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Choreographies of Writing

In Contemporary Artistic and Educational Performance:

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To Miloš, Dejan and Milena,

who continuously inspire my love for learning

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Preface

Context: This work has been inspired by the situations of apparent "performative contradiction" – usually public speeches or performances in which the declarative verbal content seems to be in disagreement with performative aspects of the event. The best examples come from educational contexts: the teachings about democracy, about subversive elements in world's literature or the Dadaist art of provocation held in authoritarian, conventional and utterly non-provocative classrooms. Other examples can be found in theory, artistic practices, and popular culture, in the works that aim to be critical and transgressive, but too easily surrender to the demands of the markets and profit-driven industries. In these situations, the message transmitted through the content usually overshadows their performative discourse and material conditions. I was interested in how contemporary performance art explores such discursive cleavage, as well as the gap between the declared transgressive goals and concealed complicity with the existing socio-economic system.

Topic: The performances that stage writing as a focal activity truly embody the multilayered communication I was interested in. These performances can best be described as "action writing", a counterpart to "action painting", staging at least two media/discourses: performative action and production of a text. Writing happened to be a more common topic in contemporary performance art than I initially expected. Furthermore, these performances revealed a historical shortage of aestheticized activity of writing. Various depictions of writing can be traced back to ancient cultures, but when it comes to its ritualization, calligraphy, spiritual writing practices and avant-garde artistic experiments are all that we know. Again, it seems that the transient aspect of writing has remained in the shadow of lasting textual documents. Contrary to that, the contemporary performances of writing bring into light lived experience of writing – its materiality, kinetics, sensations, etc.

Conceptual frame: One of the first theoretical associations that come to mind apropos performances of writing is Jacque Derrida's grammatology and, particularly, his idea

of "the scene of writing". Briefly, directly opposed to the metaphysical favoring of abstract ideas over their material expressions, "the scene of writing" points to the role of the medium through which we perceive and express our understanding of reality. Derrida's theory proved to be indispensable for our work for two reasons. First, Derridean idea of "trace" provided a basis for modern views on visual and performative arts as knowledge production, completely equal with language. Second, "the scene of writing" has been applied to pedagogy in the age of new media, pointing precisely to the complex interweaving of verbal and non-verbal discourses (Ulmer, 1985). The "applied grammatology" considers spoken lectures as a kind of theatralization of the scene writing. That inspired me to include lecture performances in my thesis' corpus.

Nevertheless, the contemporary performance art stage is not entirely equivalent to "the scene of writing". The stage is more than a medium; it hosts multifaceted material events. To explain the difference, I employed the notion of "remediation" (Bolter and Grusin, 2000), and, more specifically, "performative remediation". Just like digital media, performance has a capacity to incorporate ("remediate" or recontextualize) other media and forms of expression while at the same time maintaining their distinctiveness. Furthermore, unlike digital media, performance preserves material heterogeneity of bodies, images, sounds, architectures, etc. For that reason, performance is considered a *hypermedium* (Kattenbelt et al, 2010). These media studies concepts helped me to foreground performance in my analyses respecting its material specificities. As a consequence, staged activity of writing (including lectures as post-pedagogical writing) appeared as hypermedial in its own right, consisting of interlaced text and bodily gestures. Furthermore, the *event* of production of both verbal and performative discourse was revealed as the third element of the staged performances of writing. It is the unique encounter with the audience that differentiates performance from the scene of writing.

In order to acknowledge the event of writing, I named my corpus "the choreographies of writing". *Writing* is a procedure, a process of mediation that links performance to text. *Choreographies* point to an organization of a different order; they describe how writing emerges as a unique event. Derrida systematically analyzes the event of enunciation in his more recent texts (2007, 2002). At the same time, the material production of discourses, regarding its institutional and cultural *dispositifs*, came into

focus in contemporary art and performance theory (e.g. McKenzie, 2001). These theories address the politics of art in terms of its rootedness in the existing socio-political arrangements and its capacities to envision change. *Choreographies of writing*, with their multilayered structure, provide an apposite model for the analysis of this question.

Methodology: The theme of knowledge production connects Derridean grammatology (and its application in contemporary pedagogy) with performance studies' focus on politics. The foundation of performance art implied the affirmation of non-verbal theatrical elements as equal to textual narration. That coincided with the increased interest in artistic practice as a research process and knowledge production. The non-verbal modes of expression gained significance with regard to texts.

Choreographies of writing juxtapose three distinct elements: text, performance and event of writing. Each of them ingrains a specific kind of knowledge and independently produces political effects. Then how can we think about the overall effect of such events? How are they supposed to be received? Returning to our initial example, the question would read: if a teacher professes democracy in a classroom organized according to the traditional authoritarian teacher-student relations, what do students really learn? How do they understand their lecture? And which kind of political subjects do they become?

Such multidimensional knowledge production raises the question of epistemology. According to my interpretation, the choreographies of writing self-reflectively address these issues and, in addition, anticipate their own subsequent reception and interpretation. I consider the reception of the choreographies of writing as "meta-writing" since it commonly involves verbal expression of the experience of performative events. I argue that choreographies of writing, through their performative means, point to the need of an integrative epistemology that would acknowledge all their medially and materially heterogeneous elements.

In my analysis, I focus on the unique combination of these elements in each of the two selected choreographies of writing. Individual chapters are dedicated to The Forsythe Company's performative installation *Human Writes* and a lecture performance by Guillermo Gómez-Peña. My interpretation of these works is principally based on the idea of "counterpoint". Counterpoint allowed me to regard

these performative pieces as open structures with equally relevant distinctive elements, none of them overshadowed by others. In addition, counterpoint helped me address the relation between writing and meta-writing.

Questions: My research attempts to answer three main questions:

1. What do *choreographies of writing* reveal about the relations between text, performance and the culturally situated event of writing?
2. How can we approach the heterogeneous nature of such performances, without translating them into the medium of our expression (i.e. text)?
3. What do *choreographies of writing* tell us about choreographies of *meta-writing*?

