performing a series of movements. As Van Baarle (2015, p. 41) mentions this "display of the non-human nature of properties that we consider to be solely human" is a step in the direction of a "post-anthropocentric

world". *DANCER#3* (Verdonk, 2010) opens territory for the lone performativity of 'things' and the anxieties that might come with it. It is a profound mirror of contemporary questionings on the role machines occupy or will occupy in the future and our relation to them. *DANCER#3* (Verdonk, 2010) is a section of the piece entitled *ACTOR#1* (Verdonk, 2010), whose theme is the ancient Greek story behind the creation of an artificial miniature human. In this section we see a robot trying to stand vertical but always falling. Throughout the section the robot falls repeatedly in an effort to reach a standing position. It is a display of trying endlessly to come into verticality and being. The work functions in the form of three tableaux (*MASS, HUMINID and DANCER #3*) performed in three distinct places in the same venue. The theme explores hybridity in the form of machines acting and performing human challenges and the failure involved in the coming into being. In another work based on Franz Kafka the central concern is the life of things and the fact that they survive humans. This suggests a radical shift in concerning the life of objects by rejecting the idea of thing as a static and passive in its material status and therefore dead. His choice of non-human actors acknowledges an existence that goes beyond objects as passive or objects of consumption only there to be used or acted upon. The undoing of commodification makes for an unveiling of the 'true' characteristics and the affective power of things. Yet what is interesting in Verdonk's case is that he addresses the specificities of hypercapitalism with these oeuvres.

Hybridity and the idea of the 'dancer' as other than human is a theme explored by French choreographer Christian Rizzo in *100% Polyester Object dansant à definer* (1999). The title points to the idea of hybridity as polyester is a material that combines natural and synthetic chemicals. Hybridity here exists also in the fact that this object is supposed to be a dancer or an "objet dansant" meaning "a dancing object". An activity often performed and executed exclusively by humans. By using 100% in the title Rizzo suggests a being that is a total hybrid blending: natural, artificial, object and human. In the form of a duo performed by two dresses, the choreography is operated by the air produced by ventilators placed in the room. Lasting 12 minutes the duo develops accompanied by an electronic soundtrack. In the work's notes Rizzo mentions that the work arose from his desire to present a dance where the human body is absent, a reflection on absence. There was also a desire to conjoint the main artistic activities of his practice: movement, costume and

sound in one piece. His inspiration arose from Virilio's book *Aesthetic of disappearance* (1991).The resulting simplicity of having various fans on the floor and two protagonists hanging from above combined with the use of light creates "a system that disorients the senses and through this renders visible what was not evident to the common eye." (Frimat, 2010). As French theorist Frimat mentions, Rizzo's work is characterized itself by "rendering new regimes of visibility". Here, the disappearance of the human body and performer opens space for another performativity, the performativity of things; Rizzo's questionings are of an ontological nature implying that the object of choreography is located beyond human performativity.

In another work *Mon Amour* (2008) giant spheres advance through the space in a stable controllable way with a will of their own cutting the space in a direct manner. Rizzo's objects are given a central role almost an "over-presence" amongst the presence of human performers. The dancer's faces in "Mon Amour" are often covered, hidden by helmets or hoods, their bodies blend with materials such as stockings, fabrics, or become a prolongation of potted plants. Often disjointed, the body behind hooded garments is transfigured appearing ghostlike. The human body is hybrid, or an altered figure made of things. Human performers appear as strange corporal wrapping figures folded in materials emptied of their bodily human quality. Sometimes bodies are carried but their positional form remains unchanged adopting an almost object like-attitude. So, if the body was lying down in a precise position the position will be unaltered throughout the transporting act. Even time seems to originate from the plants existing in their bodies as it is a slowed non-human temporality that is adopted by the performers. Rizzo's visual arts background surfaces in a piece where performativity extends to all things and to things in particular. A former graduate from Villa Arson, Ecole des Beaux Arts located in Nice – a city with a long tradition in performance art – Rizzo's work is characterized by a distributed attention to all elements: things, human performers, sound and light. His oeuvre challenges the ontology of choreography by suggesting an-other possible choreography – one that includes things, bodies, light, nature. The continuity affirmed by Rizzo is thus not limited to elements. Rather than submitting to the subject object divide (proliferating in the performing arts) his creations go beyond it. By ignoring this divide completely, they create a very unique notion of presence and

subjectivity. Such inter-mediality is rare; it is distinguished by its own unique sense of time and existence. It is a porous existence one where the limits between body and the world seem to disappear.

