

Choreo-graphy

The Deinstitutionalisation of the Body and the Event of Writing

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All the work presented within this dissertation is my own.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Clinton', written in a cursive style.

NOTE:

Citations are footnoted in Chicago style

Abstract

Choreography is commonly understood as a technical term that describes what the choreographer does in a literal sense: writing the dancing bodies according to a master's set narrative. However, recent events in contemporary choreography suggest a different possibility of articulating choreography as a technique of offering rather than a technique of domination over other bodies. Through an analysis of some groundbreaking choreographic experiments by Xavier Le Roy, Jérôme Bel, Boris Charmatz, Eszter Salamon, Christine De Smedt, Jan Ritsema, and Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker, which have gained visibility since the late 1990s in the global art scene beyond the Western institution of dance, this thesis aims to theorise this shift in what choreography is and can be.

In an attempt to theorise choreography as a technique of offering, this thesis illuminates the relationship between some of the tactical operations in contemporary choreographic experiments and the post-structuralist rethinking of power, institution, the body, subjectivity and knowledge production. Turning to Michel Foucault's rethinking of power and Jacques Rancière's challenge of the position of mastery, it aims to articulate the tactical deconstructions of the choreographer-master in contemporary choreographic experiments. Borrowing Hannah Arendt's notion of a 'space of appearance' and Jean-Luc Nancy's rethinking of body, it attempts to articulate how choreography as a spatiotemporal technique offers spaces of appearances for other bodies.

This thesis also highlights a different possibility of articulating choreography by positioning it in the critical field called the 'curatorial'. Reflecting the contemporary disciplinary crisis in art, where the given methodologies and tools no longer do the job that they used to do, there are increasing demands from cultural producers for different

modes of operations in order to open up new critical possibilities of interdisciplinary research. In thinking through Le Roy and De Keersmaeker's 'choreographed' exhibitions, this thesis aims to rethink choreography in terms of the curatorial. This also means to rethink the curatorial in terms of choreography, where both theatre-making and exhibition-making can be rearticulated as a matter of body in relation to other bodies.

Introduction.

Choreographed By, Not Curated By

'BZZZZZZZZZZ' is the jolting sound I hear as I enter the empty gallery at the Fundació Antoni Tàpies in Barcelona. Inside the gallery, there is nothing but six performers who dramatically cease all activity on my entrance into the exhibition space. And the noise they make seems to function as a reset button that prompts three performers to exit the room swiftly, only to return moments later and encircle me. Dispersing and then organising themselves into a preconceived arrangement across the space, the performers return to what they were doing before they were interrupted by my appearance. This is what happens during the first few moments of my entrance into *Retrospective* (2012), a solo exhibition choreographed by the French choreographer Xavier Le Roy.

I hear three performers saying out loud the production dates of Le Roy's choreographic works. Then, these performers perform them in chronological order, to their own varied rhythms. But the ways in which they re-enact Le Roy's works here are all different. One performer is stuck in an image extracted from one of Le Roy's solo works, as if he is a human sculpture. Another performer, like a video, repeats a loop of choreography. While I try to make sense of what is happening, another male performer approaches me and begins to tell me an anecdotal history of his relationship to dance and the development of his artistic identity, using Le Roy's works and biographical information as chronological anchors in his personal story. By presenting three different temporalities that can operate in the exhibition apparatus, Le Roy's choreographic intervention in exhibition-making highlights the conditions that make exhibition exhibition.

As the title clearly points out, a retrospective is an operational mechanism of the exhibition-apparatus often called the white cube.¹ It is where the absolutisation of time is devised, presupposed, and normalised. Thus it becomes a shrine where passing moments of the past can be recollected and represented. However, in Le Roy's choreographic intervention, the mechanism of the 'retrospective' does not work towards the absolutisation of time. Instead, it operates as a trigger point that generates questions in his attempt to come to terms with the exhibition apparatus via a choreographic operation. And this inevitably highlights some of the disciplinary discordance between dance-making and exhibition-making.

First of all, Le Roy is not a curator but a choreographer. Of course, this project was initiated by a curator, Laurence Rassel, who was the director at Fundació Antoni Tàpies and who invited Le Roy to exhibit in the first place. But it is still not 'curated by' Le Roy, but 'choreographed by' Le Roy. Why did Rassel want an exhibition 'choreographed by' Le Roy in the first place? The story of why Rassel invited Le Roy is worth a closer look. Le Roy confesses that he did not understand why he received an invitation from a museum curator to an exhibition project. Moreover, Rassel's invitation was not about re-presenting Le Roy's existing choreographic piece in a museum context. As Le Roy points out, their collaboration began with Rassel sharing her problem of how to reinvent

¹ Directly referring to Brian O'Doherty's *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, I use the term 'white cube' as the theoretical framework of the white cube convention for gallery design, which is epitomised by Alfred H. Barr Jr's MoMA construction. Originally published as a series of three articles in *Artforum* in 1976, O'Doherty's discussion of the white cube space was later published as a book *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Berkeley: University of Berkeley Press, 1999). As opposed to the term 'white cube', I will deploy the term 'black box' to describe the condition of performing arts, where there is a distinctive separation between the stage and the auditorium via the physical or conceptual fourth wall. However, as David Wiles discussed, there is an ideological resemblance between the white cube and the black box. As O'Doherty's project was to overturn the claim of the white cube as a neutral space, Wiles argues that the concept of the black box was invented to meet aesthetic demands for 'empty space', that is a privileged space where society is kept at bay. See David Wiles, *A Short History of Western Performance Space* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 256–257.

spectatorship. Le Roy explains that Rassel wanted to reinvent the ways in which visitors to the museum relate to works of art. Especially in a museum that is named after a historical heavyweight artist, she wanted to find an opening so that the relationship between works of art and visitors could be radically rethought.

What is particular about the curator's enquiry into how to create a different relationship between visitors and works of art lies in the fact that Rassel located her question in unfamiliar territory, where existing imperatives inherent to the white-cube space could be open to re-examination. In other words, instead of turning to artists whose parameters of practice were within museum contexts, Rassel went to Le Roy, who is a choreographer and works in a theatre context. This deliberate departure from one's comfort zone was the very ground on which Le Roy's exhibition project began. However, my interest lies in the fact that despite the obvious disciplinary discordance, there is also a common space between theatre-making and exhibition-making. They both need or work with the bodies of other people. Therefore, Rassel's ambition to reinvent the ways in which visitors experience an exhibition becomes about re-examining the bodily aspects of exhibition-making via Le Roy's choreographic intervention.

This is not the first time that Le Roy has worked in an exhibition context. He has worked in a museum context before. For instance, in 2009 and 2011 at MoMA, Le Roy presented *Self Unfinished* (1998). But it was clear then that he was re-presenting his theatre piece in a museum. There was a specific indication of the beginning and the end, and there was a specific orientation of attention so that spectators watched performances from the front. However, as opposed to this way of reinstalling a black box in a white-cube context, in Rassel's deliberate departure from her own comfort zone she implicates Le Roy in her problem. In responding to Rassel's problem, it became a choreographic

project through which the time and space of a theatre context was reorganised in an exhibition context. At the same time, Le Roy's choreographic intervention highlights the specific spatialisation and temporalisation of the exhibition apparatus that was invented to resist the passage of time. In this light, I would like to argue that choreography is deployed as a critique of the specific spatialisation and temporalisation of both the white cube and the black box, one that predetermines how the body is perceived and can be materialised in a specific relationship between spectator-visitors and works of art.

In recent years, dance-theatre has become a topical issue in exhibition-making. Since the early 2000s there have been increasing numbers of exhibitions devoted to the intrinsic link between the history of dance-theatre and the visual arts: *Dancing Through Life* at the Centre Pompidou (2012), *Move: Choreographing You* at the Hayward Gallery (2010–2011), and *On Line: Drawing Through the Twentieth Century* at MoMA (2010–2011), to name but a few. And, in another strand, there have been many occasions when historical dance-theatre has been re-presented in a white-cube context as a performance or 'live art' programme: Yvonne Rainer's *Dance Works* at Raven Row in 2014, *Laurie Anderson, Trisha Brown, Gordon Matta-Clark: Pioneers of the Downtown Scene, New York 1970s* at the Barbican Art Gallery in 2011, and more. Against this backdrop, I would argue that the particularity of Le Roy's *Retrospective* is highlighted even more; it is not just taking place in a white-cube space, but its taking place in a white cube becomes the very condition for its coming into being.

In this light, Le Roy's exhibition-making via a choreographic operation shows the possibility that choreography need not be subordinated to the institution of theatre and

the discipline of dance.² As Le Roy's exhibition-making illustrates, one can deploy choreography to reinvent the exhibition apparatus. In doing so, choreography is deployed as a critique, which heightens the attention to the given conditions that have legitimised the exhibition apparatus as the white cube, which still dominate the condition of contemporary artistic production. In the particular regime of the modern institution of art, the apparatuses of theatre and exhibition are believed to have developed distinctively – from their respective spatiotemporal arrangements and institutional significations to the expectations and protocols attached. The theatre apparatus is developed for a fixed duration on a stage before a seated, front-facing audience; exhibition, on the other hand, has developed to accommodate artworks in a space available for viewing by the public during opening hours, over a duration of several weeks or months, whereby visitors enter and exit at will. Yet, Le Roy's choreographic project of exhibition-making demonstrates a new possibility for thinking about choreography that goes beyond the given institutional and disciplinary boundaries. By being able to detach itself from the discipline of dance, choreography is no longer a pedagogical tool for devising the particular formulation of the body. Instead, choreography can be a powerful tool that offers a critique of how the body and its relation to other bodies has been perceived, materialised, and institutionalised within a specific spatiotemporal context.

² In Chapter 1, I will discuss how choreography was invented in the institutionalisation of dance in the West via André Lepecki's *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement*. By taking a detour via the publication *Orchesography*, where the term 'choreography' was first recorded in the West, I will argue how choreography was invented as a pedagogical tool that became the disciplinary logic of the institution of dance.

Losing One's Way, Mapped: the Contemporary Disciplinary Crisis in Art

As discussed, it is not difficult to come across claims from cultural producers who insist on going beyond the given disciplinary boundaries strictly canonised by the Western institution of art, whose rise and fall cannot be detached from the particular subjectivity project called Western modernity. Therefore, the problematisation of the given disciplinary boundaries can be understood as attempts to reinvent subjectivity. In this light, I aim to examine here the ways in which contemporary cultural producers articulate their mode of operation within and against the specific disciplinary boundary. For instance, within the epistemological norm of the Western institution of art, a painter makes a painting. A sculptor makes a sculpture. A choreographer makes dance. But what does it mean when a choreographer claims that what she or he makes is choreography rather than dance? By claiming choreography rather than dance, there is already the shift in emphasis from the outcome to the mode of operation. This may appear to be a simple play of words at first glance. Yet, as we examined in Le Roy's case, this shift from dance to choreography is a definite claim against the given subjectivity within the specific disciplinary boundary.

This shift in emphasis from the outcome to the mode of operation signifies the contemporary disciplinary crisis in art that we are witnessing today. When the given methodologies within a discipline no longer do the job that they used to do, we witness the rise of new tactics and a different mode of engaging with the problems we face. It is in this light that I was drawn to contemporary choreographic experiments by a new generation of choreographers who have been gaining in visibility in the European art scene since the late 1990s. Despite the fact that it is not possible to bracket the diverse artistic proposals evident in contemporary choreographic experiments under one

umbrella term, one of the common denominators is a claim often found in their own articulation, that what they produce is choreography rather than dance.

Bojana Cvejić's conversation with Xavier Le Roy in 2007 clearly explains what is at the heart of this subtle but significant move in contemporary choreographic experiments.³ Cvejić expresses her discontent with the particular label of 'conceptual dance' attached to this new generation of European choreographers by American dance critics. The framing of contemporary choreographic experiments as conceptual dance is obviously intended to refer to the movement called conceptual art in the 1960s and 1970s. In fact, the debate about whether a new set of choreographic experiments has to be framed by the term 'conceptual dance' has become a topic of many critical dance studies in recent years. But the term 'conceptual dance' was rejected by those who are framed as conceptual choreographers. Cvejić explains that the term encompasses the accusation that this group of choreographers betray the essence of dance, in line with American dance criticism influenced by Greenberg's categorisation.⁴ In this light, the phenomenon of a new generation of choreographers claiming their work is choreography can be understood as a rupture that manifests the resistance against the Western art history machine which quickly captures any artistic experiments within a specific canon. And this resistance against the Western art history machine is an important symptom of the contemporary disciplinary crisis in art that we witness today.

³ Xavier Le Roy, Bojana Cvejić, and Gerald Siegmund, "To end with judgment by way of clarification," in *It Takes Place When it Doesn't: On Dance and Performance Since 1989*, ed. Martina Hochmuth, Krassimira Kruschkova, and Georg Schöllhammer (Frankfurt: Revolver, 2008), 49–56. This discussion came out of a talk between Jonathan Burrows, Xavier Le Roy, and Bojana Cvejić entitled "Not Conceptual", from a series of talks called *Parallel Voices*, which Burrows curated at Siobhan Davies Studios, London in 2007.

⁴ Ibid.

The series of theoretical journeys that I have taken in the process of writing this thesis were led by this subtle yet definite move evident in contemporary choreographic experiments by a new generation of choreographers. Through reflecting on some of the tactics and methodologies deployed in contemporary choreographic experiments, I have realised that there is a parallel impulse between the move made by a new generation of choreographers and my own intellectual journey from the history of art to visual culture via curatorial studies.

Since my first year at college as a student in the Department of Art History, this journey has taken me more than twenty years and across three different continents (BA in the States, MA in the UK, and fieldwork in Korea). Of course, in a bigger picture, it is all related to the discipline of art. However, from an economic point of view, this has been a dreadfully unproductive investment, as I have failed to acquire the status of an expert in any of the disciplines in which I have been trained.

Therefore, asking why there have been claims of choreography rather than dance made by a new generation of choreographers in this thesis has also been an attempt to make sense of why and how I have been operating in a way that ends up dismantling the discipline that I began with. For instance, I could have moved on to a master's programme in art history after my undergraduate study in art history, or to a doctoral programme in the Curating Department after my masters in curatorial studies, but I did not. As a consequence, I failed to acquire the status of 'expert' in any discipline that I have studied. Instead of attempting to accumulate particular sets of knowledge and skills within specific disciplinary parameters, I moved on to a new platform whenever I faced a set of questions that could not be asked in a previous discipline. For instance, while I studied art history, what could not be questioned was the presupposed notion of time in this

particular discipline. For instance, Western art history is based on a linear conception of time, whereby past, present, and future are understood in a chronological sense. What is problematic with this conception of time lies in the fact that this presupposes the entirety of history such that there is one vanishing point towards process and innovation. This is why I was drawn to some of the bold curatorial proposals that challenged the linearity of time by highlighting a multiple understanding of time that resonates with Foucauldian genealogical and archaeological research.

In this way, I have been moving towards a discipline that was not even invented when my previous disciplines were founded. For instance, when the history of art was perceived as a legitimate discipline of the humanities in the late eighteenth century, there was no notion of curating or curators. In the UK, the Tate Gallery's announcement in 1992 of its ambitious plan to create a new exhibition space dedicated to contemporary and international arts signalled a radical shift in the institutional structure in the UK, and brought about increasing demands for a workforce that could deal with massive infrastructural change and its role in the institution of art, not to mention its newly redefined relationship with the public.⁵ Therefore, the fact that the Curating Contemporary Art MA at the Royal College of Art in London was established in 1992 was not a mere coincidence.⁶ As the first masters programme in the world on the discipline called 'curating', it signalled an important directional change in art education in Western academies.

⁵ Caroline Donnellan, "Establishing Tate Modern: Vision and Patronage" (PhD diss., London School of Economics and Political Science, 2013).

⁶ The Curating Contemporary Art programme was jointly initiated by the Royal College of Art and the Arts Council under the leadership of Teresa Gleadowe in 1992.

The reason why I think the emergence of curatorial studies within the Western academic structure is significant is because this is another important symptom of the contemporary disciplinary crisis within art in our time. Until the early 1990s, the direct relationship between the art academy and the jobs market was not an urgent subject for discussion. This does not mean that its relationship was absent or ignored. But the relationship between the jobs market and the academy was not perceived within a direct cause-and-effect formula. Yet, when the discrepancies between the needs of the job market and what was provided within the existing academic structure were highlighted, noting that the given academic structure was no longer capable of dealing with a set of urgent needs from the field, what inevitably emerged was either a new form of articulation of an existing discipline, or a reorganisation of the existing boundaries of that discipline.

In recent decades, we have witnessed the unprecedented creation of new academic degrees and programmes in Western academies that opened their doors to many areas or sets of questions that were considered not serious enough to become academic disciplines in the past. This proves that there have been persistent critiques of any disciplinary attempts to reduce the boundaries of research and put a stop to such questions in order to maintain the given operational mechanisms of existing disciplines. However, I need to point out that this is not necessarily emancipatory. In a neo-liberal culture of fluidity and destabilisation of categories and disciplines, this process of reorganising the existing boundaries of disciplines has accelerated and reformulated the operational mechanism of the 'knowledge economy' in Western academies. Especially since the Bologna declaration, a so-called reform of European education privileging the modulation and schematisation of European education structures, the Western academy

has faced unprecedented pressure to create new business models, from both the market and a public sector that is suffering radical budget cuts. For instance, in contrast to the enormous resistance in the 1960s when the MFA was first introduced, the proliferation of studio-art PhD degrees for artists has rarely faced any opposition. In this sense, it would not be misguided to argue that the contemporary disciplinary crisis is welcomed by both the market and its consumers. Therefore, the contemporary disciplinary crisis in art has a double-faceted signification. It certainly means that financial logic becomes a primary mode of governance in the art education system but, on the other hand, this crisis also proves that there has been a form of resistance to the given presuppositions that sustain the existing disciplinary boundaries.

One of the main reasons why I have been dissatisfied with the given disciplinary boundaries lies in the fact that the presupposed methodologies within single disciplines cannot support paradoxical desires to constantly disturb the originating ground on which sets of questions have been formulated. For instance, as a young art historian, it was important to learn the logic beyond the particular canonisation of artistic practices or works of art in the West. But, at the same time, I wanted to find a tool with which I could deconstruct the particular sets of underlying logics or presuppositions that have legitimised the specific canonisation process, which has actively collaborated with a particular subjectivity project called Western modernity. Or as a young curator interested in artistic practices and their potential to be an active social and political force, it was necessary for me to learn and experience the existing operational mechanisms of art institutions, but it was also important for me to be able to reflect critically upon operational mechanisms that normalise particular sets of curatorial practice.

In this context, I wanted to go beyond art history and curatorial studies in order to navigate different disciplines: film studies, cultural studies, and postcolonial theories, philosophy and aesthetics, feminist theories, social sciences, and more. This is why I moved to Curatorial/Knowledge, Department of Visual Culture at Goldsmiths College, London. However, on reflection, the biggest privilege that I had was not permission to jump from one discipline to another. Rather, it was the freedom to ‘start from the middle’, where the state of not-yet-knowing does not become an obstacle but a force to help formulate a question that could not be asked before within specific disciplinary boundaries.⁷ I would like to argue that this is a very different mode of operation from what is often called interdisciplinary research. As Michael Moran argues, ‘the very idea of interdisciplinarity is only possible in a disciplinary world’. I often find that the attempts to unify modes of knowledge in interdisciplinary circumstances in academic institutions or funding structures are often subordinated to the logic that everything goes on in the name of economic efficiency.⁸

Irit Rogoff explains that starting in the middle is ‘starting from elsewhere and otherwise’. Thus, starting in the middle is not just protesting against an existing discipline, but is a profoundly critical operation that opens up other possibilities of engagement. By opening up such possibilities, it opens up a new platform that enables us to formulate the following question: ‘How do we know what we don’t know how to know?’⁹ This is not simply to raise alternative research methodologies in an area in which one does not have any previous training. Instead, it is the persistence to go beyond the conventional

⁷ Irit Rogoff, “A Pantheon of Disenchantment” (unpublished manuscript, December 14–16, 2012), 1. From a lecture given at the Weaving Politics symposium, Stockholm, 2012.

⁸ Michael Moran, “Interdisciplinarity and Political Science,” *Politics* 26 2 (2006): 74.

⁹ Rogoff, “A Pantheon of Disenchantment,” 1–2.

dichotomy between actuality and potentiality that is demonstrated in Giorgio Agamben's rereading of the term 'potentiality'.¹⁰

In 'On Potentiality', Agamben rethinks Aristotle's dichotomy between actuality and potentiality. He argues that thinking about potentiality should concern a specific 'mode of existence' that is not irreducible to actuality, one that maintains itself precisely as potentiality. What does it mean for a mode of existence to maintain itself as potentiality? In order to explain this point, Agamben returns to Aristotle's discussion of sensation, and focuses on his treatment of sight and colour. He points out that, for Aristotle, where the 'colour' of actuality is light, darkness is the 'colour' of potentiality. Agamben pays attention to the fact that darkness is also a colour that one can see. By deconstructing Aristotle's dichotomy between actuality and potentiality, Agamben articulates the mode of existence of potentiality as darkness. The crucial point Agamben wants to make here is that since we can experience darkness, we can also experience potentiality as it is. For instance, even when we deprive our senses of sight, as illustrated in the act of closing our eyes, we nonetheless are able to distinguish darkness from light, that is to say, we are able to see darkness. Rather than saying that we cannot see when we are in the dark, that we only have the potential to see, for Agamben we can see in the dark. In other words, darkness itself can become the object of our sight. This is how Agamben explains the mode of existence of potentiality. Potentiality exists as it is and it does not have to be reduced to actuality. But this does not mean that potentiality is a pre-given entity. Agamben argues that potentiality comes into being when one is

¹⁰ Giorgio Agamben, "On Potentiality," in *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 177–184. See also Irit Rogoff, "Turning," e-flux 0 (2008), <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/turning/>. Here, Irit Rogoff mentions Agamben's notion of potentiality in relation to actualisation, arguing Agamben's rearticulation of potentiality can offer a capacity to reorganise educational structural premises.

'absolutely demanding' without being grounded in any certainty or specific capacity to transform this demandingness into actuality.¹¹

In this light, I would like to go back to Rogoff's question of how we know what we don't know how to know. Thinking about this question in relation to Agamben's notion of potentiality highlights the absolute demand through which other possibilities of engagement can be opened up. And it is on a platform called Curatorial/Knowledge in the Department of Visual Culture at Goldsmiths College that my absolute demand to understand the claim of choreography rather than dance has been accommodated.

Choreography in the Curatorial

Started by Irit Rogoff and Jean-Paul Martinon in 2008, Curatorial/Knowledge positions itself as a new critical platform that accommodates urgent demands from various cultural producers in different situations, whose practices concern the exhibition in one way or another. When this platform was founded, it was a time when the proliferation of international art biennales and fairs, as a new mode of artistic and curatorial production and distribution, had reached its peak. However, this also meant that it saw a downturn when various attempts to rethink curatorial activities critically began to occur. Departing from their passive role as the guardians of the museum, the increasing number of international biennales offered unprecedented opportunities for a new generation of curators claiming a new political and social role for curating. And we have witnessed the emergence of a new discourse on the 'curator as' that dominates the knowledge economy of the art market. In this light, keeping a critical distance from the hustle and bustle in the

¹¹ Agamben, "On Potentiality," 178.

activities of curating, which is quickly being captured within the commodification process, there have been increasing demands for critical platforms that are not captured by the logic of representation. And one of the platforms that accommodate such demands for this space of reflection is the Curatorial/Knowledge programme.

On this platform, where diverse proposals and demands cannot be pinned down as one type of subject matter, one of the common denominators that hold this platform together can be articulated as 'the curatorial rather than curating'. If the curatorial privileges questions and processes, curating implies an activity directed towards a finished product. This is why I think that one of the jokes that we used to tell about this platform, that Curatorial/Knowledge is to prevent people from curating, does in fact explain well the prevailing demands from cultural producers to resist the logic of efficiency that quickly quash any space of reflection in the name of practicality. In other words, the demands for a new critical platform are not for curators to better their professional curatorial activities. Instead, departing from its own museological territory, to demand the curatorial is to resist a curator's practice ending with the material production of exhibitions or events. The demands for the curatorial aim to unravel the very ground on which it stands, in order to navigate between different modes of knowledge production. Therefore, the demands for the curatorial are a definite symptom of the contemporary disciplinary crisis in art that is witnessed at every level. In this context, Curatorial/Knowledge can be understood as the manifestation of an absolute demand from cultural producers who insist that their practice is more than just the illustration or demonstration of what we already know or what we have already done within the conventional operation of institutions. As the solidus between curatorial and knowledge indicates, this absolute demand is not grounded in any certainty or specific

capacity to transform potentiality into actuality. Instead, it attempts to replace the actuality of a disciplinary system with potentiality, where the state of not-yet-knowing operates as a mode of knowledge production. It is on this privileged platform that I embarked on my research into choreography rather than dance, a notion that resists being pinned down by the logic of representation within a particular disciplinary boundary.

Therefore, this thesis is an attempt to rethink the absolute demand evident in choreography rather than dance in terms of the curatorial. Rethinking choreography in terms of the curatorial means locating choreography in a new critical platform called the curatorial. In doing so, it allows me to start in the middle and elsewhere, where the lack of previous training in dance studies is not an obstacle to research on contemporary choreographic experiments. At the same time, rethinking choreography in terms of the curatorial also means rethinking curating in terms of the choreographic, where curatorial activities can be understood as a matter of the body. And in acknowledging curatorial activities as a matter of the body, choreography can also be deployed as a powerful critique against the particular operation of the body within the exhibition apparatus. Against this backdrop, I will briefly take a detour, tracing why and how I embarked on my research into choreography rather than dance in the curatorial.

My interest in contemporary choreographic experiments initially began during my professional practice as a curator of a newly opened art institution in Seoul. As a curator working for a performance, or 'live art' programme, I witnessed a certain tendency in the so-called second wave of the 'performance turn' in the early 2000s that somehow embraced choreography as an emancipatory term against institutional hierarchies and logics that were already captured within the system of representation.

Moreover, choreography was understood as a magic word that somehow explained the artistic and curatorial impulse evident in a heightened attention to the body as an artistic medium that is somehow not contaminated by the exhibition apparatus. It seemed to me that the term 'choreography' was replacing what the term 'performance' did in the so-called first wave of the performance turn in post-war art movements in Europe and America, when there was also a definite interdisciplinary impulse. In order to articulate further what I mean by this, I will make a quick detour and discuss some of the contexts that explain the emergence of the term 'performance' in the first wave of the performance turn in the 1960s and 1970s.

What has to be discussed here is how the term 'performance' emerged as a magic word in the first wave of the performance turn in the 1960s and 1970s that promised everything that had failed in the Western institution of art. Especially, in this first wave of the performance turn, the term 'performance' was used as a healing term to counter the evil theatricality which was the name for everything that was already being captured within the system of representation. In this context, performance claimed to be innocent of the guilt of theatre. This type of theorisation of performance to oppose theatricality, which has been actively utilised in the English-speaking academic context, coincided with the so-called institutional critique of the 1960s and 1970s. Hence, there is nothing surprising in the rise of performance studies which insisted on being situated on different ground from theatre studies, where it could avoid being circumscribed within the endless cycle of sins and redemption. However, as Nicholas Ridout argues, what seems to be a

radical departure from existing theatre studies can in fact only be sustained as long as it remains in a 'dialectical tension with theatre that it constantly seeks to transcend.'¹²

In 'The Undoing of Theatre', Ridout explains further what he means by the 'dialectical tension' between the discourse of performance and theatre. Performance condemns 'theatre's cultural insignificance in relation to an "expanded field"'.¹³ Ridout argues that the rise of a new discipline called performance studies was engineered precisely to be the counterpart to theatre's limitations in the field of expanded artistic practice. Although departments of performance studies first appeared in the 1980s, mainly in American universities, the term 'performance studies' was first coined in 1965 by Richard Schechner, who was the founder of the Performance Studies Department at New York University, the first programme in an American university solely devoted to performance.¹⁴ In his article 'Approaches to Theory/Criticism' in *The Drama Review*, Schechner argues that 'any event, action, item, or behaviour may be examined "as" performance'.¹⁵ Therefore, he insists that the disciplinary boundaries of conventional theatre studies have to broaden their scope from theatre, music, and dance to include the anthropological study of ritual on the one hand, and sociological analyses of the performance of everyday life on the other. Moreover, the later addition of psychoanalysis in performance studies means that it aims to cover a huge range of social interaction, to the extent that it becomes difficult to maintain it as a useful and specific analytic category.

¹² Nicholas Ridout, "The Undoing of Theatre: The Politics of Effect on the Contemporary Stage" (PhD diss., Birkbeck, University of London, 2004), 12.

¹³ Ibid., 5. The term 'expanded field' comes from Rosalind Krauss's essay 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field'. Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1986).

¹⁴ Shannon Jackson, *Professing Performance: Theatre in the Academy from Philology to Performativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 8–10.

¹⁵ Richard Schechner, "Approaches to Theory/Criticism," *TDR* 10 4 (1996): 20–53.

Performance condemns 'theatre's inadequacy as a site for radical action.' This is because, in contrast to the 'real' of performance, theatre is too artificial to accommodate any radicality.¹⁶ And the reason why performance can be real is because it only comes into being in the present. This is what Peggy Phelan argues:

Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance.¹⁷

Phelan, in her influential essay 'The Ontology of Performance', argues that performance only exists in the present. This radical proclamation positions performance as a critique of the system of representation from which theatre has not been able to escape. In contrast to performance's radicality, theatre cannot escape from the representation machine, being incessantly circumscribed within the process of commodification in post-industrial Western societies' systems of reproduction.¹⁸ It is in this context that Phelan proudly announces that performance betrays the economy of reproduction.¹⁹ She argues that even though performance can be documented, the resulting photographs and video footage are not the same as those that only refer to the memory of what happened before.

Phelan's famous declaration about the ontology of performance explains well why 'performance' was perceived as an emancipatory term against the system of representation in the first wave of the performance turn in the 1960s and 1970s.

¹⁶ Ridout, "The Undoing of Theatre," 7–8.

¹⁷ Peggy Phelan, "The Ontology of Performance: Representation Without Reproduction," in *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 146.

¹⁸ Baz Kershaw, *The Radical in Performance: Between Brecht and Baudrillard* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999).

¹⁹ Phelan, "The Ontology of Performance," 146.

However, despite its bold claim, we witnessed how performance was quickly perceived as a new artistic genre within the art history machine. For instance, from Allen Kaprow's 'Happenings' to Fluxus concerts, the term 'performance art' became a new currency that signified the fundamental objections that these artists made against the system of representation.²⁰ And in the second wave of the performance turn in the 2000s, in the name of re-enactment, we witnessed how historical performances from the 1960s and 1970s were repeated, documented, and even commodified within the art economy. Marina Abramović's *Seven Easy Pieces* at the Guggenheim Museum in 2005 is a good example of how historical performances from the 1960s and 1970s were re-enacted, and became the object of re-presentation within the existing operational mechanism of the museum that serves a definite role in the society of spectacle.

It is in this context that I want to go back to the rise in interest in the notion of choreography in the so-called second wave of the performance turn in the 2000s where the notion of choreography has suddenly become the very currency that everyone wants to possess in our contemporary art and knowledge economy. What is especially interesting to me is the fact that there is a parallel emphasis in the mode of operation between the term 'performance', which was the key term in the performance turn of the 1960s and 1970s, and the term 'choreography', which is employed as a sort of conceptual term in contemporary artistic and curatorial practices. It is not hard to notice that the term 'choreography', which was conventionally understood as a technical term in the performing arts field, distinguished from performing arts practices such as theatre and dance in Greenbergian modernist discourse, is increasingly employed as a sort of

²⁰ American curator and critic RoseLee Goldberg's *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present* is a good example.

conceptual term to explain some of the most interesting artistic practices and curatorial proposals in the field of visual arts. In this light, it is no coincidence that there are increasing numbers of encounters and points of contact between visual artists and curators, and a new generation of European choreographers who gained visibility in the early 1990s.

By a new generation of choreographers, I am thinking here of the practices of Xavier Le Roy, Boris Charmatz, Jonathan Burrows, Jan Ritsema, Jérôme Bel, Mårten Spångberg, La Ribot, and Eszter Salamon, to name but a few. Although they differ from each other in terms of their modes of operation, one of the significant common denominators that intersect these very different practices is the fact that each of their practices disturbs the conventional mode of production of dance-theatre. Opposing the pedagogical mode of production inherent in dance-theatre, they test new forms of community, collaboration, and mobilisation via the medium of human bodies in order to experiment with new forms of production. In other words, contemporary choreographic practices are another symptom of the disciplinary crisis in art, and this opens up an unprecedented space for critical reflection on the modern institution of dance. And one of the driving forces that enable this space of reflection is undeniably the attempt to rethink what choreography is and could be.

In parallel with their attempts to rethink choreography, my investigation also begins by deconstructing the term 'choreography'. Therefore, my thinking on choreography can be articulated in terms of *choreo-graphy*. In adding a hyphen between *choreo* and *graphy*, I attempt to highlight that the term 'choreography' is, in fact, a neologism that is made within a specific sociocultural and political context and ambition. Etymologically, choreography is a neologism that combines *orcheso-* 'dance' and *-graphy*

'writing', and first appeared in Thoinot Arbeau's *Orchesography* in 1589. And here, the reason why this specific demand to write dance down emerged was hinted at in the conversation between the author of the book, Arbeau, and his fictional ex-student Capriol. I will discuss the story in the forthcoming chapters. However, I want to point out here the fact that this particular demand to write dance down stemmed from the realisation that dance as a particular discipline of art was vulnerable in the face of incessantly passing moments of now. For instance, on several occasions Capriol complains that nothing remained in the archive of dance. Therefore, in order to overcome its ontological weakness, a particular technique for writing dance was devised within the institutionalisation of dance in the West. What has to be paid attention to here is the fact that this technique of writing dance inevitably developed as a cohesive pedagogical practice, because writing dance means subordinating the bodies of others within the specific disciplinary canon. Therefore, rethinking choreography in terms of *choreo-graphy* is to deconstruct the power structure inherent in the pedagogical practice within particular institutional logics and hierarchies that subordinate the bodies of others. In this light, the question posed is what can be achieved by deconstructing choreography as a pedagogical technique that subordinates others' bodies? In the coming part, I will demonstrate how and why *choreo-graphy* can be a tactical articulation that highlights a different possibility for writing the bodies of others in artistic and curatorial practice in the contemporary disciplinary crisis.

Choreo-graphy as the Event of Writing

Whether it is theatre-making or exhibition-making, they both involve the bodies of others. This means that a certain technique for writing the bodies (of others) is voluntarily or

involuntarily deployed. This is the basic presupposition for the move from choreography to *choreo-graphy* that I attempt to make in this thesis. If the term 'choreography' implies particular disciplinary parameters within the modern institution of art in the West, *choreo-graphy* goes beyond the specific disciplinary boundaries of dance by opening up a possibility for thinking about what writing the bodies of others means and can be. Here, writing means more than a process of inscription on a computer or on paper in a literal sense. It is to put bodies in relation to other bodies, against or within the given structural conditions. Putting bodies in relation to other bodies means that bodies are signified in relation to these other bodies. However, what has to be highlighted here is the fact that this process of signification cannot be devised and planned in advance. Even though some encounters can be set up in a specific artistic or curatorial practice, encounters between bodies are inevitably open to contingencies, as a body always already manages to fail to sustain itself within a particular disciplinary canonisation. Therefore, rethinking choreography in terms of *choreo-graphy* highlights a new mode of engagement with the problematics of thinking 'body' that can always already happen in relation to other bodies. Hence, proposing *choreo-graphy* instead of choreography immediately disturbs and unsettles the particular modernist logic that perceives a body as an independent identity card for individuals. In doing so, *choreo-graphy* demands us to think 'body' in the event of writing where it is open to the contingent relation to other bodies.

As the tactic of writing the movements of the choreographer-master within the institutionalisation of dance, choreography has evolved into a cohesive pedagogical practice in the institutionalisation of dance. Within the conception of choreography as a pedagogical practice, the act of writing the bodies of others was understood within a particular power operation based on a disciplinary logic and hierarchy via the mediums

of symbolic structure. But as demonstrated in Le Roy's *Retrospective*, what contemporary choreographic experiments highlight is the possibility of rethinking choreography in terms of *choreo-graphy*, which takes place in the event of writing. Here, the term 'event' should be understood in a Derridean sense, where chronological linearity is ruptured and its arrival cannot be announced. Therefore, the event of writing is not something that can be pinned down in a particular power operation. Instead, it takes place when a body is put in relation to other bodies through which the process of signification of being a body occurs contingently.

I will articulate this process of signification via the notion of the 'space of appearance', which I borrow from Hannah Arendt.²¹ In the following chapters, I will discuss in detail why I decide to deploy this term. But if I briefly outline the context, it is important to highlight that Arendt's concept of a space of appearance is not something that has a physical boundary that can be examined in an empirical sense. In other words, it is not something to be given but something to be created as an event. For instance, Le Roy's choreographic production of an exhibition in *Retrospective* effectuates a situation where the spectator-visitor confronts living bodies, so that an unprecedented space of appearance in an exhibition context is produced. Therefore, in Le Roy's *Retrospective*, a space of appearance is opened up when a visitor-spectator is allowed to be more than a 'disembodied eye' and a performer is allowed to be more than a performer, thus going beyond the accepted canonisation in the institution of theatre.²² Moreover, once a space of appearance opens up, what is challenged is the dichotomy of the prescribed roles within the theatre/exhibition apparatus. This is how *choreo-graphy* emerges as a

²¹ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 198.

²² Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Berkeley: University of Berkeley Press, 1999), 10.

spatiotemporal tactic that disturbs the smooth operation of the particular subjectivity project on which spectatorship is devised, legitimised, and sustained within the modern institution of art. In this light, one of the main strands of investigation in this thesis is examining how the tactical operation found in contemporary choreographic experiments can be articulated as a critique against the subjectivity project on spectatorship within the modern institution of art.

The ways in which a new generation of choreographers engage with the particular subjectivity of the spectator, devised in the modern institution of art, is to rethink the particular disciplinary hierarchies that presuppose the specific relation of a body to other bodies. This is why, in many contemporary choreographic experiments, we witness experimentation with the positionality of the spectator and its relation to the positionality of the choreographer-master. Turning upside down the sets of conditions that sustain the position of the choreographer-master, a new generation of choreographers turn the existing limits of conventional choreographic practices into material for setting up epistemological games. And it is in these epistemological games that new possibilities for the positionality of the spectator and its relation to the positionality of the choreographer-master are tested.

In this light, one of the common strategies found in contemporary choreographic experiments is to highlight the failure of the speech-act of the choreographer-master. For instance, in Le Roy's choreographic experiment with exhibition-making, Le Roy's speech-act, involving the deliberate naming of his exhibition as a retrospective, is meant to fail. As discussed in an earlier part of the chapter, a retrospective is one of the crucial operational mechanisms of the exhibition apparatus that aims to resist the passage of time. Yet, Le Roy's *Retrospective* has travelled to New York, Rio de Janeiro, Hamburg,

Singapore, and Paris since its premiere at Fundació Antoni Tàpies. Therefore, in the end, the project will be an accumulation of retrospectives that happened in various cities and institutions. This structural condition of Le Roy's *Retrospective* will create a constellation of associations and experiences around his work that no one can predict. Therefore, Le Roy's series of retrospectives can never be captured by the particular exhibition mechanism called a retrospective, as it comes to have an open-ended structure. In this open-ended structure, the absolutisation of time devised by the exhibition apparatus no longer works. Instead, in Le Roy's attempt to relocate his solo works over two decades in an exhibition context, what is highlighted is a constant process of transitions and crashes between different temporalities, triggered by unexpected encounters and exchanges. In other words, Le Roy deploys the retrospective as a point of departure or a basic material for an epistemological game instead of as a point of arrival, by which the speech act of calling it a retrospective is meant to fail.

The failing speech acts of Le Roy, the choreographer-master, show us his meticulous resistance towards the position of mastery. In order for Le Roy's speech act of calling his choreographic experiment a 'retrospective' to work as it promises, the totality of his perspective has to be presupposed. And this only comes into being via the absolutisation of time through which a particular position of mastery is presupposed. However, in Le Roy's choreographic production of an exhibition, he constantly resists the instalment of a bird's-eye perspective, so that spaces of appearance for other bodies, via contingent encounters between participants, can be opened up. This strategy of opening up spaces of appearance in order to resist the conventional positionality of the choreographer-master is only one of the examples that I find among contemporary

choreographic experiments, and I will examine different strategies throughout the forthcoming chapters in this thesis.

In doing so, I will attempt to theorise different strategies deployed by a new generation of European choreographers via which I aim to articulate a move from choreography to *choreo-graphy*. Going beyond the disciplinary limits of dance, my attempt to articulate *choreo-graphy* will be achieved by asking different questions that will reveal the ways in which I engage with some of the contemporary choreographic experiments since the late 1990s. In Chapter 1, departing from examining the scandals brought by Jérôme Bel, I will begin by asking how the particular conception of choreography was first proposed within the discipline of dance that has been devised and developed in its particular institutionalisation. In doing so, I will conduct genealogical research on how a particular conception of the body has been devised and reformulated within the institutionalisation of dance in the West. It is this specific reformulation of the body that will highlight how the institution of dance collaborates with a particular subjectivity project called Western modernity.

In Chapter 2, I will discuss *Dance for Nothing* (2011) by Eszter Salamon, paying attention to how she highlights the function of writing, in the most expanded sense of the term, in choreographic practice. Via Derrida's deconstructive project on writing, I will highlight how a deconstructive understanding of writing offers a new generation of choreographers a different possibility for thinking about choreography in terms of *choreo-graphy*, as a spatiotemporal technique for offering a space of appearance for other bodies. Instead of operating as a representational tool, writing in Derrida's project becomes a deconstructive force where the position of the logocentric author is disturbed and reconstructed. In this light, a different possibility for understanding writing will

allow us to rethink the conventional positionality of the choreographer-master as the ultimate author in relation to other bodies. In Chapter 3, via the Belgian choreographer Christine De Smedt's recent choreographic experiment *Untitled 4 – 4 Choreographic Portraits of Jonathan Burrows, Alain Platel, Xavier Le Roy & Eszter Salamon* (2012), I will examine how the subjectivity of the choreographer-master is deconstructed by being reframed as a truth game where the production of subjectivity is understood as something to be created, not something to be given or revealed.

When the conventional positionality of the choreographer-master as author is no longer sustained, what becomes possible is a new way of thinking about the positionality of the spectator. In rethinking the positionality of the spectator, I will articulate the notion of spectatorship in terms of the spectator-body, so that the fact that the subjectivity of the spectator always comes into being in relation to other bodies can be highlighted. In rethinking the subjectivity of the spectator in terms of the spectator-body, which is often neglected in both the conventional exhibition-making and theatre-making processes, what is highlighted in contemporary choreographic experiments is a different understanding of a power operation whereby spectatorship is no longer captured within victimisation. In this light, the spectator-body is a force from which new knowledge about the potentiality of thinking about the body can be opened up. In disturbing and reconfiguring the relationship between the spectator-body and the choreographer-master, Xavier Le Roy, in various contemporary choreographic experiments, demonstrates how the rearticulation of the spectator-body produces new knowledge on a power operation, and I will discuss some of his projects in detail in Chapter 4.

When the spectator-body can be perceived as something that emerges, not something pre-given, its process of signification can be understood in terms of the event

of writing. In Chapter 5, I will discuss this event of writing through examining *The Agora Project* (2009–2011). In articulating how the event of writing in *The Agora Project* brings about spaces of appearance for other bodies, where there is no hierarchical division between the spectator-body and the dancer-body, I will highlight the choreographic bodies that emerge in this space of appearance that only come into being in relation to other bodies.

In Chapter 6, through examining Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's recent exhibition *Work/Travail/Arbeid* (2015), I will highlight how contemporary choreographic experiments become an important platform where radical thinking about the body can be put forward. In highlighting a move from choreography to *choreo-graphy*, De Keersmaeker's choreographic production of the exhibition *Work/Travail/Arbeid* demonstrates how *choreo-graphy* as a spatiotemporal technique can reconfigure the spectator-body that is constantly disturbed by unexpected situations and contingent encounters. Through contingent encounters caused by De Keersmaeker's displacement of the spectator-body from the theatre apparatus to an exhibition context, what emerges is the choreographic body. It is via the choreographic body that we come to be aware of the fact that my coming into being a body depends on other bodies' coming into being, and vice versa. Therefore, being a body is being with other bodies in open-ended possibilities. This is the absolute demand of being a body that exists as potentiality.

Chapter 1. What Makes Dance Dance?

– A Reformulation of the Body and Its Institutionalisation

Two Points of Departure

There are two initial threads which I shall attempt to interweave into the question posed in this chapter: what makes dance dance? The first thread comes from my encounter with Jérôme Bel's dance-theatre in the early 2000s in Seoul. It was the time when interdisciplinary practices were at the centre of attention at national and international levels. What has to be noted here is the fact that Jérôme Bel is enthusiastically accepted in the visual art field rather than by the conventional performing arts audiences. There can be many explanations of this but one of the possible answers would be that the institutional critique performed by this new generation of choreographers opens up a new space of collaborations between different disciplines. When Bel's dancers dance to pop songs that anyone can join in with in *The Show Must Go On* (2001), or when he talks on stage without any dancing in *Pichet Klunchun and Myself* (2005), it was clear that his proposal is more than a matter of dance.

What I mean by a new generation of European choreographers is a group of European choreographers whose practice has often been referred to as 'non-dance' or 'conceptual dance'.²³ The fact that this new generation of European choreographers' practices are referred to as non-dance paradoxically tells us that there is a certain logic that has made dance dance within a particular institutional framework. Moreover, the accusations that these choreographers do not perform dance tell us that there has been

²³ Le Roy, Cvejić, and Siegmund, "To end with judgment by way of clarification," 49–56.

an agreed understanding about the essence of dance. Therefore, by labelling the dance-theatre produced by this new generation of choreographers as non-dance, what is highlighted is an accusation that this new generation of European choreographers betray the essence of dance. In this context, examining contemporary choreographic experiments is to ask what makes dance dance within a particular institutional framework and how this new generation of choreographers attempt to redefine this definition in order to highlight the conditions of the institution that they inhabit.