Introduction

CHOREOGRAPHIES OF WRITING

We use the term *choreographies of writing* to encompass two types of performances that place texts, both in the written and spoken form, on the performance art stage:

1) embodied inscriptions and
2) lecture performances.

Each of the terms that we use requires further explanations. Let's start with the most familiar and most frequently used one: *writing*. The Cambridge online English dictionary distinguishes five meanings of the word "writing" that can be sorted into three groups. The first category considers "writing" in *gerund form*, including (a) "the skill or activity of producing words on a surface" and (b) "the activity of creating pieces of written work". The second category regards "writing" as a noun, referring to the results of the mentioned activities: (a) "something that has been written or printed" and (b) "the written work, such as stories or poems". Finally, the remaining fifth meaning refers to "a person's style of writing on paper that can be recognized as their own".[1] In the last case, "writing" is again a noun that, however, denotes a specific, even individual, way of doing an activity – the *style*. The notion of style at once marks the momentary performance and the durable characteristic of the person performing it. The *choreographies of writing* embrace all five mentioned meanings by considering *writing* as a complex and heterogeneous medium and *choreography* as at once a way writing comes about and a hallmark of a particular performance piece.

The performances of the first type present writing as an embodied activity; the gestures of writing performed by performance artists or dancers are turned into artistic events. Writing is, therefore, the central (if not exclusive) activity performed in these

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[1] The Cambridge online English dictionary, http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/writing.

happenings. In order to emphasize the material and kinetic aspects of writing, we name such performances *the embodied inscription*. Writing gestures figure as a kind of *objets trouvés*, a displaced and artistically re-contextualized everyday practice. The production of text – including technology, skills and labor – becomes a medium of artistic exploration. The term *embodied inscription* has not been used so far in the performance art literature neither was the physical activity of writing explored as a specific theme in performance art. The texts produced through these performances are material graphic objects, whose verbal content is not always exposed to the audience.

When the text is physically too small to be seen and read from a distance or the letters remain undecipherable, some other performative means are employed to indicate that the displayed activity is indeed writing. For example, in the *Collective Writing Machines* (2012) by Argentinean choreographer Diego Gil, writing is turned into collective activity in which the audience participates as well, so that each person produces (and is able to read only) her own text. The text can also be communicated to the audience prior to performance, so the performers re-produce/re-write it on stage; e.g. in The Forsythe Company's piece *Human Writes* (2005), the individual articles from the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* are being painstakingly rewritten, sign by sign and stroke by stroke, over the course of three to four hours. In some cases, the performance consists in laborious actions whose visible traces form letters or words over longer periods of time, which makes them unrecognizable until a certain point of their coming-into-being. Such is, for example, writing in Forsythe's performance *We Live Here* (2004). Regardless of whether the result of writing is visually exposed and readable or not, the performers/choreographers usually carefully select texts and put them into dynamic interplay with the design of the performed actions.

1.1 The Forsythe Company, *Human Writes* (Zürich, 2005)

The second type of the choreographies of writing consists of *lecture performances*. Unlike embodied inscriptions, lecture performances are recognized as a genre of performance art, though relatively new.[2] The interest in lecture performances rises since the so called "pedagogical turn" in arts, referring to new initiatives both in literary theory and in curatorial practices that question modernist paradigm of art's institutional autonomy.[3] The focus shifts from the artwork itself to its reception and "the active nature of interpretation"; the artistic practices are placed within the broader social and institutional contexts, whilst their capacity to challenge conventions and common sense is emphasized. Originating from such a background, lecture performances combine the artistic aims with conventional pedagogical forms of knowledge creation and transmission.

Lecture performances are often employed as a means of presenting artistic work to an audience, a means that itself turns into a complex artistic medium. Such is, for example, one hour lecture *The Fortunetellers* (1999) in which visual artist Ellie Ga presents the work she developed as a joint crew member of a scientific Arctic expedition. Ellie Ga explores the myths surrounding vanished civilizations, as well as the hardship and poetry of daily life on the ice-bound boat in the Arctic night. She presents the results in a performance combining "live narration, video, slide and overhead projection, [and] recorded sound."[4] The lecture performances relay on the conventions of academic presentations, but do not impose these conventions as a limitation to the artistic expression. These conventions are never materialized as

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[2] Two comprehensive expositions on Lecture Performance were organized by Jenny Dirksen at al at Kölnischer Kunstverein (Oct-Dec 2009) and Salon of MoCA in Belgrade (Jan-Feb 2010). The expositions were accompanied with a catalog and a collection of the key essays on the topic: Jentjens, Kathrin, Radmila Joksimović, Anja Nathan-Dorn, and Jelena Vesić (eds), *Lecture Performance*, Kölnischer Kunstverein / Museum of Contemporary Art, Köln and Belgrade, 2009.

[3] See the seminal essay of Gerald Graff, "The Pedagogical Turn", *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 1994, p. 65-69. The more recent influential texts on this topic include Irit Rogoff's "Academy as Potentiality" (Summit. Non Aligned Initiatives in Education Culture, 02/2007) and "Turning" (*e-flux journal*, #0, 11/2008), as well as Kristina Lee Podesva's "Pedagogical Turn: Brief Notes on Education as Art" (*Phillip*, No. 6, summer 2007). The forthcoming conference *The Pedagogical (Re)Turn* (March 2016) organized by the Northeast Modern Language Association (NeMLA), University at Buffalo, will present the latest developments in the field.

[4] From Ellie Ga's personal website: http://www.elliega.info/index.php?/ongoing/project-description/

prescribed choreographies; the lecturers rather alter them playfully, thereby revealing their constructed nature.