CONCLUSION

In this study I have looked into performances that refuse to comply with particular expected performances of reductionism, operationality and productivity. Through the work of several artists and my PaR I have sought to examine the potential of opacity, (non)performance, disappearance and acts of withdrawal in performance(s) in a time characterized by a turn from one form of capitalism to another where there is a "breakdown of the strategies and relations that have sustained capital accumulation over the past five centuries" (Moore, 2015a, p. 1).

Such exploration enabled me to wrestle with what still remains a rather undetected territory situated between performance(s)' rigid categories of visibility and presence. Often such territory has been immersed in Deleuzian, Marxist, post-Marxist or post-structuralist approaches to performance while ignoring a whole set of fugitive performance(s) that dismantle this rigid paralyzed idea of presence.

My attempt at understanding and grasping the mesh-like intricated relations of performance with the histories of capitalism and present-day post-Fordism exposed another history of (non)performances. One that contests and demands for an alternative approach and that tackles the various exploitative imbrications of capitalism which are in direct relation to fugitive choreographies and trouble a deep-seated, rigid, paralyzed idea of presence as an inherent category of performance.

So far, approaches relying solely on Marxism or Deleuze in performance studies have stayed far from truly troubling performance's inherent emancipatory category of visibility and have indirectly underwritten reductionist and exploitative operations in performance in a continuum of the division of Nature and Society pointed out by Moore.

This research attempted to put performance in the entanglement of this division, in the empty interval between "Nature" and "Society" produced by exploitative capitalism in a desire to trace other alternative performances, knowledges often "reduced" (Glissant, 1997) or ignored. It is only from this critical juncture of

intricated relations of performance(s) with the histories of racial capitalism[48] that a more complex mapping of (non)performances emerged in this study, one that can truly contest and challenge a continuum of extractive economies of exploitation (radical consumption of the body, over production of subjectivities) and coloniality and a whole set of questionings of what we often call performance.

Here, this study speaks to Moten's oeuvre by focusing, in Chapter 2, on the particularities of black (non)performances so that it is able to address (non)performances that articulate the complexities of the present hybrid world made up of social justice, racial inequalities, ecological concerns or technologies. But unlike Moten, the scope of this study focused on contemporary recent (non)performances in the field of choreography, performance art or the performing arts.

My intervention has sought to study these (non)performative presences, their potentialities and the questionings brought by them. With these (non)performances it was also my intention to caution against the risk of inhibiting other possible forms of intervention that rely on the unseen or even of ignoring altogether the political potential of intentionally adopting the hidden. It is perhaps a divergent approach from the one many in the performing arts are familiar with.

However, such an approach exposed a set of alternative formations that rely on opacity, disputing many of the inherent categories of performance showing that not rarely have these categories corresponded and arguably correspond with non-emancipatory and even exploitative traits of present time culture that collude with capitalism. Many of the (non)performances in this study contest such an idea of performance, an idea grounded on definite binary separation between presence|absence, visibility|invisibility, true|false, transparency|opaque or dead|alive.

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[48] Racial capitalism is a term introduced by American political philosopher and black studies pioneer Cédric Robison in *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (2000). In tracing the origins of capitalism to the first proletarians in Europe (Slavs, Irish, Jews, Roma), alongside its further development with the transatlantic slave trade Robinson argued that capitalism operates within an ideological system that ascribes differential value to human life. With his concept Robinson contended that racism is a foundational constitutive aspect of capitalism and the two are inseparable.

The examples in this study enunciate alternative modes of navigation that dismantle these binary certitudes produced under modernity.

I have suggested that only by addressing performance(s) with such an unconventional deviant approach can one move away from the continuum of exploitative nature of present hypercapitalism and detect possible (non)performance formations that move away from this continuum of extractive economies of exploitation, radical consumption of the body and coloniality.