The choreographers whom I shall focus on, in my attempt to answer the question of what makes dance dance, include Jérôme Bel, Boris Charmatz, Eszter Salamon, Christine De Smedt, Xavier Le Roy, Jan Ritsema and Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker.²⁴ Despite the fact that it is not possible to understand their diverse projects as a unified movement or artistic group, there are several areas in which their practices come together. Among them, I shall explore the way in which this new generation of choreographers have complicated what used to be the simple and definite statement of what makes dance dance. By turning upside down the sets of conditions that sustain the Western institution of dance, these choreographers have become estranged from what has become normalised within the Western model of the modern institution of dance.²⁵

²⁴ I will discuss Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's *Work/Travail/Arbeid* (2015) in Chapter 6. Despite the fact that she is older than most of the choreographers that I discuss in this thesis, I do not use the term 'new generation of choreographers' in a chronological sense. De Keersmaeker has constantly collaborated with this generation of choreographers, for instance with Jérôme Bel in *3Abschied* (2010) and with Boris Charmatz in *Partita 2* (2013).

²⁵ By the Western model of the modern institution of dance I am not exclusively referring to the school of modern dance (the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century) within a genre-based categorization. Distancing itself from a rigid periodic distinction, the term 'Western model of the modern institution of dance' is used to describe the ruling episteme still dominating the institution of dance-theatre worldwide that presets the ontology of its subject as 'being-toward-movement'. In fact, defining the Western institutionalisation of dance as producing a subject that is being-toward-movement is the main thesis of André Lepecki's *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006). Throughout the book, he argues that the ideal of motility that is privileged in the institutionalisation of dance in the West began in the Renaissance and moved on to what he calls Western modernity. Again, the term 'Western modernity' deployed by Lepecki also refuses to be framed within a

Within the specific institutional framework of the Western model of the modern institution of dance, what makes dance dance has been the disciplining of oneself according to a strict canon demonstrated by the teacher's body. Disciplining oneself in a dance studio is about the painful reformulation of the body in order to achieve the ideals expected of a dancer. It is a long and painful process of modelling one's body via endless repetitions of exercises and dieting. Then, the question to be asked is the following: what is the ultimate goal of reformulating the body in the modern institution of dance?

The popular image we have of dance as a capital 'A' art form is not far removed from images of classical ballet dancers endlessly jumping up and down as the reification of a continuum of movement. This is obviously the product of a specific idealisation of the human body. In other words, there is nothing natural about how the human body is portrayed in the modern institution of dance. The notion of people jumping up and down as if they are not bound by the law of gravity is the product of a specific disciplinary demand that has 'shaped styles, prescribed techniques and configured bodies'.²⁶

The question that I ask in this chapter, what makes dance dance, seems to align with the questions asked through contemporary choreographic experiments, which question why the body has been captured within this particular disciplinary logic that demands the particular reformulation of the body as part of the institutionalisation of dance. It is to ask what has conditioned the smooth operation of this particular disciplinary logic in the Western model of the modern institution of dance. In doing so, André Lepecki's *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement* (2006) is

periodic categorization. For Lepecki, Western modernity is the name for a particular political project that aims to produce a kinetic subjectivity.

²⁶ André Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 3.

another crucial point of departure. Here, Lepecki attempts to create a new critical language to theorise the conditions that formulate a particular disciplinary logic of reformulating the body within the modern institution of dance. In doing so, Lepecki privileges post-structuralists' thinking whose political aim is to estrange what has been normalised within Western modernity. Lepecki argues that there is an intrinsic link between the institutionalisation of dance in the West and the emergence of Western modernity as a particular political project. In other words, Lepecki contends that dance's collaboration with Western modernity has resulted in a particular disciplinary logic of reformulating the body. Why then has dance collaborated with Western modernity in its institutionalising process?

Lepecki argues that dance's collaboration with Western modernity begins from dance's desire to secure an autonomous place in the modern classification of art, and this desire brings about dance's active collaboration with modernity's production of hyperkinetic subjectivity. In other words, the discipline of dance comes into being by submitting itself to modernity's obsession with hyperkinetic subjectivity. In becoming a machine that constantly produces this form of subjectivity, the ultimate goal of the discipline of dance must be to reformulate the body so that it can actualise this production. In the forthcoming part of this chapter, I will further investigate Lepecki's discussion on Western modernity as a particular project that aims to produce hyperkinetic subjectivity and the emergence of the modern institution of dance in the West. In doing so, I aim to ask why the modern institution of dance has collaborated with, and in turn been conditioned by, the hegemonic ideology called Western modernity.

For Lepecki, Western modernity is not the name for a specific chronological period, nor a specific historic event. Rather, Western modernity is a particular political project

that aims to produce a specific form of subjectivity. Lepecki finds ground for his argument in Harvie Ferguson's *Modernity and Subjectivity: Body, Soul, Spirit* (2000), in which Ferguson articulates Western modernity as a specific form of subjectivity that constitutes its subject as a constant display of motion.²⁷ Moreover, in turning to German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk's critique of 'kinaesthetic politics' in *Eurotaoismus* (1989), Lepecki argues that Western modernity as kinaesthetic politics produces a permanent ontological agitation of the modern subject.

In this context, Lepecki attempts to make sense of why 'hyperkinetic subjectivity' has been normalised within the Western institution of dance. In highlighting the link between the advent and legitimisation of dance as a discipline and the modernist obsession with the production of 'hyperkinetic subjectivity' in the specific political project called Western modernity, Lepecki positions himself differently from the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari where the concept of movement is conceived as a form of positive political progress.²⁸

In order to stress the fact that there is nothing natural about this alignment between dance and movement, Lepecki highlights the historical understanding of dance before dance's collaboration with Western modernity. Via the dance historian Mark Franko's research on the perception of dance in the Renaissance, Lepecki highlights that dance's relationship with movement was not as normal as we perceive it today:²⁹

²⁷ Requoted from Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, 9. Harvie Ferguson, *Modernity and Subjectivity: Body, Soul, Spirit* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000), 5.

²⁸ Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, 12. Lepecki quotes Deleuze's argument that there are only two political positions: 'embracing movement or blocking it'. Lepecki argues that Deleuze associated the latter with a reactionary force. Moreover, by raising Randy Martin's argument in *Critical Moves* (1998), Lepecki highlights the fact that in Deleuze and Guattari, movement is perceived as a positive force towards a politics of progress. See Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972-1990* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 127.

²⁹ Requoted from Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, 7, 13, 3, 2. See also Mark Franko, *The Dancing Body in Renaissance Choreography* (Birmingham, Alabama: Summa Publications, 1986), 9.

As the dance scholar Rodocanachi put it ... as for the movements, it is the dance itself that seems to have been the least of the dancer's concern.³⁰

In highlighting the fact that movement has not been considered to be a principal ingredient of what makes dance dance, Lepecki aims to estrange this relationship between dance and motility that is normalised within the Western model of the modern institution of dance. Then, the question to be asked is the following: If movement was the least of the dancer's concerns, what was their principle concern? Despite the fact that these questions require an in-depth historical investigation which is beyond the scope and purpose of the research conducted for this thesis, in the coming part I will briefly discuss the institutionalisation of dance in the West by examining Lepecki's articulation in *Exhausting Dance*.

Institutionalisation of Dance in the West

If I could argue that institutionalisation is about transforming oneself into a memory machine where a certain logic of representation can be repeatable, it would not be wrong to argue that the institutionalisation of dance begins when the movements of the dance master can be recorded and passed on to his pupils. In this context, it is significant that Lepecki tells the story of a Jesuit priest, mathematician and dance master, Thoinot Arbeau and his pupil, Capriol, as recorded in a book called *Orchesography*, first published in 1589. This dialogue between the dance master and the pupil reveals Capriol's desire to write

³⁰ Quoted from Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, 2–3. See also Franko, *The Dancing Body in Renaissance Choreography*, 9.

down the master's dance so that he can learn it despite Arbeau's absence. In other words, Capriol's desire to write down his master's dance was nothing to do with the ideal of motility. Rather, it was to avoid 'being reproached for having the heart of a pig and the head of an ass'.³¹ Capriol's desire to write down his master's dance concerns the reformulation of the body in producing a particular subjectivity, but this was not necessarily about transforming the body so that it could be the actualisation of the ideal of motility.

In this context, Lepecki points out that the early period of dance's institutionalisation concerned what Erving Goffman called 'performance of the self', through which one gains admission to the social theatrics of heterosexual dancing and mating.³² And even in the later time of Louis XIV, the Sun King who presented himself as Apollo in *Ballet de la Nuit* in 1653, the principal concern was not about reformulating the body so that it could express kinetic subjectivity.³³ It was certainly concerned with a display of power and a particular reformulation of the body as the reification of this absolute power, but being-toward-movement was not the principal concern, even in early French court dance.³⁴ When or how then did this ideal of motility begin to be embedded in Western dance?

³¹ Quoted from Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, 26. See also Thoinot Arbeau, *Orchesography: A Treatise in the Form of a Dialogue Whereby All Manner of Persons May Easily Acquire and Practise the Honourable Exercise of Dancing* (New York: Dance Horizons, 1996), 11.

³² Quoted from Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, 26. See also Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1959), 17–79.

³³ *Ballet de la Nuit* is a ballet by Jean-Baptiste Boësset, Jean de Cambefort, Michel Lambert and probably Jean-Baptiste Lully. It premiered on 23 February 1653, and featured Louis XIV. It was the fourteen-year-old's debut at court. This court ballet lasted 12 hours, beginning at sundown and continuing until morning, and consisted of 45 dances. Louis XIV appeared in five of them. The most famous dance in *Ballet de la Nuit* portrays Louis XIV as Apollo the Sun King.

³⁴ The Académie Royale de Danse was founded in 1662.

In this context, Lepecki mentions the German dramatist and poet Heinrich von Kleist's 1810 essay 'On the Marionette Theatre'. Here, we can find one of the earliest and certainly most densely articulated theories of dance (specifically Romantic ballet) being clearly linked to a performance with an uninterrupted flow of movement.³⁵ This is how the ideal of the uninterrupted flow of movement via the figure of a puppet is articulated:

Puppets, like elves, need the ground only so that they can touch it lightly and renew the momentum of their limbs through this momentary delay. We [humans] need it to rest on, to recover from the exertions of dance, *a moment which is clearly not part of the dance*.³⁶

As Heinrich von Kleist's text demonstrates, human bodies are portrayed as puppets that maintain uninterrupted flows of movement.³⁷ For Kleist, the ideal of the human body is close to a puppet that can move lightly in the air. For Lepecki, positing a puppet as an ideal for the human body is a symptom that reveals what the kinetic project of modernity attempts to disguise. We all know that a puppet cannot be a self-propelled entity: the energy source is hidden behind a black curtain on stage. Lepecki argues that this positing of the ideal of the human body as a puppet reveals the 'colonial gesture' inherent in Western modernity, whereby 'the actual source of energy is disguised and buried

³⁵ Filippo Taglioni's 1832 production of *La Sylphide* is considered to be the first Romantic ballet, which premiered at the Paris Opera. Susan Foster argues that it was with the emergence of Romantic ballet that dance's alignment with movement became apparent. The premise of Romantic ballet is to present dance as a 'continuous motion, a motion preferably aiming upwards, [an] animating body thriving lightly in the air'. Requoted from Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, 3. See also Susan Foster, *Choreography and Narrative: Ballet's Staging of Story and Desire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 197–250.

³⁶ Requoted from Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, 3. See also Roger Copeland and Marshall Cohen, eds., *What Is Dance?: Reading In Theory and Criticism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 179–184.

³⁷ Copeland and Cohen, *What Is Dance?*, 179.

underneath the smooth surface of the colonialist's desire'.³⁸ The discipline of dance participates in this colonial desire that attempts to transform the human body into a 'machine for free movement'.³⁹ It is this colonial desire that is responsible for the advent of the 'techno-body' that has been normalised by the institutionalisation of dance.⁴⁰ The techno-body is a specific reformulation of the body free from the demands of gravity and the need for energy. And it is this machine for free movement that serves to produce hyperkinetic subjectivity as a modern mode of existence.

However, Lepecki argues that it was only by the 1930s that a definite theorisation of the ideal of motility as the essence of dance emerged in the modern institution of dance. For instance, Lepecki discusses John Martin's famous lecture at the New School in 1933. John Martin, the first *New York Times* dance critic, was an ardent advocate of modern dance and a fierce critic of the classical school of ballet. In this lecture, he argued that both Romantic ballet and Classical ballet were 'dramaturgically too tied up with narrative and choreographically too invested in the striking pose'.⁴¹ For John Martin, these historical predecessors of modern dance failed to discover movement as the essence. And for Martin, the essence of dance was movement. In his view, even the anti-balletic gestures of Isadora Duncan did not articulate that dance was to be founded on movement alone.⁴² Dance had to invest more in its essence in order to become an independent form of art.

³⁸ Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, 100.

³⁹ Requoted from Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, 100. See also Carter, *The Lie of the Land*, 364.

⁴⁰ Requoted from Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, 7. See also Mark Franko, "Figural Inversions of Louis XIV's Dancing Body," in *Acting on the Past: Historical Performance Across the Disciplines*, eds. Mark Franko and Annette Richards (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), 36.

⁴¹ Requoted from Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, 4. See also John Martin, *The Modern Dance* (New York: Dance Horizons, 1972), 6.

⁴² For John Martin, choreographers such as Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Mary Wigman and Rudolf von Laban were the ones who actualised the essence of dance. See Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, 4.

In this context, Lepecki argues that the institutionalisation of dance has been moving toward the ideological programme for defining dance as a continuum of movement.

By deconstructing this specific historical trajectory, Lepecki prepares the ground on which he can formulate a logic to rearticulate many contemporary choreographic experiments that have been accused of being non-dance. As the title *Exhausting Dance* already suggests, Lepecki argues that contemporary choreographic experiments are about exhausting the modern disciplinary logic of dance. In exhausting this logic, what contemporary choreographic experiments achieve is the 'deflation of movement' that is evident in many contemporary choreographic experiments.⁴³ And because the conventional ontology of dance as a continuum of movement no longer works in contemporary choreographic experiments, this new generation of European choreographers has been understood as betraying the very ontology of dance: there are no longer people jumping up and down; no longer are there displays of spectacular movement according to specific choreographic manuals. Instead, turning the sets of conditions that sustain the Western institution of dance upside down, these choreographers have successfully estranged the ideal of motility that has become normalised within Western dance. In this light, Lepecki attempts to see whether there might be any emancipatory potential in the deflation of the movement of the new generation of choreographers.

In this process of attempting to create a critical language for this new generation of choreographers, one of the most obvious tactics deployed by Lepecki is to privilege

⁴³ The list of choreographers in Lepecki's discussion in *Exhausting Dance* does not exactly match the list of the choreographers I examine in this thesis. For instance, Lepecki includes Trisha Brown who is often associated with the avant-garde Judson Dance Theatre, and Bruce Nauman who does not identify himself as a choreographer.

philosophy. More specifically, he attempts to rethink the body and subjectivity through post-structuralist projects by creating a new frame of reference for this new generation of choreographers. In doing so, he echoes post-structuralism's political aim of divorcing itself from the modernist project that produces a particular subjectivity, and giving rise to a new generation of choreographers who problematise the existing ontology of dance as a continuum of movement. Within this framework, the practice of these new choreographers becomes the symptom that exemplifies the exhaustion of the modernist project and its aim to produce a kinetic subjectivity.⁴⁴ In other words, Lepecki's privileging of the discipline of philosophy, especially post-structuralism's aims to review Western modernity, provides important reference points for articulating the operational tactics deployed by this new generation of choreographers. In doing so, Lepecki aims to trigger a discussion of this group of choreographers that goes beyond the self-contained disciplinary boundaries of dance studies in order to push dance studies forward into other critical study areas.

Against this backdrop, I will take a close look at two choreographic experiments by Jérôme Bel and Boris Charmatz. Despite the fact that it is not possible to categorise them within an artistic movement or group, Bel and Charmatz both trained as traditional ballet dancers at conventional French dance institutions in the 1980s (Bel at the Centre national de danse contemporaine in Angers and Charmatz at the École de Danse at the Opéra national de Paris). Their problematisation of the very institution that they inhabit, especially its disciplinary desire to reformulate the body within a specific logic of representation, allows me to juxtapose Bel and Charmatz in this chapter.

⁴⁴ Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, 7.

In the coming part, I will first examine Bel's *Pichet Klunchun and Myself* (2005), which is one of his dance-theatres that I saw in Seoul. Then, I will examine Charmatz's *Enfant* (2011), a recent production that I came across several times at various European festivals. Following Lepecki's reading of contemporary choreographic experiments as a key symptom of the exhaustion of modernism's aim to produce a kinetic subjectivity, I will examine how conventional configuration of the body has been challenged both in Bel and Charmatz' dance-theatres.

Pichet Klunchun and Myself is a good example that demonstrates Bel's mode of critical engagement with the disciplinary logic which aims to reformulate the body. In the modern institutionalisation of dance in the West, this disciplinary logic was manifested in the dancing-subject who is in a constant agitation or 'flow or continuum of movement'. In presenting a clear counter-logic to the disciplinary logic of the institution of dance via juxtaposing himself with a traditional Thai Khon dancer Pichet Klunchun, Bel clearly reveals his understanding of what makes dance dance, that does not necessarily involve jumping up and down and creating striking poses.

However, what has to be considered here is the fact that Bel does not juxtapose himself with a ballet dancer but a Thia Khon dancer Pichet Klunchun. Thus, what is emerged is a complex relationship not only between contemporary choreographic experiments and the modern institution of dance, but also between the modern institution of dance and the other. In these multiple layers of meanings, I first pay attention to how Bel demonstrates a counter-logic to the kinetic subjectivity demanded by the modern institution of dance in the West. In other words, why has the body within the specific institution of dance been conceived as something controllable under the pedagogical logic of representation?

Bel problematises what I would like to call as the modern subject machine that understands the body as a self-enclosed boundary and a self-sufficient entity. Under the operation of the modern subject machine, the body is conceived as something already there, as a blank canvas whose boundaries and limits are predictable and visibly determined.⁴⁵ However, the body as a blank canvas does not mean that it is neutral. The body is always already captured within the particular modalities of sociopolitical discourses that are impregnated with institutional power and hierarchies. This will be discussed further in the coming part via examining the dialectical position of Bel and Klunchun.

In parallel with the institutionalised body in *Pichet Klunchun and Myself*, I will also discuss Charmatz's inert bodies of children in *Enfant*. This dance-theatre was first presented at the Avignon Festival when he was invited to be the associate artist. Charmatz's inert bodies of children show a dramatic contrast from the conventional disciplinary logic that reformulates the body as always being-toward-movement. But his inert bodies of children, who are not professional dancers, do not represent the emancipated body. It is true that *Enfant* disturbs what has been normalised within the institution of dance. Yet, Charmatz's performance also highlights complex sociopolitical institutions whose area of control (and moral codes of conduct) begins by reformulating the body within a specific disciplinary logic.

⁴⁵ By the modern subject machine I mean the systematic production of the self-sufficient, independent individual as a basic unit for a holistic picture of the world.

Jérôme Bel's *Pichet Klunchun and Myself*

Jérôme Bel's *Pichet Klunchun and Myself* (2005), which is one of the first of Bel's dance-theatres that I came across in Seoul. This dance-theatre has also remained one of the most problematic dance-theatres for me, and has lingered in my psyche for a long time. It has intrigued me to embark on further theoretical investigations into the critical potential of contemporary choreographic experiments, but at the same time it has evoked mixed emotions over time that has often resulted in thwarting my attempts to articulate further my positionality in relation to contemporary choreographic experiments. And one of the main issues for me begins with the fact that, in this dance-theatre, I identify with the positionality of Klunchun as a Thai Khon dancer, instead of with Jérôme Bel. And what is problematic for me is not so much what Bel or Klunchun says on stage, but what remains unsaid from the position of Klunchun in this seemingly egalitarian conversation between the two. In order for me to explain why I find what is unsaid problematic, I need to make a brief detour via this dance-theatre.

Pichet Klunchun and Myself is an important work for Bel, because this particular work represents a breakthrough in his career. Since he premiered *nom donné par l'auteur* in 1994, Bel has been an important reference point for a new generation of choreographers who have attempted to create a different relationship with the institution of dance in the West. But it is not wrong to say that with *Pichet Klunchun and Myself* Bel gained the widest public acknowledgement, as well as unprecedented attention from other fields of contemporary art. One of the reasons for the popular success is the element of humour that is evident throughout the performance. This element of humour stems from the clear counter-logic presented by Bel, not only against the Western model of the institution of dance but also in the way he positions himself

against the traditional Thai dancer, Klunchun. For some, this element of humour becomes problematic, as laughter from audience members materialises what is unsaid about the positionality of Klunchun, which is installed and devised by Bel.

For instance, when *Pichet Klunchun and Myself* was presented at the Spring Wave Festival in Seoul in 2007, a local art critic became so furious that he yelled at Bel, who was on stage. The performance had to be terminated and was only able to resume a few minutes later after that critic had left the theatre after being booed by other audience members. What prompted such a violent reaction from that person? This question has stayed with me for a long time. Despite the fact that I disagree with the way in which this critic expressed his view, his violent reaction allows me to pay attention to the fact that Bel's position, opposing the Western model of the modern institution of dance, is highlighted by the juxtaposed positionality of himself against Klunchun, which inevitably installs a 'versus' structure through which modernist logic can be uncritically imposed. And the problem for me lies in the fact that, contrary to Bel, Klunchun's position and his relationship with the Western modern institution of dance can never be as clear as they first seem to be.

As a legitimate heir of the modern institution of dance in the West (trained as a ballet dancer at the Centre national de danse contemporaine in Angers), Bel's position opposing the very institution that he inhabits cannot be clearer when he presents his favourite movement to Klunchun: Bel does not dance at all but looks at the audience. In other words, Bel refuses to perform what could be a representation of the very institution in which he trained as a dancer. But what becomes problematic lies in the fact that Klunchun's position and relationship with the Western model of the modern institution of dance cannot be as simple as Bel's. As Klunchun explains on stage, traditional Thai

Khon dance has become a lost art. Since King Rama VII of Thailand banned Khon dance from the public realm in the name of modernisation (which is another name for Westernisation in many non-Western contexts), Khon dance does not even belong to its own people. As Klunchun admits, it now belongs to Western tourists. Klunchun talks about his recent attempts to re-enact Khon dance in his own theatre in Bangkok. Of course, these attempts are not intended to resurrect the dead masters from the last two hundred years; instead, Klunchun wants to translate Khon dance into his own language and in relation to his own contemporary situation. Nevertheless, as Klunchun admits, in so doing, he ends up failing both the audience that expects to see 'virtuosic' Khon dance, as well as the audience that expects to see Westernised contemporary dance. Klunchun's struggle to open up the possibility of thinking about and practising other forms of dance does not seem to work, as he cannot clearly identify the enemy that he is rebelling against. Is it a local authority that has banned public performances of Khon dance? Is it Western tourists who limit Khon dance to being an exotic commodity? Or is it homogenisation brought about by a global capitalist movement in the name of progress? Instead of choosing between becoming a subcategory of the Western model of the modern institution of dance in the name of traditional dance (thanks to its diversity policy), or diminished by obeying the dominating imperative of modernisation, in order for indigenous knowledge to be translated or repositioned as intellectual property, there should be complex layers of resistance and operation.

Therefore, Klunchun paradoxically highlights the fact that the 'operation within' is not as simple as one might imagine. In other words, Bel's clear counter-logic opposing the very institution that he inhabits is not the end of the story. In this light, I would like to examine further what is unsaid in Bel's conversation with Klunchun in *Pichet Klunchun*

and Myself. From the position of Bel, what is unsaid is the fact that the formation of the subjectivity of Klunchun in this dance-theatre highlights the position of Bel himself, not the other way round. I would argue that this formation of the other (who does not understand Bel's radical gestures) resonates with the very mechanism that produces the colonial subjectivity that necessitates the derogation of the other. In this context, I would like to argue that Bel's positioning of himself against Klunchun results in a simplification of the complex power structures, struggles, and different forms of resistance inherent in non-Western contexts and their relationship with the Western model of the modern institution of dance. In other words, not doing any dance on stage may not be the best solution in some non-Western contexts, whose archives have been violently dismantled and whose visibility is not even secured in the name of modernisation.

Thus, I need to ask whether this strategy, which I have been referring to as the 'operation within' that is often found in post-structuralist thinking, can still be an effective mode of resistance for those who cannot be comfortably positioned 'within'. Klunchun trained as a traditional Thai Khon dancer, but he also trained in the USA and at other Western institutions. This does not, however, automatically position him within the institution that Bel inhabits. Although the 'operation within' allows us to escape from the dichotomy inherent in the conventional mode of institutional critique, I came to wonder whether this strategy could be a pertinent tactic for those who are not given any access to, or whose ontological or epistemological condition of being visible depends on the generous invitation of the West which always maintains its position as the subject through which silenced others are presupposed.

The complexity of Western modernity as the ontological and epistemological condition that we inhabit requires us to acknowledge the fact that Western modernity is

the name for various temporal and spatial conditions through which different power structures have been installed and operated, and this requires different forms of resistance and criticality. In this light, I would like to emphasise that my investigation of contemporary choreographic experiments delivers one version of the critiques of the very institution that a new generation of European choreographers inhabit. And what interests me lies in the fact that this type of institutional critique does not seek to destroy the given institution, but to reformulate or enrich it.

For instance, the story of how *Pichet Klunchun and Myself* came to be staged and legitimised as an artistic production clearly demonstrates how critical engagement with a particular institution is also part of the institutional operation. In his interview with Jan Ritsema at Les Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers, Bel reveals the back story to how he devised this simple and seemingly transparent structure for the performance, where one asks a question while the other answers, which later turned out to be so effective for him. When Bel was invited by a Singaporean curator, Tang Fu Kuen, to the Bangkok Fringe Festival in 2004, he said that he did not have any intention of giving a performance of the dialogue that he had with Klunchun, who had been introduced to him by the curator. Bel initially planned to repeat the format of his previous work, *Véronique Doisneau* (2004), a monologue in which a dancer talks about her life. When he arrived in Bangkok, however, he did not have enough time to actualise his initial plan. Before the scheduled premiere, all he had was the four days of conversation between himself and Klunchun, with whom Bel did not have anything in common, apart from the fact that they were both invited by the same curator and both were involved in the field of dance in an expanded sense of the term.

In this situation, Bel decided to restage his conversations with Klunchun. To respond to a situation in which they had to produce something for the festival, Bel developed keywords that came up during the conversations that he had with Klunchun. In so doing, this process slowly developed into a structure in which one asks the other questions. Within this mirror-like structure, one interrogates the other. Also, when one of them demonstrates some movements, the other plays the role of the audience. During their conversation, they began with what they had in common, their identities as dancers, and then progressed to a realisation that there were certain differences between them within this constructed space of what is common.

This tactic of departing from a common space was inevitable because, without this space of the common, they could not even initiate a conversation. What is, however, problematic with this process of enacting a conversation lies in the fact that in order to operate in this common space, there is no other way to proceed but to reproduce the hegemonic logic that is presupposed in what is considered to be in common. I would argue that this is what Spivak meant by saying that the subalterns cannot speak for themselves. In other words, when Spivak argues that the subalterns cannot speak for themselves, it does not mean that they are not allowed to speak but that they lack the ground on which this presupposed, unspoken, but evidently present hegemonic logic can be rearticulated. Therefore, in the case of *Pichet Klunchun and Myself*, the attempt to identify difference, departing from this constructed space of what is common, inevitably leads to reproducing the hegemonic logic that dominates this common space between them. This is the Western institution of dance, that has been safeguarded by the modernist logic of categorisation that aims to justify the autonomous status of dance as art.

On stage, Bel begins to ask Klunchun questions. 'What is your name?' Klunchun replies, 'My name is Pichet Klunchun'. Then further questions: 'How old are you?', 'Where do you live?', 'Are you married?', and 'What is your profession?' From their conversation, the audience gets to know that Klunchun is 35 years old and a traditional Thai Khon dancer from Bangkok. As Bel himself admits, at first, the mode of questioning Klunchun resembles that of a police interrogation. Soon, however, Bel attempts to open up the common space, asking why he decided to become a dancer. But unlike Bel's original intention, his question highlights somewhat the differences between them, as Klunchun replies to Bel's question with a long story about how his mother had longed for a son and had prayed in a Buddhist temple.

At first, Bel cannot understand why Klunchun has to answer the question about why he decided to become a dancer with a long story about his birth. Klunchun tells Bel that this particular temple god appreciates dance more than anything, and so, after his birth, his mother commissioned a performance before the temple statue. In other words, for Klunchun, becoming a dancer was not a matter of preference or choice. For Klunchun, it was his destiny. Bel, in further professing his ignorance of Klunchun's relation to dance, continues to ask more questions about Khon dance. Klunchun explains that the Ramayana legend, which came from India two hundred years ago, provides the basic plot for Khon dance-theatre. It was King Rama II, an excellent dancer himself, who translated the legend and choreographed the movements as a legitimate artistic repertoire for the glorification of his royal court. At this moment, Bel intervenes in Klunchun's explanation. Bel argues that it was also politics that gave birth to ballet. In attempting to find common ground between himself and Klunchun, Bel talks about how Louis XIV advocated the establishment of a school of ballet in order to propagate his political message.

Bel then asks Klunchun whether he can demonstrate some of the movements from Khon dance for him. What follows is a lucid demonstration of the physical language of Khon. Klunchun also explains how the language of Khon works within the formal conventions of Thai theatre. Klunchun demonstrates a few techniques of Khon dance, such as turned-back movements of the fingers with turned-out legs and aggressive stomps. At last, Bel attempts to learn Klunchun's movements himself. But these movements are not something that one can learn in such a short time. They require years of practice and painful training. Instead of narrowing the gap between Bel and Klunchun, Bel's attempt to learn Klunchun's movements ends up by reinforcing the differences between them.

And it is at this moment that the audience begins to giggle or laugh at Bel's voluntary positioning of himself as an ignorant dancer. What is ironic is the fact that their laughter is not really directed at Bel's inability to perform what Klunchun performs. Rather, it highlights Klunchun's ignorance of the new critical language of contemporary dance that refuses to accept the old imperatives of the institution of dance based on hard training and painful practice in the studio in front of the gaze of a master. For instance, when Klunchun asks Bel a question about the kind of dance he practises, Bel replies to Klunchun that he is identified as a choreographer, but he does not really do the job. And when Bel is asked to demonstrate his favourite movement, all Bel does is stand still on stage, doing nothing. Klunchun is baffled. Then, there is further laughter from the audience. It is this stark contrast between the two positions in relation to the Western institution of dance that elicits laughter from the audience, and I would argue that this is what is unsaid, and the laughter from the audience is how what is unsaid is materialised. When Bel demonstrates his favourite movement, which is doing nothing and staring at

the audience, Klunchun seems to be shocked by this bold gesture from Bel. But the audience seems to enjoy this clear contrast between their positions. And it is through this element of humour that Bel's radical denial of the given imperatives of the conventional institution of Western dance seems to gain more sympathy from audience members.

Although the different positions of the ignorant one and the knowledgeable one are not made clear in this performance, what drew my attention was the fact that the ignorant position of Bel vis-à-vis Klunchun's dance does not really put him in the position of one who is ignorant. Instead, it was the knowledgeable Klunchun, who practises traditional Khon dance, who was perceived as ignorant as he did not understand Bel's counter-logic opposing the Western institution of dance. Therefore, despite the fact that Bel did not install a simple colonialist and colonised model in his performance, it was clear that the different positions of the two highlighted somewhat their unequal relationships with the Western institution of dance.

The reason why Bel's counter-logic to the dominating Western institution of dance is because he belongs to the Western institution of dance. In fact, it is the Western institution of dance that legitimises Pichet Klunchen and Myself as a valid critique of this institution. As Bel confesses in the aforementioned interview with Ritsema, at first he was not even sure this could be called a performance. Even after its premiere in Bangkok, Bel did not have any desire to include this performance in his repertoire. It was Frie Leysen, artistic director of the Kunsten Festival des Arts at that time, who asked Bel to recreate the piece at the Kaaithheater in Brussels. Bel said that it was in the studio of the Kaaithheater, where many of his friends and colleagues were present supporting this performance, that he realised that what he had done could work as a performance. In other words, without Leysen's invitation, this piece might not have come into being at all.

Moreover, if his colleagues and friends had not supported this production, this performance would not have gone on to tour the globe. In other words, it is the existing institution of dance that embraces Bel's counter-logic opposing his own institution. It is the existing Western institution of dance that continuously redefines what makes dance dance and gives new life to what might otherwise be conceived as a mere representation of a conversation between two strangers. In this context, *Pichet Klunchun and Myself* is not just a dance performance given by two performers in conversation, but a performance that is produced, consumed, and distributed by the specific economy of the Western institution of art. In other words, the institution of dance is not just a house that displays practices, but one with active producers, consumers, and distributors of what is to come.

In contrast to Bel's situation, Klunchun's struggle against the Western institution of dance is more complicated. During his conversation with Bel, Klunchun attempted to convey his knowledge of Khon dance to the audience. He explained the subtle gestures of characterisation that distinguish four characters, the female, the male, the demon, and the monkey in Khon dance. He also explained how the general shape of the body in Khon is meant to imitate the architecture of Thai temples. But this knowledge of Khon turned out to be incapable of creating a logic to counter the Western institution of dance. On stage, Klunchun explained that since King Rama VII of Thailand banned Khon dance from the public realm in the name of modernisation in the 1960s, the fight for Khon dance became, paradoxically, one about making sure that Khon dance was safely located within the Western model of the modern institution of dance, through which theatre stages are secured and the movements of masters are preserved. In other words, in the process of modernisation and so-called 'developing' nations' attempts to catch up and overcome

their 'belatedness' in order to transform themselves into modern states, the Western model of the institution becomes the norm and the condition for sustainability within or against the upside-down sociopolitical structures of post-colonial states. But these attempts to be at the centre of things, or to catch up from their belatedness, were never meant to be successful as they only confirm that the alleged inferiority of the non-West in relation to the West is legitimate. As Klunchun admits, in its fight for survival, Khon no longer belongs to its own people. In an attempt to preserve what is on the brink of disappearing in the name of modernisation, it ends up belonging to Western tourists. This paradoxical demand is inherent in any contemporary artistic production in the non-West, on the one hand the Western model of the modern institution of art is something to catch up with, but on the other hand, it is something to resist.

The Body Under the 'Garment of Grace'

If the centre of my analysis in *Pichet Klunchun and Myself* is the complex layers of the institutionalised body of the other, in this part, I would like to discuss othering process of the body of children via disciplinary control over the body that Charmatz highlights in his dance-theatre *Enfant*. If a puppet, which symbolises the ontology of hyperkinetic subjectivity in the Western model of the modern institution of dance, disguises the actual source of movement, disguises actual source of movement, Charmatz's *Enfant* is not afraid of revealing the real source of movement

When the second notice bell rings, the stage goes completely dark. Through the gloom of the darkened stage, I can only see the outlines of two huge machines standing on it. They look like cranes with long wires reaching out all over the stage. A few minutes later, two dancers are hooked up to the machines. The first dancer is dragged across the

floor and then hoisted dangerously in the air. Then the second dancer is hoisted even higher. The horrible creaking and groaning noises produced by the machines intensify what is already a charged atmosphere in the theatre. Finally, when they are brought down, they are placed next to another dancer who is already on what looks like a huge, rolling-carpet machine placed in the centre of the stage. They are then savagely shaken and thumped up and down to the point where it becomes uncomfortable to watch. This is the very beginning of *Enfant*.

Despite this sounds too obvious, the crane-like machines themselves, which is the source of movement, do not have any intent. Once they are engineered to move the dancers up and down, they are apparently indifferent to what they bring about. It is at this very moment when the human bodies seem to be completely defeated by the cold machinery that I think about the image of a man erased by the waves of the sea, as portrayed by Michel Foucault. In *The Order of Things*, while finishing his research on human sciences in the age of reason, Foucault writes the following as the last sentence of the book: 'The man will be erased like a face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea.'⁴⁶ Through this image of a face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea, vulnerable to being erased by the waves at any moment, what does Foucault imply? The basic condition for the birth of human science in the age of reason was to construe humans as the stable subject and object of knowledge, positioning Man as the source of all representation and knowledge. However, this is exactly what Foucault refuses to accept.

What must be highlighted is the fact that Foucault's declaration that 'the man will be erased' has nothing to do with the Apocalypse or a pessimistic prophecy. Instead, it is

⁴⁶ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 387.

an affirmation that the humans whom we know today are not the ultimate destination of history. Throughout the vast array of his research, Foucault challenges the progressive view of human science that claims to have concrete knowledge and an answer to the question of what human nature is. By challenging Western modernity's political investment in the construction of a predetermined notion of Man, Foucault continually seeks 'the conditions and the indefinite possibilities of transforming the subject, of transforming ourselves'.⁴⁷ In this context, Foucault's image of a human face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea should be understood as an affirmation that the notion of Man can always be rewritten, as it is just a matter of constitution at a specific time for specific strategic functions. For Foucault, rewriting has to begin by questioning the privileged position of humans as the subject via which the foundation for all types of signification is guaranteed.

On the stage of *Enfant*, the well-trained bodies of dancers do not have any will to resist the operation of the machinery. They seem already to have given up the privileged position of the human as subject. Here, the human body is completely subjected to the power of the machinery, so that the impotence of the human body exposes its materiality as flesh. With the bodies so vulnerable, with no will to resist, what is Charmatz trying to say? Does he want to highlight the victory of the machine over humanity in the age of technology? Is this his critique on our technological society?

It is true that we have become more immune to images of the human body as mere flesh in the midst of our contemporary media storm. We can no longer feel anything about images of female nudes in bling commercial advertisements or violent images of dead

⁴⁷ Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 153.

bodies on battlefields in remote corners of the world. However, what is troubling here, and at the same time what bestows a critical possibility on Charmatz's presentation of the impotence of human bodies, comes, ironically, from the fact that this presentation takes place in a theatre.

I am fully aware of the fact that I am not here to watch *Swan Lake*, which means I do not expect to see dancers thriving lightly in the air as a symbol of overcoming gravity. Yet, because it takes place in a theatre, the fact that Charmatz does not yield to the conventional disciplinary logic of dance highlights what is ruptured by the choreographer's wilful renunciation of disciplinary control over the body. By presenting impotent bodies that do not have any muscular energy to resist the operation of the machinery, what is highlighted is Charmatz's refusal of the hyperkinetic subjectivity that is demanded, normalised, and institutionalised in the modern institution of dance. This creates friction with the conventional understanding of what the discipline of dance is supposed to be. Throughout modernity, dance has been supposed to seek to maximise the potential of the human body in order for it to be presented as being-toward-movement. And in return, this clear identity has guaranteed for dance an autonomous status in modern art.⁴⁸ However, Charmatz's refusal to accept this disciplinary logic clearly problematises this given condition within the Western model of the institution of dance. In the coming part, I will develop the discussion of how Charmatz's refusal of the disciplinary logic in *Enfant* not only disturbs the smooth operation of the modern

⁴⁸ The history of dance being recognised as art, and hence granted aesthetic autonomy, is a complex one. Among other things, dance being recognised as art can be examined by looking at the historical alliance between dance and theatre, and to an even greater extent between dance and literature.

institution of dance, but also the complex sociopolitical discourses that constitute a specific ethical imperative in our contemporary society.

Not Everyone Charmed by Charmatz's *Enfant*

'Not everyone charmed by Charmatz's *Enfant*'.⁴⁹ This is the headline of a review of *Enfant* after it premiered at Festival Avignon. This is the reason that this reporter provides:

Nine other dancers appear on stage holding children who are seemingly asleep.

Some of the dancers hold the children tenderly but others manipulate their limbs

as if they were objects.⁵⁰

After the scene where three adult dancers are shaken on top of what looks like a rolling-carpet machine, the problem that is exposed on Charmatz's stage becomes even more complicated. Some of the survivors of the rolling-carpet machine begin to appear on stage again while pushing the bodies of children along. So the bodies of children slither across the floor. Some being pulled by their feet, more than a dozen children are dragged on stage by adult dancers, exposing their inertia as they do so. The vulnerability of human bodies is intensified by the bodies being those of children, so small and inert that they look like they have no energy whatsoever. After being bumped along upside down, these helpless, unresisting little figures are piled up into heaps before being swung around in

⁴⁹ Brent Gregston, "Not everyone charmed by Charmatz's 'Enfant'", review of *Enfant*, by Boris Charmatz, *RFI*, July 12, 2011 <http://www.english.rfi.fr/visiting-france/20110712-turning-adult-world-its-head>.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

the air in all directions by the adult dancers. Therefore, it is not surprising that ever since *Enfant* premiered in 2011, it has aroused controversy.

It was sinister and distasteful to see these small children being tossed around like so many limp dolls.⁵¹

As this review clearly reveals, as soon as the bodies of children appear, normative moral codes begin to function that go beyond the discipline of dance. Now this is not just a matter of dance. It is as if someone sets off the emergency alarm by accident so that the ear-bashing sound of a siren automatically rings. In a civilised Western society, the bodies of children should remain out of reach. As soon as one touches the body of child that is not one's own, one has to be prepared for the noise of a siren tearing at one's ears. The hasty reaction from the press – a headline such as 'Not everyone charmed by Charmatz's *Enfant*', or a convinced review that the message of this performance is the choreographer's denunciation of paedophilia – reveals how the signifier *enfant* is no longer safe and immune from the world we live in, but comes to be located in a perplexing position. *Enfant*, especially the body of an *enfant*, no longer signifies a world that is safe and innocent, like in the images portrayed in *The Sound of Music*. Instead, it becomes one of the most agitating words in our media-driven society, signifying a battlefield where complex issues of our society are fought. In an interview with Ruhrtriennale, Charmatz acknowledges the fact that the word *enfant* does not signify what it used to thirty years

⁵¹ Patricia Boccadoro, "Review: Enfant ('Child')," review of *Enfant* by Boris Charmatz, Culture Kiosque, December 9, 2011, http://www.culturekiosque.com/dance/reviews/bcharmatz_enfant_pbocca681.html.

ago.⁵² He says that the word *enfant* is already caught up within complex and countless social issues, such as school violence, paedophilia, social insecurity, poverty, and racism. In this context, it is quite significant that Charmatz uses the word *enfant* in its singular form as the title of his work, despite there being dozens of children in the performance. As Charmatz himself explains, it is because the performance is not about presenting cute and young children singing and dancing for the amazement of adults, but about posing questions that are formulated by the signifier *enfant*.

The children are not bringing, let's say, the life, usually ... they sing and dance but what they bring first is being asleep, not moving, being inert, so they bring more troubles, problems, questions than the security of life.⁵³

It was when I saw Heiner Goebbels' *When the Mountain Changed its Clothing* (2013) that I was able to comprehend what Charmatz was trying to do. After a year or so, by chance at the same festival at which I saw Charmatz's *Enfant*, I saw Goebbels' *When the Mountain Changed its Clothing* (2013). This is a musical theatre piece that Goebbels produces with forty young girls, aged between ten and twenty, from the Vocal Theatre Carmina Slovenica. These young girls are also amateur performers like the children in Charmatz's *Enfant*.⁵⁴ In this performance, Goebbels attempts to answer his initial question, 'what do young girls dream of?', through various constructed theatrical scenes of these girls singing and dancing. Unlike the inert bodies of children in Charmatz's *Enfant*, the bodies

⁵² "Boris Charmatz über enfant und links," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RhM0ejAb350>.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ The girls in Goebbels' *When the Mountain Changed its Clothing* are generally older than the children in Charmatz's *Enfant*.

of these young girls are not at all exposed to what could be considered a hostile situation. It becomes clear to me that these girls are represented within what Giorgio Agamben calls the 'garment of grace'.⁵⁵

The 'garment of grace' is a term that Agamben uses in his essay 'Nudity' to explain the complex sociopolitical desire to capture the body within a specific disciplinary logic. And the reason why I feel that Goebbels' representation of the girls in *When the Mountain Changed its Clothing* is within the garment of grace is because his articulation of the girls is never located outside the comfort zone of permissibly represented children (not the bodies of children). In other words, the girls are safely located within the normative idea of how children ought to be represented.

Ever since Adam and Eve were expelled from Paradise, we have been trained not to see the human body as it is. Even pornography is not about seeing the body as it is. A specific discursive operation involving nude human bodies in pornography is not about exposing the human body as it is. Rather, it is very much about obeying discursive imperatives projected onto human bodies, for instance, the objectification of female bodies for the pleasure of the male gaze. In other words, the human body has never been allowed to be presented as it is. It is in this context, in his essay 'Nudity', that Agamben conducts an interesting analysis of how the theology of clothing has been developed as a subjectivity project so that what makes humans human lies in the fact that we all have a body. He argues that the story in Genesis about the fall of Adam and Eve is not about a mere moral failure, but instead reveals to us the imperatives imposed on the human body. Agamben argues that the human body has never been naked, even before the Fall, as it

⁵⁵ Giorgio Agamben, *Nudities*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Redwood City: Stanford University Press), 60.

has always been enveloped by ‘the cloth of grace of God’. This is why the Fall is about the discovery of the human body, ‘which [has] become visible for the eyes that have now been “opened” and ... what was before veiled and dressed is now unveiled and undressed’.⁵⁶

Watching dozens of girls singing and dancing according to the direction given by a hetero-white-male gaze, I realise that the very notion of a child as an innocent being we have in our mind is only sustained by the ‘garment of grace’ that has been culturally, religiously, or institutionally demanded and protected. In fact, it is not difficult to find traces of how the notion of the child was invented in the first place in Western modernity as part of a legal, political, and social process of constituting the notion of the individual. What used to be perceived as a ‘little adult’ suddenly becomes an unknown species that has to be reinvented under the newly organised notion of modern man. For me, this is what Charmatz’s choreography of inert bodies of children is highlighting. And his decision to remove the ‘cloth of grace’ that has been wrapped around the body of what was once only a little adult is what makes people upset.