1.2. Ellie Ga presents *The Fortunetellers* at Guggenheim Museum in New York (2015)

The artists-lecturers consciously combine spoken text with other media performatively employed on stage, such as background sound, voice modulations, bodily movements, costumes, projected images, video recordings, space architecture and stage design etc. The lecture is presented as a multimedia event whose all elements actively contribute to the multifaceted communication with the audiences. Although partly improvised on stage, the speech is typically based on a written script. We consider lecture performances as a type of choreographies of writing since the speech unfolds over time through a dynamic interplay with the non-verbal elements of the performance. Unlike embodied inscriptions, the textual content here is not only spoken, but also bears a rather central position in regards to the other employed media. Nevertheless, the fact that the verbal content is foregrounded does not imply that it conveys the meaning independently from the choreography of its material and temporal appearance on stage. The verbal and non-verbal elements are rather inscribed into one another. In other words, if we frame and analyze only the textual content, we will surely miss the point of the lecture.

1. Basic concepts

Conventional vs. artistically designed choreographies. What makes us bring together *the embodied inscriptions* and *lecture performances*? And how are they different from other forms of staged writing activity, staged texts, or public speech, such as calligraphy, spiritualist automatic writing, classical theatre, rhetorical exercises, poetry slams etc? All these phenomena qualify to be considered as choreographies of writing in a broader sense since they truly bring into play various different meanings of writing. The two selected forms are specific in that they belong to contemporary performance art. Contrary to other examples, the artistic performances employ texts, writing gestures and choreographic styles as motifs of performative explorations, experimenting with their materiality and signification. The text does not determine how the performance will be organized, as it is the case in rhetoric or theatre. All staged media have equal status, even though, from one performance to the other, the focus might shift between verbal content, bodily movements, interaction with the audience etc. Consequently, how the text comes about is at least as important as its verbal content and meanings. This is not the case with the other mentioned phenomena: from calligraphy to classical theatre, the text maintains a privileged status over other elements of performance, whilst the performance is either subject to strict conventions or in service of better conveying textual meaning.

Text as/vs. performance. So far, we have referred to *text* and *performance* as two distinct media whose mutual interplay creates the internal dynamics of the choreographies of writing and help us distinguish them from other similar forms. In the discourses of cultural and performance studies, the so-called *performative turn* and theoretical challenging of *linguistic paradigm* not only enforce the opposition between text and performance, but see either the one or the other as a dominant mark of culture as such.[5] Cultural phenomena are either structured and read as "texts", or related to as events and "performances". On the other hand, the semiotics of theatre

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[5] See J. Hillis-Miller's "Performativity1/Performativity2" and Erica Fischer-Lichte's "Culture as Performance – Developing a Concept of Performance", in Lars Saetre, Patrizia Lombardo and Anders Gullestad (eds), *Exploring Textual Action*, Aarhus U.P, 2010. In addition, the disciplines of performance studies in the US are firstly established at the universities of New York and Northwestern by separating from text-based theatrical studies and rhetoric, respectively.

and performance relies on the idea of *performance text* to describe the basic fabric of diverse phenomena, ranging from dance and performance art, to various kinds of theatre, to radio drama and film.[6] The idea of performance text integrates text and performance into one single flow of signification, consisting in unites that are at once verbal, iconic and material. The text and performance are, therefore, inextricably bound in theatrical practices and their semiotics; they generate and define each other.

Writing, choreographed. With the idea of *choreography of writing* we aim to address the complexity of performance/text relations, without neglecting their paradoxes and contradictions. As we see them, the choreographies of writing retain the performance/text distinction and equal status between the two, while, at the same time, interweave them into more complex heterogeneous entities. Thanks to its multiple denotations, referring to material actions and their textual results, the notion of *writing* provides us a conceptual tool to unite performance and text, without necessarily resolving their paradoxes. We see writing as a complex medium, a *hypermedium*,[7] which includes the process of (graphical or oral) production of text alongside its final product. Performance and writing, therefore, function as two qualities of a unique entity, just as two sides of the same coin. Then, the idea of *choreography* refers to the ways these two sides are forged together. In both the *embodied inscriptions* and *lecture performances*, it is precisely the complexity of writing that is a subject of artistic exploration. Writing comes into being through deliberate and consciously designed choreographies that foreground questions of media relations and their reception by the audiences. In contrast, the choreographies

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[6] See, for example, Domenico Pietropaolo (ed), *The Performance Text*, Legas, Otawa, 1999. The volumes on the semiotics of theatre: e.g. Erica Fischer-Lichte, *The Semiotics of Theater*, Indiana U.P, Bloomington, 1992. Eli Rozik, *Generating Theatre Meaning: A Theory and Methodology of Performance Analysis*, Sussex Academic Press, Brighton, 2008. And the semiotics of performance: Patrick Campbell (ed.), *Analysing Performance: A Critical Reader*, Manchester UP, 1996. Marvin Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction*, Routledge, London/New York, 1996. Marco de Marinis, *The Semiotics of Performance*, Indiana UP, Bloomington, 1993.

[7] We refer to the idea of *immediacy, hypermediacy and remediation* presented in J.D Bolter and R. Grusin's theory of mediation in *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (MIT Press, 1999), as well as the idea of theatrical performance as a hypermedium developed in the theories of intermediality in theatre and performance (Chiel Kattenbelt at all, *Intermediality in Theatre and Performance*, Rodopi, 2007, and *Mapping Intermediality in Performance*, Amsterdam U.P, 2010).

of other stagings of texts, though sometimes conscious and planned, are not themselves experimental.

The difference between *performance* and *choreography* might be clearer if we compare traditional calligraphy with its contemporary counterparts in performance art and dance. In traditional calligraphy, both text and performance of writing equally matter. However, the way they merge together – the choreography – follows given conventions of that particular calligraphic tradition. The contemporary dances and performance art pieces employ calligraphy in such a way that each of its elements – texts, movements, material objects, bodies etc. – can vary and thereby challenge traditional norms. Besides performance, the choreography is also brought into light, involving the choice of these elements, their combinations, interaction with the audience, stage design etc. The way heterogeneous writing comes about is clearly marked as a medium in its own right, open for creative exploration and experiments. The performance does not merely help in conveying verbal meaning; the choreographed interplay between verbal and non-verbal elements and the ways the audiences are addressed bear critical potential.

| 1.3. Kaifeng chrysanthemum festival (2012) | 1.4. K. Hachinohe, *Rainbow Black* (2009) |

The first photography shows calligraphy lovers exercising various forms of Chinese calligraphy at a Kaifeng chrysanthemum festival in 2012. The second image is a snapshot from a recorded calligraphic performance *Rainbow Black* by Japanese visual artist Kotaro Hachinohe (New York, 2009).[8]

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[8] Sources: China Central TV web site http://english.cntv.cn/20121018/107840.shtml. The video recordings of Kotaro Hatchinohe's work: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Pp7_yTOnBk.