This was done by asking the following questions: As performance becomes a core feature of hypercapitalism, could a refusal to perform or a withdrawal of the performer provide alternatives to or a critical stance on the way we live today? What other presences, existences, knowledges have been ignored by performance because of the inherited division of "Nature" and "Society"? What openings can result from leaving Western's dance's prevalent "body humanism" and "universal body"? In what ways are we not as performance artists presently endeavouring in visible resistance but instead collaborators with the present form of capitalism?

Due to the mesh-like nature of this research, the method employed has favoured patternation. As such I opted to prioritize the relational nature of a multiplicity of practices, cultivated disappearances and infiltrations in articulation with specific compositions of thought that constitute the field of choreographies of disappearance. That is to say, I have proceeded alongside particular assortments of refusal and evasion giving greater attention to the particular works of the artists Boursier-Mougenot, Jeong, Lewis, Hammons, Verdonck and my PaR so as to avoid the homogenizing impulse of performance's humanist universalizing frames. I have tried as much as possible to stay with these formations in an effort to highlight and trace their relations in opposition to Aristotelian modes that often privilege homogeneous separate essences. But above all staying with this principle was a means to avoid the tempting trap of a performance's universal horizon.

I tended to these as a network of a multiplicity of practices in close relation to particular dispositions of thought where Glissant's ideas of opacity and "Creole Garden" occupied a prominent role. The latter became pivotal in the research's overall methodological set up and in the particularities of the PaR.

This enabled me to lay out the distinct patterns and forms of intervention of these (non)performances under an epoch characterized by a change in a form of capitalism with its particular anxieties and challenges: the compulsion to perform manifest in the personalization of political life, coloniality, racial inequalities, social justice and our increasingly intimate, complex relation with technology.

In line with Kunst, I have argued that the present compulsion to perform and over-production of the body brings new challenges for performance. I suggested that (non)performances of withdrawal, opacity and disappearance are a particular set of formations that attempt to tackle some of the concerns arising from this aspect. Through the works the performance makers Boursier-Mougenot, Verdonck and choreographer Jeong I have tried to show in Chapter 1 the possible operations of withdrawal of the human performer that enable a performativity that defies and moves beyond use value and the over-consumption of the body.

I examined how Jeong's work can be understood as critical acts that open up alternative dimensions for experiencing objects, technology, life and death in the present time. Further on, I described how unlike Jeong, Verdonck exercises a strong internal critique of the performing arts by making visible their over productivity in the form of powerless over-production of subjectivities (through the consumption of presence and of the body). But overall, both revert to strategies where human withdrawal, even disappearance is central to their acts of profanation. If in the Korean choreographer's practice, she and her body disappear, it is in order to form new figures which are new productive formations and have the potential for transformation (related to the present times and particular aspects of current form of capitalism, namely technology). In Verdonck's case disappearance gives prominence to nature, technology or other known figures (mascot) and often questions the invasive, harmful or oppressive impact they might bring.

I critically interrogated how Jeong's choreographic performance finds itself expressing many conflicting directions desires and orders characteristic of the present time: the permanence of life of objects over human certain death, the intimate links developed between machine and the human (organic) resulting in new living beings, the accumulation of purchased items with its posterior abandonment

and the disruption of the "border war" (Haraway, 2016, p. 7) between organisms and machine characteristic of 20th-century capitalism.

Section 2.3.2.1. further developed the complexities and the distinctiveness of Jeong's approach to progress with a question that Chapter 2 tackled: the ethical value and ethical implications of some of the performances that are part of this study. As you might have understood, it was not my intention to uphold that all disappearances in choreography or performance are ethically generative and more importantly are valuable are or of equal value.

Quite the contrary, this was a question that arose strongly in the *Table for Upside Down Practices* (Gala & al, 2019) and deserved extensive consideration. As one participant mentioned, some performativities have the desire to shut out multiplicity, distinct forms of expression (Gala, 2019b, 01:32:45:00) or other blurred unrecognizable forms. Habitual roles and patterns of domination or performances towards the universal are some examples of such configurations that surfaced in this shared performance of questionable value. Concerning Jeong's practice I critically interrogated her engagement with death. For it is through 'playing dead' and the play with 'dead' things that this work raises important challenging questions about human-non-human agency but also about liveness. Of course, dead – here as "not alive" – is precisely the blurred zone that Jeong's practice's entanglements trouble. I have contended that if disappearance in the form of camouflage can be a predicament of becoming space (Levin, 2014), of disappearing and an eventual (self-)eradication,[49] in this performance it is above all a means to radically become extra-human.