In attracting attention to some of the controversies caused by Boris Charmatz’s inert bodies of children in *Enfant*, I have attempted to highlight how the body has always already been captured within a specific disciplinary logic that is devised to meet particular sociopolitical hegemonic demands. In briefly introducing Agamben’s critique on the notion of the ‘cloth of grace’, that has formulated specific knowledge of the body within Christian hermeneutics, I have attempted to highlight the fact that the body can never be presented as it is. In other words, it is a disciplinary logic that conditions the

⁵⁶ Ibid., 59.

understanding and conception of the body. And the emergence of the techno-body in the modern institution of dance is no exception.

Briefly detouring via Lepecki's line of thinking that aims to suggest the deflation of movement as a signifier of contemporary choreographic experiments, I examined the techno-body (the body as being-toward-movement) that is devised, legitimised, and sustained within the Western institution of dance. However, even though there are no longer bodies obsessed with a continuum of movement, what is highlighted is not the possibility of the body being a pure material entity. Both the institutionalized body in *Pichet Klunchun and Myself* and the discursive body in *Enfant* highlight the fact that the body has always already been captured within a logic of representation. The body can never be naked or be without its socially, politically, and culturally constructed 'garment of grace'.

In Chapter 2, I will discuss the particular strategy developed in the institutionalisation of dance in the West that reconfigure the body within a specific disciplinary logic. In doing so, I will pay attention to the term choreography, which is a neologism that combines *choreo-* and *-graphy*. With the emergence of the particular tactical operation that writes dancing bodies, the modern institution of dance produced the particular understanding of the dancing-subject. What has to be highlighted here is the fact that the term writing is more than a literal process of inscribing something on paper or on a computer. In the coming part, via French philosopher Jacques Derrida's theory of writing, I will highlight complex layers of the term writing. I will demonstrate how pushing the parameters of thinking writing can be deployed as an active force that disturb the smooth operation of the modern subject machine. Hence, the technology of writing as emerged in the institutionalisation of dance should not be perceived as an

auxiliary technology. Instead, it is emerged as a deconstructive force through which the choreographer-subject can be reconstituted.

Chapter 2. What Makes Dance Choreography?

- Binding the Body with the Technology of Writing

Tactics in the Institutionalisation of Dance

The question that I want to consider in this chapter is how the particular disciplinary logic of dance that I discussed in the previous chapter has come to be institutionalised so that it can be repeated and operate as an institutional principle. In other words, I am asking how the 'structural necessity' of any institutionalisation process has been met and dealt with at a particular moment in history by a specific group of people or individuals. The term 'structural necessity' comes from Christopher Johnson's *System and Writing in the Philosophy of Jacques Derrida*.⁵⁷ In revisiting Jacques Derrida's discussion, in *Writing and Difference*, of Foucault's project on madness, Johnson explains that Derrida disagrees with the way in which Foucault localises the division between reason and madness within a specific historical context. Nevertheless, Johnson points out that Derrida agrees with the 'structural necessity' of such a division, that Foucault refers to as a 'decision'. Johnson explains that, at first glance, Derrida's italicised use of the term 'decision' seems to be somewhat abstract when compared with Foucault's original notion of the term. It is because Foucault's notion of the decision implies 'inherent violence', as it is already historically determined. Johnson, however, argues that for Derrida, the decision is a fundamental structure of *logos*. And it is the violence that is inevitable in the irruption of *logos* that makes Derrida's decision fundamentally violent too. What is significant in Derrida's idiosyncratic deployment of Foucault's notion of the decision is the fact that, for

⁵⁷ Christopher Johnson, *System and Writing in the Philosophy of Jacques Derrida* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 53.

Derrida, the term, as a fundamental structural necessity, is equivalent to a passion for inscription. As Johnson contends, for Derrida, decision is analogous to the principle of inscription. And as Derrida says, 'it is the moment at which we must *decide* whether we will engrave what we hear'.⁵⁸

In this context, the way I deploy the term 'structural necessity' refers to Derrida's decision as being equivalent to a passion for inscription. In other words, when I ask what is 'the structural necessity' in the institutionalisation of dance, I ask how it is captured within a 'passion for inscription'. In pursuing the question of how the disciplinary logic of dance is captured within a 'passion for inscription', I shall pay attention to the dialogue between the Jesuit priest and dance master, Thoinot Arbeau, and the lawyer and past pupil Capriol that Lepecki mentions in *Exhausting Dance*.⁵⁹

This dialogue, which can be found in *Orchesography*, a book first published in 1589, gives us a clue to understand the kind of tactics deployed in order to transform the specific disciplinary logic of dance into something inscribable and repeatable. Before I go into the details of the dialogue, I would like to explain how I use the term 'tactics'. Here, I employ the term based on Kevin Jon Heller's discussion in 'Power, Subjectification and Resistance in Foucault'.⁶⁰ In attempting to rethink Michel Foucault's notion of power, especially his notion of 'non-subjective power', Heller contends that Foucault distinctively separates the term 'strategy' from 'tactics'. For instance, tactics are something that can be planned by individuals or a group; but strategy cannot be planned, as it is the effects of the operation of specific tactics. This is what Heller argues:

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, 26.

⁶⁰ Kevin Jon Heller, "Power, Subjectification and Resistance in Foucault," *Substance* 25 (1996): 78–110.

'Tactics' are the intentional actions carried out in determinate political contexts by individual and groups; 'strategies' are the unintentional but institutionally and socially regularised effects produced by the non-subjective articulation of different individual and group tactics. Both tactics and strategies involve power, because both create social change; only strategies, however, involve non-subjective power.⁶¹

Therefore, my aim in tracing the tactics utilised by specific groups or individuals, as illustrated in the dialogue between Arbeau and Capriol in *Orchesography*, is to examine the strategies that emerged to inscribe a disciplinary logic for the institutionalisation of dance.⁶² In other words, it is through identifying the tactics deployed that I can examine the effects that are produced by their specific deployment.

The dialogue begins when Capriol, a young lawyer from Paris, goes to Langres to visit his old master, Arbeau, who is not only a maths master but also a dance master as well as a Jesuit priest. At first glance, this particular dialogue may look like a general greeting between master and ex-pupil. This is how Capriol presents himself to his master:

Capriol: I come to pay you my respects, Monsieur Arbeau. You do not remember me, for it is six or seven years since I left this town of Langres to go to Paris and thence to Orleans. I am an old pupil of yours, to whom you taught computation.

Arbeau: Indeed at first glance I failed to recognize you because you have grown up since then, and I feel sure that you have also broadened your mind by

⁶¹ Ibid., 87.

⁶² *Orchesography* is the most detailed and authentic record of fifteenth and sixteenth century dances in the West. It deals with what we would today call the ballroom dances of the period. The figure of Capriol is believed to be fictional, while Thoinot Arbeau is the author of the book and a historical figure.

manliness and learning. What do you think of the study of law? I pursued it in bygone days myself.⁶³

In this dialogue, Capriol reveals his identity as a past student of computation, and Arbeau asks Capriol about his study of law, which Arbeau himself pursued a long time before. Yet, what is happening here is not a simple identification of each other's occupations. As Lepecki points out, the encounter between the priest, mathematician, and dance master, Arbeau, and the lawyer, Capriol, illuminates the special relationship that appeared between mathematics, law, and theology in the advent of the disciplinary tactic that bound the dancing body to writing.⁶⁴ After revealing his identity to Arbeau, Capriol tells his master the purpose of his visit, which gives us a clue as to why and how this binding of the body to writing began. He tells Arbeau of his desire to learn a proper dance as a mode of socialisation:

Capriol: I find [dancing] a noble art and necessary in the conduct of affairs, but I regret that while in Orleans I neglected to learn fine manners, an art with which many scholars enriched themselves as an adjunct to their studies. For, on my return, I have found myself in society where, to put it briefly, I was tongue-tied and awkward, and regarded as little more than a block of wood ... I should like to have acquired skill in dancing during the hours between my serious studies, an accomplishment which would have rendered my company welcome to all.⁶⁵

⁶³ Arbeau, *Orchesography*, 11.

⁶⁴ Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, 25.

⁶⁵ Arbeau, *Orchesography*, 11.

Capriol says that he has to learn how to dance so that he may 'not be reproached for having the heart of a pig and the head of an ass'.⁶⁶ This young lawyer's desire to dance, as a mode of socialisation in the hetero-mating theatrics of society, initiates a specific project that necessitates a complex mode of entanglement between what Foucault calls the technologies of the self and those of domination. I will return to this point in the next chapter, but first I will briefly explain what I mean by this. Capriol's desire to learn his master's dance, as if these movements belonged to him from the beginning, is about internalising the great movements of the master. And it is this process of internalisation, and Capriol's deliberate intention to place himself under the imperatives of the hetero-mating theatrics of society, that complicates the notion of domination, which always already accompanies what Foucault calls the 'technologies of the self', based on one's deliberate participation.⁶⁷

Capriol and Arbeau do, however, face a problem. In their attempt to restage not only Arbeau's dance but also the great dances of the past, they realise that these great dances of the old masters are no longer available to them. Arbeau points out that knowledge of dance is not something that can be recovered once its master is gone.

Arbeau: As regards ancient dances all I can tell you is that the passage of time, the indolence of man or the difficulty of describing them has *robbed* us of any knowledge...

⁶⁶ Quoted from Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, 26–27. See also Arbeau, *Orchesography*, 11.

⁶⁷ Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth (Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954–1984)*, ed. Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 222.

Capriol: I foresee then that posterity will remain ignorant of all these new dances you have named for the same reason that we have been deprived of the knowledge of those of our ancestors.

Arbeau: One must assume so.

Capriol: Do not allow this to happen, Monsieur Arbeau, as it is within your power to prevent it. Set these things down in writing to enable me to learn this art, and in so doing you will seem reunited with the companions of your youth and take both mental and bodily exercise, for it will be difficult for you to refrain from using your limbs in order to demonstrate the correct movements. In truth, your method of writing is such that a pupil, by following your theory and precepts, even in your absence, could teach himself in the seclusion of his own chamber.⁶⁸

When Arbeau regrets that all the greatness of ancient dance has been erased by the passage of time and nothing remains in the archive of dance, Capriol worries that Arbeau's own art of dance may face a similar fate. Thus, Capriol suggests that his master *write down* his movements so that, even in his absence, his dance can be passed on to future generations. This is the very moment when dance became a writing project, through which the body submits itself to the force of writing. At the intersection where the 'techniques of domination' and the 'techniques of the self' demand to meet, we see the rise of a tactic of submitting the body to the force of writing, which is later developed into a coherent technology called choreography. As Lepecki explains:

⁶⁸ Quoted from Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, 27. See also Arbeau, *Orchesography*, 15.

At the critical point where dance finds its new destiny as choreography, we find the joint labors of a lawyer and a priest. Here is a powerful foundational duo to consider choreography's ontohistorical relationship to the force of law. A male couple, dancing within a psycho-philosophical, theological, and gendered space triangulated by hard discourses and disciplines: mathematics, religion, law.⁶⁹

With the emergence of this new technology, thanks to 'the joint labours of a lawyer and a priest', dance now finds its new destiny as choreography. What is most important in this technology of choreography is the fact that it locates the body under the force of writing. In so doing, this joint tactic of a lawyer and a priest enables the institutionalisation of a particular disciplinary logic.

As its name clearly indicates, Arbeau's *Orchesography* reveals what might be the first moment when the tactic of binding two seemingly unrelated words, *orcheso-* (dance) and *-graphy* (writing), was plotted and engineered.⁷⁰ As this neologism literally reveals, dance-writing means to write one's movements onto the body of another. What has to be emphasised here is the fact that there is no natural transference between writing and the body of another. The very tactic of putting them together brings about the advent of the technique that disciplines the body of the other (based on a particular conception of the linguistic body within the logic of representation) under the force of writing. And the deployment of this tactic seems to capture the dancing body successfully, within the disciplinary logic of dance, allowing for the emergence of a technology later called choreography in the institutionalisation of dance in Western modernity.

⁶⁹ Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, 26.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

What must be highlighted, however, is the double-sided effect of the tactical operation of binding the body with writing. The tactic of binding the body with writing is what allows the master's dance to be recorded in the archive of dance. Yet, what must also be highlighted is the unstable ground on which the subjectivity of the master emerges in this tactical operation. In the coming part, I will attempt to articulate further why the tactical operation of binding the body results in bringing about the unstable ground for the subjectivity of the master.

Writing Emerging as a Deconstructive Strategy

In *Exhausting Dance*, Lepecki discusses this unstable ground on which the master's subjectivity is articulated with the term 'the spectral'. Thanks to the power of telecommunication inherent in the technology of writing, by submitting the body to the force of writing, the movements of the dead master are able to find a way of always being present. Therefore, the institution of dance is ready to transform itself and become a memory machine from which the dead master's movements never fade.

My particular focus here is the Derridean term 'spectral' that is used by Lepecki when articulating the subjectivity of the master that emerges in the institution of dance. Because of its spectral presence, the emergence of the master-subjectivity brings about a 'haunting temporality' where time is caught up in the haunted chamber of the dead choreographer.⁷¹ It is true that it is this haunting temporality that enables the dead master to be 'reunited' with his living pupils. But the position of mastery here is unstable. Because of its spectral subjectivity, the spectral master only comes into being by

⁷¹ Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, 26–28. See also Francis Barker, *The Tremulous Private Body: Essays on Subjection* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 2.

disturbing any stabilisation of the ground on which its master-subjectivity emerges. In other words, it is the technology of writing that enables the emergence of the spectre-master in the institution of dance. Yet, it is the same technology that prevents the instalment of the position of mastery, as its 'haunted temporality' confuses time by disturbing the solid ground on which is installed the position of mastery.

It is in this light that I would like to examine Jacques Derrida's tactical investment in writing. This investment begins by highlighting a self-deconstructing logic inherent in writing. For Derrida, the self-deconstructing logic of writing becomes evident when we think about the power of telecommunication inherent in the technology of writing. It is this power that makes writing writing, but at the same time it is what pushes the structural possibility of writing to the point where writing no longer functions as writing in a conventional sense. Derrida's notion of the power of telecommunication inherent in writing does not simply mean that communication can occur beyond the physical presence of the sender of the message. He pushes the structural possibilities inherent in writing itself in order to allow the radical or absolute absence of the addressee.

For example, let us say that A is writing a letter to B. From the perspective of A, who is sending of the letter, B is a distant presence. In other words, the notion of absence at play here is merely a modified form of presence. But Derrida pushes this further, to the point where the notion of absence 'must be capable of being carried to a certain absoluteness'. Derrida insists that writing 'must remain readable despite the absolute disappearance of any receiver, determined in general'. Likewise, Derrida pushes this notion of absence, not only in relation to the perspective of the receiver, but also that of the sender:

To write is to produce a mark ... which my future disappearance will not, in principle, hinder in its functioning ... For a writing to be a writing it must continue to 'act' and to be readable even when what is called the author of the writing no longer answers for what he has written ... The situation of the writer is, concerning the written text, basically the same as that of the reader.⁷²

Here Derrida is arguing that in order for a written text to function as writing, it has to work even in the absolute absence of the context of its production. This does not change, even in a situation where writing cannot be interpreted in a linguistic system as it is established as a secret cipher only known by the producer and the receiver. In other words, even if producer and receiver were the only ones who know how to decipher the code and they were to die, it could still be identified as writing due to what Derrida calls 'iterability'. The word iterability literally means repetition. But the prefix of the word, *iter* (probably from *itara* 'other' in Sanskrit), makes it somewhat distinct from its literal meaning, as it allows the meaning of repetition to be tied to the notion of alterity, or otherness.⁷³ In other words, what allows writing to remain writing is not just its simple ability to be repeated. Instead, by making an etymological connection to concepts of otherness to explain the notion of iterability, Derrida highlights the fact that the repetition that is presupposed here as the function of writing is not simply a repetition of the same.⁷⁴ In doing so, Derrida opens up the structural possibility of a written mark that is freed from the 'logocentric' idea of an indefinitely repeatable meaning that presupposes a solid, sovereign subject. This is one of the reasons that explains why

⁷² Jacques Derrida, "Signature Event Context," in *Limited Inc*, trans. Samuel Weber and Jeffrey Mehlman, ed. Gerald Graff (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 7-8.

⁷³ Johnson, *System and Writing*, 118.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 184. See also Derrida, "Signature Event Context," 40.

Derrida invests in the technology of writing and why writing emerges as a deconstructive strategy in Derrida's operation opposing the institution that he inhabits. In the coming part, I will take a brief detour to examine Derrida's problematisation of the logocentrism inherent in the Western school of philosophy. In doing so, I will take a closer look at how Derrida deconstructs logocentrism, which he defines as the foundation of the Western school of philosophy.

Foundational Instability of Logocentrism

Before focusing on Derrida's problematisation of logocentrism, I would like to briefly discuss Christopher Johnson's examination of the move made by Derrida from language to writing, and how this corresponds to the transformation, contemporaneous with Derrida, of the episteme evident across disciplines. Christopher Johnson, in *System and Writing in the Philosophy of Jacques Derrida*, argues that during the 1960s, there was an epistemic shift from language to a more specific notion of writing within structuralism, or between structuralism and post-structuralism.⁷⁵ He argues that this move from language to writing was necessary and inevitable, saying 'it is not the initiative or inspiration of one individual thinker (Derrida) but the effect of a more general transformation of the modern episteme'.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ In *System and Writing in the Philosophy of Jacques Derrida*, Johnson argues that Derrida's own work was itself a major influence on the dissemination of the idea of *écriture*, which is discussed in *Of Grammatology* and *Writing and Difference*. The influence of Derrida's reference to *écriture* should, however, not be overstated. As he himself recognises, 'it is as much a symptom as it is a cause'. For instance, Derrida writes, 'the contemporary biologist speaks of writing and programme in relation to the most elementary processes of information within the living cell. And finally, whether it has essential limits or not, the entire field covered by the cybernetic programme would be the field of writing'. Requoted from Johnson, *System and Writing*, 4. See also Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 9.

⁷⁶ Johnson, *System and Writing*, 5.

Johnson talks about how information science and the general technological evolution of communication technology contribute to the epistemic shift from language to the technology of writing. Johnson clearly states, however, that Derrida does not display this complex conceptual and methodological matrix of the aforementioned disciplines in his *Of Grammatology*, as the orientation of Derrida's writing is to create a critique opposing the discipline of Western philosophy.⁷⁷

One of the tactical reasons for Derrida's investment in writing is to disturb the logocentrism via which the Western institution of philosophy has been sustained. According to the etymology of the term, the Greek word *logos* translates literally as 'word', but it also carries within it a larger sense of 'logic', 'reason', or 'meaning'.⁷⁸ Hence, semantically, logocentrism implies not only a tendency to privilege 'word', but also expresses a desire that is deeply embedded in the Western metaphysical tradition; the desire for an ultimate origin, *telos*, a centre or principle of truth which grounds meaning.⁷⁹ Therefore, Derrida ultimately attempts to disturb a logocentric desire that is deeply embedded in the Western metaphysical tradition, one 'consistently and dogmatically positing a moment of pure and unmediated "presence"'.⁸⁰ In other words, logocentrism is the defining mode of Western metaphysics that seeks to establish an essential foundation of reality in presence.

⁷⁷ In *System and Writing in the Philosophy of Jacques Derrida*, Johnson argues 'This is not to say that one should attempt to discount or minimize the importance of Derrida's references to the "extra-philosophical" sphere of modern science. His citation of two sciences in particular, biology and cybernetics, is symptomatic and not simply a passing gesture to the intellectual fashion of the moment, for what these two disciplines offer to philosophical reflection is obviously of considerable relevance to Derrida's theory of writing.' Johnson, *System and Writing*, 7.

⁷⁸ Simon Morgan Wortham, *The Derrida Dictionary* (London: Continuum, 2010), 89.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Arthur Bradley, *Derrida's Of Grammatology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 41.

In this context, the question to be asked is the following: What is this 'presence', and how does it come into being? From the spatial presence of something we can see, hear, or touch through to the temporal presence of the here and now in which we live, and even the absence of some presence that has been lost but might be achieved in the future (the return of the Messiah, for example), the Western tradition of metaphysics is obsessed with the notion of presence. But for Derrida, this metaphysical concept is not as simple as it appears at first glance. Instead, the metaphysics of presence is based on the foundational instability inherent in the notion of presence itself. This is because every seemingly pure, stable, or self-identical presence is nothing more than an effect generated by a prior series of differences. Nothing is ever purely and simply there.

In this context, it is important to pay attention to Arthur Bradley's argument in *Derrida's Of Grammatology*. He argues that in order to dogmatically sustain the notion of pure and unmediated presence as an ultimate ground for truth, the metaphysical tradition of the West developed a tactic of establishing a series of binary opposites. For instance, in the Western metaphysics of presence, there is always a series of binary oppositions between concepts, values, or terms where, in each case, one concept is identified as the bearer of presence itself while the other is identified with the falling away, or loss of that presence. Against this backdrop, the transcendental is privileged as being more present than the empirical, the ideal is championed over the material, the soul over the body, the masculine over the feminine, and speech is perceived as the bearer of presence, not writing.⁸¹

⁸¹ Ibid., 6-7.

Yet Derrida argues that the privileged position given to speech (*phone*) over writing (*gramme*), as the means by which the presence of *logos* is expressed, is not as sustainable as it seems at first glance. This is because all language, both speech and writing, is essentially mediation. If speech is also the product of mediation, the ground which sustains the privileged position of speech over writing loses its legitimacy. Such a rereading of logocentrism can be a good example of a particular operation that has become central to Derridean thinking: deconstruction.

What needs to be emphasised here is the fact that deconstruction should not be understood as a philosophical process of destruction or demolition.⁸² As Bradley points out, 'with those two apparently contradictory prefixes "de-" and "con-", what Derrida is actually describing is a 'double process' that is both 'destructive and constructive'.⁸³ In other words, on the one hand, it undoubtedly performs a negative or critical role in undoing, dismantling, or questioning the way in which any given system is put together. On the other, however, it has a very positive dimension, because its purpose is not to destroy but to reconstruct a given structure. What Derrida attempts to do is to articulate the often hidden or repressed conditions according to which it is possible for any structure to be constituted in the first place. This is why Derrida argues that deconstruction signifies the 'undoing, decomposing and de-sedimenting of structure' in order to 'understand how an "ensemble" was constituted and to reconstruct it to this end'.⁸⁴ This is why deconstruction is not something we do from the outside. If Derrida's reading of the privileged positionality of logocentrism has a purpose, it is not to denounce

⁸² Ibid., 42. See also Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 10, 21.

⁸³ Bradley, *Derrida's Of Grammatology*, 42.

⁸⁴ Ibid. See also Jacques Derrida, "Letter to a Japanese Friend", in *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, trans. David Wood and Andrew Benjamin, ed. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 272.

what is already there but to highlight the contradictions within logocentrism itself. For Derrida, the process of his deconstructive reading is to show what is already in self-deconstruction. This is why deconstruction is the 'name for a structural or foundational instability on which, despite appearances to the contrary, every metaphysical system is erected'.⁸⁵

In highlighting the foundational instability inherent in logocentrism, Derrida pushes the self-deconstructing logic in logocentrism even further, to the point where he makes the radical claim that 'writing precedes speech'. For Derrida, writing is primary, and speaking is also a form of writing. The reason is simple. Whether it is speaking or writing, they are both a form of inscription. In this context, the term 'writing' is not limited to the sense in which one inscribes something on paper or a computer. Rather, it should be understood in terms of Derrida's notion of 'archi-writing'. Derrida's notion of archi-writing challenges our epistemological understanding of writing as being merely the technical process of inscription on paper or a computer. This does not, however, mean that Derrida's archi-writing dismisses the empirical understanding of writing. In this neologism, 'archi' means origin, principle, or *telos*. In other words, archi-writing is what is already there before we use it. This is why Derrida argues that archi-writing can even be seen in cultures that do not have any technical system of writing.

In creating the particular neologism of archi-writing in his critique opposing the logocentrism of the Western school of philosophy, Derrida highlights the unstable ground on which stands the privileged position of speech over writing. Moreover, by deconstructing the very ground on which logocentrism is sustained, Derrida aims to

⁸⁵ Bradley, *Derrida's Of Grammatology*, 146-147.

stress the fact that signification, broadly perceived, always refers to other signs. Therefore, one can never reach a sign that refers only to itself. And this process of infinite referral, of never arriving at meaning itself, what makes writing writing, is the breach that is inevitably brought about between what is intended to be conveyed and what is actually conveyed. In other words, for Derrida, writing is an active force that generates a spatial differentiating and a temporal deferring, as opposed to a mere representational medium of the logocentric subject.

In taking a detour via Derrida's deconstructive operation against logocentrism, I have attempted to highlight the instability of the ground on which the privileged position of speech over writing has been sustained. When the privileged position of speech is no longer secure, the ground on which the subject is perceived as the source and the origin of speech is also challenged. This detour highlights how Derrida's critique of logocentrism ultimately disturbs the specific conception of the subject. Therefore, rethinking the relationship between speech and writing is also to rethink the modern conception of the subject as a concrete and stable ground for generating a meaning.

Against this backdrop, I will go back to contemporary choreographic experiments that highlight 'choreography rather than dance'.⁸⁶ Through understanding Derrida's investment in the technology of writing, I will be able to lay the theoretical ground on which the heightened attention to choreography in contemporary dance can be articulated as a tactic of dismantling the conception of the master-subject as the origin of dance within the modern institution of dance. In juxtaposing Derrida's investment in the technology of writing with the shifted emphasis from dance to choreography that is

⁸⁶ Le Roy, Cvejić, and Siegmund, "To end with judgment by way of clarification," 49–56.

evident in contemporary choreographic experiments, I aim to demonstrate how choreography emerges as a deconstructive strategy opposing the positionality of mastery that has sustained the modern institution of dance.

Choreography Precedes Dance

In Cvejić's conversation with Xavier Le Roy, she contends that one of the most evident shifts in contemporary dance since the early 1990s is its claim to be 'choreography rather than dance'.⁸⁷ As Derrida deconstructs the privileged positionality of speech over writing, the shifted emphasis of 'choreography rather than dance' highlights how contemporary choreographic experiments challenge the privileged notion of dance in relation to choreography. In the institutionalisation of dance in the West, dance has been associated with the logocentric idea of authentic moments, whereas choreography has been perceived as a mere representational medium. Moreover, what this presupposed hierarchical relationship between dance and choreography implies is a position of mastery where a process of subjection is necessary.

The claim for 'choreography rather than dance', a defining tactic deployed by the new generation of choreographers, highlights how contemporary choreographic experiments destabilise the solid ground on which the logocentric idea of the subject as the ultimate source of origin of dance stands. This in turn disturbs the particular subjectivity of the master as devised, sustained, and legitimised in the modern institutionalisation of dance. As Derrida's radical argument that 'writing precedes speech' disturbs the very ground on which the conventional notion of communication, as the

⁸⁷ Ibid.

transmission of meaning between self-completed subjects, has been sustained, the claim for 'choreography rather than dance' highlights the fact that the conventional positionality of the master-subject in the modern institution of dance can no longer be sustained in contemporary choreographic experiments.

In this context, it is interesting to go back to the earlier discussion on the spectral subjectivity of the master from which emerges the tactical operation of binding the body with the technology of writing. What must be emphasised here is the fact that the spectral subjectivity of the master in the institution of dance always writes one's movements for the body of another, from the moment of its inception. This is why the choreographic 'I' is perceived only as providing a 'space of appearance' for other bodies, to borrow Hannah Arendt's words.⁸⁸ This does not change in a situation where one is choreographing for oneself. This particular understanding of the paradox inherent in the tactic of binding the technology of writing and the body is important to explain why contemporary choreographers define their practice as choreography rather than dance.

It is in this light that I would like to discuss *Dance for Nothing* (2011) by Eszter Salamon. Here, Salamon presents a speaking body on stage that iterates John Cage's famous speech, *Lecture on Nothing*, originally delivered at the Artists' Club in New York in 1949. In the interview that I conducted with Salamon, she claims that the days of the muted dancing bodies demanded by the modern institution of dance are over.⁸⁹ Nowadays, she claims, one of the distinguishable features of choreographic experiments since the 1990s is the advent of the speaking body on stage. Awakening from muteness, contemporary choreographic stages have witnessed the proliferation of the speaking

⁸⁸ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 198.

⁸⁹ From the interview that I conducted with Eszter Salamon in Manchester on 18 July 2013, during Salamon's performance of *Dance for Nothing* at the Manchester International Festival.

body. However, Salamon's speaking body is not deployed for better communication with an audience who often feel excluded from the specific institutional language of modern dance. Instead, Salamon's speaking body should be understood as a writing body in a Derridean sense, where there can be no hierarchical division between speaking and writing. In this sense, Salamon's argument that the days of muted bodies are over refers to the shift in emphasis from dance to choreography. In this light, I will attempt to articulate how Salamon's tactical deployment of choreography enables her speaking/writing body to be in a constant process of being spatially differentiated and temporally deferred from any type of concrete ground on which the logocentric idea of the choreographer-subject emerges.

The Choreographer's Body Never Refers to Itself

When Salamon comes onto the square-shaped stage, with spectators placed along its four sides at the start of *Dance for Nothing*, what immediately captures my attention is the fact that there is no music. Instead, what we, the spectators, hear for the duration of the performance is Salamon's voice iterating John Cage's *Lecture on Nothing*. This lecture was first delivered in 1949, and later published in his collected writings *Silence: Lectures and Writings* in 1961. What is interesting about this published version is the fact that Cage stresses rhythmic structures in the lecture. Printed in four columns, the published version facilitates a rhythmic reading and Cage explains the forty-eight units that constitute the whole structure. This musical quality inherent in the text would have provided the perfect condition for Salamon to respond to by generating movements. Salamon's iteration of Cage's lecture becomes the source of the music for her own body, producing movements based on the rhythms created by her mouth.

Instead of playing back a recording of the lecture, or having somebody else read the text while she danced, Salamon moves according to the rhythms of her speaking body. The conventional understanding of a dance-theatre presupposes a hierarchical relationship where the body becomes the subject that submits to the music. The dancing body is devised according to the rhythm of the music, as if the music commands the movements of the dancer.⁹⁰ Yet, in Salamon's dance-theatre, we see a more complicated structure, as the source of the music is that which is supposed to be subject to the music. Therefore, the conventional hierarchical relationship between music and the body never becomes clear.

Salamon reiterates Cage's lecture, which begins 'I am here, and there is nothing to say. If among you are those who wish to get somewhere, let them leave at any moment.'⁹¹ This evident resistance to arriving at any definite point of meaning, where a logocentric conception of the subject is presupposed, is highlighted even more by Salamon's attempt to generate movements simultaneously to her reiteration of Cage's speech. She falls down. She crawls. She stretches and flexes her body. She makes turns. She flaps her hands. She swivels on one knee. She walks. She scrawls in the air with gangly and interlocked arms. She does all this while reiterating Cage's lecture at her own pace and rhythm for the duration of an hour.

Therefore, as time goes by, we, the spectators, cannot pay full attention to Cage's lecture as Salamon's dancing body is simultaneously producing a language of the body. In

⁹⁰ I am referring to Romantic ballet as the matrix of dance, whereas in most folk dances, for example, the musicians observe the dancers and adjust their playing to the movements as much as the dancers dance to the music. This is (at least partly) impeded in ballet as the dance takes place in a theatre with an orchestra where there is no direct visual or other communication possible between dancers and musicians.

⁹¹ John Cage, "Lecture on Nothing" in *Silence: Lectures and Writings* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), <https://seanstorm.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/john-cage-lecture-on-nothing.pdf>.

other words, Salamon's dancing/writing body constantly takes our attention away from Salamon's speaking/writing body, and vice versa. In the interview that I conducted with Salamon, she describes this state of body-writing on multiple levels as achieving a 'trance of multitasking'.⁹² The human brain is not engineered for multitasking. The fact that the term 'multitasking' derives from computer technology tells us that this is not how we are made. Recent scientific studies seem to support this argument by showing that multitasking increases levels of poor performance and errors. This is why the Fordist assembly lines became the symbolic structure of organised productivity in human beings. But, in insisting on being in a state of trance while multitasking, Salamon appears disinterested in the efficacy and productivity of her speaking/dancing/writing body. And what is paradoxical is the fact that this is how Salamon actualises Cage's desire to actualise nothingness, which does not mean the negation of a thing but the negation of any arrival point. Any words or movements emerging from Salamon's multitasking are soon fragmented, fractured, and reconfigured into nothingness. Therefore, what the spectator encounters for the duration of Salamon's performance is a constant state of spatial differentiating and temporal deferring from arriving at any point of signification.

In this context, I would like to develop the discussion on spatial differentiating and temporal deferring generated by Salamon's speaking/writing body. First, there is a spatial differentiating and temporal deferring between the text pre-written onto Salamon's body during preparation time, and what is actually inscribed during the time of the performance. In the interview that I conducted with her, she told me that she

⁹² From the interview that I conducted with Eszter Salamon in Manchester on 18 July 2013 during Salamon's performance of *Dance for Nothing* at the Manchester International Festival. See also Jeroen Peeters, "Entranced in Multitasking," review of *Dance for Nothing*, by Eszter Salamon, *Corpus*, September 12, 2009, <http://www.eszter-salamon.com/WWW/dancefornothing.htm>.

memorised John Cage's text to the point where she does not have to think about what to do next. On stage, what she writes is what is already inscribed to become part of her body. And then, there is another layer of writing from the spectators. While Salamon writes on stage, I am, as a spectator, at first determined not to miss anything. I pay full attention. I try to read everything that is produced by her writing, attempting to grasp every point she makes. In this attempt to grasp everything, a specific type of writing/inscription is deployed due to my inability to remember everything. And, of course, there is another layer of writing taking place after the performance. I am now searching my memory to literally write Salamon's body-writing in parallel with Derrida's writing.

Therefore, my writing in front of my computer can never be the ultimate account of what happened in Salamon's choreography. It is just one of the processes that highlight the constant spatial differentiating and temporal deferring in any attempt to deploy the technology of writing. As I cannot predict where my writing will arrive (although I have a plan for what to write), Salamon's durational acts may not proceed as she planned. Of course, I have some initial ideas, feelings, and most importantly, memory which I want to incorporate into the text. But I can only discover where it is going to lead me via the process of the actual movement of writing and rewriting, as both an empirical and a physical act. It is because, in the process of writing, there are always unexpected questions that are raised which lead to different routes from those initially planned. In this light, what becomes clear is the fact that my writing only comes into being by being in a constant state of *doing*. And what this doing does is to take my writing somewhere that I initially had not thought of.

In the coming part, I would like to discuss further this doing of writing, through which writing emerges as a deconstructive strategy opposing the very institution that it

inhabits. In doing so, I will go back to Derrida's essay 'Signature Event Context', where he engages with the philosopher of language J. L. Austin's speech act theory. In opposition to some orthodox readings of Austin's speech act theory within English linguistic philosophy, Derrida's deconstructive reading in 'Signature Event Context' not only contributes to his own project of deconstructing the technology of writing, but also resurrects once again Austin's theory in reference to the critical discussion of the 1970s.⁹³

Signature Event as a Breaking Force

'Signature Event Context' begins with Derrida's question of how and why Austin emphasises the 'act' in speech. What must be pointed out here is the fact that Derrida deliberately attempts to expand Austin's notion of speech, going beyond the logocentric limits imposed by Anglo academic linguists. Derrida expands the parameters of the discussion on Austin's speech act theory and locates it within the larger notion of communication. In doing so, Derrida questions our common conception of communication as a vehicle for meaning within a linguistic exchange.

Derrida first rethinks the eighteenth century French philosopher and epistemologist Étienne Bonnot de Condillac's theory of communication found in the 1746 publication *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*. Here, Condillac argues that because humans have to communicate their thoughts or their ideas, which are the signified content, they have to invent a particular means of communication, i.e. writing.⁹⁴ This

⁹³ Jacques Derrida's essay 'Signature Event Context' in *Limited Inc* has a complicated publishing history. It was first written for an international conference held by International l'Association des Sociétés de Philosophie de Langue Française (Montreal, August 1971) and was included in Derrida's *Marges de la philosophie* in 1972. See "Editor's Foreword" in *Limited Inc*, trans. Samuel Weber and Jeffrey Mehlman, ed. Gerald Graff (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988).

⁹⁴ Derrida, "Signature Event Context," 4.

representational character of written communication can be more complicated, as is seen in various systems of writing such as hieroglyphics, ideographs, and phonetic alphabets where the specific system functions as the representation of representation. But as Derrida points out, even in explaining the complicated system of writing, Condillac never gives up the relationality between ideas and signs in his formulation. Derrida deconstructs Condillac's notion of writing as a means of communication by highlighting the fact that the notion of absence is already implied within Condillac's formulation of the technology of writing. This is because, according to Condillac's formulation, writing is invented and deployed in order to communicate something to those who are absent. Of course, Condillac's notion of absence is a modification of the notion of presence, as this absence implies the physical absence of a speaker is just a temporal phenomenon. But as we have already discussed in the previous part, Derrida pushes this notion of absence inherent in Condillac's exploration of writing to the point that it arrives at an absolute.

As opposed to Condillac's presupposition, Derrida further argues that we do not have any ground to limit communication to words.

Indeed, [communication] opens up a semantic domain that precisely does not limit itself to semantics, semiotics and even less to linguistics. For one characteristic of the semantic field of the word *communication* is that it designates non-semantic movements as well.⁹⁵

Because one can communicate movements such as shock or fear, that cannot be captured within a semantic or semiotic domain, Derrida argues that communication does not have

⁹⁵ Ibid., 1.

to refer to the conveyance of words, and so be limited to linguistic exchange. Derrida points out one of the apparatuses that limits communication to linguistic exchange is context. He argues that context is produced as a kind of consensus that prescribes communication. He points out that, within the notion of context, communication is supposed to be listened to, and one engages with or pursues dialogues across a horizon of intelligibility.⁹⁶ Therefore, in problematising the notion of context, Derrida questions the structure that sustains this operation of communication. For instance, if the conditions of a context cannot be absolutely determined, the ground on which the notion of communication has been sustained can no longer be insisted upon.

In addition, Derrida argues that what sustained the notion of communication was an empirically determined subject secured by a context. But as we have discussed in the previous part of this chapter, when the technology of writing is deployed, the ground, on which the notion of the determined subject has been sustained, is challenged. This is because the notion of absence is inherent in the technology of writing, and this disturbs the very notion of the subject inherent in the conventional notion of communication. As Derrida explains:

To be what it is, all writing must, therefore, be capable of functioning in the radical absence of every empirically determined receiver in general. And this absence is not a continuous modification of presence, it is a rupture in presence, the 'death' or the possibility of the 'death' of the receiver inscribed in the structure of the mark...⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Ibid., 2.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 8.

What Derrida emphasises here, in deploying the technology of writing, is a rupture in presence that can be brought about by the radical absence of a determined receiver. In this light, writing 'must continue to "act" and to be readable even when what is called the author of writing no longer answers for what he has written, for what he seems to have signed'.⁹⁸ My focus here is how Derrida deploys the word 'act' in explaining the operational mechanism of the technology of writing. In other words, according to Derrida, writing is not something to be read or interpreted but something that has to continue to act. And this conception of writing as an act is what allows Derrida to be connected to J. L. Austin's speech act theory.

In *How to Do Things with Words*, J. L. Austin makes a groundbreaking argument that changes the entire discourse of analytic linguistics. This is concerned with what he calls the 'performativity' of language. As opposed to the conventional understanding of language as a medium to describe or report reality, Austin argues that speaking can also bring about *doing*. For instance, when one says 'I do' at the church altar, this is not just describing or reporting reality. Moreover, this is not just to verify whether this statement is true or false. Instead, it brings about the *act* of marriage through which the utterance is actualised. In repositioning the role of language, that had been limited within conventional analytic linguistics, Austin further categorises the performative into three sub-categories: the locutionary, the illocutionary and the perlocutionary.

For instance, when A asks B the question 'Is there any salt?', the locutionary act of uttering delivers the meaning of the sentence to B. This allows the further illocutionary

⁹⁸ Ibid.

act of uttering to be performed so that B can understand the desire of A to have some salt. Austin distinguishes the meaning delivered by a locutionary utterance from the force brought out by an illocutionary utterance. In other words, what A is really asking is not about the presence of the salt in the dining room; rather, he expresses his desire to have some salt. When B finally understands what A really means, then the further perlocutionary act of causing B to hand over the salt to A produces the effect of A's speech. But what is interesting about Austin's theory is the fact that he also discusses the situation where A's speech does not produce what A intended in the first place. Austin calls this type of instruction 'infelicitous', as opposed to felicitous instructions.

Despite the radicality inherent in Austin's theory of speech acts, his premature death in 1960 became an obstacle to his groundbreaking thinking being acknowledged. It is hard to deny that Derrida's deconstructive reading of Austin's speech act theory in 'Signature Event Context' contributed to Austin's articulation of what language could do becoming located in the centre of theoretical discussions in the 1970s. Likewise, it was Austin's revolutionary theory that enabled Derrida to rearticulate the possibility of written marks going beyond the binary opposites between speech and writing. Opposing John Searle's orthodox reading of Austin's speech act theory, Derrida pays attention to an act of writing that does not know the dichotomy between speech and writing.

In light of this, it is Derrida who actively responds to Austin's consideration of how to do things with words. For Derrida, what writing does can be explained by his notion of 'rupture', traversing all types of written communication. The term 'rupture' is a breaking force that is inherent in the structure of any written marks. This is a revolutionary understanding of what writing does. Instead of our common understanding that writing adds something or inscribes something for better communication, Derrida argues that

writing is a breaking force. And it is this rupture that brings about the spacing (*espacement*) that separates the written sign from other elements of the internal contextual chain, which is always open to the possibility of disengagement and grafting.⁹⁹ And it is this spacing in speech acts that brings about a disruption of presence. Unlike Austin, who maintains presence by making reference to the source (origin) of the utterance, Derrida pushes it further by replacing it with what he calls signature.

Within the structural possibilities of writing, a signature can easily lose its ties to the signer. But a signature is still a trace of the source. Derrida calls this a signature event. In other words, a signature event is a rupture created between the signer and the source of an utterance. Moreover, we cannot control a signature event or how it is deployed, but we know that absence will always be a part of it. Even if an object is present when the word that refers to it is uttered, there is still a gap between the word and the object.

In his deconstructive reading of Austin's speech act theory, Derrida shows the possibility of writing being sustained without the subject as the author, whose position of mastery comes from the conception of the subject as the ultimate source of utterance. In parallel with Derrida's operation against the Western school of philosophy, Salamon's speaking/writing body highlights the possibility of body-writing being radically detached from the disciplinary logic of dance that necessitates a master-subjectivity as the ultimate source of utterance. In Salamon's patient and consistent body-writing in the 'trance of multitasking', where meanings attached to words, and the hierarchical orders attached to sequences of movements begin to be pushed away, what emerges is a signature event. The body does not inscribe on top of existing writing within a conventional notion of

⁹⁹ Derrida, "Signature Event Context," 9.

communication, but deconstructs what is already inscribed so that the impossibility of communication can be recognised.

In the coming part of this chapter, I shall examine another signature event that emerged in one of the contemporary choreographic experiments by Jérôme Bel. By straightforwardly juxtaposing what is said and what is conveyed (that does not satisfy institutional expectations), Bel highlights the infelicitous speech act inherent in writing. This infelicitous speech act exposes what Derrida would call the 'dissension' between what is conveyed and what is expected. And by highlighting dissension within the modern institution of dance, what emerges is a signature-event such that the positionality of the choreographer-master as the source of the utterance is no longer secure. Moreover, here I highlight the fact that the signature-event provoked by Bel's choreographic experiment pushes Derrida's notion of the signature-event even further, by revealing not only the dissension between the signer and the source of the utterance, but also the dissension between the signer and the institution in which the signer is legitimised as the source of the utterance.

Signature Event in Bel's (In)felicitous Instructions

Jérôme Bel's *The Show Must Go On* (2001) is entirely constituted of linguistic instructions, formed by the lyrics of pop songs that direct the movements of the dancers on stage. In other words, it is the lyrics of pop songs that direct the specific writing of the bodies on stage. It begins on an empty stage. For about ten minutes, the spectators are left in darkness, listening to the song 'Tonight' from *West Side Story*. The lyrics of the song, 'Tonight, Tonight, It all began tonight, I saw you and the world went away', seem to describe our expectation as spectators, ready to be diverted by the performance on stage.

When the next song, 'Let the Sunshine In', is played, the stage lighting begins to intensify as if it is the song that dictates the stage direction. Then we come to notice that at the front of the stage, a DJ is positioned with his back to the spectators as if he were a conductor with an orchestra or the director of the stage. His prominence makes it clear who is controlling the movement of the dancers and why they move in a particular way. The gap of silence created between the songs is the length of time it takes for the DJ to change a stack of CDs and hit the play button. Finally, when another song, 'Come Together', is played, nine men and nine women come onstage, dressed in casual street clothes, and stand silently. For a while, they just stand still and do nothing, apart from staring at the spectators. But when the song 'I Like to Move It' begins, the performers onstage suddenly go crazy. One of the women keeps jerking the backdrop, while one of the men takes off his T-shirt and swings it around above his head. At the same time, an overweight man plays with his belly, and a woman furiously strips to her bra and panties and then dresses again.

Then, the tune 'Ballerina Girl' begins and all the men leave the stage, triggering a laugh from the spectators. The women onstage perform some signature ballet movements in humorously clumsy fashion, evoking more laughter. When the song 'Private Dancer' begins, a DJ from the auditorium suddenly walks on stage and begins to dance alone there. He even goes back to the DJ station in order to shine a spotlight on himself. Then, when another song, 'Every Breath you Take', is played, all the performers return to the stage. However, all they do is stand still and watch the spectators again, as if to remind the spectators that it is not only they who are watching during this performance. The spectators begin talking to each other, trying to figure out what is going on, as they realise that they are an essential part in making this experiment meaningful.

As time goes by, the response of the spectators grows, as some of them sing along to the songs being played.¹⁰⁰

However, this cheerful reaction was not the case when it premiered at the Théâtre de la Ville in Paris in 2001. Angry spectators stormed the stage and asked for a refund. Despite the hostile reception at its premiere, the popularity of *The Show Must Go On* grew rapidly over time. It seems its initial failure fuelled a growing interest in the piece, and the more the piece became controversial, the more the spectators seemed to enjoy its controversy.