Technology and automaticity of mundane writing. Most of the common quotidian practices of writing instrumentalize technology, skills and laborious aspects of writing for the sake of fixing a text. The modern-day technological developments entail the change of writing gestures.[9] Some of the early media theorists claim that writing practices shape human consciousness. [10] According to this idea, each of the historical revolutions in writing technology has affected people's mindsets so deeply to finally cause shifts of civilizations. If we regard everyday practices of writing as conventional choreographies (let's say choreographies in a broader sense), then new technologies bring different materials, spatiotemporal arrangements, skills, gestures, and new conventions, which altogether shape not only the choreography of writing, but also its textual output.[11] For example, digital writing made the hyperlinks and hypertexts possible and, thanks to the new electronic social media, we got accustomed to the form of Twitter or Facebook condensed multimedia posts.

Once the new technology settles, the accompanying gestures become *automatic*, and the choreographies of writing rendered *immediate*.[12] That is to say, when using writing, we do not notice its media complexity and the ways in which some of its elements influence or overshadow the others. Contrary to the automaticity and habits of everyday writings, the artistic choreographies bring to light writing's irreducible complexity, characteristic for the medium itself, as well as for its reception by the audiences (co-present listeners and readers). In the staged choreographies of writing, what seemed to be an automatic gesture opens up as a heterogeneous and multimedia network of interfaces. The embodied inscriptions and lecture performances engage in multilayered communication that calls for reflection on its aesthetic and political

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[9] On gestures as inscription and embodied cultural knowledge see: Carrie Noland and Sally Ann Ness (eds), *Migrations of Gesture*, Minnesota U.P, Minneapolis, 2008.

[10] The ideas of the media theorists of writing – Harold Innis, Jack Goody, Vilém Flusser and Marshal McLuhan – are outlined below, in the section "Writing technology, gestures and practices" of the first chapter "Choreographies of Writing: Theoretical Framework", p. …

[11] On how new writing technologies and digital text shape new epistemologies, see: Susan Broadhurst and Josephine Machon (eds), *Sensualities/Textualities and Technologies: Writings of the Body in the 21st Century Performance*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2009.

[12] The discussion on automation of gestures: Carrie Noland, "Inscription and Embodiment: André Leroi-Gourhan and the Body as Tool", *Agency and Embodiment: Performing Gestures/Producing Culture*, Harvard U.P, 2009, p. 93-129.

effects. The implications of such artistic explorations on other types of writing and speech remain an open question as well.

Art and academy. On a formal level, both embodied inscriptions and lecture performances insert movement in the process of verbal signification and further self-reflectively investigate the relations between the two. The embodied inscriptions gradually produce graphic traces, making the text emerge from performance; in lecture performances, the public enunciations of texts generate performance. Institutionally, embodied inscriptions remain more strictly in the domain of art, occupying performance venues, museums, galleries, art festivals etc. Although also artistic in nature, performance lectures mimic educational formats, which makes them suitable for use in traditional educational institutions, as well. The Mexican-American artist Guillermo Gomez-Peña, whose work we are going to present in details in the thesis' last chapter, transposes the lecture performances format from the artistic to traditional academic contexts. Thereby Gomez-Peña's work encourages not only a more creative use of media and active interaction with academic audiences, but also inspires a reflection about the multifaceted event of encounter and exchange through which the participant subjectivities and being created.

Knowledge production and pedagogy. The choreographies of writing basically bring a text on a performance stage displaying its various facets: (a) the content and meaning; (b) the materiality and technology; and finally (c) the laborious process of becoming of that particular text that happens within a scene of the event. It is through the event of writing that a text connects with extra-textual reality. The choreographies of writing, in a more strict sense of performance art pieces, experimentally juxtapose selected texts with consciously designed performances. Thereby, they explore text/performance relations, mutual dependence, the ways they define each other, and the aesthetic and political effects of their choreographed co-enactments.

Where does the interest in making such media combinations come from? The embodied inscriptions have their precursors in automatic writing and writing rituals such as calligraphy aimed to unite the mind (or spirit) and body through attentive and aestheticized process of writing. In performance art, however, they seem to relate to intermedial experiments in happenings in the 60s, and to the influence that action painting made on performance and dance explorations of gestures producing visual

traces.[13] Similarly, the history of lecture performances goes back to Fluxus performance artist Joseph Beuys and his version of *gesamtkunstwerk*, as an all-embracing synthesis of not only various forms of art, but also of the domains of art and everyday life. As both embodied inscriptions and lecture performances date back to multimedia happenings and performance art of the 60s, we will observe them in the context of the broader artistic interest in experiments, knowledge production and didactic potentials of art that came to focus around the same time.

Alongside visual arts, music and architecture, performance art and dance aspire to affirm themselves as forms of knowledge, just as valid as textual documents prevailing in mainstream educational institutions.[14] The increasing interest in knowledge production in various artistic domains fundamentally challenges the Cartesian paradigm of knowledge as exclusively cognitive and critically opposed to sensorial experiences, affects, emotions, intuition etc.[15] Cognitive knowledge materializes through texts, the most reliable sources in our attempts to understand ancient civilizations and history, as well as to express the insights of modern science, philosophy and literature. Text has long been a paradigm for a document, and also for knowledge. Although the modern day education is excessively exposed to new media, and scientific methods include amazingly diverse technologies, experiments and events, the academic cultures around the world still predominantly relay on textual transmission of scientific results. The lectures, conferences and seminars in sciences as well as in arts and humanities are organized around a textual exchange, and so are

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[13] Such are, for example, Shigeko Kubota's *Vagina Painting* (1965), Carolee Schneemann's *Up to and Including Her Limits* (1973-76), Janine Antoni's *Loving Care* (1994) and Trisha Brown's drawing performances.