But more, in exploring the ethical dimensions of other fugitive (non)performances, two aspects deserved consideration. Firstly, their intentionality. These (non)performances are intentional, not reactive. These are not performances resulting from physical, violent coercion. And yet, these develop and emerge from particular

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[49] Levin makes several references to the eradication of women: "Woman cannot take '(a)' place since she has been synonymous with 'the place'" (2014, p. 17) or "women are place and simultaneously lack place…" (Levin, 2014, p. 17) . In addition, she highlights the problem of camouflage and annihilation for particular people: "Non-white, lower class, and queer persons, among others, have always occupied the invisible background" (Levin, 2014, p. 25).

conditions that were of interest to this study, an aspect I develop in the later sections of this text. Secondly, I stressed how these (non)performances called for a closer alternative approach. That is, I suggested that if we look at them as a negation – a refusal to be given to the gaze in a certain way, to be reduced – we must then further examine the meaning of this negation. Or better, we must look at what that refusal negates. Here, as Levin (2014, p. 15) suggested, concealment, covering up, being upside-down and camouflage functions as a strategic methodology for "a political critique of structures of visibility" or as "mischievous tactic of infiltration".

One of the main operations has been to map the present conditions that shape the ground of these (non)performances (i.e., the conditions under which they are operating) in order to trace possible performance(s) of refusal to give into the conditions of hyper-performativity of the present time and into the exploitative reductive nature of capitalism central to the colonial project and its present coloniality.

Furthermore, it has been my purpose to capture and outline the intricate relations between these (non)performances and the edifice of performance by reflecting on the problems they pose for assumptions that prevail in Western performance.

But more importantly, in attempting to answer the second question noted earlier, I proceeded in Chapters 2 and 3 to examine in more depth particular fugitive (non)performances that have been left out or have remained fairly unexamined in performances which are in direct relation to capital accumulation, an exploitation central to the colonial project and its present afterlives. I attempted to spot, decipher and give an account of these particular fugitive (non)performances in a desire to map disappearance, opacity, and withdrawal, but also to further contest the postulate of Western presentism and its valued transparency as fundamental premise of performance. Here, I followed Moten and Glissant. While Glissant's oeuvre gave a meticulous rendering of the past histories of these black opaque fugitive performances in its variety of forms (from various strategies of invisibility, hiding or withdrawal, to a varied of inscrutable performances, codified utterances and cultural forms), I have moved further in this study by spotting present contemporary renderings of such strategies.

I have argued that not only do these (non)performances form an important formation that contests and resists many of the current challenges for performance(s) that I traced earlier, but I further stressed that without them such an operation would remain largely uncritical.

In this regard, my contribution highlighted the relevance of context and the circumstances under which performance(s) were, are and will be produced. By this is meant that my excavation of these works was not limited to an analysis of the methodologies or devices that brought these performances into their materialization but instead it attempted to trail, detect and give an account of the forms of (non)life, labour and exploitation these (non)performances emerge from.

Yet, one of the limitations some may find is the little space given to a more-detailed critique of Deleuzian or Marxist accounts that came before me. This may come in the near future; the path has been traced.

For now, it was my desire and necessity to follow, excavate with and along the thought of both Glissant and Moten in the meticulous trailing of these pulverized compositions that I have called choreographies of disappearance.

Here, it must be said that as much as this was necessary it also corresponds to an intentional manifestation of an overall counter positioning towards an "aesthetics of rupture and connection" (Glissant, 1997, p. 151) that marks my study. It was a deliberate move of staying longer with this fugitive errancy that relies on opacity, blurring and withdrawal to account for an impenetrable performativity that challenges legibility in order to find other connections and new mappings of thought in these performative compositions.

On second thought, such positioning could be read as counter aesthetic or even non-methodical to performance as understood in the Western archive. And yet, in as much as such a move can be understood this way, it was only by staying with and in this displacement that this study found alternative languages, (non)performances and structures of thought that were more than often left out of performance studies. This is also a reflection of my PaR as it was only through the displacement found in the positioning of being upside-down earlier on that the research took off.