But if one thinks about it carefully, there are not really any controversial aspects in this piece. Paradoxically enough, this piece did not rebel against the operational mechanism of the modern institution of dance. For instance, the conventional hierarchy is sustained between the master (a linguistic imperative) who writes the movements and the dancers who execute these movements as they are told. Through its continuous obedience to the voice of the master, substituted into the lyrics of the songs, the operational principle of a conventional dance-theatre is faithfully delivered in this piece.

The song says 'come together', and the dancers on stage come together. The song says 'I like to move it', and the dancers move it, whether it is a tongue, a knapsack or a zipper. In other words, the problem caused by Bel's performers is not the fact that they do not obey the rules, but that this obedience does not reproduce what is expected of it. It is a failed utterance, thus the instructions become 'infelicitous', to borrow J. L. Austin's term. And here, let us consider the political potential of the act of writing.

¹⁰⁰ The response to Bel's work has changed dramatically over time. For instance, when I saw *The Show Must Go On* in 2015 at Sadler's Wells in London, the spectators really enjoyed the performance, as if they were at a pop concert. They seemed to understand Bel's intention and language.

When one obeys the rules but does not produce the effect that has, in the past, been engineered, what opens up is a space that reveals its internal dissension through which its conventional hierarchical order is exhausted. And this internal dissension is not simply about the conflict due to the signer's failure to be the source of utterance. It reveals that, in order for the signer to be legitimised as the source of the utterance, the signer has first to be legitimised within specific institutional imperatives. For instance, in Bel's performance, the dancers faithfully obey the linguistic imperatives on their bodies. However, this does not produce 'proper' movements that can be hierarchically organised, from the most complex to the most simple, within the existing system of dance-theatre. In other words, the signer (the DJ or the lyrics of the pop songs) conflicts with the conventional signer (the dance master) that has been legitimised within the modern institution of dance.

Moreover, in this performance, there were some professional and some amateur dancers. Nevertheless, the spectators could not distinguish between them because their movements never became more than those that anyone could do. The movements being those that anyone could do disturbs the presuppositions on which the notion of 'properness' has operated in the modern institution of dance. Who is it that tells a dancer which movements are proper and which are not?

Properness is another word for the imperatives given from a position of mastery. Throughout the development of Western dance, the notion of properness has been manufactured through a strict process of authorisation based on choreographic manuals that write the movements of dead masters. Therefore, if one wants to become a professional dancer, one must go through a predetermined process: first to master the movements in these manuals. But Bel's dancers, who produce movements that anyone

could do, obviously diverge from the strict process of legitimisation within the modern institution of dance. They obey what the lyrics of the songs dictate, as professional dancers obey choreographic manuals. Yet, Bel's dancers fail to produce what is considered as proper in the modern institution of dance, thus they exhaust the conventional operation of institutional imperatives. When the existing institutional imperatives are exhausted, what we are able to see is the emergence of a signature event where particular pedagogical presuppositions are suspended.

Chapter 3. What Makes Choreography a Truth Game?

- Disturbing the Modern Subject Machine

Choreographic Production of Subjectivity

In the previous chapters, I have examined how rethinking the relationality between the subject-making and the body-making via choreography (writing the bodies of others), in contemporary choreographic experiments disturbs what I would like to call the modern subject machine. In Chapter 1, I examined how the conception of the body is problematised by Bel's and Charmatz's presentation of the institutionalised body. Within the modern subject machine, the conception of the body is based on a unitary, self-enclosed entity whose boundary is predetermined, in order for the body to be utilised as a legal identity card.¹⁰¹ This is because, in order for the body to continue to function as a valid identity card for a subject, it has to remain absolutely individual and verifiable. In this light, by challenging the particular conception of the body, Bel's and Charmatz's choreography disturbs the smooth operation of the modern subject machine and its subjectivity production process. In Chapter 2, via Derrida's philosophical investment in writing, I discussed how the technology of writing emerges as a deconstructive force against the modern conception of the subject as the ultimate source of the meaning.¹⁰² In pushing the structural possibilities inherent in writing, Derrida ultimately disturbs the logocentric conception of the subject whose coming into being also presupposes a particular understanding of the body.

¹⁰¹ Jérôme Bel's *Pichet Klunchun and Myself* and Boris Charmatz's *Enfant* are examined in Chapter 1.

¹⁰² Eszter Salamon's *Dancing for Nothing* and Jérôme Bel's *The Show Must Go On* are examined in Chapter 2.

In briefly summarising the previous chapters, I attempt to highlight the fact that choreography is what allows us both to rethink the body via the subject, and rethink the subject via the body. This is why the technology of writing the body (of others) in contemporary choreographic experiments is always emerged in the never-ending dynamics between the subject-making and the body-making. And this is why choreography can be deployed as a critical force in reviewing the given relationality between the body and the subject within the modern subject machine. In this context, I will discuss the choreographic production of subjectivity that disturbs the very ground on which the operational mechanism of the modern subject machine has been secured. In challenging the operational mechanism of the modern subject machine that requires a predetermined conception of the body, the choreographic production of subjectivity in contemporary choreographic experiments brings about a different knowledge of the conditions that produce us as subjects.

In the modern institution of dance, the production of the choreographer-subject was formulated in a power relationship between the one who writes other bodies and other bodies that are written by the choreographer-master. But this power relationship is much more complex than a unilateral process of subjection. In Chapter 2, it is via Derrida's notion of the spectral inherent in the technology of writing that I attempt to highlight the foundational instability inherent in the choreographer-master. It is true that the spectral subjectivity of the choreographer transforms the institution of dance into a memory machine whereby the dead master's movements never disappear, but it is also true that this spectral subjectivity of the choreographer emerges in a ground that destabilises the positionality of the choreographer-master.

Against this backdrop, in this chapter I aim to examine a different intellectual itinerary from that of Derrida by thinking about the foundational instability inherent in the positionality of the choreographer-master, highlighted in contemporary choreographic experiments. In doing so, I would like to go back to Capriol's plea in *Orchesography* that I have discussed in the previous chapter once again:

Capriol: Do not allow this to happen, Monsieur Arbeau, as it is within your power to prevent it. Set these things down in writing to enable me to learn this art, and in so doing you will seem reunited with the companions of your youth and take both mental and bodily exercise, for it will be difficult for you to refrain from using your limbs in order to demonstrate the correct movements. In truth, your method of writing is such that a pupil, by following your theory and precepts, even in your absence, could teach himself in the seclusion of his own chamber.¹⁰³

As I have already mentioned, for Lepecki, it is the pupil Capriol's plea that enables the emergence of the choreographer-master in the modern institution of dance. In Capriol's plea, however, the subjectivity of the choreographer-master is not a unilateral force of oppression. In other words, the constitution of the subjectivity as the choreographer-master in the modern institution of dance is, in fact, envisaged by the pupil who is afraid of losing his master's dance after the master passes away. Capriol made his plea to his

¹⁰³ Thoinot Arbeau, *Orchesography: A Treatise in the Form of a Dialogue Whereby All Manner of Persons May Easily Acquire and Practise the Honourable Exercise of Dancing* (New York: Dance Horizons, 1996), 15. Requoted from Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, 27. Thoinot Arbeau is the anagrammatic pen name of the French cleric Jehan Tabourot (1519–1595). Tabourot is most famous for his *Orchesography*, a study of late sixteenth-century French Renaissance social dance. He was born in Dijon and died in Langres. *Orchesography*, first published in Langres in 1589, is the most detailed and authentic record of fifteenth and sixteenth-century dances in the West. It deals with what we would today call the ballroom dances of the period, considered by both Arbeau and his pupil, Capriol, to be an essential part of the education of every well-bred young man.

master, Arbeau, to write down his movements so that future generations could learn his dance. And since that moment, dance has submitted itself to the citational force of writing. This constitutes a condition for the emergence of the spectral subjectivity of the choreographer-master.

As Capriol's plea clearly reveals, I would like to draw attention to the fact that the subjectivity of the choreographer-master only comes into being via the pupil voluntarily submitting him or herself to the disciplinary logic of dance. In other words, the subjectivity of the choreographer in the modern institution of dance only comes into being when there is a subject who voluntarily places himself under the pedagogical authority of the choreographer-master. Therefore, the choreographer-master cannot be understood as an autonomous power as he always requires the pupil's voluntary submission to his commands. In highlighting the fact that it is the pupil's voluntary submission that brings about the subjectivity of the choreographer-master, I will examine Michel Foucault's critical shift from power to relations of power.¹⁰⁴

Rethinking the Choreographer-Master via Foucault's Rethinking of Power

Foucault pays attention to the fact that any operation of power is far from a unilateral operation of the powerful subject. In reviewing his own early work on asylums and prisons, Foucault admits that he might have placed too much emphasis on technologies of domination.¹⁰⁵ In this context, he stresses the fact that technologies of domination are by no means only pure violence and coercion. Instead, they always overlap with the

¹⁰⁴ '...power has to be analysed in terms of relations of power', Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* (Brighton: The Harvester Press Limited, 1980), 208.

¹⁰⁵ Michel Foucault, "Subjectivity and Truth," in *The Politics of Truth* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007), 154.

process of the individual acting upon himself.¹⁰⁶ Foucault calls this volunteer participation 'technologies of the self'. And it is at this intersection, where the technologies of domination and the technologies of the self intersect with one another, that a specific disciplinary logic of 'knowing yourself' becomes actively internalised in the production of subjectivity in the Western institution of philosophy.

In the two lectures that Foucault gave in 1980 at Dartmouth College, later published under the titles 'Subjectivity and Truth' and 'Christianity and Confession' in *The Politics of Truth*, Foucault explains why this particular disciplinary logic of 'knowing yourself' has been developed into the practice of self-examination. In doing so, Foucault asks how this practice has been developed into a coherent technique that produces a basic condition for the production of subjectivity in the Western institution of philosophy. In the coming part, via the aforementioned two lectures, I will follow Foucault's genealogical investigation into the practice of self-examination in the Western institution of philosophy, and explore how this practice develops into a coherent technique for the production of the particular subjectivity that takes place at the intersection between technologies of domination and technologies of the self. In other words, I will attempt to reveal how this practice of self-examination (later developed into a confessional practice found in various Christian institutions) exemplifies the Foucauldian understanding of the operation of power that occurs at the interaction between technologies of domination and technologies of the self. This Foucauldian understanding necessarily requires us to review the conventional strategy of resistance often found in

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

historical avant-gardism, where power is presupposed as the unilateral source of external oppression.

Against this backdrop, I would like to bring up the Belgian choreographer Christine De Smedt's recent choreographic experiment *Untitled 4. 4 Choreographic Portraits* (2012). I will juxtapose De Smedt's investigation of choreographic portraits in *Untitled 4* with Foucault's genealogical investigation of the practice of self-examination that takes place at the intersection of technologies of domination and technologies of the self.¹⁰⁷ The reason I decided to juxtapose two different projects with different aims is to highlight a different possibility of the practice of self-examination that is demonstrated in De Smedt's choreographic portraits and a truth game that Foucault articulates in his idiosyncratic investigation on the historical models of the practice of self-examination.

In De Smedt's *Untitled 4*, this different possibility of the practice of self-examination is manifested as a truth game, through which the conditions that produce us as subjects can be rearranged and reconfigured. Her *Untitled 4* begins by problematising her own mode of practice as a choreographer. But instead of producing her own portrait via the practice of self-examination, De Smedt decides to create choreographic portraits of fellow choreographers Jonathan Burrows, Alain Platel, Xavier Le Roy, and Eszter Salamon. In creating choreographic portraits of four choreographers with whom she has worked or who have been long-time colleagues and friends, De Smedt presents on stage the complex subjectivity of the choreographer that cannot be captured within the modern

¹⁰⁷ I pay particular attention to the fact that De Smedt employs the term 'portraits' here. In the interview that I conducted with her in Brussels on 4 May 2013, De Smedt said she does not want to put too much emphasis on portraits any more. However, I think the fact that she begins by appropriating portrait-making, which involves a certain type of self-examination, is significant as this explains the tactical shift she makes in order to transform what might be termed the conventional practice of self-examination into a 'truth game'.

subject machine.¹⁰⁸ Instead of being captured within the modern subject machine that normalises the dialectical circuit of self-examination, De Smedt's choreographic production of subjectivity highlights a different understanding of the choreographer-subject. The subjectivity that emerges on the stage is De Smedt/Platel/Burrows/Salamon/Le Roy and is suggested in terms of a truth game that is open to constant rearrangement and reconfiguration against the operation of the modern subject machine.

The term 'truth game' comes from Foucault's genealogical investigation into the practice of self-examination in the Western institution of philosophy.¹⁰⁹ As opposed to the predetermined operation of the modern subject machine, Foucault's term highlights the possibility of rethinking the conditions that produce us as subjects. And it is via the notion of a truth game that I attempt to articulate the tactical operation of resistance deployed in contemporary choreographic experiments that oppose the given subjectivity of the choreographer-master within the modern institution of dance. But before discussing De Smedt's choreographic production of subjectivity as a truth game, I would first like to examine Foucault's genealogical investigation through which this particular notion of a truth game emerges.

¹⁰⁸ Christine De Smedt has been with les ballets C de la B (founded by Alain Platel in 1984) for more than 20 years. She was a colleague of Jonathan Burrows at P.A.R.T.S. in Brussels, founded by Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker. She co-produced *Dance#1/Driftworks* (2008) with Eszter Salamon. She participated in Xavier Le Roy's *Low Pieces* (2009–2011) and *Temporary Title* (2015).

¹⁰⁹ Foucault, "Subjectivity and Truth," 164.

Foucault's Genealogical Investigation into the Practice of Self-Examination

The term 'truth game' comes from two lectures later published under the titles 'Subjectivity and Truth' and 'Christianity and Confession' in *The Politics of Truth*.¹¹⁰ Before articulating how I deploy this particular term, it is first necessary to explain the background to these lectures. Given in English, these lectures were Foucault's intervention into the philosophy of the subject that dominated in the post-war era in France. Foucault attempted to highlight the paradox inherent in the conventional mode of understanding the subject that necessitates a process of subjection, as opposed to the claim for the subject being an ultimate source of original thought. In other words, Foucault contends that the subject-making in the Western school of philosophy presupposes a position of mastery that controls and predefines the mode of production of the subject.

In 'Subjectivity and Truth', Foucault begins by questioning the Cartesian conception of the subject as foundation. This means that the subject is, a priori, a pre-existing platform from which thought and action can emerge. This platform, that is responsible for the subject's actions and experiences, is often referred to as the self. And it is this self that unifies the acts of conscious awareness. But Foucault finds that this Cartesian claim is not what is actually taking place in the constitution of the subject. In *Foucault, Subjectivity and Identity: Historical Constructions of Subject and Self*, Robert M. Strozier explains why Foucault finds the Cartesian conception of the subject paradoxical.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 147–191.

¹¹¹ Robert M. Strozier, *Foucault, Subjectivity and Identity: Historical Constructions of Subject and Self* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press), 2.

Imagine Descartes in a dark room, alone. Only a glimpse of him is visible as he speculates about himself, by himself. What is happening here is the theatre of the mind, with a capital-S Subject who watches over him and a subject who thinks. Therefore, as opposed to the presupposed notion of a subject as the foundation or origin, the Cartesian constitution of the subject relies upon a dialectical formulation: if the subject only comes into being via self-reflexive examination by the capital-S Subject, the subject cannot act as the foundation or origin. In other words, when one is subjected to one's own gaze, what this brings about is a split subjectivity. And it is this split subjectivity that allows the emergence of the notion of the capital-S Subject, whereby all subjects have to go through a process of subjection, as opposed to the notion of the subject as a priori and self-founded.¹¹²

In order to avoid this fundamental paradox in the Cartesian constitution of the subject, Foucault contends that the post-war structuralist constitution of the subject replaces the notion of the subject as self-founded with that of the discursive subject. According to their argument, there is no a priori subject, only a socially constructed one. They attempt to deconstruct the notion of the individual subject as a closed entity, a self-representational entity, limited by its localisable and visible corporeal boundaries, revealing it to be the product of modern legal, moral, social, and political discourses seeking specific pedagogical domination. But these structuralist projects, that attempt to replace the individual subject with a discursive subject, also have to face the logical paradox inherent within them. As demonstrated in early feminist thinking, if any individual subject has the capacity to stand outside itself and examine the cultural forces

¹¹² Ibid., 11.

acting upon it, this means that one can find one's true self, in contrast to the constructed one, which contradicts the notion of a discursive subject.

It is in this context that Strozier highlights Foucault's genealogical research, which recounts the process of constituting the subject throughout Western history. Strozier argues that Foucault attempts to resolve the paradox inherent in the structuralist constitution of the discursive subject by pursuing the constitution of a genealogy of 'subjectless subjectivity' in his later writings. The notion of subjectless subjectivity does not mean negation of the notion of the subject. Instead, as Strozier points out, by highlighting the techniques for making the subject penetrate the institutional history of Western philosophy, Foucault attempts to construct a 'genealogy of the historical ontology of self-constitution', via which he attempts to envisage a different mode of constituting the subject.¹¹³ In this context, for Foucault, his genealogical research is a particular tactic via which the technique of forming the subject in the history of the West can be revealed and reorganised.¹¹⁴

In performing genealogical research on the constitution of the subject, Foucault first pays attention to the practice of self-examination, as the Cartesian constitution of the subject illustrates. For Foucault, this practice of self-examination has later developed into a coherent technique for forming the subject under the modern subject machine. In this light, Foucault pays attention to the disciplinary logic of 'knowing oneself', as this has been internalised in the practice of self-examination since antiquity. What is problematic for Foucault about this particular disciplinary logic lies in the fact that this subjectivity automatically involves a process of subjection.

¹¹³ Ibid., 55–78, 14.

¹¹⁴ P. Taylor Trussell, "The Gift of Power: Foucault, Derrida, and Normalization" (PhD diss., Villanova University, 2009), 46.

In his genealogical tracing of how knowing yourself has been internalised in this practice of self-examination, the relation between the genealogy of the modern subject and the history of knowledge is highlighted.¹¹⁵ In the practice of self-examination, the subject is required to constitute itself both as a subject and an object of knowledge, for both itself and others. This does not mean, however, that Foucault locates his genealogical research in the history of science in general. In other words, he is not interested in creating objective value which is created by the demand to know oneself. Instead, he seeks to discover 'the discursive, the institutional and the social practices from which these sciences arose'. And in these archaeological spaces where the practice of self-examination surfaces, Foucault's project seeks to determine how the practice of self-examination became 'coherent reflective techniques with definite goals'.¹¹⁶

For Foucault, the institutionalisation of the practice of self-examination is manifested as a confessional practice in a particular time of Western history.¹¹⁷ In *The Culture of Confession from Augustine to Foucault: A Genealogy of the 'Confessing Animal'*, Chloë Taylor emphasises the fact that, for Foucault, confessional practices occur at the intersection of 'techniques of domination' and 'techniques of the self'. It is at this intersection, where the technologies of domination and the self mingle, that Foucault attempts to answer why and how this specific obligation for confessional practice emerged in the West in relation to the production of subjectivity.

¹¹⁵ For Foucault, the genealogy of the self does not take place within a field of scientific knowledge. But he does point out that the history of science is an important testing ground for the theory of knowledge. Foucault, "Subjectivity and Truth," 151.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 151–152.

¹¹⁷ Chloë Taylor, *The Culture of Confession from Augustine to Foucault: A Genealogy of the 'Confessing Animal'* (London: Routledge, 2009).

Foucault first examines how confessional practice was exercised in Greek and Hellenistic society. Foucault admits that, at first glance, the obligation to tell the truth about oneself did not seem to concern pagan philosophers in the classical period. This is because the objective of philosophical training was 'to equip the individual with the master's discourse'.¹¹⁸ Therefore, the burden of verbalisation fell on the side of the master, not on his pupils' shoulders. Foucault points out that there was another reason why the obligation to confess did not have much importance in antiquity. It was because the pupils' ties to the master were circumstantial or provisional. In other words, in antiquity, the relation between pupil and master did not require unilateral obedience. Moreover, this relationship was a temporary one, for a certain period of one's life. Under these conditions, the exhaustive and continual presentation of oneself to the supervision of the capital-S Subject was not necessary.

Foucault argues, however, that this does not mean that the demand to develop techniques for discovering the truth about oneself were absent in classical times. A most dramatic contrast to Christian confessional practice lies in the fact that confessional practice in classical times was not at all to do with 'discovering the truth hidden in a subject'.¹¹⁹ Instead, it was to account again for truths forgotten about the subject. Foucault explains that to account again for truth is to memorise the oral precepts of conduct, as memory is conceived as 'a force for truth' when it is permanently present and active in the soul. In other words, the subject is perceived as the point where rules of conduct come together and register themselves in the form of memories. Based on this

¹¹⁸ Michel Foucault, "Subjectivity and Truth," 156.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 154–160.

understanding of the subject, the obligation to tell the truth is not to discover a still unknown truth deep inside one's soul. As Foucault explains:

Truth is conceived as a force that is not defined by a correspondence to reality but as a force inherent to principles and which has to be developed in a discourse. It is something which is in front of the individual as a point of attraction, a kind of magnetic force which attracts him towards a goal.¹²⁰

This means that confession is understood as 'a force capable of transforming pure knowledge and simple consciousness into a real way of living'. This is why confession is not directed towards examination of oneself as the object of knowledge, but towards 'the constitution of a self, which could be at the same time and without any discontinuity in the subject of knowledge and subject of will'. Therefore, the role of confession and consultation is to 'give to truth as a force'. In this context, Foucault argues that, in ancient philosophy, the practice of confession might be considered a truth game.¹²¹ Again, the objective of this truth game was not to discover a hidden truth about oneself. Rather, the objective was to turn the individual into a place where truth could appear and act as a real force. In other words, the self does not have to be discovered but *constituted*, through the force of truth. This force lies in 'the rhetorical quality of the master's discourse', and this rhetorical quality depends on how distant the pupil is, in his way of living, from the true principles that he knows. In contrast to this understanding of confessional practice in the ancient world, Foucault argues that, in Christianity, confessional practice is linked

¹²⁰ Ibid., 163–164.

¹²¹ Ibid., 165.

to 'the art of interpretation'.¹²² This is why, in Christianity, the pagan philosophers' conception of truth had to be radically revised. In examining the second part of Foucault's lecture, later transcribed as 'Christianity and Confession', I will attempt to articulate further how the truth game is transformed into the 'art of interpretation' in Christian institutions in the West.

The Body to be Interpreted

For the early Christian fathers, truth was something to be discovered, not constituted. In other words, truth is something hidden in or behind the deepest and most secretive part of the soul. Therefore, it can only be reached via an analytical examination. In this context, one's task is to bring to light what is normally the most obscure part of oneself. This is why Christianity is the very manifestation of confessionary practice. Foucault points out that, among the many Christian institutions, the monastery has many similarities to the pagan schools of philosophy in classical times. There is nothing surprising in this, since a monastic life was considered to be a true form of philosophical life. Therefore, in Christian monasteries, there is an obvious transfer of several techniques of the self, from the practices of pagan philosophy that put emphasis on sustaining conformity with acts and rules. Therefore, some of these constitutive elements inherent in the constitution of the subject in classical times are repeated in the Christian constitution of the subject. But, in the end, Foucault argues that Christianity reveals itself as having a very different form of constitution from that of the ancient world.¹²³

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Michel Foucault, "Christianity and Confession," in *The Politics of Truth* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007), 171.

Foucault contends that what concerned early Christian monks was not the knowledge of whether there was conformity between an idea and the order of external things, but rather a 'question of scrutinizing the thought in itself'. This is why Foucault argues that it was for the 'first time in history that thoughts are considered as possible objects for an analysis'. Moreover, these thoughts have to be suspected, since they can be secretly altered, disguised in their own substance. Therefore, hermeneutics in Christianity becomes about 'discovering the reality hidden inside the thought'.

Then, the question is how do you analyse your own thoughts? The early Christian fathers concluded that one interpreted one's thoughts by telling them to others. This act of verbalisation has 'the specific virtue of verification of the truth'.¹²⁴ It is because what marks the difference between good and evil thoughts is that evil ones cannot be referred to without difficulty. If one blushes when recounting them, that is proof that those thoughts are not as good as they may appear.

This is why Foucault argues that verbalising the truth about oneself cannot be disconnected from the obligation to renounce oneself. Under Christian hermeneutics, one is able to acquire knowledge about oneself from the departure point of renouncing oneself and the hidden part of the soul. In this light, it is not surprising that the body was demonised under Christian hermeneutics. The reason is quite simple. One's body is more difficult to decipher than one's thoughts. The process that takes place to decipher one's thoughts necessitates translating or transposing thoughts into the linguistic realm, where they can be communicated to others. As Elaine Scarry points out, however, in *The Body in Pain*, the body does not have its own language with which to articulate itself to others.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Ibid., 183–185.

¹²⁵ Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

The body does not know how to submit itself to linguistic force. For instance, when one has a headache, one may not find the exact words that are already taken for granted to convey one's state of pain. A sentence such as 'I feel like I'm being hammered' reveals that there is no direct link between the body and language. In other words, the body lacks its own words that can be acknowledged and allowed in a linguistic utterance. Because of this difficulty in locating the body within the realm of the linguistic, the body remains as somebody else, within oneself. The body cannot be easily verbalised and transformed into subjective data for interpretative analysis, and so remains forever foreign to oneself.

Therefore, within the Christian confessional formula, one can either demonise this other to its very limit, or attempt to transfer its indecipherability into something to be deciphered.¹²⁶ For instance, the obsession with the task of analysing one's sexual desire in Christian confessional practice, to which Foucault pays attention in his project on the history of sexuality, can be understood as an attempt to decipher the body so that it can be transferred as interpretive material for analysis.¹²⁷ In this attempt to deal with the indecipherability of the body in the linguistic realm, a specific technique has to be invented so that the body can be perceived as an object of knowledge that can be deciphered and communicated. For the Christian Church, thanks to this technique of self-examination, the body now becomes an important object of knowledge, which is later captured within confessional practice.

By taking a detour through Foucault's genealogical research on the practice of self-examination, which has been institutionalised as confessional practice in the West, I have attempted to articulate the thread that interweaves the complex avenues of

¹²⁶ Foucault, "Christianity and Confession," 188.

¹²⁷ Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," 222.

Foucault's investigation of the constitution of the modern subjectivity. For Foucault, one of the important techniques for making modern subjectivity is confession, which transforms the subject into the object of knowledge. Once the subject becomes the object of knowledge, the process of subjection cannot be avoided and the position of mastery is internalised. However, this process of subjection in the practice of self-examination is always installed by the voluntary submission of those who obey the demand to practise self-examination.

In this context, I would like to go back to De Smedt's choreographic portraits in *Untitled 4. 4 Choreographic Portraits*. As discussed before, this dance-theatre begins with De Smedt's problematisation of her own mode of practice as a choreographer. The reason why I pay attention to this problematisation is because, by posing a question about her own mode of operation, De Smedt inevitably positions herself as the object of examination so that a process of subjection is necessitated. Yet, the ways in which she deals with the question of the mode of her own practice allow her to escape from being caught within the split subjectivity that necessitates this process of subjection. In other words, De Smedt refuses to position herself as an object of knowledge to be interpreted. Instead, she creates a truth game, through which she attempts to reconstitute her subjectivity as a choreographer who is open to constant rearrangement and rearticulation. In the coming part, I will take a closer look at some of De Smedt's tactics.

Problematising the Mode of Operation as a Choreographer

In a booklet published on the occasion of *Untitled 4*, De Smedt confesses that it was a question about her own mode of operation as a choreographer that became the driving force behind this particular dance-theatre:

What is it that I always do? Or rather that I don't want to do? I realized that in my work there was a hidden premise not to involve biographic and personal elements. But what do I mean by *personal*? What is the relationship between how I think *the personal* and the work that I make?¹²⁸

In other words, for De Smedt, this hidden presupposition not to involve personal and biographical elements when giving a performance has influenced her basic mode of operation as a choreographer. However, does that mean that her work can be completely distinguished from her way of life, the decisions she makes every day, and the people she has relationships with? In an attempt to push this question further, as the title of the dance-theatre suggests, De Smedt turns to four choreographers with whom she has collaborated, and had professional or personal relationships for a long time: Alain Platel, Jonathan Burrows, Eszter Salamon and Xavier Le Roy.¹²⁹ In doing so, De Smedt is able to avoid being caught up in a mirroring structure whereby she examines herself.

De Smedt conducted a series of interviews with these four fellow choreographers, and the interviews became the basic skeleton through which the structure of the performance emerged. Therefore, four different structures that together constitute the dance-theatre reveal the particularities of the interviews that she had with these four choreographers. The particularities of the interviews can of course come from her particular relationships with each of those choreographers. But I want to emphasise the

¹²⁸ Christine De Smedt, "4 Choreographic Portraits," in *4 Choreographic Portraits* (Ghent: les ballets C de la B, 2012), 3. Published on the occasion of the premiere at Kaaaitheater in Brussels, 2012.

¹²⁹ Christine De Smedt has been with les ballets C de la B (founded by Alain Platel in 1984) for more than 20 years. She was a colleague of Jonathan Burrows at P.A.R.T.S. in Brussels, founded by Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker. She co-produced *Dance#1/Driftworks* (2008) with Eszter Salamon. She participated Xavier Le Roy's *Low Pieces* (2009–2011) and *Temporary Title* (2015).

fact that the structure also reveals the particular mode of operation of each of these choreographers. Therefore, what is presented on stage is not just a representation of the interviews that De Smedt conducted. Instead, De Smedt attempts to reveal the mode of operation of each choreographer that I already reflected in the structures of the dance-theatre presented on stage.

When De Smedt examines her own question about the mode of her practice as a choreographer, this initial question positions her as an object of examination. Soon however, by including other choreographers, De Smedt successfully escapes from a mirroring structure that would sustain the split subjectivity. Then, a problem arises with the positionality of De Smedt herself as she examines other choreographers within a confessional situation where the invited choreographers talk to her about their mode of practice. In this situation, De Smedt has to witness the emergence of the positionality of the choreographer-master, in this case De Smedt herself, who examines these four choreographers as the objects of interpretation.

What is interesting, however, is the fact that De Smedt cannot maintain a normal distance between herself and her objects of examination, as these choreographers are her long-time friends and colleagues. Given that she has maintained such long professional and personal relationships with them, there would have been many points made by her interviewees that would have made it difficult for her to distinguish her own voice from theirs. On the other hand, we have to take into consideration what these interviews go through in the process of being transformed into a stage performance. Therefore, the distance that seems to be reduced due to her special relationship with these four choreographers springs back, since this casual talk between friends and colleagues is combined with a professional mode of recording and composition. By transforming these

interviews into a stage performance, her positionality in relation to the four choreographers is once again transformed.

When De Smedt transforms the interviews into a stage performance, she knows that she will not be able to claim authorship over what she is going to perform on stage. The movements, speech, and gestures that constitute the performance cannot be claimed to be her own creation as they are based on the interviews that she conducted with the four choreographers. As these four choreographers are her long-time colleagues and friends, it would be confusing for her to draw a neat line between what is hers and what is theirs. Therefore, what is highlighted is the citational force inherent in the technology of choreography, through which a space of appearance for other bodies opens up. It is true that this citational force inherent in the technology of choreography is what provides the conditions for the emergence of the subjectivity of the choreographer-master to be sustained, even when physically absent from the modern institution of dance. But De Smedt cannot acquire the master's positionality, as what is hers and what comes from the interviewees never becomes clear. Therefore, the subjectivity on stage is something that only comes into being with the form of a *solidus*, as in De Smedt/Platel/Burrows/Salamon/Le Roy.

In this light, I want to highlight the tactical operation in De Smedt's deployment of the technology of choreography. By deploying the citational force inherent in the technology of choreography on multiple levels, and to its maximum capacity, to the point where the distinction between what De Smedt says and what De Smedt cites on stage is not clear, De Smedt does not allow the instalment of an authentic author as the foundation of all the meaning produced. At this point, it is interesting to notice that, despite the fact that De Smedt initially called her performance *Untitled 4. 4 Choreographic Portraits*, in the

interview that I conducted with her a year after its premiere, she insisted that it was no longer about portraits.¹³⁰ Historically, portrait-making is based on a judicious examination of the subject that necessitates the objectification of the very subject one examines. Self-portrait-making is an especially scrupulous and static practice of self-examination through which the process of subjection, thus the position of mastery, is internalised. In contrast, De Smedt's choreographic portraits refuse to be captured within this split subjectivity, and constantly attempt to reconstitute their subjectivity as a truth game.

In attempting to avoid being captured within this split subjectivity inherent in any portrait-making, De Smedt plays with the nature of theatre that generates subjectivity as a truth game. As opposed to the simple denigration of theatre as an illusion-producing machine, the production of subjectivity in theatre is not as simple as it seems. Here, I would like to elaborate further by considering the eighteenth-century French philosopher Denis Diderot's notion of the paradox of the actor. Diderot argues that a good actor is one who can manage to distance himself from the role that he plays. In other words, an actor only comes into being through 'the erection of a barrier' within himself. For instance, an actor in a play has first to negate his real self in order to actualise the character on stage. Therefore, a process of negation is essential to become an actor. But this negation does not automatically allow an actor to become a character. There are constant struggles between oneself (the actor) and the character. Regardless of how good an actor may be, he can never achieve a state of becoming entirely somebody else within a particular time and space. At best, the actor will become good at playing a given

¹³⁰ From the interview that I conducted with De Smedt in Brussels on 4 May 2013.

character. In short, this is what Diderot calls ‘the paradox of the actor’. On stage, he is neither himself nor the character: he is a self who goes through the endless role-playing of a character. I will come back to this paradox of the actor when I discuss the first part of *Untitled 4. 4 Choreographic Portraits*, based on De Smedt’s interview with Alain Platel. De Smedt highlights the fact that the ‘paradox of the actor’ is inherent in the theatre as a particular subjectivity machine. By copying, imitating, assuming, identifying, appropriating, desiring, empathically listening to, and directly and indirectly citing the interviews that she conducted, De Smedt evokes the following questions: Who’s speaking? Who’s moving? Who’s talking about whom? And does any of this matter in the end?

Neither De Smedt Nor Platel

When the door at the Kaaitheater finally opens, I first notice that there is no concrete boundary between the stage and the auditorium.¹³¹ Instead, a couple of low, iron-framed wooden benches have unevenly been put in the space, causing momentary confusion among the audience regarding where to sit. Moreover, the choreographer and performer De Smedt is already onstage, standing at the rear near the back wall of the theatre space. There is neither a curtain call nor lights out to give the habitual signal for the beginning of the performance. Instead, the audience find that as soon as they enter the theatre, De Smedt is already busy reading a script, holding a microphone connected to an amplifier. This is ‘I would leave a signature’, the first part of De Smedt’s *Untitled 4. 4 Choreographic*

¹³¹ The premiere of Christine De Smedt’s *Untitled 4. 4 Choreographic Portraits* was at Kaaistudio in Brussels on 17 April 2012.

Portraits, where she enacts her interview with the Belgium choreographer and founder of les ballets C de la B, Alain Platel, with whom she has worked for a long time.¹³²

At first, it is not clear what she is reading. Slowly, the audience realise that it is about how communication of the meaning of performance can take place between the audience and the performer on stage. But what is never made clear is whether this script is De Smedt's direct citation from her interview with Platel or De Smedt's rearticulation of Platel speaking. This is what we hear from De Smedt/Platel:

Especially in encounters with people after a performance,
they ask questions like, What do you mean by ...
And very often I ask the question back,
What do you think it meant?
And very often they give an answer that we already had in mind.
But they just don't trust their own answer,
because you know ... they think they saw something strange on stage,
what they understand is too strange,
so they just assume this is what the meaning was.
And then, also, when you see an audience, a big audience,
differences in how they experience a performance are quite minor.
I did not like very much or they like so and so or they did not like it.
It is only three options. It is not a lot.
We can divide thousands of people in the audience, on those levels.
So it is not much, huh?

¹³² De Smedt has been associated with les ballets C de la B since 1991.

So it is not much, huh?¹³³

At this very moment, above her live voice, a recorded version of the same script begins to play simultaneously. It is also her voice that is speaking, and the script seems to be the same, but since she cannot speak exactly in synch with the recording, the chasm between the live reading and the recorded version ends up creating an echo effect. If I could express this in a written format, it would be something like this:

In *in fact fact*, it *it is is* not *not so so* diverse *diverse*,

It *it is is* more *more* united *united* than *than we we* think *think*.

People ... *people ...* you *you* know *know*...

If *if you you* talk *talk to to* people *people*...

These versions of her voice that echo within and against one another seem to highlight the split subjectivity presented to the audience. Moreover, here De Smedt talks about the split subjectivity created within the theatre by the division between the auditorium and the stage. Therefore, what is presented on stage is a doubling of the split subjectivity of De Smedt and Platel taking place on stage.

This De Smedt/Platel subjectivity is not the outcome of an accumulation of Platel and De Smedt. Yet, at the same time, despite the fact that the subjectivity of the two choreographers presented on stage is inevitably partial, refractive, and mediated, neither does this mean that the De Smedt/Platel on stage is the product of a reductive process of what is, supposedly, two self-sufficient subjects. Instead, what De Smedt's presentation

¹³³ Transcribed by me from the DVD version of *Untitled 4. 4 Choreographic Portraits*.

aims to do is to break down both subjectivities into elements, reassemble some of them, and transform them into something neither De Smedt nor Platel can claim. Therefore, what the audience encounters is neither Platel nor De Smedt. And by becoming neither subject, De Smedt successfully escapes from constructing any positionality of the master inherent in any subject-making process. In other words, De Smedt never practises being Platel nor expresses herself via Platel. This is the point where I want to revisit the paradox of the actor mentioned in an earlier part of this chapter. As opposed to the common anti-theatrical thoughts prevalent in Western critical thinking, theatre is not a place where illusion conquers reality.¹³⁴ Instead, as the paradox of the actor clearly illustrates, theatre is where any attempt to establish a solid subject is never successful. In this context, the fact that De Smedt decides to transform her interview with Platel into a stage performance reveals contemporary choreographers' relationship with theatre, one which differs from that of the historical avant-garde. For them, theatre and theatricality are not an ultimate evil to be eradicated but something that can be tactically deployed and reassembled as a truth game.

The emergence of this new subjectivity, that always fails to acquire sustainability and fixity, is emphasised when De Smedt puts down her microphone after several rounds of reading the prepared script. As if attempting to distance herself from this complex subjectivity, De Smedt places herself close to the audience. While standing next to us, she looks back at the place where she stood a minute before. This change in position is a repeated tactic that can be detected throughout *Untitled 4. 4 Choreographic Portraits*.

¹³⁴ Nicholas Ridout, "The Undoing of Theatre: The Politics of Effect on the Contemporary Stage" (PhD diss., University of London, 2004).

Throughout the performance, De Smedt is never satisfied with her given position as a performer on stage.

As De Smedt is never satisfied with her position, our given positionality as the audience is also heightened. We, as the audience, have the full right to observe the performer on stage. Although our power is underestimated, as passive and impotent spectators, it is our gaze that dominates the performers on stage. We can see them, but they cannot see us due to the strong lighting that hampers their vision. This is enormous power. But, when De Smedt moves to a position next to the audience, we realise that this may no longer be the case. Standing right next to the audience, De Smedt is looking back at the trace of the complex subjectivity created by her. And in so doing, De Smedt occupies the place of the spectator. Thus we, the audience, realise that we are not simply spectators; we are a spectator's spectators.

De Smedt/Platel/Burrows/Salamon/Le Roy

The last part of De Smedt's performance is called 'Self-reliance'. It is based on her interview with Xavier Le Roy. This performance comes after 'The son of a priest', that is based on her interview with Jonathan Burrows, and 'A woman with a diamond', based on her interview with Eszter Salamon. Thus, the audience has already encountered De Smedt/Platel/Burrows/Salamon. Yet, in this last part of the performance, De Smedt drives the citational force inherent in the technology of choreography to its maximum, to the point where she attempts to become Xavier Le Roy herself via the format of a question and answer session.

After a short break, when the audience are allowed to enter the theatre again, De Smedt also walks in and sits on a chair in the stage area. Then, she says that she is

proposing a post-performance talk for 40 minutes. At first, I did not even realise that this part of the performance was about Xavier Le Roy, as I had not read the leaflet before entering the theatre. Therefore, I assumed that she was actually proposing a question and answer session with the audience. But it did not take long for me to realise that she was speaking on behalf of Le Roy, as there were specific clues that I could immediately relate to Le Roy's practice.

For instance, De Smedt's suggestion to have a question and answer session as part of the performance itself reminds me of Le Roy's *Low Pieces* (2010), in which De Smedt participated as a performer. *Low Pieces* begins with a question and answer session before presenting the prepared performance on stage. Le Roy proposes a specific time duration to the audience, and after this time the lights automatically dim and this is a sign for the beginning of the stage performance. When De Smedt begins the last part of *Untitled 4. 4 Choreographic Portraits*, she appropriates Le Roy's way of incorporating a question and answer session, and allows the audience to participate in the actual staging of the performance. This means that the last part of her performance is always different, as each performance depends on what kinds of questions a particular audience asks and how De Smedt responds to those questions.

In the performance that I participated in, one audience member asked a question about De Smedt's shoes. He asked whether her change of shoes after the first part of the performance (I had not even realised that she had changed her shoes after the first part) was based on a conscious decision. People laughed. And this helped to break the ice. And the way in which she dealt with this question was to turn it back on the person asking it, saying, 'Would you expect me to change my shoes?' And for a while, a conversation that began with what might initially be considered silly, continued. Here, the kinds of

questions that were asked were not important. In other words, the content of the questions was not the point. Instead, what has to be considered are the ways in which she dealt with the questions raised. De Smedt constantly redirected the questions asked of her so that the answers could hardly be about what she thought, judged, felt, or believed. And in this constant attempt to redirect the questions posed to her, what she attempted to include was an unexpected moment when the conversation became about Le Roy. This is how the emergence of the subjectivity of the choreographer on De Smedt's stage became an event that could not be predicted or announced, prior to its arrival.

For instance, after a few minutes of discussion about De Smedt's shoes, another audience member asked a different question. This time, it was about her shorts. Everyone laughed again. This is what she asked:

Are those shorts your private shorts that you just bring in to the performance or part of a costume for your performance? If this question is not interesting enough, maybe you can elaborate more on this relation between bringing something private into a performance?

And from this simple question that seemed to have nothing to do with Le Roy, we witnessed how De Smedt introduced Le Roy:

These shorts are my private shorts.

As you asked me to elaborate a little on that,
private and work, for me there is no difference.

Everything for me is related to work. Everything is working.

It has to do with a moment in my life when I decided to go from one way of living to another way of living. So it is a story that I tell a lot. It is a story about going from science to dance.

It is a big story with lots of little stories inside. It is not only about a story about work.

But about love and leaving France. This story has been formalised. It is a show...

At this moment, I immediately notice that it was De Smedt/Le Roy speaking, as the story about Le Roy being a molecular biologist before he decided to become a choreographer is a famous one. And the show that De Smedt refers to here is *Product of Circumstances* (1999), which was the very first stage performance given by Le Roy, and which explains his biographical story of deciding to change his career from molecular biologist to choreographer. De Smedt/Le Roy continued to speak:

If people ask me my story, it is the story that I tell about...

Not wanting to be in a situation where I am in a job or forced to work from nine to five or seven...

I want a place where you cannot draw a line between private time or free time and work.

And if you want to draw a line, you have to draw it by yourself.

It is always changing. It is always a question, how to draw that line.

What seems to be problematic is not just whether there should be a division between work time and free time. The problem for Le Roy is the fact that this drawing of a line is done by an institutional framework that is given and perpetuated.

So it was a decision to go to a place where work is not the opposite of free time where we understand ... free time is the heritage we inherited from the thirties or the forties. But I want to go to this place where there is a constant permanent exchange between whatever I do and work and life. That was a kind of resistance towards a way of living where I did not feel good and that I felt was imposed on me ... It was an act of rupture, an act of resistance...

Here, De Smedt/Le Roy further explains how the choice of becoming a choreographer was an act of resistance against the given division of time in the field of science. De Smedt/Le Roy argues that what seems to be a natural division between work time and leisure is only a modern invention intended to legitimise the dialectical reorganisation of life. I will return to this issue of the particular distribution of time in Chapter 4. Here I want to pay attention to the fact that this problematisation of the conditions that produce us as the modern subjects is shared by this group of choreographers that I examine in this thesis. Therefore, although I know that De Smedt was referring in particular to Le Roy's performance *Product of Circumstances*, what never became clear in that question and answer session was who was referring to whom, and who was speaking for whom. For instance, one audience member posed the following question in the middle of the conversation:

Would you die if you don't work?

Then, De Smedt/Le Roy replied:

No, I think everything I do, I really enjoy it.

The way in which I live and also work is still a big luxury...

Because I still enjoy being in this state of permanent exchange...

Here, the question to be asked is the following: When the audience member used the pronoun 'you', to whom was this question addressed? And when De Smedt/Le Roy replied with the pronoun 'I', to whom was this 'I' referring? When everyone seemed confused, one of the audience members interrogated De Smedt by asking why she chose not to include Xavier Le Roy's story, but have this question and answer dialogue instead.

This is how De Smedt/Le Roy replied:

Maybe, somebody else in the audience can make a comment on that ... huh ... So, the question is why I choose not to show Xavier Le Roy and propose this talk ... why is this, in your opinion?

Once again, instead of swiftly replying to the question posed, De Smedt attempted to redirect the question to the audience. When the audience were not willing to respond to the question redirected to them, De Smedt/Le Roy finally spoke:

I think the situation, which is related to the situation of an interview, is a situation related to the way I work with people. If you ask me for words about how I work with people ... listening, talking, negotiating, thinking together ... which is an interview or a situation ... One can even say this is part of the ethics of my life. It is important to be in another mode of exchange. I think it is important to be in a situation where you can develop ideas and understanding, and in this way we cannot

really do it alone. You can listen, negotiate and talk together. This is also why we have this talk.