[14] The idea that artistic practice is also a way to research the reality was initially introduced in visual arts by art historian Giulio Carlo Argan in his essay "Art Practice as Research" (1958). The idea proved to be influential in the following decades and was applied to other forms of art as well. According to Argan, the research in arts entails "the ability attributed to art for addressing and solving certain problems or for addressing itself to the artist as the problem that should be solved". The citation is borrowed from Ana Vujanović's entry on Argan on the online portal dedicated to self-education in the arts: http://www.deschoolingclassroom.tkh-generator.net/tag/argan/

[15] The collection *Knowledge in Motion: Perspectives on Artistic and Scientific Research in Dance*, edited by Sabine Gehm at al. (transcript Verlag, 2007) offers alternative views on knowledge from the perspective of dance.

the journals and publishing houses. The multimedia performances and choreographies of such exchanges have rarely been reflected upon in terms of their creative input, while their contribution (within broader institutional arrangements) to the conceptualizations of modern knowledge remained neglected. Yet, the fact that we do not pay attention to these event-based, performative, and choreographic aspects of knowledge creation and transmission does not mean they do not produce effects on the audiences in their own right.

The events of encounters between teachers and students in educational settings are sites through which social and cultural *dispositif* manifests.[16] Each event creates a reality, with specific networks of interfaces of communication between people, objects, spaces and technologies – the communication that is itself complex and heterogeneous, involving diverse media. Given that, the choreographies of writing arrange events of knowledge creation and exchange in order to explore a whole range of forms that knowledge can take. They address the general questions about education while enacting it in their own alternative artistic ways. Furthermore, the choreographies of writing extract concrete "lines of force" from the broader frames of *dispositif*: discursive lines are represented by concrete texts, while the non-discursive ones come in the form of the heterogeneous mise-en-scène. The lines are interconnected, sometimes fragmented or fractured, but remain distinct.

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[16] Michel Foucault uses the concept of *dispositif* to describe interconnectedness of discursive and non-discursive elements of the social fabric and knowledge structures that enforce the dynamics of power within society: "What I'm trying to pick out with this term is, firstly, a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions–in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of the apparatus. The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements." Michael Foucault, "The Confession of the Flesh" (interview), in Colin Gordon (ed), *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1980, p. 194.

Deleuze depicts the Foucauldian *dispositif* as an ensemble of interlaced "lines of force": "These apparatuses, then, are composed of the following elements: lines of visibility and enunciation, lines of force, lines of subjectification, lines of splitting, breakage, fracture, all of which criss-cross and mingle together, some lines reproducing or giving rise to others, by means of variations or even changes in the way they are grouped." Gilles Deleuze, "What is a *dispositif*?", in Timothy J. Armstrong (ed), *Michel Foucault, Philosopher*, Routledge, New York, 1992, p. 159-198.

By introducing text into the frame of performance, the choreographies of writing examine the relationship between the textual message and the effects produced by performance. The two juxtaposed media delimit and determine each other, and so do the two forms of message/information/knowledge: textual and performative. How does their interaction manifest on the level of choreography that embraces the two? How are we to experience and understand such heterogeneity? On the one hand, this is a question of semiotics and hermeneutic of intermedial performance; on the other, it becomes a pedagogical issue. How do we receive/learn the knowledge consisting in diverse heterogeneous forms/media? How do we learn the knowledge that is at once discursive and non-discursive, textual and performative, cognitive and experiential, and that simultaneously addresses our multiple capacities, including reasoning, affects, emotions, imagination, motor skills etc? What do we learn from heterogeneous knowledge and how do we do it? Finally, how does the new knowledge manifest, how does it transform the learners?

Creative pedagogical mediation. We have mentioned above that the *pedagogical turn* in the arts and literature placed focus on the students, response theories, interaction, and also on the situation/event of exchange.[17] We therefore assume that, when the choreographers employ texts on stage as a part of a performative action, they necessarily take part in the broader theoretical discussions about various traditions of knowledge making: the textual and non-textual ones. Following this assumption, we would say that the embodied inscriptions appropriate texts in order to further dissect and explore them physically, using their own performative means. On the other side, the lecture performances rather question the conventions and institutional arrangements in which textual knowledge appears.

Furthermore, the format of lecture performances allows this genre to be transferred from the artistic to mainstream educational institutions – which is exactly what Gomez-Peña does, thereby calling attention to the creative performative potential of

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[17] In his recent study, the renowned educator and advocate for education reforms, Ken Robinson argues for an end of outdated industrial educational model and highlights the importance of personalized approach. According to Robins, the transformation of educational system – or, in his words, *the grassroots revolution* – should start with the analysis of the very encounter between students and teachers. Ken Robinson and Lou Aronica, *Creative Schools: The Grassroots Revolution That's Transforming Education*, Penguin, London, 2015.

academic performances. The lecture performances can include physical and performative experiments that are explicitly demonstrated in the embodied inscriptions. Besides that, the lecture performances can be incorporated into a more conventional academic context, bringing in the performative knowledge alongside textual narration/message. The performances such as the ones by Gomez-Peña and La Pocha Nostra actually reveal the performativity inherent to common educational practices based on live encounter between teachers and students. These performances point out that the existing pedagogies have already been heterogeneous and performative, even though the professors/lecturers rarely reflect upon their own performance as a *creative mediation*. Such reflection is not a part of mainstream institutional conventions. In predominantly textual academic cultures, the event of encounter and exchange, as well as its performance and choreography, are often (over)seen as immediate and automatic. In contrast, the consciously designed choreographies of writing enhance the awareness of the pedagogical media and processes of mediation, strongly emphasizing the possibilities of creative intervention.