I argued that some of these fugitive (non)performances are ways of "developing opaque structures" in defiance and refutation of a "universalizing and reductive humanism" (Glissant, 1997, p. 133). That is, such practices can be understood as a means of safeguarding certain practices and dimensions of existence from regulatory power, from normative exclusionary constraint. This is the case of Hammons and Lewis, who both trouble simple versions of identity. Seen from this perspective, opacity can be viewed as highly generative, withholding operation in performance. I have discussed in detail how this intentional withholding distinguishes itself from forced silencing or forced invisibility. And how such a strategy of remaining hidden can be considered as a form of protest, a form of dissent, a strategic demur and a manner of res(x)isting in opposition to a disappearance into obscurity. While doing so I described five major strategies: engaging with hidden, camouflage, orality, auscultation and the upside-down.

In this, I have shown how these particular (non)performances reconceptualize aspects of choreography and performance in particular, and how they open up the question of performance's inherent emancipatory category of visibility. For presence, visibility, liveness or aliveness are entangled with a long history of to whom and under which conditions those categories are permitted, enabled and accessed. From this perspective, this study is also an intervention on the politics of presence and liveness that have so far underpinned performance. Put differently, this could be seen as an invitation to rethink and open up the possibility of "another kind of examination of the metaphysics of 'behavior' and 'decision'" (Moten, 2018, p. 250) through performances. Or, borrowing from Hartman (1997, p. 56), for many the very "constitution of the subject renders" them "socially dead or subversively redeploy[s] an identity determined by violent domination"; here, in this instance visibility can equate to reduction or socially death.

Which brings us to the last two questions. By highlighting the relations between power and voice and calling into question the constraints, reductionism and closures that determine what can be performed but also (the identity of) who performs, these fugitive (non)performances interrogate and refute a "universalizing and reductive humanism" (Glissant, 1997, p. 133) that is present in the idea of the universal body in performance. In exploring these issues, I contended that opening performance(s) to other knowledges, bodies, relations and to the "social" (Latour, 2005), implies

engaging with a particular set of methods with distinct departure points. Such a move entails a break in a major aspect: an intentional decentring from the human universal body accompanied by an abandonment or even rejection of the prevalent "body humanism" (Laermans, 2008, p. 7) to focus on the relational and mediation. I have expanded on these two conditions: the move away from the 'universal body' and a disfavour of "body humanism" (Laermans, 2008, p. 7) . By turning to Banes (1993a), I reflected on the specificities of the construction of this universal body in recent avant-garde choreographies, their exclusions and reductions.

More, I traced the entangled relations between the universal (as a category) and the universal body in performance produced by modernity. I further examined how the centrality of the body i.e., body humanism (Laermans, 2008, p. 7) in choreographic performance is related to a modernity that runs parallel to the divisions produced as "Nature" and "Society"; in other words, how modernity was, and is debatably a drive for separation and alienation, a purifying process. Here, Latour's and Tsing's insights have been operative. Not to follow these operations would have meant to suppress the very historicity of the thought of the universal body and consequently to deny the many internal contradictions that subsist in performance.

For even the present 'presentism' free of context and historicity that some of these fugitive (non)performances defy can be viewed in itself as a product of modernity. Therefore, the understanding that modernity is not just an artistic movement, or an ideological concept intrinsically linked to capitalism, to colonialism, and the world market, but also (as highlighted in Chapter 3) a move towards distorted thought and a world historical project that constructs its own performance, and 'universal history' – all of this underpins this study. This aspect crystalized in *The Table for Upside Down Practices* (Gala & al, 2019a) where orality came to play a fundamental role.

From this perspective, choreographies of disappearance in their multiple manifestations can be understood not only as a series of formations that disturb modernity but also as compositions of thought in their multiple (non)performances infiltrating a multitude of disciplines (performance studies, politics, ethics, black studies) in the form of fugitive figures construing in some instances an archive that remains but remains differently. I hope that this dissertation can contribute to a

number of overlapping fields and subfields in performance(s) and further complicate some of the questions that arise from this terrain.

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