In this situation, when De Smedt/Le Roy says 'I', to whom is this 'I' referring? When De Smedt/Le Roy talks about the 'ethics of my life', whose ethics are referred to here? And lastly, when De Smedt/Le Roy says 'this is why we have this talk', who is 'we' here? In this context, the title 'Self-reliance' is very ironic as De Smedt can never rely upon herself in constituting this performance. Instead, the subjectivity that is revealed on stage by De Smedt/Platel/Burrows/Salamon/Le Roy is always more than what is defined in the first place. This surplus subjectivisation of the choreographer is what I want to highlight by scrutinising De Smedt's choreographic experiment in this chapter. In an attempt to avoid being captured within the dialectical constitution of the choreographer-subjectivity as the master that sustains the particular process of subjection, I would argue that De Smedt's choreographic experiment suggests a thought-provoking theoretical model so that a new possibility of conceiving the choreographer-subjectivity can be tested.

In the contemporary experiments by this new generation of choreographers examined in this thesis, the choreographer is no longer perceived as a unilateral force of oppression that necessitates and internalises a process of subjection. In this context, it is no coincidence that the conventional notion of a dance company, where there is a definite hierarchical division between the choreographer-subject and the dancer-subject, has been replaced by collaborative projects between colleagues and circles of friends on many contemporary dance stages.¹³⁵ In these various types of collaborative projects,

¹³⁵ In this thesis, apart from Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker, the choreographers whom I examine do not operate in the conventional sense of a dance company. Although some of them run a certain type of organisation, it is more like having a platform rather than a dance company in a conventional sense.

what stands out is the fact that the constitution of the choreographer-subject becomes an event where a truth game rearranges and rearticulates the conditions that produces us as subjects.

Chapter 4. What Makes Choreography Research?

- De-Signifying the Body within the State of Not-Yet-Knowing

Reconstituting the Field of Knowledge via a Foucauldian Conception of Power

In previous chapters, I examined how the particular disciplinary logic that demands the submission of the body to the master's speech-acts has been devised, legitimised, and institutionalised, thanks to the tactics of binding the body with the technology of writing. At the same time, I also investigated how a particular set of critical engagements has been raised to deconstruct the choreographer-subject by rethinking the conditions that have normalised the imperatives of the modern institution of dance. In doing so, I have turned to Michel Foucault's rethinking of the mechanism of power that takes place at the intersection of the technologies of domination and the technologies of the self.

In rethinking the relationship between those who write the bodies of others and those who perform, I have ultimately aimed to highlight the need for a different understanding of the operation of power. As opposed to the conventional tactic of resistance, positioned outside the operation of power, and inevitably installing a binary system, a Foucauldian rethinking of power allows us to review the conventional tactic against the operation of the institution that we inhabit. For instance, what has drawn my attention most in contemporary choreographic experiments is the fact that their critical engagement with the institution that they inhabit illustrates a different understanding of the operation of power from that of the historical avant-garde. Thus, for the new generation of choreographers, the choreographer-subject as a position of power always operates at the intersection between the technologies of domination and technologies of the self, through which the body becomes reformulated according to particular canons.

In other words, this reformulation of the body does not mean that the body is only captured under the negative force of oppression. Instead, the reformulation of the body is achieved by a wilful submission of individuals that correspond to the particular disciplinary logic. But why has there been a voluntary submission of one's body to the master's speech-acts? This is how Foucault explains it:

What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression.¹³⁶

For Foucault, discipline as a mechanism of power, which regulates the behaviour of individuals in society, not only produces the positionality of the master, but also induces a productive network through which a particular set of knowledge can be induced. Therefore, the discipline of dance should be understood as more than the oppression of the body. It has brought about pleasure, discourses, and knowledge in its institutionalisation. But, the question to be asked here is the following: What do we mean by knowledge?

In order to comprehend the Foucauldian understanding of knowledge, it is necessary to bring up Foucault's power/knowledge configuration.¹³⁷ This Foucauldian configuration of power/knowledge ruptures our conventional understanding of power

¹³⁶ Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought*, ed. Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin Books, 1986), 61.

¹³⁷ Sara Mills, *Michel Foucault* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 67-79.

as the unilateral source of oppression and violence. Instead, as the solidus between power and knowledge indicates, this Foucauldian model emphasises the mutual interdependence between the two. In other words, the Foucauldian power/knowledge model is based on the presupposition that there is no power relation without the constitution of a field of knowledge.¹³⁸ Therefore, when there is a specific constitution of knowledge, there must have been a specific operation of power that determines what can remain within the realm of knowledge. In other words, it is a specific power relation that enables, legitimises, and sustains a specific truth claim, through which a specific belief system is internalised and constituted as knowledge. In this context, Foucault argues that far from preventing knowledge, power produces it.¹³⁹ For Foucault, power not only controls knowledge but also supports, applies, and exploits it. On the other hand, Foucault claims that a specific constitution of knowledge shapes power relations in accordance with a specific intention. Therefore, it is knowledge that defines the conditions, scope, and parameters of a specific power operation. This is why, within the Foucauldian model of power/knowledge, the conception of knowledge is always implicated in the conception of power.

In this light, there is nothing surprising that the problematisation of power operations in the institutionalisation of dance has led this new generation of choreographers to become involved with the problem of the (modern) system of knowledge production. As we saw in previous chapters, the problematisation of the positionality of the choreographer has become a common departure point from which contemporary choreographic experiments have begun. And I would argue that this

¹³⁸ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 27.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 194.

necessarily raises questions about the modern system of knowledge production that conditions and predetermines the scope and parameters of the particular power operation in the modern institution of dance. In other words, contemporary choreographic experiments become a critical force, opposing the modern system of knowledge that has normalised the operation of a specific hierarchical system within the modern institution of dance.

Contemporary choreographers attempt to challenge how dance as a particular discipline has been institutionalised within the modern system of knowledge production by presenting their dance-theatre as a form of research that highlights the state of not-yet-knowing. In order to develop this discussion, I would first like to discuss further what I mean by research. But considering the fact that the term can be deployed in manifold ways, in attempting to define what I mean by research, it would be quicker to outline what I do not want associated with my discussion.

Dance-Theatre as a Form of Research

First of all, in discussing contemporary choreographic experiments as a form of research, I do not want to associate with the recent debates on 'artistic research', especially in the field of visual art. In recent years, with the proliferation of international biennales and their loud claims for globalisation, we have witnessed artistic practice being rearticulated with the term 'research'. And there have been many critical attempts to define and redefine what is special about artistic research.¹⁴⁰ I have, however, no intention of adding an extra slant to what artistic research is, or to categorise the different vectors of

¹⁴⁰ Tom Holert, "Art In the Knowledge-Based Polis," *e-flux* 3 (2009): <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/art-in-the-knowledge-based-polis/>.

studies on artistic research. Instead, I want to point out here that the recent debates on artistic research tend to focus on what artistic research could be or should be. In consequence, I would argue that the debates have been captured by the institutional and managerial desire to encompass the specificity of research-based art within the existing framework, in order to sustain the existing operational mechanism of the institution of art. In this context, I want to focus not on what is special about the artistic research conducted by contemporary choreographic experiments but on why and how contemporary choreographic experiments present their dance-theatre as research. Many contemporary choreographers do not see their stage performance as a finished work that is inevitably captured within the specific system of representation, but rather as part of research activity, by highlighting the state of not-yet-knowing.

For instance, one of the common features of contemporary choreographic stages since the late 1990s has been the presentation of choreographer as narrator. She or he is no longer the transcendental master, but rather a tangible narrator who is willing to reveal the structure of the performance to the audience. In this context, I would like to discuss Xavier Le Roy's *Product of Circumstances* (1999). In this performance, Le Roy decided to talk about why he became interested in becoming a choreographer. In other words, Le Roy decided to expose himself and his positionality as a choreographer as much as possible. In the process, he interweaves his unusual professional trajectory, from being a molecular biologist to becoming a choreographer, into the very structure of the performance by integrating parts of his doctoral thesis in biology into his lecture-formatted performance. Thus, on stage, he inevitably moves between different modes of research and disciplines. In this process of mediating and negotiating between different

modes of research and disciplines, Le Roy creates an unexpected epistemological link while oscillating between being a biologist and a choreographer.

Such a mode of presentation as seen in *Product of Circumstances* evokes a post-Fordist mode of operation whereby new epistemological paradigms, such as reflexivity, transdisciplinarity, and heterogeneity, dramatically change the structure, status, and shape of the knowledge system. The term 'post-Fordism' obviously comes from the system devised in Henry Ford's automotive factories that were characterised by the assembly line. Within the assembly line system, what is guaranteed is standardisation of production.¹⁴¹ But opposed to this standardisation guaranteed by Fordism, post-Fordist society redefines the frame of the systems of consumption and production. If one can say that Fordism is about mass production, post-Fordism is about mass customisation, thanks to globalised markets and the development of information technology that allows unprecedented fluidity in the consumer market, where diversification and flexibility seem to be guaranteed. What I want to highlight here, however, is that this post-Fordist structure under a neo-liberal culture of fluidity and the destabilisation of categories and disciplines are not necessarily emancipatory. As De Smedt/Le Roy admits in 'Self-reliance', Le Roy's resistance to the specific partition of time does not liberate him, as now he is caught up in a neo-liberal regime that demands that one works all the time. Therefore, a once decisive upheaval is now captured within another power operation that controls one's subjectivity and mode of operation.

¹⁴¹ Sonja Lavaert and Pascal Gielen, "The Dismasure of Art. An Interview with Paolo Virno," *Open 17: A Precarious Existence, Vulnerability in the Public Domain* (Amsterdam: SKOR, 2009), 17.

But this way that I tried, I also felt it started becoming imposed by the surroundings because now it prescribes that we work all the time, it is also the result of this push-up economy ... it is also the ideal way of living, it is the concept of progress.¹⁴²

In this context, I want to briefly return to Christine De Smedt's performance, *Untitled 4. 4 Choreographic Portraits* (2012), that I examined in Chapter 3. Especially in the last part, 'Self-reliance', based on her interview with Xavier Le Roy, one of the issues that De Smedt raises is why Le Roy decided to become a choreographer after gaining a PhD in molecular biology. De Smedt/Le Roy explains that it is due to Le Roy's problematisation of the existing distribution of time within the specific field of his profession:

Not wanting to be in a situation, where I am in a job or forced to work from nine to five or seven...

I want a place where you cannot draw the line between private time or free time and work.

And if you want to draw a line, you have to draw the line by yourself.

It is always changing. It is always a question, how to draw that line.¹⁴³

Here, what is highlighted by De Smedt/Le Roy's problematisation of the existing distribution of time within a specific profession is two contradictory terms: free time and work. De Smedt/Le Roy argues that this line between free time and work is not natural,

¹⁴² A quotation from De Smedt/Le Roy's reply to a question from the audience in *Untitled 4. 4 Choreographic Portraits* (2012), performed at the Kaaitheter, Brussels, 17 April 2012, transcribed by me.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

as it comes into being via the specific operation of power that controls and determines one's mode of production and organisation of living. Therefore, problematising the existing distribution of time and space becomes about problematising the specific operation of power (the master's voice that predetermines the ways in which one organises one's time) that defines the conditions, scope, and parameters of what can be produced and legitimised. In other words, problematising the existing distribution of time and space implicates Le Roy in the matter of the modern system of knowledge production. In the forthcoming part, I will examine further De Smedt/Le Roy's problematisation of the distribution of time, and its potential as a force of resistance that can disturb the smooth operation of the modern system of knowledge production. I will also examine why Le Roy locates his problematisation within the modern institution of dance, and how this disturbs the positionality of the choreographer that has been sustained by the specific knowledge system of the modern institution of dance.

Free Time and/or Work Time

...free time is the heritage we inherited from the thirties or forties. But I want to go this place where there is constant, permanent exchange between whatever I do and work and life. That was a kind of resistance towards a way of living...¹⁴⁴

De Smedt/Le Roy's problematisation of the division between free time and work aims to open up the possibility of reorganising one's way of living so that there can be constant and permanent exchange between work and life. This explains why Le Roy decided to

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

become a professional choreographer, as he believed that art was a place where work did not have to be the opposite of free time. In other words, the problematisation of the existing distribution of time in his own profession becomes the departure point for Le Roy's practice as a choreographer, and for his resistance against the master's voice that aims to capture his subjectivity within a manageable scope. When your job is producing art, how can you distinguish between what is free time and what is work time? Given the inspiration, experience, and dialogues that constitute one's time, how can you know in advance what will be part of your artistic practice and what will remain as your own private material?

This problematisation of the distribution of time within the institution of art, which is already captured within the neo-liberal mode of management, is further developed in Le Roy's *Product of Other Circumstances* (2009). Its title obviously refers to his performance, *Product of Circumstances*, a decade previously. In this performance, Le Roy intensifies his enquiry into the specific distribution of time. He claims that he has worked on this performance during his free time. On stage, Le Roy ironically makes the following statement: 'Isn't it nice to be paid for what you perform as a hobby?'¹⁴⁵

What makes Le Roy's radical claim more problematic lies in the fact that, from the beginning, this performance was not Le Roy's idea. The idea for this performance came from the choreographer Boris Charmatz, Le Roy's long-time colleague and friend. On stage, Le Roy reads an email from Charmatz from his laptop. In his email, Charmatz reminds Le Roy of his previous assertion that anyone can learn butoh in two hours.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ At the Kunsten Festival des Arts in Brussels, 23 May 2010, transcribed by me.

¹⁴⁶ Butoh is the collective name for a diverse range of activities, techniques, and motivations for dance, performance, or movement inspired by the ankoku Butō movement in 1950s post-war Japan. It typically involves playful and grotesque imagery, taboo topics, and extreme or absurd environments, and it is traditionally performed in white body make-up with slow, hyper-controlled motion, with or without an

Then, Charmatz asks Le Roy to support his previous assertion by inviting him to an event entitled *Rebutoh* that Charmatz curated at the Musée de la danse in Rennes.¹⁴⁷ But the positionality of Charmatz is not fully articulated within the conventional notion of choreographer as master. What becomes clear is that instead of directing Le Roy, Charmatz creates a problem. Having read the email aloud, Le Roy turns to the audience to tell them that what he is going to present tonight stems from this provoking invitation. I will return to the provocative claim of Le Roy, that he can learn butoh in two hours, in the forthcoming part, but first I want to go back to Le Roy's radical statement that he worked on this performance during his free time. He claims that he decided to conduct research on butoh dance during his free time from his main work as a professional choreographer. What does this mean? Can an artist have free time that does not involve the process of making art?

Kai van Eikels, in 'Learning from Xavier Le Roy Means Learning to Work. On Dilettantism and Professionalism in 21st Century Performance', points out that an artist is considered as one who knows no distinction between 'work' and 'off work': he is one who is always ready to be inspired, ready to create, and ready to work.¹⁴⁸ In other words, everything he does, at least in part is, or contributes to, the production of art. In this light, Van Eikels points out that what Le Roy is claiming in *Product of Other Circumstances* by arguing that he produced this performance during his free time, is that he produces art,

audience. There is, however, no set style, and it may be purely conceptual with no movement at all. Its origins have been attributed to Japanese dance legends Tatsumi Hijikata and Kazuo Ohno.

¹⁴⁷ "Rebutoh, edition 2009," Musée de la danse, <http://www.museedeladanse.org/fr/articles/rebutoh-edition-2009>.

¹⁴⁸ Kai van Eikels, "Learning From Xavier Le Roy Means Learning to Work. On Dilettantism and Professionalism in 21st Century Performance" (unpublished manuscript, March, 2011), 4.

but it is not work. By separating work from art, does he aim to resist being captured by the neoliberal regime under which we end up working all the time?

What is at stake in Le Roy's argument that his performance is produced in his spare time is the conventional notion of professionalism that has unified the notion of work to that of art within the modern institution of art. Especially in modern dance-theatre, such as ballet, it is not possible to separate art from work. In such theatre, the customised operation of a production system, whereby specific tasks at each stage of production have a specific timetable, has been established. Therefore, one has not only to work to a specific timetable, but also to train oneself to the point that one can reach a state of art. In other words, the state of art is the product of numerous hours of work and painful training. For at least the last three hundred years, in the history of ballet there has been the pedagogical operation of institutional mastery that predetermined the course of training for a professional ballet dancer. It comes from a preset relationality between a master's knowledge of dance and the mode of embodiment of that knowledge.¹⁴⁹ This relationality has been safeguarded by choreographic manuals for generation after generation. Therefore, if one wants to become a professional dancer, one must go through a predetermined process, first embodying the movements in these manuals. It is about submitting oneself to the forces of choreographic demands. It is about becoming the object in a structure of commands, and following someone else's rules. In doing so, one yields to the citational force of choreographic manuals.

Yet, as Le Roy himself claims, his art is not produced through work. What he is claiming here is that he does not follow the customised operation of a production system

¹⁴⁹ The first Académie Royale de Danse was founded by Louis XIV in 1661. See Lepecki's *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 57.

whereby specific tasks at each stage of production have a specific distribution in time. In doing so, I would argue that he attempts to escape from the pedagogical operation of institutional mastery that is circumscribed in the professional production system of conventional dance-theatre. Moreover, the fact that he works with *butoh* dance makes his radical claim more persuasive, as *butoh* has a different notion of mastership and professionalism from that of the modern Western institution of dance. In this context, I would like to investigate further Van Eikels' scrutiny of the notion of professionalism, as it allows us to see a different picture of professionalism to that which we have now. Van Eikels argues that the notion of professionalism, based on the idea of hours of labour and work, only began in the middle of the nineteenth century.¹⁵⁰ In other words, the notion of professionalism that we have is actually a relatively modern invention.

In this context, Van Eikels pays attention to the term 'virtuoso', which is often perceived as the basis of the notion of professionalism. In explaining why this term has been associated with professionalism in a modern sense, Van Eikels argues that the virtuoso has been exclusively associated with a small number of celebrity stage performers since the nineteenth century. Since this perception of virtuosos continues to occupy the collective memory, this associates the term with values of extreme specialisation and professionalisation. As opposed to such an understanding of the virtuoso in a modern sense, Van Eikels points to the fact that, from the Renaissance until the late eighteenth century, the words 'dilettante' and 'virtuoso' were used synonymously to refer to non-professional forms of knowledge. Van Eikels explains that it was Goethe who devalued the concept of the virtuoso-dilettante, opposing it to the concept of artistic

¹⁵⁰ Eikels, "Learning From Xavier Le Roy," 14.

genius. Goethe believed that the virtuoso-dilettante transforms 'aesthetic pleasure' into the 'pleasure of practice'. And what was problematic for Goethe regarding the pleasure of practice was that it inevitably evoked the egalitarian message that everybody could become a virtuoso:

Everybody can start practising everything that can be practised, and [as] for becoming virtuosic (the stress on becoming) no more will be needed: you just have to start practising and go on practising, be it for a lifetime, a couple of years, or two hours – as long as the pleasure continues to empower you.¹⁵¹

What must be further scrutinised is why the egalitarian message once inherent in the notion of the virtuoso-dilettante has been captured by a specific pedagogical strategy within the institutionalisation of dance, such that endless training according to a specific canon has been normalised. In this context, it is necessary to go back to Le Roy's claim about learning butoh in two hours. I will argue that what seems to be an empty promise is, in fact, a radical criticism of the system of production of the modern institution of dance.

Can One Learn Butoh in Two Hours?

When Le Roy makes the radical claim that he can learn butoh in two hours, it is obvious that his claim cannot be understood within the conventional professionalism that has governed the modern institution of dance. If someone claims that he or she can learn ballet in two hours, it would be an insult to the numerous classical ballet dancers who train endlessly in order to create virtuosic performances. Despite butoh having a different

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 5–6

cultural and historical background from ballet, a performance like that of a great master of butoh, that I have experienced myself, does not seem to be something that can be learnt in two hours. So then why does Le Roy make such a claim? It was this provoking premise that concerned me, through the feeling of discomfort that I too was implicated by Le Roy's problem, provoked by Charmatz.

In the theatre, it is possible that there were experts in butoh other than me or Le Roy. Or there could have been individuals who actually practise butoh or have done so in the past. Alternatively, there might have been people in the audience who had never experienced butoh before. In other words, everyone's experience, and thus knowledge of butoh, would have been different. Moreover, everyone's experience with dance in general would have also been different, despite the fact that the audience for this particular performance seemed to be, more or less, a group of professionals in the field of the arts. In a conventional dance-theatre, these different systems of knowledge are harmonised by the rule of a virtuosic performer who knows better than the people in the auditorium. And of course, a virtuosic performance is perceived as being the product of a man of instruction whose transcendental subjectivity allows him to operate on stage, despite his physical absence. But with Le Roy's performance, his arbitrary and casual relationship with butoh disturbs the harmonised system of knowledge in the modern institution of dance. For instance, when I saw *Product of Other Circumstances* at the Kunsten Festival des Arts in 2011, I experienced an unusual incident.

'Shouldn't butoh dance be about Hiroshima?' shouted an audience member to Le Roy, in the middle of the performance. From his tone, it was reasonable to conclude that this person was annoyed with Xavier Le Roy. With his question, he not only challenged Le Roy on stage but also interrupted the performance. Following this interruption, the

audience's attention focused on that audience member. At the same time, people waited to see how Le Roy would respond to this interruption from the auditorium. At first, Le Roy responded to this person in French, presumably because Le Roy was not prepared for this situation and unconsciously reacted to it in his mother tongue. Then, several audience members, including the person who raised the question in the first place, asked Le Roy to speak in English, as they did not understand French. Le Roy immediately translated his answer into English, arguing that he did not see a cause-and-effect relationship between butoh dance and the bombing of Hiroshima. In observing this rather unusual improvised conversation between an audience member and a performer on stage, I was curious to know what kind of urgency might have provoked that person to interrupt the performance in that way. I supposed he might have been implying that Le Roy's casual regard for butoh dance and the bombing of Hiroshima was not politically correct. He might have been protesting against Le Roy's arbitrary presentation of butoh dance. Normally, if one does not agree with the content of a performance, one leaves the theatre. But he chose to remain. In my opinion, the reason why this person spoke up in the middle of the performance, instead of leaving the theatre, was to correct Le Roy on his supposedly 'wrong' attitude towards butoh dance. He chose not to leave the performance, but to stay for the entire duration, as if he had a responsibility to make sure Le Roy delivered the essence of this great art of butoh well and correctly.

As opposed to this positionality of the audience member, Le Roy made it clear that he does not position himself as a virtuosic performer (in the modernist sense) who knows better than the audience. He is a performer whose knowledge does not necessarily exceed that of the audience. This is the same for Charmatz, who provoked Le Roy in the first place. What Le Roy was presenting on stage, and what Charmatz prompted Le Roy

to engage with was not based on what they had already mastered or resolved. What is interesting is that each of them presented his problem, including the way in which he planned to deal with it. This allowed the audience to become involved with what was happening on stage in a direct manner. When the performer seemed not to have any clear answer to a problem posed on stage, this inevitably invited the audience to contribute something as they began to feel an obligation to help resolve the problem presented on stage. In other words, this provoking premise of how to learn butoh in two hours became a burden for everyone in the theatre.

But at the same time, Le Roy's casual relation to his own premise of the project, learning butoh dance in two hours, relaxed the audience who were under pressure to resolve the problem. Obviously, Le Roy had spent more than two hours researching butoh dance, so the premise of the performance had already failed. But Le Roy did not seem to be bothered by this failure. As if the point of the performance was for the premise to fail, his easy-going attitude spread to the audience. As he proceeded with his presentation, I no longer cared about the provoking premise of learning butoh in two hours. My concern shifted from whether it was possible to how we were managing to address the given task together. It became clear that the point of the performance for those who participated in it was not about achieving what seemed to be an impossible mission.

In order to understand the positionality of Le Roy in this performance, it is important to remember that the performance was in response to a curatorial invitation. In many contemporary choreographic experiments, such as this performance by Le Roy, the role of the curator as the initiator of a performance becomes highlighted more than ever. In other words, the conventional positionality of the choreographer seems to be rearticulated with the role of a curator who initiates choreographic research that is often

presented on stage. But this does not mean that this emergence of the choreographer-curator actualises the egalitarian ideal. It is still the choreographer-curator who explicitly or implicitly formulates the criteria. This often has direct consequences for the final form of the performance. Yet, it was the choreographer-curator's interaction with his friend that determined how he formulated the criterion. As it was Charmatz's friendship with Le Roy that enabled him to suggest the criterion for the production of the work, the operation of a choreographer-curator replaced the hierarchical positionality of the choreographer-master.

Moreover, Le Roy's decision to research butoh dance, based on resources available to everyone, highlighted his intention to problematise the conventional positionality of the choreographer as the master who owns the knowledge of dance. On stage, Le Roy explained to his audience that he decided to utilise online resources, books, memories, and anecdotes, which most people have easy access to. Then, he shared with the audience the resources that he worked with and how he conducted his research using those resources. He projected images of some of the websites onto a screen behind him, and demonstrated how he found the websites he used, simply inserting the word 'butoh' into a search engine. He also talked about his experience of attending a butoh performance given by the legendary butoh master Kazuo Ohno, and he said that one of the most memorable scenes of Ohno's performance was the moment when Ohno dressed like a little girl. He said that when Ohno appeared on stage, it was not clear whether it was Ohno dressed like a little girl or a little girl who looked like Ohno. Le Roy then proceeded to talk about a book on butoh dance that he had studied. He even read aloud from some of the sections he had highlighted. And he showed some video clips from YouTube to the audience, explaining that he had learned some butoh movements from these clips. From

YouTube clips to a book about a butoh master, it is clear that Le Roy tried various methods to learn butoh dance – everything apart from taking direct lessons from a butoh master.

Following a presentation (lasting about an hour and a half) on his decision to learn butoh dance and the process which he followed to learn the dance, Le Roy finally performed a butoh dance himself as a virtuoso-dilettante. He performed the part that he thought he could manage to copy from some YouTube clips. But what he presented on stage was precarious and vulnerable. His demonstration on stage seemed to be far from a stereotypical butoh dance, and the overly charged atmosphere of his seriousness, with butoh's uncanny visual imagery, dominated any other communicational possibilities. As its popularity continues to grow, especially in Europe, butoh dance has been increasingly particularised by a specific vocabulary and grammar of movements that set out the parameters of what butoh dance should be. Thus, butoh dance is epitomised by representational schemata, such as white make-up or slow but hyperbolic movements. A highly minimalistic black or white stage with exaggerated dramaturgy has been every butoh dancer's manual for the last few decades. In this context, Le Roy's precarious performance was far from stereotypical butoh. It was, however, Le Roy's arbitrary performance that made me to realise that I did not have any grounds to judge Le Roy's performance on stage as not being butoh dance. I recognised that my initial judgement of Le Roy's performance was based on contemporary hyperbolic and representational productions of butoh dance which have overshadowed the notion of what butoh dance could be.

Historically, butoh dance emerged from such charismatic masters as Tatsumi Hijikata and Kazuo Ohno. Yet, in principle, there is no set style for butoh dance. Everyone can create their own butoh. It may be purely conceptual, with no movement at all, with

or without an audience. Thus, one does not necessarily go through a pedagogical process of embodying existing knowledge of what butoh dance used to be. Yet, such arbitrariness inevitably brings with it a fundamental paradox to butoh dance. If everyone can create their own butoh, then there cannot be any parameters that identify dance as butoh dance. In other words, if one wants to create one's own butoh, how does one claim it is butoh? In order to identify it as butoh, one has to deal with what has been set out by the great masters. But if one follows the example of the great masters, one cannot create one's own butoh dance. In other words, what makes butoh butoh is this availability that continuously provokes the question of what butoh dance can be. This egalitarian message, inherent in butoh dance, does, in fact, mirror Le Roy's positioning of himself as a dilettante-virtuoso. In doing so, Le Roy attempts to challenge the institutional framework that controls and defines the system of knowledge within the modern institution of dance. And what Le Roy ultimately disturbs is the specific power/knowledge operation inherent in the very formation of the modern institution of dance. Le Roy resists the given pedagogical premises that bring about endless stultification. Therefore, he attempts to transform the positionality of the pupil into a virtuoso-dilettante so that an egalitarian message can be manifested. In other words, instead of the pedagogical process sustaining the position of the pupil, Le Roy attempts to open up the possibility of everyone becoming a teacher of him or herself. It is in this context that I would like to interweave my discussion of Le Roy with works by the French philosopher Jacques Rancière.

Joseph Jacotot's Radical Pedagogy

Rancière's diverse intellectual trajectories head towards problematising the specific power/knowledge operation that naturalises the hierarchical institutional framework.

This is particularly well-expressed in his archive-based work *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1987), via the figure of Joseph Jacotot. I would argue that Rancière's problematisation of the position of mastery within a specific institution, and his philosophy of equality can be theoretical grounds to articulate further Le Roy's egalitarian operation against the specific powers/knowledge operating within the modern institution of dance. In this context, I will attempt to draw a parallel between Le Roy's positioning of himself as a dilettante-virtuoso and one of Rancière's protagonists, Joseph Jacotot, who positions himself as an 'ignorant schoolmaster'. But before discussing Joseph Jacotot, it is important to understand why Rancière embarked on a series of archive-based projects in the 1980s.¹⁵² Thus, it is necessary to take a brief detour via his unusual intellectual trajectories.

Rancière was one of the most brilliant students of Althusser at the *École normale supérieure* in the 1960s. He even contributed an important section to *Reading Capital* at the age of 25. What was problematic for Rancière about Althusser's *Reading Capital* was the fact that the given role of pioneers automatically put participants of the project in a position of mastery, as those who know.¹⁵³ In fact, it was this position of mastery that was maintained throughout the emancipatory discourse of the Althusserian project.

According to the Althusserian concept of ideology, people are exploited because they are blind to the law of exploitation. A positive formula for this presupposition would be the intervention of an agent who is in a position of mastery because he already knows about the law of exploitation. Within this configuration, the fight against domination

¹⁵² Turning to Foucault for methodological inspiration, Rancière conducted a series of archive-based projects in the 1980s. *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* is his last book of this series, following *The Nights of Labor* (1981) and *The Philosopher and His Poor* (1983).

¹⁵³ Peter Hallward and Jacques Rancière, "Politics and Aesthetic: An Interview," *Angelaki* 8 2 (2003): 195.

becomes a matter of knowledge and ignorance, through which a specific form of hierarchy is inevitably installed. Rancière argues that what underlies this configuration is the presupposition that people are incapable of understanding the complexity inherent in the sociopolitical system.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, the inequality that is presupposed, between those who know and those who do not, in turn legitimises the top-down transmission of knowledge through the intervention of agency.¹⁵⁵ And it is this top-down transmission of knowledge that inevitably necessitates pedagogical practice. People are exploited because they do not understand the law of exploitation. This Althusserian premise, in fact, retained pedagogical practice so that those who already possessed the knowledge were able to ‘transmit a determinate knowledge to subjects who do not possess this knowledge’.¹⁵⁶

For Rancière, this is how inequality is sustained. This is the inevitable consequence of positioning equality as a goal to be achieved, instead of as a point of departure. As the Althusserian emancipatory project automatically installs another form of inequality, between those who already possess knowledge and those who do not, any attempt to abolish inequality inevitably falls into the trap of sustaining inequality in the name of emancipation. *La leçon d'Althusser*, published in French in 1974, was Rancière's first step in his turn against the Althusserian emancipatory project. From that moment

¹⁵⁴ Jacques Rancière, “Afterword / The Method of Equality: An Answer to Some Questions,” in *Jacques Rancière: History, Politics, Aesthetics*, ed. Gabriel Rockhill and Philip Watts (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2009), 275.

¹⁵⁵ Kristin Ross, introduction to *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, by Jacques Rancière (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), vii–xxiii.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* xvi. The dispute between Rancière and the other Althusserians over the pedagogical principle of how to create a curriculum for the new philosophy department of the University of Paris VIII forced Rancière to reconsider the dogmatism in the structuralist project on Marxist theory. See Hallward and Rancière, “Politics and Aesthetic”.

on, he embarked on a new journey, in a search for the possibility of reconfiguring the relationship between domination and knowledge.

After *La leçon d'Althusser*, Rancière became immersed in early nineteenth-century workers' archives in order to reconfigure a relation between domination and knowledge which differed from the Althusserian scheme. By engaging with the journals, newspapers, and diaries of artisans, anonymous thinkers, and worker-poets, Rancière attempts to open up a new topography where these exploited individuals devise their own emancipatory system without the intervention of any agent. This is why these archival projects are at the heart of Rancière's egalitarian mode of operation. By configuring a topography different from that of the Althusserian emancipatory project, Rancière is able to verify his own premise of equality without falsification. In other words, Rancière does not attempt to create his own theory of equality by falsifying Althusserian theory. This way, Rancière is able to avoid falling into the trap of reproducing a position of mastery. Instead, Rancière decides to take a detour via the stories of real people that demonstrate the performance of equality. In this process of restaging the emancipatory system devised by the exploited themselves, the simple fact that people are where they are not because they are ignorant of the law of exploitation, but because they are incapable of being elsewhere, is able to resonate. Without a process of falsification, the real stories re-enacted by Rancière create a dramatic contrast to Althusserian science that disguises this simple matter of incapacity as a matter of knowledge and ignorance.¹⁵⁷

In this light, I now consider the story of Jacotot in Rancière's *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*. Here, via the story of Joseph Jacotot, a revolutionary pedagogist in early

¹⁵⁷ Jacques Rancière, "Afterword," 275.

nineteenth-century France, Rancière attempts to open up a new topography where a different relation between domination and knowledge can be verified without falsification. The story begins when Jacotot is driven into exile, to Brussels, in the middle of political turmoil. The King of the Netherlands graciously offers him a job at the Université catholique de Louvain, teaching French to Dutch students. But Jacotot does not speak Dutch himself. Therefore, he becomes an ‘ignorant master’. In other words, his dominating positionality does not guarantee that he has the necessary knowledge. Despite Jacotot being an ignorant master, the students find a way to learn French themselves. All Jacotot does is find a bilingual edition of Fénelon’s 1699 *Les Aventures de Télémaque*, which was published in Brussels at that time.¹⁵⁸ He delivers the book to the students. Then, through an interpreter, he asks them to learn the French text with the help of a translation. When the students make it through the first half of the book, he asks them to repeat what they have learned over and over again and then tells them to read through the rest of the book until they can recite it. When he tests the students, by asking them to write in French what they have learnt from the book, Jacotot expects a complete lack of ability from his students. But he finds that he is totally wrong. The students have learnt French by themselves. This experience turns Jacotot’s original view of pedagogical practice upside down. He becomes convinced that pedagogical practice does not work towards eradicating the schoolmaster and his pupils, but towards sustaining the distance between the two.

In conventional pedagogical practice, the schoolmaster is presupposed as one who already knows what his pupils do not know. Therefore, the role of the schoolmaster

¹⁵⁸ Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, trans. Kristin Ross (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 2.

is to abolish or reduce the distance between his knowledge and that of the ignoramus. In other words, the ultimate goal of pedagogy is to transform ignorant pupils into knowledgeable ones, so that any further necessity for pedagogy can be discarded. This is why self-vanishing mediation is at the core of any pedagogy.¹⁵⁹ But throughout his pedagogical experiment, Jacotot realised that the schoolmaster could only reduce the aforementioned distance on condition that he constantly recreates it. The reason is simple. To replace ignorance by knowledge, the schoolmaster must always be one step ahead. This instils a new form of ignorance between the pupils and himself. In pedagogical logic, the ignoramus is not simply one who does not yet know what the schoolmaster knows. The ignoramus is one who does not know what he does not know, or how to know it. In contrast, the schoolmaster is not only one who already possesses the knowledge unknown by the ignoramus; he is also one who knows how to make it an object of knowledge.

Of course, there is no ignoramus who does not already know a plethora of things, who has not already learnt them by himself, by listening and looking around him, by observing and repeating, and by being mistaken and corrected. But for the schoolmaster, such knowledge is merely an ignoramus's knowledge, knowledge that cannot be ordered in accordance with the ascent from the simplest to the most complex. Therefore, what the pupil will always lack, unless he becomes a schoolmaster himself, is '*the knowledge of ignorance*, that is to say, knowledge of the exact distance separating knowledge from ignorance'.¹⁶⁰ It is this knowledge of ignorance that sustains the position of mastery, as the pupil can never obtain the knowledge of ignorance unless he becomes master himself.

¹⁵⁹ Jacques Rancière, "The Emancipated Spectator," in *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2010), 8.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

This is at the heart of the paradox of any pedagogical intervention. Instead of eradicating the distance between the master and his pupils, any pedagogical intervention requires the ignorance of the pupil to be sustained.

In contrast, for an ignorant schoolmaster, such tautology in the knowledge of ignorance is unknown to him. It is his ignorance of the distance between knowledge and ignorance that allows him to break away from this stultifying pedagogy. There is no longer a gulf between the ignorant schoolmaster and his pupils. Instead, between the schoolmaster and his pupils there is now a third thing, in this case a bilingual edition of *Télémaque*. It is alien to both, and both schoolmaster and pupil can refer to it to verify, between them, what the pupil sees, what he says about the book, and what he thinks of it. This system of verification does not, however, have the position of mastery that falsifies what one has verified. It is because this third thing is owned by no one. It only subsists between them, thus excluding any pedagogical transmission from one to the other.¹⁶¹

In thinking about the possibility of creating this third thing that is owned by neither pupil nor master, I want to go back to the Le Roy's egalitarian operation in *Product of Other Circumstances*. As the students in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, who are given the bilingual edition of *Télémaque*, become their own teacher, Le Roy's choice of positioning himself as a virtuoso-dilettante allows him to be the teacher for himself. In neither case is anybody allowed to take the position of pupil. In doing so, the position of mastery can be eliminated. In other words, the shift from 'the distribution of learning' to 'the distribution of teaching' allows collective emancipation whereby no one remains in the position of pupil. In this light, I would like to examine *Le Sacre du Printemps* (2007),

¹⁶¹ Ibid.,15.

another problematic performance by Le Roy. Le Roy's strategy in this performance illustrates how the distribution of teaching, or becoming the ignorant schoolmaster, could actualise what Rancière calls the 'third thing', as opposed to the conventional positionality of the choreographer-master.

Turning Knowledge of Ignorance into an Epistemological Game

In *Le Sacre du Printemps*, Le Roy stands alone on a seemingly empty stage. Suddenly, the sound of an orchestra fills the theatre. It is Stravinsky's famous music from *The Rite of Spring*. Le Roy begins to move his hands. It is obvious that he is imitating the movements of the conductor, a man of instruction who leads the playing of the entire orchestra. According to the conductor's interpretation and reading of the text, the orchestra produces a specific rhythm and gives a specific performance.

But the audience soon discover something strange. Although it is the conductor who leads the orchestra on a conventional stage, the audience is not supposed to see his movements. The conductor has his back to the auditorium because his movements are supposed to be watched and interpreted only by members of the orchestra. When the audience begins to wonder why Le Roy, who is performing the role of conductor, is facing the audience, they realise that they are a part of an epistemological game set up by Le Roy. They begin to sense that it is they who are involuntarily playing the role of an orchestra. For instance, at a specific moment, the audience notices that the brass suddenly sounds further away and the sounds of the drums get stronger under their seats. In other words, each audience member is playing a role of a specific musician in the orchestra. At the same time, the audience notice that Le Roy changes direction and engages with different sets of movements. Therefore, instead of remaining within the conventional role of

passive audience, the audience members realise that they are playing different roles that somehow contribute to making the performance what it is.

This does not mean, however, that they are becoming real musicians who are easily captured within the specific hierarchical system of the institution of music. Most of the audience do not have any capacity to translate what seems to be the complex codification of orders that the performer, Le Roy, seems to be delivering. In other words, it is the ignorance of the audience regarding the musical score that causes the hegemonic operation of Le Roy as a conductor to fail. Instead, the movements of Le Roy, that are undone by the ignorance of the audience, are opened up to a new possibility whereby they become more than musical codification. Of course, knowledgeable eyes, trained in this codification of music, would have felt different towards Le Roy's movements than would uneducated eyes. What is interesting here is the fact that the possibility of understanding Le Roy's movement as dance is more apparent to ignorant eyes.

Later, in his interview with me, Le Roy explained that this experiment began with a documentary that he received for free from the education department of the Berlin Philharmonic a couple of years earlier.¹⁶² This documentary is called *Rhythm Is It!* and is directed by Thomas Grube and Enrique Sánchez Lansch. The film documents a project undertaken by the Berlin Philharmonic's principal conductor, Simon Rattle, and a choreographer, Royston Maldoom, who decided to share their knowledge of classical music by staging a performance of Igor Stravinsky's ballet *The Rite of Spring* with a cast of 250 underprivileged children recruited from Berlin's state schools. Van Eikels argues that in their pedagogical desire for the distribution of learning among underprivileged

¹⁶² My interview with Xavier Le Roy on the occasion of the Bo:m Festival in Seoul in 2010. See also Kai van Eikels, "Learning From Xavier Le Roy," 9.

people, with no previous background in classical dance or music, there is an obvious top-down transmission of knowledge. In other words, what conductor Rattle and choreographer Maldoom have is knowledge of ignorance, as opposed to the children who simply have not had a chance to taste the pleasure of music. Moreover, this documentary attempts to show that this schoolmaster not only shares what they now taste, which is pleasure in music or pleasure in knowing, but also manages to change the lives of those who participate. As Rattle sets out to teach his young students the importance of music, Maldoom shares with the children his passion for dance, and how he came to ballet relatively late in life, as the youngsters slowly coalesce into a dance ensemble. In this context, it is not surprising that this DVD caught the attention of Le Roy, whose mode of egalitarian operation has produced many critiques of pedagogical attempts to sustain given hierarchical, institutional frameworks. However, what captivates Le Roy is not the tear-provoking story of underprivileged children being granted access to the world of classical music, but the gestures of the conductor that direct Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*.

The gestures of the conductor were not originally meant to draw the audience's attention, as they are meant to serve as an internal *modus operandi* communicating specific musical orders to the orchestra. Yet, because Le Roy was ignorant of all the different kinds of codes and signs in music, he realised that the gestures of the conductor could not convey any specific instructions to him. Thanks to this knowledge of ignorance, to his eyes the gestures of the conductor seemed to be reacting too late or too fast to the music that he was listening to. Le Roy realised that it was his ignorance that caused the hierarchical system of orders in music to fail to operate. As Le Roy says in the interview,

this failure was only possible as he was not even an amateur musician.¹⁶³ However, it was this failure that opened up a new possibility for the gestures of the conductor to be more than the transmitters of specific orders.

After Le Roy realised that his ignorance could be an important asset for creating dance, he decided to learn the gestures of the conductor by himself, again without professional training. But in order to imitate the gestures of the conductor that he saw on the DVD, he first had to learn how to read a score. Without an understanding of the operational mechanism of the specific language of conducting, it was almost impossible to copy movements that have such complex organisational principles. Despite his efforts, Le Roy could not learn everything about the complex system of codes and signs within a limited period of time. Therefore, whenever he failed to match the score and the movements of the conductor, Le Roy turned to Millicent Hodson's reconstruction of Nijinsky's movements as a secondary source. Through Nijinsky's interpretation of the music, Le Roy attempted to reconstruct the movements of the conductor.¹⁶⁴ When Le Roy failed to imitate via this secondary source, he developed his own movements, in addition to copying the gestures of the conductor from the documentary. Through this process, Le Roy reached a point where he could transform what used to be the mechanical orders of the conductor into open signifiers, not owned by anyone.

In addition, Le Roy worked with a sound engineer, Peter Boehm. He took the music from a filmed recording of the Berlin Philharmonic and piped it strategically through a matrix of speakers placed beneath each seat of the auditorium. Each speaker came to have

¹⁶³ My interview with Xavier Le Roy on the occasion of the Bo:m Festival in Seoul in 2010.

¹⁶⁴ Vaslav Nijinsky (1890–1950) was a Russian ballet dancer and choreographer. He was celebrated for his virtuosity and for the depth and intensity of his characterisations. His ability to perform seemingly gravity-defying leaps was legendary in the development of modern dance-theatre.

a different percentage of instruments so that the audience heard some instruments playing louder than others, depending on where she or he was seated. In this way, the audience came to play an active role in producing Le Roy's movements, as it was the specific sounds of specific instruments represented by each seat that drew specific movements from him. Therefore, instead of being merely the audience, the audience at this performance become co-professionals.

What is it then that Le Roy and the audience produced together? Can it be automatically embraced as new knowledge about dance? The performance released the gestures of the conductor from their heavy duty of conveying and delivering the complex knowledge system of music. Thus, the gestures of the conductor became open signifiers, attempting to be more than what was allowed to them before. But when the specific knowledge system inherent in the gestures of the conductor is undone, so that the gestures of conductor depart from their conventional realm of habitation, what is left behind? What kind of new possibilities will open up for them?

When the centrally and hierarchically organised system of knowledge inherent in the gestures of the conductor is undone, the movements that inevitably get produced in the process of following the signs of the orders lose their ontological, epistemological ground. So they become dispersed. Within this dispersed space, rhythms resurface that were overshadowed by the codes of signification that dominated the ontological condition of those movements. In other words, it is the transitive nature of the movements that allows them to be reunited with rhythms. But this does not mean that these movements will be automatically welcomed within the discipline of dance.

To what extent can the movements of a dancer endure their ontological vulnerability to the movements made by another system of knowledge? The movements

of the conductor, when dismissed by the original system of knowledge, disturb the parameters of the discipline of dance that has operated according to a specific system of orders and rules. How does one distinguish between movements and dance? When does a moving body become a dancing body? What Le Roy's choreographic experiment produces, in challenging the specific knowledge of music, is a set of questions that ask what makes dance dance? He is highlighting the fact that our current understanding of what makes dance dance is not something pre-given, but rather the product of a very specific institutionalisation.

In examining Le Roy's performances, I have aimed to reveal how contemporary choreographic experiments have attempted to present themselves as open-ended processes, such that various systems of knowledge crash into one another. Therefore, as opposed to perceiving research as an endless process of authorising the existing institutional framework, contemporary choreographers position their practice as research through which the normalisation of the boundaries and criteria, that have defined and sustained a specific knowledge system, can be called into question.

Chapter 5. How Does Choreography Reinvent Spectatorship?