In the context of technological revolution that challenges the conventions and habits of mainstream education in multiple ways, the choreographies of writing call for a self-reflective investigation of the ongoing changes by seeing them as parts of pedagogical mediation. This mediation necessarily involves processes of *immediation* and naturalization/automatization, while simultaneously revealing complex networks of communication. [18] The possible implications of our analysis of the choreographies of writing would be considered starting from the following question: how do the conscious and skilled design of choreography in dance and performance art – i.e. in what we consider as choreographies of writing – can help us understand the hidden potentials for self-reflection and creative interventions in the academic performances?

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[18] For example, the use of computers in the classrooms, including video projections and internet access, has introduced various media into the performance of a lecture in the mainstream education. Internet has significantly facilitated the access to information and educational materials related to the topic of the lecture. The practices that once used to be a necessary complement to lectures, such as visits to libraries, mediatheques, or expositions, have in many cases become optional, since the additional study material can virtually be accessed *immediately*, even during the lecture. On the other side, the use of technology introduces new interfaces of communication: students are supposed to simultaneously follow the teacher's speech and projected visual presentation, operate with their computers and online search, and to participate in the discussion.

And how do they contribute to the current conceptualization of knowledge production and reception? In the following chapters we will try to give some hints about it.

Meta-writing, choreopolitics and counterpoint. Let us return to the question of reception of the intermedial artistic and educational performances – the reception by the audiences surrounding the stage, by the students in the classroom, and also by the scholars before a computer screen aiming to provide knowledge about the fleeting performative events. To make it clear right away, we claim that, despite its frequent use, the metaphor of "reading" is not the correct description of the reception of performative works. Using "reading" in this context rather reveals an inclination, characteristic for the academy, to see all kinds of phenomena as covert texts, and therefore overlook the non-discursive effects of their various materialities. The problem is largely addressed in the studies of arts, and especially in dance and performance studies. In the collection *Knowledge in Motion*, the critics point to the methodological mistake in any attempt to "grasp dynamic processes by static concepts", while at the same time there are authors who still re-cite the old question: "how can dance-based knowledge *talk*?"[19]

One of the solutions might be found in André Lepecki's idea of *writing along dance*.[20] That is, if the scholars have no other option but to *write* and *talk* about dance, they should then be careful not enforce a text upon the performative subject of their research – either by pretending that dance talks as well, or by objectifying it as mute in their theoretical gaze. Lepecki thus suggests: instead of offering us an authoritative textual record *about* a transient dance event, writing would better do if it finds a way to truly accompany and move *along* dance. The editors of *Knowledge in Motion*, by referring to Gabrielle Brandstetter's work, advocate similar transition:

> Since movement cannot be *translated* into language off hand, *a language needs to be found to express the dynamic processes*. Just what form such a notation might take is

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[19] Susan Leigh Foster, Peggy Phelan, Sue Ellen Case, Shannon Jackson are among the theoreticians who problematize the textual approach to performances. The publication *Knowledge in Motion* gathers the most significant contributions to the one of the largest conferences on dance in recent decades (Berlin, 2006). It focuses on the question of embodied knowledge produced through dance within the contemporary "knowledge societies".

[20] André Lepecki, "Inscribing Dance", in André Lepecki (ed.), *On the Presence of the Body: Essays on Dance and Performance Theory*, Wesleyan U.P, Middletown, 2004, p. 124-139.

illustrated by Gabriele Brandstetter: the perception of movement can best be written *when the language used to do so is also set in motion*. In doing so, the scientific world is venturing into an uncontrollable and unpredictable area.[21]

According to Brandstetter, as well as to Gehm, Husemann and von Wilcke, the theoretical movement *along* dance requires the invention of a new dynamic language that would be able to grasp dynamic bodily movements. In that way, these authors avoid the assumption that it is possible to translate movement into texts "off hand"; still, they do imply that the text can reflect upon movement only if they both share something like an underlying dynamic language structure. So, the theoretical work would basically consist in creating adequate dynamic or temporary concepts – an idea already proposed and exercised in the 1990s by feminist theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick.[22] Lepecki's idea, however, remains less specific and restrain from proposals of how *writing along dance* should be realized. Besides, Lepecki regards both dance and writing as Derridean *traces*, at once significatory and material/kinetic.

One possible step further in concretization of writing along dance would be to consider writing as an inherently complex and materially heterogeneous medium. By doing so, we would broaden the conceptual frame of what we consider as knowledge about dance/performance: from the initial focus on text (= language, concepts, rhetoric, editing etc.) towards the inclusion of material processes of production. Besides language as one possible common ground for writing and movement, which makes possible the "translation" between them, there is also the material kinetic capacity embedded in both media. The embodied activity of writing – gestures and movements of verbal inscription – consists in movements that can be seen as dance in their own right: a dance of hands and pencils, a dance of typing fingers, a dance that synchronizes a calligrapher's actions and breath. So, *writing along dance* can be seen

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[21] Sabine Gehm, Pirkko Husemann and Katharina von Wilcke, "Introduction", in *Knowledge in Motion: Perspectives of Artistic and Scientific Research in Dance*, Transcript Verlag, Bielefeld, 2007, p. 16. Emphases added - MP.

[22] Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Introduction" in A. Parker and E.K. Sedgwick (eds), *Performativity and Performance*, Routledge, London and New York, 1995, p. 1-18.

as a specific writing dance that corresponds to, or communicates with, the dance performed on stage.[23]

Regarding all of the above, the choreographies of writing reveal precisely this hidden capacity of writing and the variety of forms it might take. When we bring to light the performance of writing, not only movements are at stake. The choreographies of writing also demonstrate that writing creates situations and realities. Its complexity can bring to our view the constitutive treads of social *dispositif*, as if under the magnifying glass. And finally, the choreographies of writing turn the apparent automaticity of writing into a multitude of communicational interfaces. Thus conceived, writing figures as a dance's counterpart, and the communication between the two might not necessarily happen through language, but also through their shared heterogeneous materiality.

Writing that we are talking about refers to descriptions, interpretations and theories of dance and performance. When such performances take a form of choreographies of writing, theoretical writing appears as a kind of *meta-writing*, writing about writing. We would say that the choreographies of writing anticipate their subsequent textual interpretations. Keeping in mind our assumption that the choreographies of writing explore intermedial production of knowledge, we can then see them as a mirror image of their own possible textual documentation and theorization. They show that scholarly *meta-writing*, as knowledge making par excellence, might itself be seen as embodied, performative, spatiotemporally situated, consisting of series of events etc. Furthermore, the performances of writing reveal that this embodied and performative aspects of scholarly writing produce effects, and even knowledge, in their own ways and right. Such knowledge happens besides and along our verbal undertakings even when we do not account for it – in public speech, lectures, conferences, PhD vivas etc. To make things more complicated, the performative knowledge cannot be translated and thereby incorporated into academic text; its effects cannot be foreseen, nor calculated.

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[23] This might sound as a weird idea, I agree. If we try to apply it literally and imagine the scholars dancing around their texts, it might also be funny and sometimes probably bizarre. Still, it is *the embodied performance of writing practices as such* that we are pointing to; dance is rather optional.

Why would one bother thinking about it then? The first reason is that, for example when giving a lecture, our physical acts "do" something alongside "doing" made by our words. The created reality – the *dispositif*, if you will – is not reduced to a simple transfer of a verbal message, from teacher to students. The entire fabric of the event influences the processes of creation of subjectivities of all participants. The textual content is just one of the elements. So, if the knowledge aims to transform, then it should bear awareness that the transformation occurs on multiple levels. The choreographies of writing remind us that any production of textual knowledge – theory and pedagogy alike – is a process of mediation involving various media, materialities and technologies. The second reason why the performative aspects of textual production should be taken into account is that these mediations can be creatively choreographed, and not necessarily ruled by the institutional conventions.

The idea is not that the educational performances should by all means comply with the agendas lying behind the professed texts. Although the "performative contradictions" can sometimes be confusing – e.g. when the lecture on democracy is held in a highly authoritatively organized classroom, or when costly and hardly affordable summer schools teach critical thinking and politics of difference – the point is not that the performances necessarily need to serve the transmission of the professed values in the arts and humanities. Since the effects of the performances are incalculable, it can hardly ever be the case.

The (political) effects made by performances and choreographies of text can better be understood through Lepecki's idea of *choreopolitics*.[24] Drawing from Rancière's idea of power manifested through freedom of movement in public spaces, Lepecki conceives *choreopolitics* as a non-discursive comprehension of possibilities and limitations of movements within the social realms. So the politics of choreography consists in questioning of given polices and conventions that spatially organize public spaces, including the social and cultural institutions. So, the effects of the performative side of the *meta-writing*, can be seen as a comprehension and challenging of "habitual movement patterns" and non-discursive institutional conventions.

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[24] André Lepecki, "Choreopolice and Choreopolitics: or the task of the dancer", *The Drama Review*, Vol. 57, No. 4, 2013, p. 13-27.

Considering the choreographies of writing (as well as of meta-writing), how can we describe the relationship between the textual meaning and performative effects, i.e. choreopolitics? The idea of *dispositif* operates on a broader level of social apparatuses. Maaike Bleeker in her essay "Lecture Performance as Contemporary Dance" applies the concept of *dispositif* in the analyses of concrete dance and performance pieces and, more precisely, of lecture performances.[25] Describing the works of the choreographers Deuffert and Plischke, Bleeker writes:

> Deuffert and Pliscke demonstrate the potential of an understanding of artistic practices like dance as a dispositif. (…) Work like theirs invites reflection on the relationship between modes of conduct of dance (among others), and the realities that emerge from these modes, as well as on the differences between these modes of conduct and other modes of research and making sense. Adopting the lecture as format for a performance, their performances also invite a reconsideration of the performativity of philosophical and scientific practice through the lens of performance and choreography and, by extension, question the relationships and differences between the two. (p. 141)

It is clear that specific artistic modes of conduct differ from scientific and philosophical practices. The common trait to all different modes of research, according to Bleeker, is that, aside from making meaning, they also produce material realities and subjectivities. Drawing from the works of Deleuze and De Certeau, Bleeker clarifies that she employs "the concept of dispositif as the *in between*". We would say that this idea of "in between" preserves the distinction between proximate entities ("the lines of action" in Deleuzian words) while, at the same time, gives a hint about another realm to which these entities belong. Yet, since the notion of dispositif is so broad and rather describes complex networks, we find it insufficient in the analysis of concrete relations within the network. In other words, we need a concept that would help us think the relationship between textual meaning and performative effects, as well between discursive and non-discursive knowledge (scholarly and artistic) from inside the broader networks in which they all are immersed.

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[25] See Bleeker on Ivana Müller's lecture performance *How Heavy are My Thoughts?* Maaike Bleeker, "Lecture Performance as Contemporary Dance", in Susan Manning and Lucia Ruprecht (eds), *New German Dance Studies*, University of Illinois Press, Champaign, 2012, p. 232-246.

Furthermore, the looked-for concept should operate on (and help us link) three different levels:

1. the designed intermedial juxtaposition of text and performance on stage, in the choreographies of writing,
2. the relationship between choreographies of writing and theoretical meta-writing,
3. the possibility of theoretical/pedagogical texts to reflect upon their own unforeseeable performative effects.[26]

To describe the juxtapositions on all three mentioned levels, we propose the notion of *counterpoint*. The notion originates from music theory, where it describes its formal traits – the relation between distinct melodic or rhythmic lines that remain independent (i.e. do not merge in a harmonic accord), yet simultaneously flowing and referring to each other. The notion of counterpoint is also used in social theory, from Antonio Gramsci to Theodor Adorno and Edward Said.[27] In his lectures on Schoenberg, later edited in a volume *Die Funktion des Kontrapunkts in der neuen Musik*, Adorno theorizes the counterpoint as a key term to describe the shift in worldviews, caused by the industrial change of modes of production and reflected on the creation of new aesthetics.[28] Opposed to Beethoven's sonata structure and tonal harmony, representing a unified Romantic worldview, Schoenberg's reintroduction of the counterpoint allows the expression of subconscious forces and increasingly fragmented social experiences. Edward Said adopts the notion of counterpoint to describe the communication of voices from the centers and peripheries of colonial empires. Again opposed to foundational logic of sonata, counterpoint better describes the experience of exile:

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[26] How can theory think its own institutional frames and *choreopolitical* moves, its performance as a built-in otherness, an inherent blind spot or what Butler calls opacity. Can theory reflect about the ways in which it is not clear and comprehensible to itself?