– Bringing About a Space of Appearance for Other Bodies

An Internal Contradiction in the Victimisation of Spectatorship

It was at the opening night of Xavier Le Roy's *Low Pieces* at Hebbel am Ufer in Berlin, 2011, that I heard about *The Agora Project* (2009–2011) from the Dutch theatre director, choreographer, and performer Jan Ritsema, who himself participated in Le Roy's performance that night. He said *The Agora Project* was a collaborative project that was initiated by fourteen artists, including himself, and later incorporated another five participants.¹⁶⁵ The fact that there were multiple authors immediately grabbed my attention. It was not, however, until I actually experienced a performance at the Steirischer Herbst festival in Graz in 2011 that I could understand how nineteen artists might work together without a conventional hierarchical model, whereby the director-master dictates the content of the entire production.

As soon as I climb the stairs to the Dom im Berg, a theatre built inside a natural cave under Schlossberg, the famous castle in Graz, I see people gathering in front of the black curtain dividing the theatre space from the waiting area. There, I coincidentally come across a friend whom I had met in the kitchen of the Performing Arts Forum in St-Erme-Outre-et-Ramecourt, France, a self-organising artistic platform initiated by Jan Ritsema, where *The Agora Project* was first conceived.¹⁶⁶ He happens to be a friend of several

¹⁶⁵ The names of the participating artists are as follows: Perrine Bailleux (FR), Christine De Smedt (BE), Marcus Doverud (SE), Atlanta Eke (AU), Luís Miguel Félix (PT), Maria Hassabi (CY/US), Krõõt Juurak (EE), Emma Kim Hagdahl (SE), Xavier Le Roy (FR), Neto Machado (BR), Berno Odo Polzer (BE/AT), Jan Ritsema (FR/NL), Mårten Spångberg (SE), and Tea Tupajić (BA).

¹⁶⁶ In 2006 Jan Ritsema created the Performing Arts Forum (PAF) in Saint-Erme-Outre-et-Ramecourt, France, an alternative artists' residency run by artists, where every year some 700 international artists exchange their experiences and knowledge, and create new works, see www.pa-f.net.

artists participating in *The Agora Project*, so I am able to learn how the project developed while waiting for it to start. At that moment, I realise that I am in some way sharing a particular discursive space with these multiple authors of *The Agora Project*. Among these authors and me, there is already a neutral friend, a common reference point and place of interest and, moreover, a common source of information and knowledge. In other words, I am implicated in the project even before I play my role as a spectator.

The black curtains in front of us that maintain the separation between the world and the theatre finally open. But there is no conventional auditorium where the spectators can sit. Instead, what awaits us is a series of brown paper lunch-bags placed upside down on the ground. Dozens of them are placed close together, so if we want to get into the theatre we have to crush the bags into the ground. The noise of dozens of empty, brown bags being squashed is surprisingly loud, as they are stood on simultaneously. And this violent sound coalesces with the remembered sounds hovering in my head: the sound of guns firing, the sound of an ambulance, the sound of screaming, the sound of a reporter with the background noise of people from every corner of the streets, broadcast on television to us every day. As if a moment of now is claiming its right in the theatrical operation, as if a moment of reality is squeezing into the world of the theatre, our entrance to the theatre space signals the contamination of the normative ideal of theatre as an autonomous representation machine.

Instead of being plunged into darkness, we, the spectators, are asked to make our entrance to the theatre loudly and violently. By trampling on simple brown paper lunch-bags placed upside down on the ground we listen to the noise that we ourselves make in the space. The traditional ethics of 'being there without being there', legitimised by a specific hierarchy of power in the theatre, no longer apply here. Moreover, the fact that

there are no seats reserved for the spectators does not allow us to adhere to this unspoken demand. I am not quite sure where I should go. Not only is there no auditorium, there are no marks that even indicate the places where the action will occur, and where viewing can take place. At first, I try to move into a corner. But I soon realise that that would not work either, as every corner of the theatre is a potential site for action. There is no longer a dichotomy that predetermines the relation between stage and audience through which, as Jacques Rancière calls it, the 'victimisation of spectatorship' can be sustained.

Before getting into Rancière's discussion, I would like to highlight the fact that the victimisation of spectatorship is a symptom of what Jonas Barish refers to as the 'antitheatrical prejudice' inherent in Western thoughts.¹⁶⁷ This has been legitimised by the obvious division between stage and auditorium within the modernist discourse of theatre. The stage is where the action takes place, while the auditorium is where passive spectators are located or subjugated. In fact, the word spectator identifies the position of those who only passively watch the spectacle in front of them. As passive voyeurs, spectators are bodiless and invisible, in contrast to the spotlight stage. In other words, it is the invisibility of spectators that makes them powerless. Therefore, the logical conclusion to this problem is to transform passive voyeurs into active participants so that they can be located in the 'space of appearance', to borrow Hannah Arendt's words.¹⁶⁸

In 'The Emancipated Spectator', however, Jacques Rancière argues that this logic,

¹⁶⁷ Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), 3. In Nicholas Ridout's "The Undoing of Theatre", Ridout discusses a sequence of what Barish calls the 'antitheatrical thought', from its apparent foundations in Platonic thought, through Christian Puritanism, towards the modern conception of the antitheatrical prejudice as revealed in Peter Handke's confession that theatre 'has always possessed its own saving salt of antitheatricalism'. See Nicholas Ridout, "The Undoing of Theatre" (PhD diss., Birkbeck College, University of London, 2003), 2-5.

¹⁶⁸ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 198.

which is embedded in the emancipatory claim of the historical reformation project in theatre, exposes an internal contradiction that is inherent in the notion of emancipation itself.¹⁶⁹ This notion of emancipation necessitates an intervention by the agency that emancipates the victims who cannot help themselves. Rancière explains that in order for this emancipatory strategy to operate, there are specific conditions to be met. First, the subjects must not be able to help themselves. Secondly, the subjects must not even know what they do not know. Thus, a knowledgeable agent should intervene in the situation and teach the ignorant subjects how their positionality can be transformed. For Rancière, the problem here is that the position of mastery never actually disappears. Instead, the existing position of mastery is simply replaced by a knowledgeable agent, so that the inferiorisation of the subjects is never interrupted.

In this context, Rancière points out that the emancipatory strategy of the historical avant-garde of theatre resembles the existing political emancipatory strategy that is engineered to subvert inequality through the intervention of an agent who already knows about the laws of exploitation. For Rancière, the intervention of an agent is problematic, as this sustains the position of mastery, instead of eradicating it. Thus, Rancière's juxtaposition of the emancipatory strategy of the historical avant-garde with the conventional political emancipatory strategy highlights the internal contradiction inherent in the notion of emancipation. Whether it is in the theatre or politics, any emancipatory claim presupposes the victimisation of the people as those who cannot help themselves, thus perpetuating a particular pedagogical machine that reproduces the position of the master. Therefore, the question to be asked is how can we open up a new

¹⁶⁹ Rancière, "The Emancipated Spectator," 1-23.

topology, so that the supposed inferiorisation of the people in the theatre or in politics can be rethought?

In this context, I find it interesting that Rancière's critique of the victimisation of spectatorship shares the theoretical ground on which he problematises the demonisation of the demos in Platonic political philosophy. For Rancière, the inferiorisation of the spectator stems from the specific Platonic demonisation of the demos that aims to 'keep the people present in their absence', so that the position of mastery can be sustained.¹⁷⁰ In the coming part, I will first examine Rancière's archaeological research on the Platonic political philosophy that demonises the demos. In *On the Shores of Politics* (1995), Rancière brings up the famous story of Plato's cave in order to explain how the demonisation of the demos is justified in Platonic political philosophy. Then, I will highlight the fact that this Platonic political project has never been interrupted, even in the emancipatory project of the historical avant-garde in the theatre. In doing so, I will juxtapose the Platonic demonisation of the demos with the victimisation of the spectator in historical reformation projects in the theatre.

Archaeology of the Demonisation of the Demos

In the preface to *On the Shores of Politics*, Rancière begins by rethinking the Allegory of the Cave as described by Plato in the *Republic*. Rancière argues that through the symbolic act of Socrates entering the cave, Plato successfully buries the sea beneath the earth and bids farewell to the fatal, seductive seascape. Rancière asks why Plato is eager to hide the sea and change its nature by turning it into a cave. What is at the core of Plato's hatred or

¹⁷⁰ Jacques Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics*, trans. Liz Heron (London and New York: Verso, 1995), 93.

even fear of the sea?

Rancière points out that the story of Plato's cave in the *Republic* is not something exceptional among Plato's dialogues. In fact, it is not difficult to spot anti-maritime dialectics pervading many of Plato's dialogues. For instance, when Plato speaks through the mouth of the Athenian and says that the distance of eighty stadia which separates the city of Clinias from its port is barely enough, it is not just because of the smell of the brine. For Plato, the sea smells bad. It is because the sea smells of sailors: it smells of democracy. Plato identifies democracy with maritime sovereignty, where the beast of the populace is only controlled by the lust for possession, which 'sails the seas doubly threatened by the buffeting of the waves and the brutality of the sailors'.¹⁷¹

Throughout many of his dialogues, it is clear that Plato did not believe that democracy was a perfect organic mechanism that could run itself. But after he failed in his efforts to guide a tyrant's rule in Syracuse, he began to engage with the practical side of operating a democracy as a possible regime, without any longer pursuing his passion for actualising the regime via a philosopher-king.¹⁷² Plato's struggle to make democracy a reliable regime is recorded in the *Laws*. Here, he focuses mainly on the discussion of how democracy can be engineered as a possible governing principle. It is in this context that Plato introduces the term 'theatrocracy'. In doing so, Plato attempts to create a dramatic contrast to a 'good democracy', in which the demos is under control and prevented from becoming the *ochlos*, the mob and the drunken sailors. Plato's successor Aristotle explains this to us:

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 1–4.

¹⁷² Steven Michels, "Democracy in Plato's *Laws*," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 35 4 (2004): 517–528, <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/118765221/abstract?CRETRY=1&SRETRY=0>.

A bad democracy is a democracy true to its name, where the *demos* exercises power, where it inhabits the centre of the city, has but a few steps to take in order to sit in assembly and can lay claim to the *archai*. A good democracy, by contrast, which comes as close as possible to the ideal regime of the *politeia*, contrives to distance the *demos*.¹⁷³

This process of preventing the *demos* from transforming into the *ochlos* begins with bracketing the participating entities, and its first project is to turn the *demos* into the union of a centripetal force. Rancière argues that this is not to create a centre that is being pulled in either direction, between itself and the periphery. Rather, it is a way of ‘keeping the people present in their absence’.¹⁷⁴

Therefore, in the Platonic political project, philosophy anchors its journey in a laboratory, inventing artifices that prevent the *demos* from being true to democracy. It is through these artifices that democracy is finally transformed and becomes capable of fulfilling ‘the old feudal dream of the great collective body divided into orders.’¹⁷⁵ Rancière calls the operational mechanism of this artifice, that distributes and legitimises a specific role, ‘policing’, in order to distinguish it from what he refers to as ‘politics’, where the surplus activities of subjectivisation take place.¹⁷⁶ Policing is about establishing orders that set up procedures whereby the aggregation and consent of collectives is

¹⁷³ Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics*, 16.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁷⁶ Please note that Rancière’s use of the word ‘police’ or ‘policing’ differs from the term ‘state apparatus’. He argues that ‘the notion of a state apparatus is in fact bound up with the presupposition of an opposition between State and society in which the state is portrayed as a machine, a “cold monster” imposing its rigid order on the life of society. This representation already presupposes a certain “political philosophy”, that is, a certain confusion of politics and police. The distribution of places and roles that defines a police regime stems as much from the assumed spontaneity of social relations as from the rigidity of state function’. Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 29.

achieved, the distribution of places and roles is conducted, and systems for legitimising this distribution are established.¹⁷⁷

In this context, we can understand why teatrocracy is a real threat to the Platonic political project. Teatrocracy disturbs the existing policing order, and the pre-given forms of perception and utterance are reopened to the possibility of reconfiguration. Therefore, anti-theatricality is a crucial project in Platonic philosophy so that the demos can be prevented from being true to democracy. In this context, I would argue that it is not coincidental that the development of theatre, as a distinctive artistic genre in Western history, has paralleled the isolation of theatre architecture in its move away from the street corners of the agora where teatrocracy can be actualised.¹⁷⁸ In other words, the development of theatre under the specific political project called Western modernity aims to suppress teatrocracy, under which the demos could perform and be true to their name.

Evoking the Platonic 'policing' project of the demos, theatre in the West has increasingly confined itself to abstract spaces, such as the court or private salons. With the arrival of modernity, this drive was epitomised in the manifestation of theatre as a black box.¹⁷⁹ This claustrophobic black box that always maintains its dichotomy is no different from the theatre we know today. In it, what becomes actualised is the ultimate

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 28.

¹⁷⁸ Juraj Kittler argues that the Athenian agora is the idealisation of a 'face-to-face society with everyone knowing everyone else'. Despite the fact that civic bodies grew too big to sustain such a form of communication, the Athenian agora still serves as the locus of information and communication. Any Athenian citizen who wanted to propose a legislative initiative was expected to inscribe the text of the new law and exhibit it in the agora. It served as an idealised space in the heart of the city where public life was constituted via free discussion. Juraj Kittler, "Historical Metamorphosis of the Athenian Agora: Changing Communication Technologies and the Enduring Quest for an Ideal Public Sphere" (PhD diss., Pennsylvania State University, 2009), 33–36.

¹⁷⁹ David Wiles, *A Short History of Western Performance Space* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2003), 256. In discussing how the modern institution of theatre is manifested as a black box space, Wiles highlights the Constructivist ideas of theatre such as Konstantin Stanislavski's conception of theatre as the black box and how this resonates with post-war Peter Brook's aesthetic demands for theatre to be an 'empty space' that purported to be a neutral environment.

ideal of the Platonic philosophy of keeping the demos present in their absence. And this centripetal demos is called the spectator within the institutionalisation of theatre in Western modernity.

The dramatic scene described by Socrates of the cave in Plato's *Republic* gives us a clue to how spectatorship in the West has been devised and developed. And in the dialogue between Socrates and Glaucon in *Republic*, Plato explains what Socrates witnesses after entering the cave. In retelling Plato's description of the cave, Rancière argues that, for Plato, when the sea is buried beneath the earth, men in chains replace the brutality of the sailors, while the whims of tides are replaced by the dullness of shadows.

Picture people as dwelling in a cavernous underground chamber, with an entrance opening upward to the light, and a long passageway running down the whole length of the cave. They have been there since childhood, legs and necks fettered so they cannot move: they see only what is in front of them, unable to turn their heads because of the bonds. But light reaches them from a fire burning some distance behind and above them. Between the fire and the prisoners, picture a track a bit higher up, and a little wall built along it like the screens in front of the performers at puppet shows, above which they show the puppets.

I see it, he said...

A strange image, he said and strange prisoners.

Like ourselves, I replied. For first, do you think such prisoners see anything of themselves or one another except the shadows cast by the first one on the wall of the cave in front of them? ... whenever one of them was released, and suddenly compelled to stand upright and turn his head and walk and look upward to the light, he would feel pain in doing all this, and because his eyes were dazzled, he

would be unable to discern those things yonder whose shadows he had seen before...¹⁸⁰

In this dialogue, Socrates explains to Glaucon that the prisoners in the cave have been fettered by their legs and necks from childhood. What is interesting here is the fact that these fetters are imaginary. The prisoners in the cave are, however, unaware of this. Unlike Glaucon, who believes this scene is strange, Socrates accepts that these prisoners are 'like us'. Even though their fetters are imaginary, because they believe them, they are unable to release themselves. All they can do is see shadows on the walls that are cast by themselves from the fire behind them. Socrates points out that the shadows are as close as the prisoners get to seeing reality. He then explains how the philosopher is like a prisoner who is freed from the cave and comes to understand that the shadows on the wall do not constitute reality at all. Therefore, the ultimate task of philosophy is to rescue people who are imprisoned by their own shadows. It is only through philosophy that the prisoners in the cave can escape their illusory chains.

Socrates' description of the cave scene bears a striking resemblance to the conception of theatre in the historical reformation of the theatre. What is particularly intriguing about this story is how the Platonic political project of burying the sea, or democracy, inevitably brings about an endless chain of pedagogical operations that rely on the presupposition that people cannot help themselves. The populace is buried, as it is believed to be dangerous on its own. But once it is buried, it becomes the very subject to be saved from its own delusion. This ever-defeating formation of the demos is echoed in

¹⁸⁰ Plato, *Republic*, trans. R. E. Allen (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 227–228.

the historical reformation project in theatre that aims to emancipate the spectators from their illusory chains.

The reason why this archaeology of the theatre first grasped my attention was because this particular discourse on theatrical illusion has not been interrupted by any of the historical theatrical reformation projects. In fact, Plato has proved to be a valuable ally for historical reformers of theatre. Every programme of reformation in the history of the avant-garde that corresponds to this urgent need of theatre has had to be rescued from the evil operation of illusion. In 'The Emancipated Spectator', Rancière argues that whether it is Brechtian's epic theatre or Artaud's theatre of cruelty, they inherit the logical formula that sustains and maintains the derogation of the spectator by predetermining their positionality as the victims of a theatrical spectacle.¹⁸¹ The spectators are the ones who separate themselves from the truth by remaining within the operation of the spectacle. And even though the spectators are the original sin of theatre, theatre cannot be sustained without them.

Rancière calls this 'the paradox of the spectator'.¹⁸² In order to overcome this paradox, the condemned spectators must be transformed into emancipated spectators who are ready to be mobilised for the revolution to come. In other words, the conventional pedagogical machine comes to be in tune with the reformation project of modern theatre. Under the operation of this pedagogical machine, spectators should be educated to resist the theatrical illusion by those who already know of its danger, so that spectators are no longer subjugated objects. Thanks to the agent's rescue operation, the spectators are emancipated and are now active subjects of their own experiences. In other words, the

¹⁸¹ Rancière, "The Emancipated Spectator," 2-3.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 2.

condemned spectators are finally transported to the 'space of appearance', where they are transformed into a living community.

Taking a detour via Rancière's archaeological investigation and the theoretical ground on which the demonisation of the demos is legitimised, I have attempted to highlight the uninterrupted operation of a particular pedagogical machine that perpetuates the ever-defeating formation of the spectator. In other words, I would argue that the ever-defeating formation of the spectator shares the same theoretical ground as that of the formation of the demos. It is in this context that I want to go back to *The Agora Project*, with which I opened this chapter. I have already discussed how, in *The Agora Project*, the conventional dichotomy between stage and auditorium, that sustains the modernist pedagogical impulse, has been eliminated. When the conventional dichotomy is no longer available, the ever-defeating formation of the spectator loses its ground. In this light, I want to highlight the particular operation in the technology called choreography that is deployed as a structural tactic to reconfigure spectatorship, through which an alternative model of theatre production can be envisaged.

The Unrealisation of Given Roles

The Agora Project was initiated by the choreographer, dancer, and theatre director Jan Ritsema. But in the end, it was actualised by nineteen artists. And not all of them identify themselves as choreographers. Yet, the reason why I define this project as a choreographic experiment is because its structural composition can be analysed via its tactical deployment of choreography, the technology that brings about spaces of appearances for the bodies of others. For instance, in eradicating the physical and symbolic dichotomy of theatre, *The Agora Project* produces multiple layers and spaces of

appearances not only for the authors of the performance but also for every participant, including the technicians, who are meant to document the performance, and the spectators, who are meant to view the spectacle passively. The emergence of spaces of appearance on multiple levels, at unexpected moments, brings about a constant unrealisation of the structure, so that the monopolistic frontal viewpoint in the conventional theatre context can be diverted. In other words, by strategically deploying the technology of choreography, *The Agora Project* makes sure that its structural composition remains as flexible as possible so that participants in the performance, including the spectators, can be more than they are allowed to be in the conventional theatre framework. In so doing, *The Agora Project* successfully challenges the existing configuration of spectatorship as bodiless voyeurs that necessitate pedagogical intervention.

‘Scene 1. Take 1!’ While I am still trying to work out a suitable place for myself as a spectator (there is no auditorium), suddenly someone shouts and multiple banks of cameras start rolling in every corner of the theatre. Then, I realise that I will not have the privilege of hiding in a dark auditorium. As the cameras start rolling, some of their operators are professional cameramen who are documenting what is happening in the here and now. But some of them are participating artists who take on the role of cameraman while waiting for their turn to perform. On top of that, there are some spectators who are friends of the performers and who decide, on the spot, to help them by holding microphones or lighting equipment. And there are other spectators who hover among these cameramen and begin to take pictures for their own memory or research. In this intermingling of different layers of the gaze, with different aims, the existing representation machine, based on the usual dichotomy between stage and auditorium,

becomes impotent. In this context, the question of who is watching whom becomes meaningless. Therefore, the conventional vanishing point of a stage performance, that sustains the representational structure, is being contaminated. When this conventional system is contaminated, the victimisation of spectatorship can no longer be sustained. And this allows the space of appearance to emerge in multiple ways among the participants at every level. It is not just the nineteen artists who have worked on this project who emerge on stage. It is also film crews and spectators, who are meant to 'be there without being there', and who begin to occupy the space of appearances. In other words, *The Agora Project* becomes a choreographic experiment where the unrealisation of the rigid representational system of theatre is achieved by bringing about multiple spaces of appearances.

As the multiple banks of cameras start rolling in every corner of the theatre, I see Mårten Spångberg, a Swedish choreographer, running with the cameramen. He is one of the participating artists, but for this particular scene he is watching his fellow artists perform on stage, voluntarily playing the role of a spectator, and standing right next to me. I recognise him as I met him at the Performing Arts Forum. When the intense running around is finished, he comes to me and asks me what I am writing. He saw me running with him and the other cameramen, taking photos and notes of the performance. I tell him it is for my own research and why I am interested in this project. I realise that I am involuntarily locating myself in the space of appearance, despite the fact that my given role is that of a spectator.

Moreover, this dialogue, in the middle of the performance, does not disturb the other spectators at all, as it takes place during a pause between two scenes. In fact, there are many pauses between scenes. Therefore, in these in-between times, I am definitely

more than a passive voyeur. I am able actively to engage in discussions with some of the performers or other spectators. And through these discussions, I can learn about how this performance was conceived. I ask questions and express my thoughts on stage. My learning experience takes place on stage, with nineteen authors, instead of in a secluded, black box where I am only allowed to contemplate what I see on stage. Moreover, this learning experience is more or less a mutual experience that also involves the nineteen performers on stage.

As the structural composition of the performance, this allows the performance to be open-ended via the constant deployment of the technology of choreography. The given dichotomous structure of theatre becomes vulnerable to constant unrealisation; all of the participants are exposed to unexpected situations in which they have to negotiate their given positions. I would argue that all the participants become choreographer-spectators who bring about spaces of appearances for the bodies of others, and also for themselves. And I would argue that this interchangeability inherent in the structural composition of *The Agora Project* highlights the possibility of theatre as an open-ended process that is not captured within the conventional representational system.

The Agora Project as the Process Itself

The Agora Project at the Steirischer Herbst festival in Graz was presented as an open-ended process that, like any other theatre, had to end at some point. It lasted for two hours. Yet, it continuously evolved into something else so that, as a project, it became a process itself. For instance, as already discussed, *The Agora Project* was first suggested by the theatre director, choreographer, and performer, Jan Ritsema. But since its initiation, it has been expanded by numerous internal seminars, workshops, talks, and

discussions. Since its premiere in Brussels at Kaaaitheater in 2011, this project has travelled to PACT Zollverein in Essen and to Graz on the occasion of the Steirischer Herbst festival. Over three years, it has been through various stages of production and presentation, including stage performances, and public and private workshops. A particular performance, 'Shakespeare's As You Like It, A Body Part' presented at the Steirischer Herbst festival in 2011, was the last stage performance. The stage performances have been added to, by including another layer of coming together, along with the provision and organisation of numerous public workshops, seminars, meetings and talks, on top of the already existing channels of communication between multiple authors. Therefore, it was inevitable that each stage performance should be radically different from the others, as the different dynamics of relations brought about different sets of negotiations. For instance, an intensive summer seminar prior to the Steirischer Herbst festival and a week-long public workshop during the festival resulted in a new format for the stage performance that appropriated a film-making process, whereby the accumulation of takes was made into one film at the end.

As the multiple banks of camera were rolling on stage, I realised that what was happening in front of me was not the representation of a finished work, but the very process of making itself. Later, I learnt that this particular stage performance at Graz was to be made into a film as the next stage of the performance.¹⁸³ But despite the fact that I did not have this information, I knew that what I witnessed was not something that could be captured within the conventional logic of representation in the theatre. First of all, what I immediately noticed was the fact that the structure of this performance was based

¹⁸³ In the end, the plan to transform it into a film was not realised. Instead, Jan Ritsema made it into a book. From my interview with Jan Ritsema at PAF on 1 September 2012.

on the compilation of independent scenes that did not seem to have any logical causal relationships. And the fact that multiple banks of film cameras were rolling made it apparent that it was appropriating the film-making process. Yet, what was different from normal film-making was that it did not really converge into a harmonious storyline. It was as if a film director was randomly taking each cut, and pasting them all together so that the scenes would end up being disassociated from each other. In other words, it was clear that *The Agora Project* was deliberately resisting any omnipresent directorship by deploying a technology of choreography that constantly brings about spaces of appearances for participants in the performance as multiple layers. At the same time, it was the appropriation of the film-making structure that allowed the project to become coherent enough to be represented on stage. In other words, although it was flexible enough to encompass unexpected emergences of spaces of appearances, it still had a structure to hold everything together. This mirrors the operational mechanism of the Performing Arts Forum that aims to have no rules for running an institution.

The Performing Arts Forum (PAF) was initiated by Jan Ritsema in 2006. Ritsema explains that it was a time when institutional support for new experiments in theatre and dance was becoming less available in Europe. But the Performing Arts Forum is neither a public institution nor a private studio.¹⁸⁴ Ritsema never wanted to form another institution which would stimulate new practices to go in a specific direction. Instead, he brought an old, long-abandoned school, in St-Erme-Outre-et-Ramecourt, north of Paris, and set up a physical space where people could engage in their own artistic and knowledge production, instead of only responding to opportunities afforded by the

¹⁸⁴ From my interview with Jan Ritsema at PAF on 1 September 2012.

institutional market. Of course, Ritsema's friends and colleagues, with more than 30 years of shared artistic experiences and collaborations, were the first ones to participate. But as time passed, these circles of friends multiplied, and they formulated a new public space where people could gather together to go beyond the physical boundaries of the Performing Arts Forum, without any specific intentions.

What allows the Performing Arts Forum to be an ever-elastic platform seems to be that it aims not to have any organisational principles. There are no staff, unlike most other artistic residency programmes where the responsibility for space and material generally rests on others. Anybody can organise or suggest any activity, but it is they who take full responsibility. In other words, the Performing Arts Forum can only operate as an artistic platform if people, while there, take an active part in shaping their own activities.

Mirroring the operational mechanism of the Performing Arts Forum, and despite the fact that *The Agora Project* was initiated by Jan Ritsema, Ritsema did not specify any type of organisational principles for the project. In fact, it was his intention to have as few governing principles as possible.¹⁸⁵ Here, Ritsema explains his intentions to Florian Malzacher, co-programmer of the Steirischer Herbst festival:

Malzacher: 'Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, *A Body Part*' is part of *The Agora Project*: a project in which originally 15, now even 19, artists, some of them renowned choreographers themselves, not only work together – which is quite unusual in itself – but at the same time constantly negotiate the modes of their work. It is a

¹⁸⁵ From Jan Ritsema's interview with Florian Malzacher in the leaflet published for the occasion of the Steirischer Herbst festival in Graz in 2011.

project about what it means to do theatre. How can such a group find common ground, how does it organize itself?

Ritsema: [It is a place] where we try to find out things precisely and not to organize. Where we try to develop a process that might lead to something that we do not yet exactly know. We are not heading for a formulated goal. All the people involved constantly influence, develop, challenge and intensify the project.¹⁸⁶

Ritsema explains here that the reason why he and nineteen artists with distinct artistic trajectories gathered together was to try out new things. Therefore, it was important not to keep to the same organisational methods whereby a specific type of production is presupposed. But the reason why this experiment with no rules works is precisely because, by not having organisational principles, it does not negate any rules. They still have the rule of not having any rules. And this general principle of not having any rules allows the participants to have common ground based on which the project takes shape. Yet not having any rules does not mean the eradication of responsibility. Later, when I interviewed Christine De Smedt, one of the nineteen artists in the project, she told me that there was a rule that whoever suggests something takes full responsibility for what is put on the table.¹⁸⁷ Moreover, what should be emphasised here is the fact that this act of proposing something is not done in an isolated private studio but in a continuous process of discussion and communication. On numerous occasions, and in private and public workshops, not to mention informal conversations and communication between the artists, numerous ideas are suggested and followed, one after another. In other words,

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ From my interview with Jan Ritsema at PAF on 1 September 2012.

claiming copyright for an idea in a conventional sense would not be possible.

The general rule of not having any rules can accommodate a complex network of people and allow exchanges of information to take place among those who operate inside and outside the physical and symbolic space of the Performing Arts Forum, which does not have a clear dividing line between members and non-members. Therefore, *The Agora Project* itself becomes an agora. In other words, the circulation and feedback of ideas always goes beyond the physical boundaries of workshops and seminars as these nineteen multiple authors are already part of larger networks of contemporary cultural producers. And it is the deployment of choreography that provides the basic technology.

I have argued that it is the particular appropriation of the film-making process by *The Agora Project* that interweaves different ideas and information into a single project within a theatre context. By organising different spaces for appearances by participants in the project at every level, the film-making process allows for the compilation of independent scenes, and so the compilation of multiple layers of spaces of appearance is made possible in this project. And despite the fact that there is a general rule of having no rules, the fact of being accountable for an idea provides a sustainable structural basis for this project to take shape. And this is different from claiming copyright.

For the artists who participate in *The Agora Project*, staging a theatre production means being accountable for an idea that cannot be owned by one individual under the conventional notion of author. This is how the multiple spaces of appearance become actualised while no one is in ultimate control. This is why I would argue that there are no authors in this project, but rather 'author-functions'.¹⁸⁸ And the reason why I pay

¹⁸⁸ The Foucauldian term 'author-function' was developed in his 1969 essay 'What Is an Author?'. Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* by Michel Foucault, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977).

attention to this shift from author to author-function is because it ultimately dismantles the dichotomy inherent in theatre, so that a shift from spectator to spectator-function can occur too. Moreover, what seems to me most interesting is the fact that these shifts do not come from the conventional pedagogical operation but from the decisive upheaval of the participants in reframing the space and time allotted within a specific institutional framework. In other words, it is the nineteen artists who create a structure that is flexible enough to encompass unexpected emergences of spaces of appearance, but it is the decisive upheaval of the normal given roles of all participants in the project, including the spectators, that successfully subverts what Rancière calls 'the given distribution of the *sensible*'.

In this context, I would like to examine further Rancière's notion of the distribution of the sensible in order to articulate how conventional spectatorship can be reconfigured without the conventional pedagogical operation, through which the ontological and epistemological conditions required for theatre to be theatre are called into question. And in order to examine this specific notion of the distribution of the sensible, I need to take a detour via Rancière's problematisation of the conventional emancipatory strategy, because he creates this particular concept by envisaging an alternative to the conventional notion of emancipation that is always subordinate to pedagogical intervention.

An Aesthetic Revolution: Subverting the Given Distribution of the Sensible

The unique contribution from Rancière to rearticulating the modernist discourse on spectatorship comes from his attention to the pedagogical impulse inherent in the conventional emancipatory operation in the historical reformation of theatre. For

Rancière, this pedagogical impulse legitimises the inequality between the one who is the subject of emancipation and the one who is capable of emancipating the subjugated subject in the conventional emancipatory operation. In fact, problematising the presupposed notion of inequality inherent in the existing emancipatory discourse in political philosophy has been the penetrating element of his maverick intellectual journey for more than thirty years. For instance, his very first trilogy, *The Night of Labor: The Workers' Dream in Nineteenth-Century France; The Philosopher and His Poor*, and *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, was an attempt to open up a new topography where the discussion of emancipation could find a different platform.¹⁸⁹

Turning to Foucault for methodological inspiration, Rancière's intellectual itinerary began with a series of archive-based projects in the 1980s. *The Night of Labor* was Rancière's first attempt to re-enact the stories of real people, prior to the birth of Marxism, in order to reveal a new topology that problematises the existing understanding of emancipation. In the dusty archives of various kinds of newspapers, journals, and private diaries of workers from the 1830s and 1840s, Rancière began a painstaking exploration, revisiting a time prior to the birth of Marxism. In doing so, he attempted to open up a line of flight from the pedagogical presupposition inherent in the Althusserian formalisation of the notions of workers and workers' movements.¹⁹⁰ Contending that workers were not rebelling against specific hardships and conditions but against the unyielding predetermination of their subjectivity, Rancière attempts to reveal how the given positionality of workers, or the proletariat, was subverted by a process of

¹⁸⁹ Jacques Rancière, *The Night of Labor: The Workers' Dream in Nineteenth-Century France*, trans. John Drury (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989). Jacques Rancière, *The Philosopher and His Poor*, ed. Andrew Parker (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2004).

¹⁹⁰ Hallward and Rancière, "Politics and Aesthetics," 196.

reconfiguring the very experiences within the working-class tradition, prior to Marxism's interpretation and distortion of them.¹⁹¹ In the process, Rancière came to suspect that the Marxist notion of 'the working-class proletariat' was primarily 'a name or a set of names rather than a form of experience'.¹⁹² Moreover, he realised that these names did not express an awareness of a condition. As Rancière argues:

Being a 'worker' wasn't in the first instance a condition reflected in forms of consciousness or action; it was a form of symbolization, the arrangement of a certain set of statements or utterances. I became interested in reconstituting the world that made these utterances possible.¹⁹³

In reconstituting the world of the worker, among the conditions that Rancière pays most attention to is the specific partitioning of time that is imposed on the workers. In scrutinising this issue of the partitioning of time, Rancière recounts the story of Gauny, a carpenter in early nineteenth-century France, and one of the main protagonists in *The Nights of Labor*.

The Nights of Labor portrays the lives of early nineteenth-century workers who were also proletarian intellectuals, poets, and artists. At night, these worker-intellectuals gathered to write journals, poems, music, and letters, and to discuss issues. Unwilling to give in to sleep at night, to repair the body for more manual labour the next day, these 'migrants who moved at the borders between classes' regarded the night as their real life. They sought to appropriate for themselves the nights of those who could stay awake.

¹⁹¹ Jacques Rancière, "Democracy Means Equality," *Radical Philosophy* 82 (1997): 29.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ Hallward and Rancière, "Politics and Aesthetics," 196.

Once these workers and those whom they represented had glimpsed other lives, they fought for the possibility of living those other lives. The following is an extract from one of Gauny's texts that Rancière introduces in *The Nights of Labor*:¹⁹⁴

This man is made tranquil by the ownership of his arms, which he appreciates better than the day-laborer because no look of a master precipitates their movements. He believes that his powers are his own when no will but his own activates them. He also knows that the entrepreneur is hardly upset by the time he spends at his work, provided that the execution is irreproachable. He is less aware of exploitation than the day-laborer. He believes he is obeying only the necessity of things, so much does his emancipation delude him. But the old society is there to treacherously sink its horrible scorpion claws into his being and ruin him before his time, deluding him about the excitement of the courage that he uses for the benefit of his enemy. But this worker draws secret pleasure from the very uncertainty of his occupation.¹⁹⁵

In this passage, immediately noticeable is the fact that Gauny refers to himself as 'this man'. And this man frees himself by becoming *less* aware of his exploitation. In other words, this man frees himself by nurturing the power of self-delusion. This power makes him work against his own employment and the preservation of his own health. But resulting from Gauny's way of reframing space and time, and the exercise and force of his labour, is the source of a new pleasure, 'the pleasure of a new freedom'.¹⁹⁶ This is why

¹⁹⁴ Rancière, "Afterword: The Method of Equality," 273–288.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 274. See also Rancière, *The Nights of Labor*, 82.

¹⁹⁶ Rancière, "Afterword: The Method of Equality," 276–277.

Rancière pays attention to the description of delusion that Gauny mentions in the text. The efficacy of this delusion enables Gauny to go beyond the boundaries predetermined for working-class people. In other words, Gauny does not believe in the sociocultural and political boundaries that set specific timetables for the working-class proletariat. Instead, he allows himself to indulge in a 'secret pleasure from the very uncertainty of his occupation'. Of course, this secret pleasure does not immediately change the fact that Gauny has to go back to work the next day. But the moment that Gauny becomes less aware of exploitation, another possibility for his mode of operation opens up. Rancière argues that this is the moment when intellectual equality is actualised. It is the conquest of the night that sets up a drama of emancipation free of any pedagogical operations.

In this context, we can understand that Gauny's decisive upheaval is enabled by the subversion of a given distribution of the sensible. In Rancière's notion of distribution of the sensible, (*le partage du sensible*), the French word *partage* commonly translates as 'distribution' in English, but it also includes the meanings 'partake' or 'share'.¹⁹⁷ And the word *sensible* in Rancière's writing refers not only to sense as opposed to logic, but also to a sense of perception that predetermines what is sayable, audible, and thinkable.¹⁹⁸ Hence the concept of the distribution of the sensible operates as a system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously govern the matrix of distribution and the partaking of respective parts and positions.¹⁹⁹ In other words, it defines a set of relations between a form of sensory experience and an interpretation which makes sense of it.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ Yves Citton, "Political Agency and the Ambivalence of the Sensible," in *Jacques Rancière: History, Politics, Aesthetics*, ed. Gabriel Rockhill and Philip Watts (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2009), 121–122.

¹⁹⁸ Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004), 12.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ Jacques Rancière, "Afterword: The Method of Equality," 275.

This is why the distribution of the sensible as a system always gravitates towards a particular formation of certain sets of representations and arrangements. Therefore, by activating the concept of the distribution of the sensible, Rancière is attempting to reveal the fact that there is nothing natural about one's position. Instead, it is the result of the specific operation of a set of representations and arrangements that governs the particular mode of one's subjectivity.

In this context, by subverting the given distribution of the sensible, what is overturned for Gauny is what is not allowed to him by the existing distribution of roles and places. As he is a worker, he is not allowed to enjoy the pleasure of writing. The empirical reason for this seems to be simple: he does not have any time, apart from that needed to do his work. But Rancière argues that the performance of inequality is sustained only as long as Gauny believes in it. When Gauny becomes less aware of what is not allowed of him, Gauny's nights become the places where the performance of equality is enacted. This is not done by those who already know the laws of exploitation, but by Gauny himself who is less aware of what he is excluded from. Therefore, a specific realm, in this case the intellectual life that is denied him, becomes available in the common sphere so that he can have access to it once again. The common sphere is not what is given beforehand. It is a place that one gains access to through the performance of equality, and it is constantly being battled for through confrontation between opposite ways of framing.

The Performance of Equality: Reactivating Spectatorship

In the previous part of this chapter, I discussed how Gauny's subversion of the distribution of the sensible allowed him what he was not allowed before. By fighting

against the specific distribution of time that was allotted to him, Gauny was able to enact the performance of equality without any intervention from a knowledgeable agent who could teach him the laws of exploitation. When Gauny becomes less aware of what he is not allowed, he also becomes less aware of what he is excluded from. Therefore, a specific realm, in this case an intellectual life, becomes available in the common sphere for him to access. In other words, Gauny is emancipated via his own performance of equality without any pedagogical intervention. This is why the ontological conditions for Rancièrian political actors are inevitably 'theatrical'.²⁰¹

In 'Political Agency and the Ambivalence of the Sensible', Yves Citton gives an account of his interview with Rancière. Here, Rancière himself explains the ontological and epistemological conditions for his political actors:

...I think that politics always takes, more or less, the shape of the constitution of a theatre. It means that politics always needs to constitute small worlds on which units take shape; I would call them 'subjects' or 'forms of subjectivation'; they stage a conflict, a litigation, an opposition between various worlds...²⁰²

Peter Hallward, in 'Staging Equality: Rancière's Theatrocracy and the Limits of Anarchic Equality', expands on Citton's discussion by articulating Rancière's conception of politics as a theatrocracy that can be compared with Plato's hatred of theatre.²⁰³ Plato believed that the operation of theatrical mimesis would 'set up in each individual soul a vicious

²⁰¹ Citton, "Political Agency," 129.

²⁰² Ibid., 129.

²⁰³ Peter Hallward, "Staging Equality: Rancière's Theatrocracy and the Limits of Anarchic Equality," in *Jacques Rancière: History, Politics, Aesthetics*, ed. Gabriel Rockhill and Philip Watts (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2009), 143.

constitution by fashioning phantoms far removed from reality, and by currying favour with the senseless element that cannot distinguish the greater from the less, but calls the same thing now one, now the other'.²⁰⁴ By refusing to speak within the given boundaries of one's position and role, pre-decided by society, Plato asserted that actors and poets were a threat to the very foundations of authority itself. Thus, Plato concluded that 'theatre is nothing other than the place in which such vicious indifference to functional place takes on its most seductive shape.'²⁰⁵ Plato's hostility towards theatre resided in the fact that theatre allowed people to speak outside of their given name. Yet the same fact is accepted as a new possibility for Rancière, so that multiple processes of subjectivisation can take place. Thus, for Plato, theatre was a place for the out of place, one that threatened the harmonious distribution of roles and positions in society, while for Rancière it is a place for politics.²⁰⁶

The Rancièrian conception of politics does not supplement the existing power structure. Through various writings, Rancière makes it clear that the notion of politics cannot be reduced to the form of a governmental or institutional structure. In other words, politics is not only about the struggle for an alternative structure and opposing the current political institution. This rationality in Rancièrian thinking cannot, however, simply be labelled anarchic or in 'the form of a fantasy of politics without politics'. This is because Rancière's aim for rethinking politics does not concern dismantling established political institutions.

Rancière's conception of politics is as a means to 'undermine the great "police"'

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 144.

²⁰⁶ Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf, *Mimesis: Culture, Art, Society*, trans. Don Reneau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 6.

project', which is also the ambition of historians and sociologists – the ambition to see people properly 'rooted in their place and time'.²⁰⁷ Therefore, what we see is the emergence of an unusual interface between theatre and politics in the process of Rancière's unrealisation of politics. This interface between politics and theatre exceeds the rationality that limits them to being a spatial property, such as a form of government or a form of artistic expression in a black box. Moreover, what this interface highlights is the coherent principle inherent to both politics and theatre: its performative nature. Politics comes into being only through a constant process of conjunction or disjunction of different properties, such as power, justice, ethics, or people, while theatre comes into being via the constant blurring of the boundaries with that which is not theatrical.

In this context, it is important to pay attention to Citton's scrutiny of the performative nature inherent in Rancière's conception of politics by juxtaposing it with the theatre of the jester.²⁰⁸ In the theatre of the jester, the jester never speaks under his given name. In fact, the jester is hired to speak under a different name. The jester, from the lowest part of the kingdom, dares to speak to the king directly as his professional licence allows him to be other than himself. Sometimes, the jester even mocks the king and makes a joke of his sovereignty, while telling real stories about people who do not have such access to the king. But as Citton points out, the theatre of the jester cannot operate as an agent for any type of political struggle in a conventional sense as it betrays the very system of representation. Yet, it disturbs the very ground on which the system of representation can be constructed. For instance, when the jester brings real stories to the stage, his performance is in a constant process of negotiation between what is

²⁰⁷ Hallward, "Staging Equality," 148.

²⁰⁸ Citton, "Political Agency," 131.

theatrical and what is not. In other words, the fundamental mechanism of the theatre of the jester is governed by the conflict between onstage and offstage.

In the theatre of the jester, there is a distinct interplay between offstage and onstage. On the stage, no matter what the jester is performing, it becomes only a theatrical matter. Nothing that happens onstage is ever more than an illusion, and never has any consequences in real life. But what is ironic is the fact that the ontological condition required for what occurs onstage to remain as mere theatre depends on its interplay with offstage. In other words, if there is no tension offstage, there will be no conflict between what is theatrical and what is not, which makes the jester's theatre great theatre. But when there is too much prominence given to that which occurs offstage, the jester must quickly retreat onstage, as he is only tolerated as long as his theatre does not become a real threat to the king's sovereignty. It is this constant transition between onstage and offstage that is ultimately responsible for the contamination of the system of representation that operates based on a concrete ontological distinction between life and fiction, or between reality and illusion. Therefore, the theatre of the jester tips the balance only through its operation of 'as if' scenarios. This is why the theatre of the jester is too real to be theatre, while it is too theatrical to be political. In this light, the theatre of the jester, as a conceptual model, visualises a new topography where the system of representation can no longer pin down what is, or what is not a proper place for either politics or theatre. In the theatre of the jester, both politics and theatre are in a constant process of unrealisation. In this context, Citton argues:

Within Rancièrian theatrical politics, it is no longer a group of (un)representative jesters, but the subjects who invite themselves to play the fools at the king's table.

If there is a betrayal, it will come from the ranks of the spectators rather than from those of the actors, since the latter speak for themselves. Rancière thus answers Gayatri Spivak's question: yes, within certain historical junctures, the subaltern can speak. These moments are relatively rare: politics, for Rancière, like thought for Deleuze and Guattari, is the exception, not the rule.²⁰⁹

What draws my attention to Citton's argument is the fact that Rancière's conception of politics successfully eradicates the agency whose operation perpetuates inequality. Although Rancière's actors speak under the masks that they have painted on their faces, they invite themselves to the theatre of the jester in order to speak directly to the king.²¹⁰ In other words, Rancière's political actors do not subject themselves to the conventional pedagogical operation.

In scrutinising the Rancièrian configuration of political actors via the conceptual model of the theatre of the jester, I aim to establish a theoretical model for a new possibility of spectatorship that is not subject to the conventional pedagogical operation. And like the jester in Rancièrian teatrocracy, who goes through a constant process of negotiation between what is theatrical and what is not, the spectators in *The Agora Project* go through a constant unrealisation of the given role, so that they disturb the given

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 132.

²¹⁰ Citton's analysis of Rancière's actors in 'Political Agency and the Ambivalence of the Sensible' is worth paying attention to. Citton argues that in terms of advocating the erection of a barrier within subjectivity, Rancière's actors and Diderot's notion of the actor in *Paradox of the Comedian* share common ground. Yet, the main difference between Diderot and Rancière's actors is that the latter implies a collective of actors while the former only theorises the individual actor. For Rancière, politics comes into being via the role-play of collective actors. Moreover, Rancière's conception of political actors is different from Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt's notion of 'multitude'. This is what Rancière says in the interview with Citton: '[The authors of Empire] try to present [this model] as a solution to the problem of representation. The idea is to oppose to a mass, perceived as fixed in its concept, a circulating energy without subject. This is what multitude means. But the problem is that, in politics, one always creates a stage. They try to avoid the theatrical model'. Citton, "Political Agency," 132, 133, 129.

system of representation. In this context, how can we critically review the theory of conventional emancipatory strategies, while putting forward the theory of the jester whose strategies of invention contaminate the conventional representation system in theatre? In attempting to answer this question, once again I will go back to *The Agora Project*. I find that this project illustrates the possibility of a form of spectatorship that goes through a constant process of unrealisation of the given role by strategically bringing up multiple layers of spaces of appearances. And in these spaces of appearances, the participants in this project, whether it is the authors or the spectators, all have to enact the performance of equality by subverting the given distribution of the sensible. But like the jester, who is only allowed to be subversive as long as he is on stage, the fact does not change that there are nineteen authors who set up a specific structure. Therefore, the interchangeability of *The Agora Project* is not about transforming the spectators into authors but transforming the spectators into what I would call 'virtuosic spectators'.

Becoming a Virtuoso Spectator in the Process of Negotiation

In one of the scenes of *The Agora Project* at the Steirischer Herbst festival, an actor was making a speech about the stereotypical importance of love, trust, and union, while playing the role of a divorce lawyer. I was in front of him, and so I got to play the role of an extra actor for this scene. The camera crew filmed us together. I knew the camera crew were filming me but I did not feel that I had to exit the scene. Once I was released from the auditorium, I was open to other possibilities of participating in the performance that were not allowed to me before. I was part of the *mise en scène* for this particular scene.

But this brief moment in which I played the role of an extra actor could not last long. Suddenly, I saw a person running around the perimeter of the theatre with multiple

cameras following the actor in order to film him running. As soon as one person finished running into the four corners of the rectangular space of the theatre, the next person repeated this action. Again, the focal point was diverted. I was not really sure what to look at or where to be. Because a vanishing point was no longer available in this theatre of multiple authors, the series of scenes and acts often overlapped with one another. And it was this seriality inherent in the structure of the performance that produced specific rhythms and dynamics. From these sets of rhythms and dynamics, the spaces of appearances between nineteen multiple authors and the spectators were constantly negotiated, and both authors and spectators had to go through a constant unrealisation of their given roles within the conventional system of representation in theatre. In this process of negotiating, theatre becomes an open-ended platform where the specific system of representation in theatre is contaminated. Instead of limiting itself as a finished work, *The Agora Project* becomes a process, and within this process spectators are allowed to be more than they are used to being, despite the fact that these are only momentary role-switching situations.

Here, I would like to articulate the constant unrealisation of the given roles as demonstrated in *The Agora Project* via the notion of the virtuoso-dilettante, which was discussed in Chapter 4 when I examined Xavier Le Roy's *Product of Other Circumstances*. In articulating the positionality of the ignorant dancer, in which Le Roy locates himself, I borrowed Kai van Eikels' discussion of the virtuoso-dilettante.²¹¹ As opposed to the professionalism defined by the modern institution of dance, Van Eikels explains that the terms 'dilettante' and 'virtuoso' were used synonymously until the late eighteenth

²¹¹ Van Eikels, "Learning From Xavier Le Roy".

century.²¹² As opposed to the understanding of the term ‘virtuoso’ in a modern sense, Van Eikels explains that from the Renaissance to the late eighteenth century, both terms referred to non-professional forms of knowledge in a wide range of fields, from science to engineering, or crafts. Against this backdrop, I described Le Roy’s resistance to the conventional configuration of the choreographer as a master by using the term ‘virtuoso-dilettante’ in order to highlight his attempt at an open-ended configuration of the choreographer. In this context, I would argue that a spectatorship which does not know the limits imposed within the specific representation system of theatre can also be articulated using the term ‘virtuoso-dilettante’. The virtuoso-dilettante spectator is one who does not know the limits that are predetermined for him. He is one who is willing to exercise more than what is allowed within the existing institutional framework.

For instance, as a spectator in *The Agora Project*, I was literally on stage with nineteen other artists and a camera crew. And the whole structure of the performance was flexible enough to encompass my role as something more than a spectator. Moreover, the performers themselves took the place of spectators and the spectators took the place of performers. Again, this does not mean that there was no distinction between spectators and performers. What has to be highlighted is the fact that nobody was left impotent in this project: all of us became co-professionals who learned how to perform and how to organise ourselves in the course of the performance.²¹³

The emergence of a collective of co-professionals is what I witnessed in *The Agora Project*, and I would like to articulate further this notion of co-professionals via Kai van Eikels’ notion of the ‘porous collective’. To explain what he means by this he juxtaposes

²¹² Ibid., 5.

²¹³ Kai van Eikels, “What Parts of Us Can Do with Parts of Each Other (and When): Some parts of this text,” *Performance Research* 16 3 (2011): 2.

it with Dana Gooley's observations on jam sessions in jazz from the 1930s to the 1950s, 'where everybody can participate, where leading and supporting roles constantly change, where playing is based on listening and responding to the others, and where decisions are made in improvisational interactions building on spontaneous alliances'. Eikels points out that despite the fact that there is always an inevitable structure to some extent, the jam session has been repeatedly praised as a model for the democratic political process. Within this democratic structure, the musicians in a jam session do not play for an audience. In other words, 'the performers themselves took the place of the audience'.²¹⁴

The Agora Project was not, however, constituted through improvisation. Yet, the structure of *The Agora Project* is porous enough to encompass improvisational interactions. In *The Agora Project*, both performers and spectators are allowed to be more than what is defined within the modern institution of theatre. And in this unrealisation of both roles, *The Agora Project* provides a practice ground for different forms of spaces of appearances to emerge, so that we can envisage a new form of collective, within and against the given theatrical framework.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 2–11.

Chapter 6. How Does Choreography Reconfigure the Body as an Event?

- Slipping Away From the Logic of Representation

Rethinking the Body via a Space of Appearance

In examining *The Agora Project* in the preceding chapter, I have attempted to highlight a situation where both performers and spectators are allowed to be more than they are defined to be within the modern institution of theatre. In doing so, I pointed out that it is the tactical deployment of choreography that brings about a space of appearance for other bodies, so that both performers and spectators can open up spaces for each other. By opening up spaces for each other I mean occupying a place that was not allowed before. For instance, a spectator can be in the place of a performer, and vice versa. When a spectator is located in the place of a performer, the performer is, conversely, allowed to be located in the place of the spectator. In this constant production of spaces of appearance for other bodies, the dichotomy of the prescribed roles within the theatre apparatus becomes questionable. This allows for the possibility of being a spectator but acting as a performer, and vice versa; a possibility that is not captured within the institutional pedagogical operation. In fact, the emergence of spectators as performers and performers as spectators is not something found only in *The Agora Project*. It is not difficult to find spectators who perform as the performers or to find performers who play the role of spectators in recent choreographic experiments, and they loudly proclaim that the dichotomous concept of the roles laid out within the specific institutional framework is not as rigid as was supposed.

In this context, I would like to highlight here the fact that the space of appearance is not something that has a physical boundary that can be examined in an empirical sense.

Instead, it comes into being as an event when my body brings about spaces of appearance for other bodies.²¹⁵ This understanding of the term ‘space of appearance’ is also apparent in the original deployment of the term by Hannah Arendt.²¹⁶ Arendt mentions the term ‘space of appearance’ when she conceptualises the *polis* as a space ‘where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly’. The reason why I pay attention to Arendt’s argument in the first place is the fact that a space of appearance is not something to be given but something to be created by the active intervention of a political actor as a form of subjectivisation. This is why Arendt argues that such a public space of appearance can always be open to recreation wherever individuals gather together politically, or ‘wherever men are together in the manner of speech and action’.

But since setting up a space of appearance depends on the creation of action, Arendt acknowledges that this space of appearance is by its nature both fragile and temporary. In other words, a space of appearance only comes into being via performances involving doing, or uttering words. In this context, Arendt points out that the space of appearance ‘does not survive the actuality of the movement which brought it into being, but disappears not only with the dispersal of men – as in the case of great catastrophes when the body politic of a people is destroyed – but with the disappearance or arrest of the activities themselves. Wherever people gather together, it is potentially there, but only potentially, not necessarily and not forever.’²¹⁷

²¹⁵ In this chapter, I use the term ‘event’ in the Derridean sense, in which unexpected disruption and interruption of chronological linearity are already always referred to. As soon as a particular moment is pinned down, it is no longer an event in the Derridean sense, as it is captured within a specific logic of representation.

²¹⁶ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 198–199.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

In light of this, I would like to juxtapose Arendt's conception of a space of appearance with Yves Citton's notion of the theatre of the jester that was discussed in the preceding chapter.²¹⁸ When Citton discusses the spatial ontology of the political actor inherent in Jacques Rancière's thinking, Citton uses the term 'theatre of the jester'. And like Arendt's concept of a space of appearance, Citton's notion of the theatre of the jester is also fragile and temporary.

Yet, there is also an obvious conceptual discordance between the theatre of the jester and a space of appearance. Citton's theatre of the jester presupposes a position of mastery that can unilaterally terminate the performance of the jester. In other words, in the theatre of the jester, when a prearranged form of subjectivisation goes off-track, for example when the jester attempts to be more than a jester, the theatre of the jester is no longer sustained and may infuriate the king. Therefore, all the jester can be is a jester who plays the role of the powerful, but he can never be powerful himself. In a space of appearance, the prescribed roles are also sustained. For instance, even if a performer plays the role of a spectator, as discussed in *The Agora Project*, this does not change the situation whereby the performer remains an author while the spectator remains a spectator. However, what I pay attention to in the space of appearance resides in the fact that the unilateral operation of power is not possible. It is because the space of appearance is not a contractual arrangement between the participants, as is the case for the theatre of the jester. Instead, a space of appearance comes into being as an event, a form of subjectivisation, which is open to the contingent interactions between the participants who are corporeal beings. In the space of appearance, my appearing to

²¹⁸ See Chapter 5 of this thesis, 34–36. See also Citton, "Political Agency," 129.

others conditions other bodies that appear to mine. In other words, the coming into being of a space of appearance is a coming into being as a corporeal being in relation to other corporeal beings, thus it is necessarily contingent and slipping away from the logic of representation. This is why I would argue that Arendt's conceptualisation of the space of appearance already implies a different conception of the body from that of Western modernity, where the body is understood as a self-contained object to be reformulated. In a space of appearance, the body is not a mere object to be examined or controlled; it is what comes into being as an event that disturbs the logic of representation.

In this context, I would like to address further how this new possibility of thinking about the body offers us a different possibility for understanding choreography. As I discussed in Chapter 1, within the institutionalisation of dance, the development of the technology of choreography presupposes a particular conception of the body. And based on this particular preconception, choreography has developed as an institutionalised technique for articulating bodies according to the specific pedagogical demands. But as I have discussed in previous chapters, in what I refer to as contemporary choreographic experiments by a new generation of European choreographers, what is apparent is their attempt to rearticulate the possibilities of choreography as a technique of offering the space of appearance. Especially in Chapter 5, I have attempted to rearticulate choreography as a technique for bringing about a space of appearance for other bodies by discussing *The Agora Project*. And if this space of appearance can only be perceived in terms of an event, choreography can no longer be sustained as a pedagogical tool that demands a particular reformulation of the body. Instead, what was once deployed as a pedagogical technique, choreography now can be recognised as a tactical operation which is open to different possibilities of thinking about the body. Thus, I would argue

that contemporary choreographic operations by a new generation of choreographers have become about highlighting the impossibility of capturing the body within the logic of representation. In the coming part, I will attempt to articulate further how contemporary choreographic experiments open up different understandings of bodies, and how these highlight different possibilities for understanding choreography as an emancipatory tactic opposing the conventional conception of the body that is devised, legitimised, and sustained within the modern institution of dance.

Rethinking Choreography via Nancy's Conception of the Body

The body has been a dominant preoccupation of much recent critical theory that often comes under the umbrella term 'cultural studies'. But what I find problematic lies in the fact that in its attempt to reveal a complex power operation, it presupposes the body as an object of representation so that it is deployed as a means of signification. This understanding of the body not only fails to engage with its material reality but also, as Ian James argues in *The Fragmentary Demand: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy*, fails to 'engage with or think fully [about] the limits of the symbolic or of signification'.²¹⁹ What James refers to as the limit of signification of the body highlights the fact that the body is always already slipping away from a system of representation. Daniele Rugo, in his doctoral thesis *Powers of Existence: The Question of Otherness in the Philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy*, agrees with James' problematisation of a particular understanding of the body as a means of signification. In reflecting on the body that

²¹⁹ Ian James, *The Fragmentary Demand: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 115.

always slips away from the logic of representation, Rugo points to the fact that it is not possible to think about the body from a distance as an object of examination.

The difficulty [in] thinking [about] the body is that [the] 'body' can never be before me.²²⁰

In attempting to trace the French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy's rethinking of the body, Rugo argues that the limit of signification of the body lies in the fact that it can never be the object of representation, because any attempt to capture the body within the logic of representation is already always happening within the body. In other words, thinking about the body cannot take place outside of it. In this context, Rugo turns to Nancy's rethinking of bodies.²²¹

For Nancy, his rethinking of the body begins with rethinking the classical ontology of the body that attempts to fix it within the logic of representation. But Nancy's problem with conventional thinking about the body is not just the fact that the classical ontology of the body highlights the materiality of the body while ignoring the possibility of it being translated into a discursive factor. Nancy aims to go beyond the signification of the body because the body as a means of signification also exposes its limits. If Nancy wants to go beyond both, in terms of signification and materialisation, what else is possible when rethinking the body? At this point I would like to turn to Jacques Derrida's engagement with Nancy's rethinking of the body in *On Touching: Jean-Luc Nancy*.

²²⁰ Daniele Rugo, "Powers of Existence: The Question of Otherness in the Philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy" (PhD diss., Goldsmiths, University of London, 2010), 31.

²²¹ Ibid., 32.

Here, Derrida pays attention to how Nancy opens up a new possibility for thinking about the body via the philosophical concept of touch that allows Nancy to hold together different components of thinking about the body.²²² First of all, Derrida points out that Nancy's deployment of the philosophical concept of touch is distinct from what Derrida calls 'haptology', from the Greek root *haptein* 'touch'. As conventional metaphysics is obsessed with making things present, Derrida argues that 'haptological metaphysics' is also obsessed with making the untouchable present. In other words, what Derrida calls 'haptology' is subordinated to the Western tradition of the metaphysics of presence, that privileges identity over alterity, homogeneity over heterogeneity, immediacy over mediation.²²³ But Derrida argues that Nancy's conception of touch marks a break or 'rupture' from haptological metaphysics:

Nancy appears to me to break with, or at least take his distance from, forms of haptocentric metaphysics. His discourse on touch is neither intuitionist, nor continuist, nor homogenist, nor indivisibilist.²²⁴

Derrida perceives Nancy's philosophical concept of touch as a rupture because Nancy conceptualises the moment of touch as an 'experience of the material existence of the body that is other than that inherited from the Western school of metaphysics'.²²⁵ In other words, for Nancy, the moment of touch is what enables the experience of the body, but this experience of the material existence of the body does not deliver an experience

²²² James, *The Fragmentary Demand*, 118.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 120.

²²⁴ Jacques Derrida, *On Touching: Jean-Luc Nancy*, trans. Christine Irizarry (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 179–180.

²²⁵ James, *The Fragmentary Demand*, 120. See also Derrida, *On Touching*, 247.

of immediacy, continuity, and totality, but rather ‘discontinuity, fragmentation, partition and sharing’. In delivering an experience of the body that can never be complete but only fragmentary, via touching, in Nancy’s rethinking of the body, taking the place of bodies manifests itself as an event whose coming and slipping away cannot be announced prior to its arrival.

For Nancy, the body is not a mere object, as it is constructed within discourse or a social symbolic order, nor is it simply material reality that is indifferent to the process of signification. Instead, the body is what comes into being at the limit point, or at the point of touching between discourse and matter.²²⁶ In *Corpus*, Nancy argues that bodies ‘take place neither in discourse nor in matter’.²²⁷ In this context, James argues the following:

[Bodies] inhabit neither ‘the mind’ nor ‘the body.’ They take place at the limit, as the limit: limit – external border, fracture, and intersection of the unfamiliar within the continuity of sense, within the continuity of matter.²²⁸

Here, James explains that ‘sense’ for Nancy cannot be thought of as a conventional dichotomy between the sensible and the intelligible, rather sense is what comes into being with materialistic or bodily reality.²²⁹ Therefore, for Nancy, the body can also be understood as the limit point at which sense and matter touch each other.²³⁰ In other words, the body comes into being when taking the place of sense coming into contact with

²²⁶ James, *The Fragmentary Demand*, 131.

²²⁷ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus*, trans. Richard A. Rand (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 18.

²²⁸ James, *The Fragmentary Demand*, 131.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Nancy, *Corpus*, 131.

matter at its limit. And it is at this limit point, or this point of touching, that what Nancy calls 'the opening of the world' or the 'event of being' takes place.²³¹

Here, Nancy's notion of the event of being already presupposes embodiment. It is because, for Nancy, existence cannot be thought outside bodily finitude. Moreover, conceiving in terms of embodiment via touching allows Nancy to conceive of being always in terms of 'being-with'.²³² We are beings only inasmuch as we are 'being-with', by touching others and being touched by others. And because this touching cannot be announced prior to its arrival, it can only be understood in terms of the 'event of being'. In other words, we are beings only insofar as we are bodies that are touched by and touch other bodies.

This taking place of bodies (being touched by and touching other bodies) is not something that can be planned in advance or controlled from a position of mastery. Neither can it be delimited in a specific spatiotemporal condition. In this context, James argues that, for Nancy, the body is itself a space worth paying attention to. James does though emphasise the fact that here the term 'space' does not refer to a 'three-dimensional extension as measured by geometry'.²³³ Instead, here, the term 'space' implies the 'spacing' of space, or *espacement* in a Derridean sense, that already implies a

²³¹ James, *The Fragmentary Demand*, 131.

²³² Despite the fact that highlighting Heidegger's influence on Nancy's philosophy is beyond the scope of this research, it is important to point out that Nancy's understanding of the body in terms of 'being-with' resonates with Heidegger's term 'being-with' that refers to an ontological characteristic of the human being that it is always with other human beings. However, this should not be understood literally, in that he or she is, at a given moment, in spatial proximity to another human being. Rather, it is a statement that explains the condition of being-in-the-world. Heidegger, from his phenomenological perspective, calls this condition of being-in-the-world *Mitsein* 'being-with', and says it is essential to being human. But what must be highlighted is the fact that Nancy's conceptualisation of 'being-with' presupposes the corporeal condition of being. In this context, I articulate Nancy's 'being-with' as opening up a space of appearance for other bodies.

²³³ James, *The Fragmentary Demand*, 65.

'spatiotemporal unfolding'.²³⁴ In this light, the argument that the body is itself a space means that the body is a spacing of space that cannot be delimited as an essence or finality. This is why, for Nancy, bodies do not have a teleology or finality, because the body has no essence, nothing that can be determined beforehand. Instead, the body is something that takes place by being touched by other bodies and by touching other bodies in this spacing of space. Hence, Nancy's rethinking of the body in terms of space offers us an awareness that the body is a space that we have for each other.

Nancy's conception of the body enables me to rearticulate choreography as a technique of offering instead of a technique of domination. The reason is simple. Choreography is what brings about a space of appearance for other bodies. And because the body is a space that we have for each other, the act of bringing about a space of appearance for other bodies can always surpass the pedagogical logic that aims to subordinate other bodies according to specific institutional demands. Therefore, choreography now can be perceived as a technique of offering through which my body is touched by other bodies while touching other bodies. What must be highlighted here is the fact that this taking place of bodies for other bodies comes into being as an event.

Arriving at this articulation of choreography via Nancy's conception of the body is important as I find it runs in parallel with contemporary choreographic experiments discussed in this thesis. In highlighting the possibility of choreography as a technique for

²³⁴ Ibid. James contends that this way of perceiving space represents a rupture from the classical debate about space that is essentially ontological, and it revolves around the question, does space exist? In this context, James argues that the Cartesian perception of space as an extension is revolutionary as it rejects the locating of space as a function of categories that allows us to name or classify sensory experiences. The Cartesian conception of space allows us to depart from the classical ontological question that seeks an objective existence of space as an entity independent of other entities. This paves the way for a phenomenological discussion of space so that the ontological question about space becomes a question about experiences of space.

offering that only takes place as an event, contemporary choreographic experiments successfully open up a different possibility for body-writing (by which my body is being touched by other bodies while others are touched by mine). In doing so, choreography emerges as a deconstructive strategy against the logic of representation according to particular pedagogical demands.

In this light, I would like to discuss some of Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's recent choreographic projects, where choreography is no longer conceived as a pedagogical technique but rather emerges as a deconstructive tactic that allows us to rethink the given spatiotemporal conditions of dance within a specific institutional context. Via discussing *Work/Travail/Arbeid* (2015), I will focus on the fact that De Keersmaeker's rethinking of the given condition of the modern institution of dance takes place in a white-cube context. In doing so, I will attempt to highlight how choreography emerges as a deconstructive strategy not only rethinking the theatre-apparatus but also the exhibition-apparatus. But first, I would like to discuss *3Abschied* (2010), De Keersmaeker's collaborative project with Bel that shows how she disturbs the smooth operation of the modern institution of dance by revealing her doubts and questions on stage.

Rethinking the Spatiotemporal Conditions of Dance

3Abschied (2010) is a recent collaborative project between Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker and the French choreographer Jérôme Bel. I will pay particular attention to the structure and strategy that De Keersmaeker and Bel deploy in order to highlight the particular temporalisation devised and legitimised within the modern institution of dance. Instead of building up the structure of climax, De Keersmaeker and Bel constantly reveal uncertainty over what they are doing, including De Keersmaeker's desire to work with

Gustav Mahler's 'Der Abschied' from *Das Lied von der Erde*. Therefore, instead of presenting a finished version or the solution that they could come up with in their uncertainty, they decide to try one option after another as a way of eliminating the possibilities that are available to them. This structural tactic creates pauses that disturb the smooth operation of the particular temporality that is geared towards a structure of climax, legitimised within the modern institution of dance.

3Abschied begins when De Keersmaecker comes onto stage and explains what she is going to present, and how she came to conceive of this production in the first place. She is not afraid of exposing the structure of their production. Rather, it seems that her aim is to make the code for the construction of the dance-theatre as transparent as possible, so that the structure of dance-theatre, including its fragility, becomes clear to the audience from the beginning. What I want to point out here is that this way of structuring dance-theatre already disturbs the positionality of the choreographer-master, secured in what De Keersmaecker refers to as the old school.

De Keersmaecker walks to a small mixing table on stage and dims the lights. Then, she picks up a CD and puts it in a player. We, the audience, get to listen to a fragment of Gustav Mahler's 'Der Abschied'. When De Keersmaecker turns the music off, she begins to talk. This is the first time she talks on stage. First, she wants everybody to read the lyrics to 'Der Abschied' that were distributed at the entrance. What is written in the handout is the last part of *Das Lied von der Erde*. Then, she explains why she played this particular recording by the legendary opera singer Kathleen Ferrier, the conductor Bruno Walter, and the Vienna Philharmonic. De Keersmaecker draws parallels between the theme of the song, the acceptance of death, and the story of the legendary singer Kathleen Ferrier, who knew she had cancer at the time of the recording.

Then, De Keersmaeker talks about a meeting she had with the composer Daniel Barenboim and how she discussed her desire to choreograph a dance to go with this song. But Barenboim discouraged her, saying that the score was impossible to dance to and warning that she would lose its magic if she insisted upon it. Instead, Barenboim suggested that she try other composers, such as Stravinsky, Satie, or Debussy, whose music was intended for dance from the beginning. But the reason why De Keersmaeker wanted to work with this music by Mahler was not because it was made for dance but because she was genuinely moved by it. When an artist is genuinely moved by something, how do they transform their desire into a specific form that can be identified as artistic practice, an operation which has to deal with various sets of restrictions and limits imposed by the existing disciplinary hierarchy? When De Keersmaeker shared with Barenboim her desire to work with 'Der Abschied' as a dancer and choreographer, he clearly expressed his doubts. Where did these doubts come from? His point was that this music was not written for dance-theatre. Should there be specific music that is written for dance? Or are there specific dances for music? In other words, the question that De Keersmaeker attempts to share with the audience becomes clear: what are the conditions for the possibility of making dance? She reveals her frustration with the conditions given to her that predetermine the relationship between music and dance, and it is this frustration that provokes further questions. And by revealing these questions on stage, De Keersmaeker brings about the very structure of a dance-theatre that is not geared towards moments of climax. And this structure produces a whole new possibility for the audience to think about the problem that De Keersmaeker puts on the table, and to become involved in it.

After De Keersmaeker's brief explanation of how she began to work with this music, the orchestra come onto the stage and are finally ready to play the song to the audience. They start playing 'Der Abschied' and De Keersmaeker begins to dance on her own. But as the orchestra are sitting in the centre of the stage, there is little room for De Keersmaeker to move around. So she dances in between the musicians, cautiously at first, within the space allowed to her. Later, she finds more room at the back of the stage. De Keersmaeker seems unsure where to start. She initially works with upper-body movements that do not require much space. Therefore, her hands become particularly expressive and make it look like she is painting pictures against the black background. As her dance develops she sails around the musicians. Thus, her dance also comes into being through another set of negotiations, between what she really feels and her own vocabulary of embedded dance, such as her well-known metronomic style, including swinging arms and sharp turns.

After this short performance, she leaves the stage and Jérôme Bel walks on. He explains why, during rehearsals, he did not think that what we have just seen was an entirely satisfying performance. He shows the audience some other versions he tried out during those rehearsals with De Keersmaeker. For instance, he says he suggested that the orchestra get up and leave, one by one, as the piece ends and she still dances. Then, he asks the orchestra to re-enact this version that they had tried in a rehearsal. After they have performed as Bel had just explained to us, Bel returns to the stage and talks about another option they considered during rehearsals. This time, Bel suggests that the orchestra die on stage, as Mahler's music is about death. Again, Bel asks the orchestra to show what they did during rehearsals. The first musician hits the floor with quite a thud, and it quickly becomes quite hilarious as others follow.

What is Bel doing here? He is demonstrating the series of possibilities available to them in the beginning. But by exhausting one possibility after another, while explaining why they do not work to the audience, he ends up presenting the series of failures they had during rehearsals. By staging one failure after another, what he reveals is the structure of this dance-theatre. From a simple point of departure, De Keersmaeker's desire to work with this piece, Bel and De Keersmaeker together exhaust a whole series of possibilities that were open to them. In doing so, they unrealise a given temporality of dance-theatre that is geared towards a certain moment of climax. In this process of unrealisation, Bel and De Keersmaeker locate the dancing body within a different temporal condition that deviates from the smooth linearity inherent in the conventional temporalisation of dance.

In *3Abschied*, Bel finally introduces their last version of 'Der Abschied'. First, the pianist, Jean-Luc Fafchamps, plays a piano. This time, De Keersmaeker not only attempts to dance but also begins to sing. It is very sincere, but obviously a struggle for her as singing is outside her comfort zone. Her movement and voice, the latter very faint, are loaded with uncertainty. She struggles to come to terms with the music by which she is moved so much. And in doing so, she leaves herself open to something that she has never tried. It is clear to me that the reason why they decide to present this as the final performance of this series is not because they consider this version to be more successful than other versions they had tried. While De Keersmaeker is still unsure about how she should deal with this particular music, her struggle to come to terms with it takes her to a contingent situation. And it is only through a series of failures, that exhaust the conditions of possibility given to her in the initial stages, that she is able to deviate from the given spatialisation and temporalisation of the modern institution of dance. I would

like to highlight here that choreography, or the opening up of spaces of appearances for other bodies, is deployed to exhaust the conditions of possibility within a specific institutional context instead of sustaining a pedagogical logic according to particular institutional demands. In this light, I would like to discuss *Work/Travail/Arbeid* (2015), a recent choreographic experiment by De Keersmaeker in which she exhausts the given spatiotemporal conditions for a dance-theatre to the point that she no longer can claim it is dance.

Rewriting Dance-Theatre as Exhibition

Work/Travail/Arbeid began when Elena Filipovic, who was the senior curator at WIELS, asked De Keersmaeker to present dance in an exhibition space.²³⁵ If I could articulate *3Abschied* as De Keersmaeker's attempt to exhaust the spatiotemporal conditions that were not laid out for her, *Work/Travail/Arbeid* is her attempt to recreate the spatiotemporal conditions of dance by radically displacing the given conditions that have made dance dance, to the point that she no longer claims it to be dance-theatre but exhibition.

In displacing the given conditions of dance by locating her dancers in an exhibition, one of the most obvious conditions that De Keersmaeker has to deal with in *Work/Travail/Arbeid* is the fact that her dance-theatre has to be exhibited for seven hours, every day, for more than nine weeks. This particular temporal condition in an exhibition context also brings about a particular spatiotemporal condition where no frontality is guaranteed for the dancers as visitors are free to move around. This brings about the

²³⁵ From the talk *Dance and the Exhibition Form: Conversation with Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, Xavier Le Roy and Elena Filipovic*, at WIELS, Brussels, on 22 March 2015.

possibility of a form of proximity that is not found in a normal theatre context. In other words, the way in which De Keersmaeker deals with the displacement of the spatiotemporal conditions of dance becomes the very structure of her choreographic experiment to rewrite dance-theatre as 'exhibition'.

When I visited De Keersmaeker's exhibition at WIELS in Brussels, it was a Sunday, late in the afternoon. I was a bit surprised that there was a huge crowd in front of the ticket office. Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's exhibition *Work/Travail/Arbeid* was already on. Unlike *The Agora Project* discussed in the preceding chapter, where the spectators' entrance to the theatre marks the beginning and end points, at first, De Keersmaeker's *Work/Travail/Arbeid* seems to be disinterested in the presence of the spectator-visitor. The exhibition is open as long as the art centre is open, regardless of the presence of the spectator-visitor.²³⁶

Work/Travail/Arbeid is not the first time that Keersmaeker has presented her dance-theatre in a so-called white-cube context. Yet, her previous presentations in white-cube spaces took the form of either a conventional exhibition, in which her drawings and objects, accumulated over thirty years of practice, were exhibited (as at BOZAR, Centre for Fine Arts in 2001), or theatre that took place in a museum. For instance, when she presented her 1982 theatre piece 'Violin Phase', part of *Fase*, at MoMA in 2011, a frontal situation was still sustained. And in her recent presentation of *Fase* at Tate Modern in 2012, although the frontal situation was absent and spectators were able to sit much

²³⁶ At first glance, the exhibition seems to be disinterested in the presence of the spectator-visitor as opposed to the theatre situation where it is the presence of the audience that makes theatre theatre. But whether it is a black box or a white cube, being bodiless applies as the ontological condition for a spectator to be a spectator.

closer to the dancers, it was still a theatre presentation where performances were given in fixed slots.

What was significant about *Work/Travail/Arbeid* at WIELS was not the fact that it was taking place in a white-cube space, but that taking place in a white cube became a condition for its coming into being. In other words, this project was not about exhibiting her previous dance in a double-construction situation, where a black box is installed in a white cube. Rather, what De Keersmaecker presented here was ‘dance as exhibition’ or ‘exhibition as dance’. This inevitably contaminates the spatiotemporal condition, both for the black box and the white cube. For instance, De Keersmaecker had to work with the condition that her dance was to be exhibited for seven hours every day for more than nine weeks. In other words, her dancing bodies had to occupy a duration that dance is not normally designed to sustain. The particular temporalisation and spatialisation of an exhibition required a radical rethinking of De Keersmaecker’s body-writing, as the dancing body is not capable of sustaining this particular spatiotemporal condition. But this does not mean that De Keersmaecker’s challenge was simply to make her dance longer than usual. The fact that De Keersmaecker should now work under different spatiotemporal conditions meant that she had an opportunity to rethink the given spatialisation and temporalisation that sustain the smooth operational machine, not only of the black box but also of the white cube. In this light, I would like to briefly outline the particular spatiotemporal conditions predetermined by the black box and the white cube.

I have, in the previous chapter, already discussed the particular spatiotemporal conditions of the black box as an actualisation of the ultimate ideal of the Platonic philosophy of keeping the spectator present in their absence. In analysing the spatiotemporal conditions of the white cube, I would like to depart from Brian

O'Doherty's analysis where he defines this particular term in *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, originally published as a series of three articles in *Artforum* in 1976, and subsequently collected in a book of the same name.²³⁷ I would argue that O'Doherty's argument allows us to conceive the notion of a white cube as going beyond its distinctive architectural components, such as white walls or a minimal interior. He argues that the white cube is a historically constructed, aesthetic object in the West.²³⁸ This particular development of gallery space as an aesthetic object implies that the white cube not only has architectural conditions, but also overpowers artworks themselves in its shift from placing content within a context to making the context itself the content. But this emergence of context is primarily enabled through its attempted disappearance. The white cube is conceived as a place free of context, where time and social space are thought to be excluded from the experience of artworks. It is only via the apparent neutrality of appearing outside of daily life and politics that artworks within the white cube can appear to be self-contained – only by being freed from historical time can they attain their aura of timelessness.²³⁹ This is why the white cube is a spatialisation of timelessness that is born to resist the passage of time.

In this timeless space where 'no more time' is spatialised, what is produced is a bodiless body whose eyes only hover in this vacuum space. In other words, it is only these bodiless eyes that are allowed to enter the white cube. Nothing is to be touched; one should be quiet and reverent; nobody is to laugh; it is eerily still; nobody is allowed to talk loudly. In this light, I would point to the fact that these bodiless eyes are nothing new

²³⁷ Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999).

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 49.

in the institution of theatre. In the development of theatre in the form of a black box in the West, bodiless eyes, called spectators in the institutionalisation of theatre, were also produced. Of course, the spectator-body in the white cube is not meant to confront living bodies, unlike in the black box. But whether it is a spectator-body in a black-box context or a spectator-body in a white cube, they are both mere voyeurs whose mode of being can be explained by this paradoxical institutional demand of 'being there without being there'.²⁴⁰

In De Keersmaeker's choreographic experiment involving the rewriting of dance-theatre as exhibition, the spectator, however, is no longer capable of meeting this institutional demand, as the spectator-body is constantly disturbed by unexpected situations and contingent encounters with the dancers and other spectator-bodies. For instance, despite the fact that I, as a spectator-visitor to De Keersmaeker's exhibition, tried to limit the exposure of my own body, I found my body constantly located in the space of appearance. This is because De Keersmaeker's dancers were located in an exhibition context where no particular spatial focal point was guaranteed, unlike the black-box situation, so that every spot was a potential spot for action. Moreover, when my body appeared in the space of appearance, the attention supposedly paid to the dancers was inevitably distracted and dispersed. This dispersion of attention no longer secured the specifically idealised representation of time that is sustained in either the black box or the white cube. In this context, what failed in De Keersmaeker's choreographic experiment was the normative deployment of the spectator-body, devised and legitimised in either a black box or a white cube. In other words, De Keersmaeker's

²⁴⁰ Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics*, 93. See also Chapter 5 of this thesis where I follow Rancière's genealogical investigation of the demonisation of the demos, 6–13.

choreographic experiment became an experiment that contaminated the ontological condition of being a spectator-body.

As discussed in the preceding chapter, the ontological condition of the spectator-body is highlighted in the process of bracketing spectators and turning them into a union with centripetal force. As Rancière explains, this centripetal force does not exist to create a centre that is being pulled in either direction, between itself and the periphery. Rather, it is a way of 'keeping the people present in their absence'.²⁴¹ In this context, the spectator-body is the spatialisation of being bodiless. In other words, it is a manifestation of the presence of absence. Therefore, the spectator-body is not meant to be aware of the presence of other spectator-bodies. The spectator-body only exists for its eyes.

But De Keersmaeker's choreographic experiment contaminates this ontological condition for a spectator to be a spectator. In the white-cube context, where the dichotomy between object and subject is dismantled by the confrontation between subjects, and where the focal point is eradicated, unlike the black-box context, the ontological condition for the spectator-body can no longer be sustained. In this context, the question that I would like to consider in the coming part is how De Keersmaeker's contamination of the spectator-body opens up a different possibility for articulating the space of appearance that emerges, in which the spatiotemporal condition for the spectator-body is no longer secure.

²⁴¹ Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics*, 93. I borrow Jacques Rancière's analysis of the demos as I find a common political strategy in the making of the demos and the spectator.

The Event of Being a Body With Other Bodies

As opposed to the smooth operation of the white cube and the black box, that attempt to erase the body, De Keersmaeker's tactical deployment of the technology of choreography brings the spectator-body into the space of appearance, but this only comes into being in relation to other bodies. What should be noted is the fact that this bringing of a body into the space of appearance is not something that can be planned beforehand. It occurs via contingent encounters with other bodies. All De Keersmaeker has control of is a particular way of displacing the spatiotemporal condition of the dancing body. In the case of *Work/Travail/Arbeid*, it is about placing the dancing body within a white-cube context. When a dancing body is displaced from the spatiotemporal condition legitimised by the modern institution of dance, its coming into being as a dancing body is not something to be given, but something to be acquired in relation to the spectator-body that is also displaced from its given spatiotemporal condition.

When I entered De Keersmaeker's exhibition at WIELS, because I entered in the middle of one of nine cycles that structure the exhibition, I inevitably gained some attention from some of the spectator-visitors. It was the same for me once I was in the space. Whenever new spectator-visitors entered the exhibition space, it was hard not to notice and gaze at them for a few moments. Of course, these exchanges of gazes between spectator-visitors also occur in a normal white-cube context. But when there are only other living bodies on which the spectator-visitors' gaze can be fixed, the exchange of gazes between fellow spectator-visitors becomes more immediate. It is this immediacy that heightens the attention given to the continuous process whereby spectator-visitors perceive the bodies of others and at the same time expose themselves as objects of

observation for other bodies. And this attention given to fellow spectator-visitors obviously diverts the attention supposedly given to De Keersmaeker's dancers.

When I entered the exhibition space, what first captured my attention were the bodies of fellow spectator-visitors. I did not immediately notice two male dancers, as they were not engaged in any movement at that very moment. Moreover, they were among other spectator-visitors. Of course, it only took me a few minutes to recognise them as they were wearing particular costumes intended to look like normal, everyday outfits, yet obviously different from normal, everyday attire. But even if it took a few minutes, it was clear that the privilege given to dancers in a black-box context was no longer evident here. Because there was no distinction between stage and auditorium, the attention that the dancers normally receive in a black-box situation was not given.

Once the frontal positionality guaranteed in a black-box situation is no longer present, the bodies of the dancers appearing before the spectator are not a given condition but something that occurs. At the same time, it is the dancers' bodies that allow the bodies of spectators to appear. Thus, the dancers' bodies that I witnessed were bodies that came into being only when they were in a relationship with other bodies. In a form of articulation borrowed from Nancy, the dancing body only comes into being when it is touched by a spectator-body, and a spectator-body only comes into being when it is touched by a dancing-body. A dancing-body only exists through touching spectator-bodies that surround it, and installing a theatre situation.

But these theatre situations are, however, not only temporary structures but also contingent structures. For instance, when a child of one of the spectator-visitors ran to the centre where two dancers were performing a particular set of movements, obviously the theatre situation was momentarily terminated. Moreover, this termination was not

only caused by a child who did not understand the code of conduct in a particular setting, but also by the dancers who were participating in De Keersmaeker's exhibition. For instance, as this particular cycle finished and another cycle started, one of the two male dancers did not leave the space voluntarily but took on the role of a spectator watching his fellow dancers performing a set of choreographed movements. And because I knew he was not just a spectator but a dancer, I kept looking at him watching his fellow dancers. This constantly distracted me from the theatre situations that emerged.

Whenever De Keersmaeker's attempts to install a theatre situation in an exhibition context fail, what becomes disturbed is not only the specific temporalisation of theatre that is geared towards a moment of climax, requiring a great degree of attention. The timelessness of an exhibition is also disturbed, as it becomes open to contingent situations whereby the bodies of spectator-visitors emerge by touching other bodies and being touched by others in the space of appearance. When theatre situations are constantly failing due to contingent encounters between dancers and spectator-visitors, or among spectator-visitors themselves, it is the moment when we realise what it means to offer a space for each other by being touched by other bodies while touching them in return. The space of appearance manifested itself as an event, working against the absolutisation of time, which subordinates the space of appearance of bodies under the specific system of representation, when my body was touched by others and others were touched by mine.

In this context, it is useful to summon again Nancy's understanding of the body as an event. In Nancy's rethinking of the body, the taking place of bodies is an event, as it only happens when my body touches other bodies while other bodies are touched by mine. But this offering of space to each other also means that my body taking place

interrupts other bodies taking place in a space of appearance, while other bodies taking place interrupt my body taking place in a space of appearance. In other words, being touched by other bodies while touching other bodies is inevitably fragmentary and discontinuous. This understanding allows us to articulate that opening up a space of appearance for each other is not done to bring about a common space where homogeneity and harmony coexist, but to bring about a constant process of contaminating and being contaminated by the appearance of each other. For instance, in De Keersmaeker's exhibition, it was my body as a spectator that allowed me to take the place of the dancers' bodies but which, at the same time, contaminated the appearance of the bodies of the dancers.

In this context, I would argue that choreography is deployed to deconstruct the absolutisation of time by highlighting that the time we share is inevitably fragmented and discontinuous. In this fragmentation of time, I pay attention to the fact that a position of mastery will always fail to be permanently installed. The fragmentation of time inherent in the space of appearance does not allow a position of mastery to have ultimate control over bodies taking place. In this context, I will articulate how De Keersmaeker's choreographic experiment demonstrates the failing positionality of De Keersmaeker as the ultimate author who has complete control over production.

The Choreographer's Body as a Tipping Point Between Memory and Anticipation

As De Keersmaeker revealed in the artist's talk she gave at WIELS, De Keersmaeker tried to be in the exhibition space as much as she could, along with the spectator-visitors,

watching her dancers who were inscribing her own movements in time and space.²⁴² But what she really witnessed was a failing of her positionality as the ultimate source of control, as there will be always be a gap between the choreographer's instructions and what will be performed, via incommensurable, contingent encounters between her dancers and spectator-visitors over nine weeks. In other words, despite her meticulously planned and organised choreography, De Keersmaeker, as the engineer of specific body-writing in a given space and time, does not have total control over what will be inscribed in time and space over those weeks.

During my visit to *Work/Travail/Arbeid*, I saw De Keersmaeker among other spectator-visitors. It was already two weeks since the exhibition opened, so it would have been a while since she observed her own movements inscribed by her dancers. On the floor of the exhibition space, there were numerous traces of circles drawn by her dancers. Whenever the dancers engaged in a new cycle, they drew circles in a meticulous way. The cycle that finished on the day of my visit began when two female dancers came into the centre of the space and drew circles on the ground. While they were drawing circles on the floor with chalk, the music began and opened another session. As if they were aware of the vulnerability of the stage situation, using chalk and a compass they drew circles to mark out the invisible territory of their stage. And a few minutes later, I noticed that a male dancer, who was standing right next to me, was preparing to join them for a new sequence. And another male dancer from the opposite side also joined the scene and began to count out random numbers: 8, 9, 30, 31, 35, 15, 33, 31, 1. There seemed to be no rules to these numbers. As time went by, at a certain moment the movements of the four

²⁴² From the talk *Dance and the Exhibition Form: Conversation with Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, Xavier Le Roy and Elena Filipovic*, at WIELS, Brussels, on 22 March 2015.

dancers and four musicians were in time with one another, moving backwards and forwards in circular turns. Then, even the piano, that was located in the room at the back, moved into the first room. The pianist played while the piano was being moved with the help of technicians and its wheels. They were all making a vortex pattern in their own terms and in a particular circular repetition.

De Keersmaecker's exhibition *Work/Travail/Arbeid* was based on her previous dance theatre, *Vortex Temporum* (2013). *Vortex Temporum*, as its title implies, is specifically concerned with time or, to be more specific, a time of vortex. And De Keersmaecker's decision to stage an exhibition based on this particular dance-theatre aims to advance further her thinking about 'a time of vortex'. As she explains herself, her dance-making as exhibition aims to take the 'time for time'.²⁴³

Vortex Temporum begins with De Keersmaecker's attempt to install a danced counterpoint to Gérard Grisey's polyphonic music by linking six dancers with six musicians in order to ask a question about how one can visualise polyphony by dancing.²⁴⁴ Each dancer is linked to one of the six musicians and colours his or her dancing with patterns of movement proper to the instrument. Both dancers and musicians traverse the stage, following the pattern of a vortex. For De Keersmaecker, these patterns of swirling circles reveal the emergence and disappearance of the present, that only comes into being as a permanent 'tipping point that is a balancing act between memory and anticipation, leaning back and forth between the ghost image of the past and a desire towards the future'.²⁴⁵

²⁴³ Elena Filipovic, ed., *Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker; Work/Travail/Arbeid* (Brussels: WIELS, Rosas, and Mercatorfonds, 2015), 18. Published on the occasion of the exhibition at WIELS, Brussels, 20 March 2015–17 May 2015.

²⁴⁴ "Vortex Temporum," Rosas, <http://www.rosas.be/en/production/vortex-temporum>.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

In her interview with De Keersmaeker on *Vortex Temporum*, Bojana Cvejić points out that Grisey's music shares some characteristics with De Keersmaeker's choreography: the perpetuation of circles and circular repetitions, spiral movements, and mathematical proportions in the construction of form.²⁴⁶ For De Keersmaeker's *Vortex Temporum*, the dancers and musicians are meant to perform a strictly structured choreography that is minutely written and meticulously instructed. These characteristics of De Keersmaeker's *Vortex Temporum* also apply to the basic spatiotemporal framework of *Work/Travail/Arbeid*. For both *Vortex Temporum* and *Work/Travail/Arbeid*, the multiplication of circles and their underlying pentagons are constituted based on what she refers to as a 'magic square', with its ninefold pattern as a structuring device.²⁴⁷ It is both a symbolic representation of a cosmological system, whose form is found in many ancient cultures, and also a mathematical diagram in which all the numbers in each straight line, vertical, horizontal, or diagonal, add up to fifteen.²⁴⁸ The geometric pattern is organised in a two-dimensional space and also moves in a three-dimensional volume. Numbers determine directions and points in space. The magic square then acts as a pattern for trajectories, organising architectural levels and the distribution of energy in movement.²⁴⁹ Based on this spatiotemporal logic, De Keersmaeker's exhibition is structured with nine cycles that repeat every day for the seven opening hours of the institution, so that no day begins where it did the day before, for more than nine weeks.

²⁴⁶ Bojana Cvejić, Gérard Grisey and Jean-Luc Plouvier, *Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker: Vortex Temporum*, ed. Bojana Cvejić (Brussels: WIELS, Rosas, and Mercatorfonds, 2015), 7. Published on the occasion of the exhibition at WIELS, Brussels, 20 March 2015–17 May 2015.

²⁴⁷ Filipovic, *Work/Travail/Arbeid*, 26–27.

²⁴⁸ Cvejić, Grisey and Plouvier, *Vortex Temporum*.

²⁴⁹ Filipovic, *Work/Travail/Arbeid*.

In other words, unlike a white cube or a black box, where one can get a holistic perspective of the work, De Keersmaeker's dance-making as an exhibition does not allow the visitor to see a picture of the entire exhibition. De Keersmaeker's exhibition not only begins with a new order every day but also lasts for nine weeks, from Wednesday to Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. This is why even the choreographer and the participating performers will never experience every single moment that the exhibition is open. Therefore, the emergence of a new mode of authorship is inevitable when compared to theatre, where the choreographer-spectator has more or less complete control of her production. No one, including the choreographer, can experience De Keersmaeker's exhibition in its totality. Instead, for more than nine weeks, and for seven hours every day, the movements of the dancers will be inscribed and deposited as traces of a choreographer's body.

When the last sequence of the day has finished, what is left are visible circles drawn on the ground by dancers over time. De Keersmaeker is watching the circles on the ground drawn by her own dancers who execute her movements. These traces are clearly marking out the countless invisible circles drawn by the dancers' movements in space and time. These invisible circles are traces of the choreographer-body, always in parallel with the visible circles drawn on the ground by the dancers. This endless chain, pairing invisible and visible circles, becomes evidence of the choreographer being there, observing her body being a trace of what is inscribed by her own dancers. However, despite the fact that the choreographer-body is right there at the very moment of its execution, it is failing to come to terms with what is actually inscribed over time. This is a time of vortex. It is already struggling as a 'tipping point that is a balancing act between memory and anticipation, leaning back and forth between the ghost image of the past and

a desire towards the future'. This paradoxical situation, whereby the choreographer observes her body being a trace of what is inscribed in space and time but failing to come to terms with what is actually inscribed, reveals the contingent positionality of the choreographer who fails to have complete control over her own production.

When the choreographer fails to be the ultimate author, choreography is no longer deployed as a pedagogical technique, but as an emancipatory tactic opposing the particular pedagogical demands devised, legitimised, and sustained within the Western model of the modern institution of dance. Choreography becomes a technique for bringing about a space of appearance for other bodies, through which my body is touched by other bodies while other bodies are touched by mine. In these contingent encounters via points of touching, we come to be aware of the fact that we, as bodies, are spaces for other bodies, as other bodies are spaces for our bodies. Therefore, the choreographic body is what comes into being as an event.

Conclusion.

Conditions of the Questions

In this thesis, I have attempted to make sense of choreography, its particularities as a technique of writing the dancing body within a specific institutional context, and its potential for opening up a new critical field that will enable us to rethink what writing the (dancing) body means and can do. In so doing, I have articulated the performativity of the act of writing the body in terms of *choreo-graphy*. As the hyphen between *choreo* and *graphy* indicates, I have attempted to highlight the fact that the term 'choreography' is, in fact, a neologism that reflects a specific sociopolitical demand of writing the (dancing) body within a particular institutional framework. Therefore, by putting forward *choreo-graphy* as the title of this thesis, I aimed to highlight a deconstructive reading of choreography, whereby the desire of writing the dancing body can be analysed in relation to the position of the master. Choreography came into being as a particular manifestation of a power structure through which a certain logic of representation is therefore institutionalised. Hence my attempt to make sense of choreography via *choreo-graphy* has become an attempt to make sense of this power structure that is created within the institutionalisation of dance in the West.

I have, however, sought to find a different point of contact to engage with the problematics of the power structure, one that differs from conventional institutional critique. In other words, I have attempted to rethink the conventional mode of operation of institutional critique that imposes a binary structure between those who are inside the institution and those who position themselves outside it. Especially within our contemporary situation, where utopian dreams of revolution have failed us and new forms of oppression have constantly been engineered in the name of emancipation, it is

important to go beyond these binary opposites. This is one of the reasons why contemporary choreographic experiments attracted my attention in the first place. What I call contemporary choreographic experiments by a new generation of European choreographers demonstrate the possibility of creating a different relationship with the very institution that they inhabit, without being captured within a binary system of the conventional mode of institutional critique. I call this new model of resistance the 'operation within', as opposed to what I would call the 'battlefield' model, where one positions oneself against and outside one's enemy, which necessarily imposes a binary structure. If I could argue that the emergence of performance in the first wave of the performance turn in post-war Europe and America can be understood within the battlefield model, where the avant-gardists marched against the evil institution, the ways in which contemporary choreographic experiments do not remain within the binary logic that positions oneself outside the institution. This is why I would like to suggest that the operational tactics found in contemporary choreographic experiments can resonate beyond the disciplinary boundaries of dance studies.

In order to analyse contemporary choreographic experiments and their suggested model of resistance against and within the institution that they inhabit, I have asked six questions in this thesis, which also serve as the titles of each chapter:

1. What makes dance dance?
2. What makes dance choreography?
3. What makes choreography a truth game?
4. What makes choreography research?
5. How does choreography reinvent spectatorship?

6. How does choreography reconfigure the body as an event?

In the forthcoming part, I aim to revisit each question and discuss some of the tactical decisions that I made in forming dialogues and making connections between different theoretical and choreographic projects in order to make sense of the act of writing the (dancing) body via *choreo-graphy*, and its political implications beyond the discipline of dance. In so doing, I have to ask another question: what are the conditions of the questions that I ask? From which positions have I asked these questions? And what presuppositions, what Derrida calls 'primary affirmations', have been assumed in asking these questions? And last but not least, the question that I want to ask myself: to whom have I addressed these questions?

What Makes Dance Dance?

What appears in the first instance to be a tautological question does not ask what the essence of dance is. This was a question I asked myself in an attempt to make sense of the rapid embracing of contemporary choreographic experiments in visual arts institutions that I observed as a visual arts curator working on 'live art' programmes at a newly founded art institution in Seoul in the early 2000s. In fact, the museological desire to transform what is considered to be the lifeless space of the white cube into something alive, vibrant, and full of 'now' is not something unknown to us.²⁵⁰ In the first wave of the

²⁵⁰ Here, I am referring to what is often called the performance turn in the 1960s and 1970s by post-war neo-avant-garde movements. If this performance turn can be called the first wave of institutional critique in the postwar period, in the early 2000s there were increasing numbers of exhibitions that reviewed the historical relationship between the white cube and the black box at major art institutions in Europe. I would call this period the second wave of institutional critique. For instance, *Theatre Without Theatre* at MACBA in Barcelona in 2007 was a survey show that explored how the notion of theatre has played an important role in artistic practices since the 1960s. In 2007, Tate Modern hosted Pierre Bal-Blanc's *The Living Currency*

performance turn in the 1960s and 1970s, we witnessed how ‘performance’ emerged as an emancipatory term against everything that was already captured within the existing operation of the institution of art. In parallel, I have witnessed how ‘choreography’ has emerged as a new term that seems to replace the function which performance had in the first wave of the performance turn. In order to understand why choreography has been actively embraced beyond the discipline of dance in the second wave of the performance turn in the early 2000s, I first had to ask why choreography has been released from its disciplinary weight. In doing so, the question of what makes dance dance was an important departure point for my investigation into why there has been the rapid embracing of contemporary choreographic experiments in visual arts institutions.

Moreover, this tendency towards choreography, evident in the second wave of the performance turn, is not only limited to the European art scene. Thanks to global capitalist movements accelerated after the fall of the Berlin Wall, this newly developed interest in choreography, stimulated by a set of choreographic experiments by European choreographers, has been quickly embraced by increasing numbers of emerging art institutions and festivals that have sought to become international. And not to mention that with the unprecedented accessibility and flow of information, thanks to the Internet, there are resources and networks that were not readily available in previous decades in the non-European art scene. Therefore, when I worked on the inaugural festival at a newly

that explored the possibility of exhibiting live performances in a museum context. Marina Abramović’s retrospective *Seven Easy Pieces* at the Guggenheim Museum in 2005 also evoked the neo-avant-garde history of the 1960s and 1970s by re-enacting historical performances. The term ‘re-enactment’ was one of the terms that dominated artistic and curatorial practices in the early 2000s; see Christophe Kihm, “Performance in the Age of Its Re-enactment,” *artpress* 0 (2008): 23–29. These are just a few examples of what has happened since the early 2000s. And the opening of the Tanks, a new exhibition space dedicated to performance and video at Tate Modern, epitomises what is often called the performance turn, which has become one of the most evident conditions for artistic and curatorial practices.

founded art institution in the early 2000s in Seoul, there were ever-increasing channels for exchanges of information; thus, I was exposed to various artistic experiments in the European art scene that were conventionally perceived as being outside the territory of the visual arts.²⁵¹ Among them, the active embracing of contemporary dance by visual arts institutions drew my attention the most. Particularly in South Korea, the heated notion of interdisciplinarity was rapidly prompting the reorganisation of public funding structures in order to meet the new institutional demands.²⁵² Within these infrastructures and resources, 'internationalised' visual arts institutions were embracing contemporary choreographic experiments faster than in the previous decade, and this contributed to the blurring of boundaries between the white cube and the black box, thus confirming so-called interdisciplinary practices as the very mode of contemporary artistic and curatorial practice.²⁵³

This active embracing of what was conventionally considered to be outside the territory of visual arts does in fact echo the first wave of the performance turn of the 1960s and 1970s, when the notion of the 'expanded field of artistic practice' was being increasingly debated in the spirit of an institutional critique, with the term 'performance' standing for everything that was not institutionally captured.²⁵⁴ Therefore, it was not surprising that 'No Manifesto' was the prevailing spirit dominating the performance scene of the 1960s and 1970s around the world.²⁵⁵ In this context, I have argued that

²⁵¹ Since I worked on a live art programme with Festival B:om director Seong Hee Kim in the early 2000s, my research focused on experimental performing arts festivals in Europe and Japan.

²⁵² Since the early 2000s, a new funding category for interdisciplinary practice has been introduced by the Arts Council in South Korea. They even opened up a new space dedicated to 'interdisciplinary practice'.

²⁵³ Hence I was in an environment where I soon came across what was often called non-dance by a new generation of European choreographers, at least within a couple of years of their premieres at festivals in Seoul.

²⁵⁴ Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," 276–290.

²⁵⁵ I am referring to Yvonne Rainer's 'No Manifesto', but this is not to limit the discussion to Rainer. I mention Rainer's writing of the 'No Manifesto' because this describes the prevailing spirit of the neo-avant-

what is contemporary about contemporary choreographic experiments by a new generation of choreographers stems from the fact that what I have called a battlefield model of resistance (where there is a clear battlefield between two opposing sides) is no longer presupposed.

For instance, as opposed to the anti-theatricality in the 1960s and 1970s that resisted the instalment of the black box itself, the choreographers I have examined in this thesis question the very institutions they inhabit but, nevertheless, they never position themselves outside of them.²⁵⁶ This is why I have argued that their mode of operation can be articulated with the Foucauldian understanding of the operation of power, which asserts that nothing is outside power because we are all strategic points through which certain assemblages of power are manifested.²⁵⁷ In fact, the parallel mode of operation between the post-structuralist rethinking of power, institutions, the body, subjectivity and knowledge production, and contemporary choreographic experiments that goes beyond the battlefield model, is what enables contemporary choreography to be positioned as a new field of critical studies that goes beyond the conventional boundaries of dance studies based on Greenbergian logic. In this light, it is worth paying attention to the discussions of the choreographers themselves about the labelling of contemporary choreographic experiments as ‘conceptual dance’.²⁵⁸

In the conversation between the performance theorist Cvejić and Le Roy about the label of ‘conceptual dance’ attached to this new generation of choreographers who have gained visibility since the late 1990s, Le Roy refuses to have his work categorised as

garde of the 1960s and 1970s.

²⁵⁶ For instance, Allen Kaprow’s ‘Happenings’ refused to be involved in any theatrical apparatus.

²⁵⁷ Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 194–198.

²⁵⁸ Le Roy, Cvejić, and Siegmund, “To end with judgment,” 49–56.

conceptual dance, arguing ‘I haven’t seen any choreographers who work without a concept.’²⁵⁹ Moreover, as Cvejić argues, the term ‘conceptual dance’ encompasses the accusation that this group of choreographers betrays the essence of dance, in line with American dance criticism influenced by Greenbergian categorisation.²⁶⁰ What is most problematic in the art-historical narrative is that it inevitably creates a binary opposition within a linear conception of time (ballet or modern, modernist or post-modernist, and so on).

As a visual art curator, this question of the location of choreography in relation to the Western art historical narrative was also one of the stimuli that prompted me to ask the first question that allowed me to embark on this thesis: what makes dance dance? If the new generation of choreographers claims that what is produced is choreography rather than dance, then what do they mean by dance? Again, this question does not seek to define the essence of dance in order to sustain its autonomous status, as has been the case in the institutionalisation of dance. Instead, it is a question that attempts to situate my position in parallel with this group of choreographers whose practices began by rereading what has been normalised within a specific institutional context of dance.

In developing and expanding this question of what makes dance dance, I have been indebted to the increasing amount of theoretical output that attempts to push back the existing boundaries of dance studies in relation to, or privileging, post-structuralist thinking. In an attempt to reconfigure or reinvent a new critical language and mode of articulation, there have been increasing demands from those practitioners in the field and theoreticians who began to ask why contemporary choreography was becoming more

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

than a matter of dance. In a Western academic context, one of the early critical surveys that aimed to highlight the critical potential of contemporary choreographic experiments was *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement*, by New York University professor André Lepecki, first published in 2006 and translated into more than fifteen different languages worldwide.

As the title of the book suggests, Lepecki's attempt to create theoretical dialogues with contemporary choreographic experiments begins by highlighting the politics of movement in the modern institutionalisation of dance in the West. Lepecki defines Western modernity as a particular political project that aims to produce a subjectivity of 'being-toward-movement'. For Lepecki, this needs to produce a kinetic subjectivity concerning what conditions the institutionalisation of dance in the West. By considering the subjectivity of movement as that which jumps up and down in striking poses (the best example would be Romantic ballet), dance collaborates with this particular subjectivity project called Western modernity, and this is how it gains the ground on which its autonomous status as art constructs its legitimacy. Therefore, the modern institution of dance became a pedagogical machine whose main goal was to internalise a particular disciplinary logic. Against this backdrop, Lepecki argues that by exhausting the subjectivity project of Western modernity, contemporary dance opens up a new ontological ground for subjectivity that is manifested in the 'deflation of movement in much of contemporary dance'.

Lepecki's persuasive argument about the relationship between Western modernity and the politics of movement in the Western model of the modern institution of dance offers crucial insights that open up new theoretical possibilities for engaging with contemporary choreographic experiments. And my thesis would not have been

possible without the theoretical ground opened up by this endeavour. Yet, I need to highlight the fact that a dialectical structure inevitably emerges in Lepecki's critical attempt. In rethinking the given ontology of dance as a continuum of movement, Lepecki creates a morphological contrast between the modern notion of dance, the kinetic, and contemporary choreographic experiments, represented by the deflation of movement. This inevitably installs a 'versus' structure that exposes itself to the danger of simplifying contemporary dance. Moreover, it is paradoxical that his morphological methodology, which aims to prompt a critique of Western modernity, is the very methodology deployed by various types of modernist projects whose desire for categorisation and classification ends up by providing support for cultural and scientific notions of evolution and superiority of the West over the non-West. In this light, the question that I would like to ask here is how can we escape from the modernist logic that constantly reinscribes the 'versus' structure through which our attempts to criticise the given power structure become impotent?

What Makes Dance Choreography?

In Chapter 2, I attempted to articulate the shift from dance to choreography that is evident in contemporary choreographic experiments by a new generation of European choreographers. In my thesis, this shift is articulated with the term *choreo-graphy*. In an attempt to articulate *choreo-graphy*, one of the tactical moves that I made in Chapter 2 was to conduct genealogical research on the term 'choreography' itself by asking how and why this particular notion of choreography was devised and how it has been institutionalised in Western history. And it was in Lepecki's *Exhausting Dance* that I attempted to revisit the story of the fifteenth-century dance master, priest, and maths

master, Arbeau, and his interlocutor, Capriol, in *Orchesography*. It is in this book where the neologism orchesography (from Greek *orchēsis* 'dancing' and an anglicisation of the French *graphie*, inherited from the Latin *graphia*) was first invented and put forward. Here, the dialogue between the master Arbeau and the pupil Capriol reveals a specific ontological understanding of dance which sets out the conditions for the rise of a particular tactic of binding the body to the technique of writing. When the dance master Arbeau complains that nothing remains in the archive of dance, his pupil suggests the technique of writing down the movements so that his master's dance can live on, even after the master is gone. This was the moment when the neologism 'choreography' was suggested for the first time.

In this light, my ambition was to investigate how rethinking the act of writing the body of others allows us to open up a new possibility of understanding choreography in terms of *choreo-graphy*. In so doing, I turned to Derrida's philosophical project on writing. Of course, this project had the specific goal of highlighting the foundational instability of the Western institution of philosophy that he belongs to. However, in juxtaposing Derrida's project on writing with my investigation on *choreo-graphy* in contemporary choreographic experiments as a tactical gesture, I attempted to highlight the deconstructive reading of choreography that is evident in contemporary choreographic experiments.

As Derrida's investment in the technology of writing aims to highlight the foundational instability of logocentrism, a condition that sustains the Western metaphysics of presence, the deconstructive reading that is evident in contemporary choreographic experiments aims to rethink the spatial and temporal conditions of the institution of dance. And I argue that this rethinking of the given conditions is what

underlies the shift from dance to choreography. Moreover, I would like to argue that this deconstructive reading, as demonstrated in contemporary choreographic experiments, differs from the conventional notion of resistance inherent in any revolutionary operation. If the conventional notion of resistance perceives power as a manifestation of repression and aims to subvert this operation of power (the ontological ground for revolution), the attempt to deconstruct the existing order begins by perceiving power as a medium through which a new relationality can be rearranged and rearticulated. And for a new generation of contemporary choreographers, creating a new relationality begins by paying attention to the 'internal cleavage' within the position of mastery that is evident in the modern institution of dance.²⁶¹

In order for me to explain further what I mean by the 'internal cleavage' within the position of mastery, I need to take a detour via the term 'internal cleavage', which I borrow from Shoshana Felman's *The Scandal of the Speaking Body*. This book was published in 1980, only a few years after Derrida wrote 'Signature Event Context'.²⁶² Indebted to Derrida's rereading of J. L. Austin's speech act, which does not know the conventional hierarchy between speech and writing, Felman highlights the fact that a speech act is a bodily act that always 'says' too much or too little, more, or less, than it can ever know, or intend to say. In order to explain why the speaking body always says too much or too little, Felman pays attention to the concept of promise that serves as an important conceptual tool for Austin's theory of speech act. Stanley Cavell, in the foreword to Felman's book, also supports Felman's reading of Austin, arguing that, for Austin, the act and concept of promising are not just yet more performative utterances, as

²⁶¹ Stanley Cavell, forward to *The Scandal of the Speaking Body: Don Juan with J. L. Austin, or Seduction in Two Languages* by Shoshana Felman, (Stanford: Stanford University, 2003), xiii.

²⁶² Ibid.

they are characterised by Austin's followers. Cavell points out that Felman infers a subtle nuance that promising is somehow privileged in Austin's view. Cavell explains that this privilege, detected by Felman, is evident in *How to Do Things with Words*, in which Austin identifies speaking as giving one's word, as if 'I promise' implicitly resides in every act of speech.²⁶³ Yet what is particular about Felman's reading of Austin is the fact that, for her, what sustains this concept of promising is not the achievement of a promise but the recursive failure inherent in the notion of any promise. This is what she refers to as an 'internal cleavage' in the speaking body.²⁶⁴ In order to articulate further the 'internal cleavage' created by the notion of promise in Austin's speech acts, Felman introduces Molière's *Don Juan*, who is a compulsive promise-maker, but at the same time a promise-breaker. Because he is both promise-maker and breaker, he is a perfect manifestation of Austin's ambiguous statement that all speech is a promise. Furthermore, if Don Juan's compulsive act of promising is an illocutionary force, then the threats that he receives after breaking promises also constitute a sort of 'negative promise'. This is what Felman explains:

The conflict that opposes Don Juan to his pursuers thus opposes a promise to a threat – to a negative promise resulting from Don Juan's failure to keep a positive promise, but also a positive promise not to fail to punish the failure to keep that promise.²⁶⁵

²⁶³ Ibid., xiii–xiv. Here, Cavell argues that this view of Felman can challenge Derrida's virulently influential reading of Austin's sense of language as one that precisely fails to recognise the inherent, say internal, possibility of its failures.

²⁶⁴ Shoshana Felman, *The Scandal of the Speaking Body: Don Juan with J. L. Austin or Seduction in Two Languages* (Stanford: Stanford University, 2003), 3.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 12–13.

Thus, for Felman, *Don Juan* is a play about promising. But the paradox of a promise lies in the fact that the notion of promise not only brings about conflict but also structures it. In other words, the agonistic tension caused by the failure of a promise is a force that structures recursive repetition of conflict. It is in this context that Felman pays attention to the 'internal cleavage' inherent in the notion of promise. This internal cleavage is highlighted when Felman reminds us that it is 'felicity' or 'infelicity' that Austin deploys as criteria to decide whether a performative utterance is successful or not. Felman argues that, for *Don Juan*, felicity is nothing other than having 'no more to say'. In this context, Felman argues that the act of promising, which was privileged by Austin, implies the capacity of language to fail, and to fall short of accomplishment. Felman argues that, 'Like *Don Juan*, Austin suspects in his turn that the promise will not be kept, the debt not paid'.²⁶⁶ In this light, Felman argues:

If the capacity for misfire is an inherent capacity of the performative, it is because the act as such is defined, for Austin, as the capacity to *miss its goal* and to *fail to be achieved*, to remain *unconsummated*, to *fall short* of its own accomplishment.²⁶⁷

In recognising the capacity of speech acts to fail, Felman pays attention to the 'bodily' dimension of a performative utterance, as exemplified in *Don Juan's* mouth that always says too much or too little, which the intention of a 'sovereign' subject cannot fully control. Therefore, *Don Juan's* mouth is the 'internal cleavage' inherent in the sovereign subject. And this is the point that I wanted to arrive at after discussing Felman's term 'internal

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 15, 46.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 55–56, emphasis in original.

cleavage’.

In examining how contemporary choreographic experiments rearticulate the position of the choreographer-master, I have noticed that highlighting the infelicity of the speech acts of the choreographer-master has been one of the frequently detected strategies. In so doing, a new generation of choreographers demonstrate that the master’s commands, via speech acts, do not guarantee domination over the body of a pupil. It is not simply because the master’s power is not strong enough. Rather it reveals the fact that the position of mastery relies upon the felicity of the master’s speech acts, and this depends on the performance of the pupil. In other words, because it is the pupil who could produce felicitous speech acts of the master and the felicity of the master’s speech acts is what brings about the positionality of the mastery, it is ultimately the pupil who can effectuate, sustain, and legitimise the position of mastery.

In this context, the conventional mode of resistance would have been focused on the pupil’s performance against the position of the mastery. However, what is evident in contemporary choreographic experiments is the fact that a new generation of choreographers pay attention to the internal cleavage inherent in the position of mastery in order to avoid the binary opposition between the master, who aims to sustain the power operation and the pupil, who subverts the existing power operation. The internal cleavage inherent in the position of the choreographer-master comes from the fact that it relies upon the bodily dimension of a performative utterance inherent in the speech acts of the choreographer-master, but this does not guarantee the felicity of the speech acts.

As Don Juan’s speaking body allows Felman to highlight the fact that the speaking body is what ‘guarantees the failure of the speech act’, this new generation of choreographers highlight that the speaking body of the choreographer-master always

says too much and too little. This idiosyncratic understanding of the relationality between the speaking body and the performativity of the speech act, drawn out by Felman's reading of Don Juan, I found to be parallel to Christine De Smedt's choreographic portraits, discussed in Chapter 3, where the speaking body of the choreographer De Smedt fails to produce the felicity of the speech acts.

What Makes Choreography a Truth Game?

If Don Juan's speech acts aim to achieve the state of marriage, which is never meant to be achieved, De Smedt's speech act's in *Untitled 4* radically claim that she is Alain Platel, Jonathan Burrows, Eszter Salamon, and Xavier Le Roy, which we know from the beginning cannot be true. Therefore, as much as Don Juan, De Smedt's speaking body is full of promises that cannot be met. And as much as Don Juan, De Smedt's speaking body continues to speak, not because it manages to achieve what is promised, but because it fails to achieve what it promises to be.

In examining the scandal of Christine De Smedt's speaking body, I attempted to rethink the relationship between the body and the particular subjectivity that it claims to enact. The scandal of De Smedt's speaking body stems from the fact that the only thing it guarantees is the failure of the speech acts that it promises, as De Smedt's speaking body always claims to be someone else. But because the subjects whom De Smedt's body claims to be are her long-time friends and colleagues, with whom she shares a mode of practice, the failure of the speech acts is not completely successful to some extent. In other words, what the scandal of De Smedt's speaking body brings about is a truth game, whereby subjectivity is perceived as something that is open to constant reconstitution, rather than being a completed version. In other words, a body is a limit point where the truth game

of subjectivity is constantly taking place.

The term 'truth game' comes from Michel Foucault's lecture at Dartmouth College in 1980, which I summarised in Chapter 3. In his genealogical research on the formation of the subject in the West, Foucault attempts to open up new genealogical ground on which the formation of the subject in the West can be rethought. For Foucault, what is problematic in the formation of the subject in the Western school of philosophy lies in the fact that it is based on a dialectical structure through which a position of mastery is inevitably imposed. Foucault argues that the study of the subject in the French school of philosophy begins with Descartes and the Cartesian understanding of the subject which is based on a split subjectivity: the subject only comes into being via self-reflexive examination by a capital-S Subject. However, what is paradoxical lies in the fact that as opposed to the Cartesian claim of the subject as the foundation or origin, split subjectivity installs a capital-S Subject through which there is a master-subject who is internalised.

Against this backdrop, Foucault's genealogical research on the formation of the subject in the West exposes us to a different history of subject-making in the West. In briefly discussing how the formation of the subject was perceived as a truth game in classical antiquity, Foucault highlights the fact that the subject was not to be discovered but constituted, through the force of truth.²⁶⁸ In other words, truth is not a pregiven entity but a force that does not necessarily correspond with the reality. And if the force of truth constitutes the subject, subject-making is a truth game where the conception of the subject as the origin or foundation is no longer possible.

Based on Foucault's genealogical research, which enables us to perceive subject-

²⁶⁸ Foucault, "Subjectivity and Truth," 165.

making as a truth game, I aimed in Chapter 3 to find a theoretical ground on which I could articulate the choreographic production of subjectivity as a truth game. It is in this context that I aimed to juxtapose Foucault's truth game with De Smedt's choreographic portraits. When De Smedt's speaking body claims to be Platel, Burrows, Salamon, and Le Roy on stage, what is highlighted is how De Smedt positions her speaking body at the limit of representation. De Smedt's speaking body is no longer a faithful carrier of what it says or claims to be. In other words, De Smedt's speaking body is presented as something that always speaks too much or too little.

What De Smedt's speaking body performs is based on her interviews with the choreographers whom she claims to be when performing on stage. But as I have already discussed, the speech acts of De Smedt's speaking body never fail enough. For instance, in the last part of De Smedt's choreographic portraits, when De Smedt claims to be a fellow choreographer, Xavier Le Roy, it is not easy to separate completely which part is De Smedt's own understanding of Le Roy or how Le Roy might respond, and which part is actually from her interview with Le Roy. Therefore, although De Smedt failed to become Le Roy, as long as she managed not to fail completely what was staged was a truth game where the dialectical conception of the choreographer-subject is no longer available.

This is how I aim to highlight the event of the speaking body that demonstrates the paradox within the positionality of the choreographer-master. Here, what I mean by the speaking body can also be understood as the writing body, as both speaking and writing are ultimately the act of inscription in a Derridean sense. Therefore, the event of the speaking body is the event of writing, through which choreography as the particular pedagogical technique is deployed to disturb the given positionality of the choreographer-master. Like Foucault's truth game, De Smedt's truth game is an attempt

to negate any instalment of the position of mastery in the production of subjectivity. And this problematisation of the position of mastery inherent in the subjectivity of the choreographer is what allowed me to expand the question of subjectivity to the problem of knowledge production in Chapter 4.

What Makes Choreography Research?

In Chapter 4, I sought to highlight the fact that the attempt to rearticulate the subjectivity of the choreographer in contemporary experiments implicates them in the problem of the system of knowledge production, as rethinking the positionality of mastery is a matter of knowledge production. In this context, I drew on the Foucauldian model of power/knowledge. As the solidus between power and knowledge illustrates, the Foucauldian model of power/knowledge articulates the interrelation between a particular operation of power and a specific system of knowledge. Foucault argues that the particular positionality of mastery is legitimised by a specific knowledge system through which knowledge is devised, internalised, and normalised. Hence, there is nothing surprising about the problematisation of the positionality of mastery within the Western model of the modern institution of dance, which led a new generation of choreographers to engage with the expanded issue of knowledge production in contemporary society. It is in this light that I engaged with Xavier Le Roy's choreographic practices and attempted to highlight how his problematisation of the positionality of the choreographer-master implicates his practice with a wide range of issues concerning knowledge production in our time.

Le Roy's choreography often begins with a state of not-yet-knowing. And he is not reluctant to make it transparent on stage to the audience. Moreover, he is not afraid of

presenting an unresolved problem as it is. Instead of presenting himself as a choreographer-master or ultimate author, Le Roy welcomes an impossible goal. In fact, this is one of the common features often found among this new generation of choreographers that I have examined in this thesis. Instead of positioning themselves as the ultimate source of final production, they often present unresolved problems on stage. In doing so, they are willing to reveal the structure of the performance to the audience. This is a dramatic contrast to the modern system of knowledge, where particular ways of conceptualising a problem as well as solutions are located within a closed circuit. And this closed circuit presupposes the position of an author as a logocentric subject. It is in this light that I wanted to juxtapose the open-ended mode of knowledge production often found in contemporary choreographic experiments with the post-Fordist mode of production, whereby new epistemological paradigms, such as reflexivity, transdisciplinarity, and heterogeneity, have dramatically changed the structure, status, and shape of the modern knowledge system. Yet I do not mean to imply that the post-Fordist mode of production is emancipatory per se. When Le Roy problematises a particular distribution of time in artistic production, which does not distinguish between leisure time and work time in *Product of Other Circumstances* (2009), he points out that this particular distribution of time means the artist works all the time.

Nevertheless, what the post-Fordist mode of production challenges is the conventional understanding of professionalism devised and legitimised in the modern system of knowledge production. In highlighting the fact that our understanding of professionalism is based on the notion of virtuosos, Kai van Eikels, in 'Learning From Xavier Le Roy Means Learning to Work. On Dilettantism and Professionalism in 21st Century Performance', explains how the particular link between professionalism and the

virtuoso is a recent product. In his genealogical research on the term 'virtuoso', Van Eikels argues that from the Renaissance until the late eighteenth century, the term 'virtuoso' was not associated with values of extreme specialisation and professionalisation. Instead, the words 'dilettante' and 'virtuoso' were used synonymously, both referring to non-professional forms of knowledge covering a wide range of affairs, from science to engineering, or crafts. For instance, Van Eikels explains that Goethe uses the term 'virtuoso' in opposition to artistic genius to demonstrate a different understanding of the term. Goethe argues that the virtuoso-dilettante transforms 'aesthetic pleasure' into the 'pleasure of practice'.²⁶⁹ Therefore, being a virtuoso-dilettante is far from being a professional artist. Instead, the virtuoso-dilettante is one who evokes the egalitarian message that everybody can become virtuosic. It was only in the nineteenth century and later that the term 'virtuoso' became disconnected from the term 'dilettante', and the virtuoso began to be associated with high-profile actors and performers. Therefore, Van Eikels argues that Le Roy's reconfiguration of his position as choreographer and virtuoso-dilettante in *Product of Other Circumstances* seeks to challenge the notion of professionalism as legitimised by the modern system of knowledge production.

Moreover, in challenging the modern notion of professionalism whereby the positionality of mastery is legitimised and a particular pedagogy is normalised, Le Roy, in *Product of Other Circumstances*, sets himself the impossible goal of learning butoh by himself within just two hours. Van Eikels argues that Le Roy, in doing so, attempts to replace 'the distribution of learning' with 'the distribution of teaching', through which the unilateral positionality of the choreographer-master is challenged and replaced by an

²⁶⁹ Van Eikels, "Learning From Xavier Le Roy," 5.

ignorant choreographer who is determined to reinvent knowledge on his own terms. On stage, Le Roy shares with the audience how he decides to teach himself via resources available to anyone, such as YouTube clips, and books. For Le Roy, dance is no longer something to spend one's entire life learning, following a master's protocols, but rather something where everyone can be teacher and self-taught student. This shift in the positionality of mastery in knowledge production is, in fact, one of the strategies that the French philosopher Jacques Rancière deployed in his archival research in the 1980s.

For instance, in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, via the figure of Joseph Jacotot, a revolutionary teacher, Rancière highlights the egalitarian mode of production of knowledge whereby the inequality between those who already know and those who do not even know what they do not know is no longer sustained in the name of knowledge distribution. Rancière points out that what sustains the gap between schoolmaster and pupil is the 'knowledge of ignorance' that the schoolmaster possesses. What Rancière means by 'knowledge of ignorance' is knowledge of the exact distance separating knowledge from ignorance. In other words, the position of mastery is sustained because the schoolmaster is the one who knows that the pupils do not know what they do not know. In this light, I examined Le Roy's *Le Sacre du Printemps* (2007), in which Le Roy eradicates the play on the 'knowledge of ignorance', that determines the exact distance separating what he knows about the professional language of conducting and what he does not know. Instead, Le Roy transforms his 'ignorance' into a choreographic resource from which sequences of movements are generated. Thanks to his ignorance, for Le Roy the professional system of knowledge on conducting is not something to learn but something to be rearranged. And in rearranging this given system of knowledge, Le Roy tactically deploys choreography, the technique of generating movements, so that his

choreographic production no longer instils a position of mastery. This tactical subversion of the given positionality of mastery in the modern system of knowledge production I also find in many contemporary choreographic experiments, and this is why I articulate contemporary choreographic experiments as research projects that imply a state of not-yet-knowing but already teaching.

How Does Choreography Reinvent Spectatorship?

In Chapter 5, I begin with Rancière's 'The Emancipated Spectator', in which he problematises the victimisation of spectatorship in the narratives of the historical avant-garde. What he calls the victimisation of spectatorship is an important clue to explain the 'paradox of the spectator' inherent in the historical reformers of theatre, where being a spectator is bad, but theatre cannot be sustained without spectatorship. For Rancière, this preconception of spectatorship is problematic as it automatically imposes a position of mastery that is responsible for transforming bad spectators into good ones. In other words, what is central to the paradox of the spectator is a pedagogical impulse based on the presupposition of inferiorisation of the spectator. In order to explain further why this 'paradox of the spectator' is problematic, Rancière juxtaposes it with the paradox of pedagogical practice, where 'knowledge of ignorance' sustains the difference between a knowledgeable master and an ignorant pupil, instead of eradicating the gap. In creating this idiosyncratic juxtaposition, Rancière aims to highlight the fact that the pedagogical impulse inherent in the demonisation of spectatorship in historical reformation projects in theatre does not transform the spectator, but sustains the inferior positionality of spectatorship. Therefore, while Rancière attempts to reconfigure the subjectivity of masters via the ignorant schoolmaster in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, in 'The Emancipated

Spectator' he considers the possibility of reinventing a spectatorship that is not captured within the pedagogical impulse inherent in historical reformation projects. In so doing, Rancière deconstructs the presuppositions that sustain the inferiorisation of the spectator. In arguing that the inferiorisation of spectators predetermines their positionality as the victims of theatrical spectacle, Rancière points out that seeing does not imply passivity. In contrast to the term 'spectator', which epitomises the identification of those who only passively watch the spectacle in front of them, Rancière argues that emancipating spectators is not to transform passive observers into active ones, but to blur the boundaries and presuppositions attached to spectators within a particular institutional logic.

It is in this context that I argued that *The Agora Project*, initiated by Jan Ritsema and created with twenty artists, successfully escapes from the paradox of the spectator. By coming up with a structural composition constructed by multiple authors, it resists the given dichotomy between stage and auditorium. Moreover, by resisting succumbing to the normal dichotomy of bourgeois theatre, spectatorship is no longer captured within a conventional discourse that presupposes the inferiority of the spectator. Instead, both performer and spectator can be more than they are supposed to be. And when both performer and spectator take on more than their given roles, they produce a 'space of appearance' for each other.

I have borrowed the term 'space of appearance' from Hannah Arendt's discussion of the agora in *The Human Condition*. Arendt mentions the space of appearance when she conceptualises the *polis* as a space 'where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things, but to make their

appearance explicitly'.²⁷⁰ The reason why I pay attention to Arendt's argument in the first place is the fact that the space of appearance is not something given but something to be created by active intervention from a political actor as a form of subjectivisation. This is why Arendt argues that such a public space of appearance can always be open to recreation, wherever individuals gather together politically. This is why I deployed the term 'space of appearance' when articulating the way in which *The Agora Project* was organised, one that allowed the spectators to be more than passive spectators, to the point that the spectators took the place of performers and performers took the place of spectators. In this open-ended process of making theatre, there are no longer emancipated spectators (who have been emancipated by a pedagogical programme) but rather 'virtuoso-dilettante spectators' so that the pleasure of practice of spectators can be fulfilled.

But what should be noticed here is a subtle but definite difference between the space of appearance brought about by the virtuoso-dilettante spectator, and Arendt's notion of the space of appearance. For Arendt, the space of appearance is a public space that is constituted by individual political actors, and it presupposes some type of totality of experience.²⁷¹ This totality of experience comes from the reciprocal reversibility presupposed in Arendt's articulation of the stage of appearance for a political actor. In explaining the reciprocity inherent in Arendt's conception of the space of appearance, Elena Tavani in 'Hannah Arendt – Aesthetics and Politics of Appearance' argues that one of the main aesthetic-political characteristics of Arendt's stage of appearance is her understanding of the aesthetic nature of perception in the most immediate and literal

²⁷⁰ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 198–199.

²⁷¹ Elena Tavani, "Hannah Arendt: Aesthetics and Politics of Appearance," *Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics* 5 (2013): 466–475.

sense of *aisthesis*. Tavani contends that this immediate sense of *aisthesis* presupposes a principle of reversibility that underlines its plurality. In this light, Tavani points out that, for Arendt, perceiving is always divided and shared at the same time. In other words, perception is the possibility of ‘seeing and being seen’. This means that the world as a stage of appearance consists of a plurality of viewpoints and a stage of appearance becomes a place not only for displaying a visible political actor, but also a place for him to see other political actors. Hence, the space of appearance is where we witness and are witnessed from all sorts of different perspectives.²⁷²

The space of appearance that emerges in *The Agora Project*, however, does not guarantee reciprocal reversibility between actor and spectator. Both actor and spectator are allowed to be more than they are supposed to be, but this occurs spontaneously and contingently, with unexpected intervals between what is planned and what happens. Neither is formed by the ‘agreement of many wills and intentions’, as is the case for Arendt’s space of appearance. Instead, opening up a space of appearance for other bodies via choreography does not presuppose reciprocal reversibility. The reason why this space of appearance does not guarantee reciprocal reversibility is because the choreographic body that emerges in this space of appearance cannot be identified in terms of Arendt’s political actor, who is an autonomous, individual entity who becomes a basic unit for the total sum of the world. Then, the question to be asked is how does the choreographic body differ from the political actors who become the basis for Arendt’s conception of the space of appearance? And what does it mean to say that the choreographic body does not guarantee reciprocal reversibility but is more than what it is supposed to be?

²⁷² Ibid.

How Does Choreography Reinvent the body as an Event?

In an attempt to highlight a situation where we become aware of the emergence of a 'choreographic body', I brought up Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's recent exhibition *Work/Travail/Arbeid* (2015) in Chapter 6. Here, De Keersmaeker recreates the spatiotemporal condition of dance by radically displacing the given condition that has made dance dance within a specific institutional framework, to the point that she no longer claims it to be dance-theatre but an exhibition. For instance, because *Work/Travail/Arbeid* is an exhibition, it has to be open for seven hours, every day, for more than nine weeks. This particular spatiotemporal condition in an exhibition context predetermines a particular spatiotemporal condition for De Keersmaeker's dancers, whereby no frontality is guaranteed as visitors are free to move around whenever and wherever they want. And the ways in which De Keersmaeker deals with the displacement of the spatiotemporal condition of dance becomes the very structure of her choreographic experiment of rewriting dance-theatre as exhibition.

In rewriting dance as exhibition, De Keersmaeker also disturbs the given condition both for being a spectator in a theatre context and a visitor in an exhibition context. In *Work/Travail/Arbeid*, what emerges is the spectator-visitor who has to adopt a situation that is neither exhibition nor theatre. And this spectator-visitor is constantly disturbed by unexpected situations and contingent encounters with the dancers and with other spectators. For instance, despite the fact that I, as a spectator-visitor to De Keersmaeker's exhibition, tried to limit the exposure of my own body, I found my body being constantly located in the space of appearance. This is because De Keersmaeker's dancers are located in an exhibition context in which no particular spatial focal point is guaranteed, unlike the black-box situation, so that every spot is a potential spot for action. Moreover, when my

body as a spectator-visitor appeared in the space of appearance, the attention supposedly paid to the dancers was inevitably distracted and dispersed. This dispersion of attention no longer secured the specifically idealised representation of space-time sustained in either the black box or the white cube. In this context, what is highlighted in De Keersmaeker's choreographic experiment is the emergence of a choreographic body instead of a spectator-body or a dancer-body. In De Keersmaeker's rewriting of dance as exhibition, the normative imperative that falls upon the spectator-body, of 'being there without being there' as devised and legitimised in either the black box or the white cube, is no longer sustainable. In other words, when the ontological condition of being a spectator-visitor is contaminated, what we witness is the emergence of a choreographic body, where being a body becomes an event of being with other bodies. This is why the coming into being of choreographic bodies cannot be planned ahead of time.

In this context, I attempted to take a detour via Nancy's articulation of the body as a limit in order to lay a theoretical ground on which choreographic bodies can be articulated. Perceiving the body as a limit challenges the classical ontology of the body within the logic of representation. The body is not a mere object, as it is constructed within discourse or within a social symbolic order, nor is it simply a material reality that is indifferent to the process of signification. Going beyond both materialisation and signification, for Nancy the body comes into being at the limit point, at which 'sense and matter touch or come into contact'.²⁷³ And this body's coming into being at the limit manifests itself as an event whose coming and slipping away cannot be announced prior to its arrival. This is why one's experience of the body is something that can never be

²⁷³ James, *The Fragmentary Demand*, 131.

completed. Only by the fragmentary experience via touching can we have an experience of the body.

Nancy's rethinking of the body as something coming into being as an event, instead of being already there, allows him to put forward an argument that the body is a space itself. Here, the space does not refer to a 'three-dimensional extension as measured by geometry'. Instead, space is a spacing of space, or an *espacement*, that already implies a 'spatial-temporal unfolding'.²⁷⁴ Therefore, the choreographic body is a choreographic space where both body and space cannot be delimited as an essence or finality. This shift from the discursive body to the choreographic body also emphasises that the body's coming into being always implies the state of 'being-with'. The choreographic body comes into being when it is with other bodies. What I wish to highlight here is the fact that the emergence of the choreographic body/space is not necessarily limited to the disciplinary boundaries of dance. In other words, thinking about the body in terms of a choreographic body/space has political implications that go beyond the institution of dance. In fact, highlighting this was one of my aims when embarking on a whole series of theoretical journeys through the notion of choreography.

Choreography was invented as a pedagogical technique in the institutionalisation of dance. However, in an attempt to rethink the hierarchies and the position of mastery within the institution of dance, contemporary choreographic experiments demonstrate a different possibility of choreography, whereby the technique of signifying the body in relation to other bodies is deployed to bring about the choreographic body that always already implies the state of 'being-with' other bodies.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 65.

In highlighting the deconstructive mode of operation evident in contemporary choreographic experiments, I have attempted to describe this different possibility of choreography via the term *choreo-graphy*. *Choreo-graphy* is neither the name of a genre nor a form of artistic practices. As the event of writing, *choreo-graphy* signifies a body in relation to other bodies that is not captured within the pedagogical logic. Instead, this process of signification is open to contingent encounters, as being a choreographic body always already implies the state of 'being-with'. Challenging the system of representation that sustains the particular pedagogical logic, the choreographic body can be understood as a radical opening from the dogmatic paradigm of the social and political body based on the idea of totality. The choreographic body can never be accumulated and summed up, as it always speaks/writes too much or too little.

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Boris Charmatz. <http://www.museedeladanse.org/fr>

Eszter Salamon. <http://www.eszter-salamon.com/>

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