[27] Giorgio Baratta, Antonio Gramsci in contrapuntto. Dialoghi col presente, Carocci, Roma, 2008. Lorenzo Salvagni, "A Syn-Aesthetic Path: The Notion of Counterpoint from Antonio Gramsci to Edward Said", Romance Notes, Vol. 53, No. 3, 2013, p. 263-272.

[28] Theodor Adorno, *Die Funktion des Kontrapunkts in der neuen Musik*, Akademie der Künste, Berlin, 1957.

> Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that – to borrow a phrase from music – is *contrapuntal*.[29]

Again, the counterpoint depicts the ongoing interplay of distinct yet mutually connected lines. Finally, the notion of counterpoint figures in contemporary choreographic practices and theory,[30] where it might refer to various forms of juxtapositions: choreography vs. site specificity, lights vs. movements, event vs. context, simultaneous improvisations of two or more dancers etc.

Regarding the choreographies of writing, the counterpoint allows us to clarify what kind of choreographies are at stake. When talking about the choreography of the performances enacting writing on stage – as embodied movement or lecture performance – we are far from a model of, say, classical ballet choreography. Similar to the transgression that counterpoint brought to the 20th century music, modern dance and performance art contrast the unifying choreographic structures in classical ballet. Modern dance accounts for the plurality of voices; it is relational, dissonant and highly self-reflexive. And that applies to choreographies of writing, as well. The interplay between text and performance, product and production, verbal message and emerging material reality, writing and meta-writing, are subject to the logic of counterpoint regardless of their contents. The counterpoint overcomes the search for a common ground and "translation" between the heterogeneous elements, leaving open the possibility for irony, parody, travesty, paradox etc.

Just as Adorno and Said indicated, the effect of counterpoint is *self-reflection* as a specific movement of thought. A simultaneous unwinding of two or more juxtaposed processes of mediation, irreducible to one another, inspires a reflection on the expression and its "otherness", limits and blind spots. The counterpoint is a pas-à-deux between an inside and an outside of any kind of expression and knowledge, without a dialectic resolution, a unifying synthesis. The self-reflection is not bound to

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[29] Edward Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, Harvard U.P, Cambridge Mass., 2000, p. 172.

[30] Freya Vass-Rhee, "Dancing Music: The Intermodality of the Forsythe Company", in Steven Spier, *William Forsythe and the Practice of Choreography*, Routledge, London and New York, 2011.

the content; it is rather an acknowledgement of a constitutive "otherness" within any materially heterogeneous process of mediation.

The self-reflective movement of thought allows for the heterogeneous conceptions of learning process and knowledge. That is a knowledge that accounts for its own limits and incalculable side effects. Such knowledge cannot exclusively remain in the domain of cognition and verbally transmittable content. In *Giving an Account of Oneself*, Judith Butler criticizes the self-transparency of the Cartesian subject attuned to ignore the fact that the subjectivity is preceded and shaped by social norms that it cannot fully grasp.[31] Butler names this unknowingness of oneself "opacity" and considers it as a basis for ethical responsiveness. So, the contrapuntal intermedial structures of the embodied inscriptions and lecture performances call for meta-writing and knowledge able to exercise a plasticity of thought, necessarily dependent on the plasticity of the performative structures in which it is ingrained. The cognition and textuality can perform the genuine movement of thought – broadening of one's perspective, inclusion of different voices, and a truly new experience – only if it is supported by a flexible and creative treatment of materialities, performances and institutional conventions.

2. Examples

1. Popular cultural practices:

- Chinese water calligraphy – a spontaneous dance-like practice producing evanescent scripts (counterpart to Western graffiti). It gained popularity in the early 1990s and continued being widely practiced in parks and other public spaces.

- So-called "wroga" – since recently practiced in some yoga schools in the Netherlands. It combines writing gestures with yoga exercises.

2. Artistic precursors that combine performance and writing:

- Dada performances, surrealist automatic writing.

- Action painting – emphasizes the physical act of painting and incorporates it in the final work.

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[31] Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*, Fordham U.P, New York, 2005.

- Painting involving physical activity of writing – e.g. Cy Twombly (graffiti, calligraphy, automatic writing…), Christian Dotremont (*logogrammes*).

3. Writing in visual and plastic arts:[32]

- Depictions of letters and words – numerous examples, from Apollinaire's *calligrammes*, to Sonia Delaunay's *tableau-poème*, to René Margitte

- Sculpted words – concrete poetry, the so-called "off-page writing" including textual sculptures and neon light installations (e.g. Jenny Holzer. Recently, Spanish muralists Boa Mistura whose work includes an intense collaboration with local residents).

- Video – e.g. Marcel Broodhaers (*La Pluie: projet pour un texte*, 1969, represents the event of writing) and Guillermo Gomez-Peña (*Video Graffiti*, 2004).

4. Performance art and dance:

- Shigeko Kubota's *Vagina Painting* (1965), Carolee Schneemann's *Up to and Including Her Limits* (1973-76), Janine Antoni's *Loving Care* (1994) and Trisha Brown's drawing performances.

5. Embodied inscriptions:

- Writing as a side motif – e.g. *Körper* by Sasha Waltz

- Writing as a focal activity – Diego Gil, *Collective Writing Machines* (2012); Shelbatra Jashari, *The Act of Writing* (2013); Taysir Batniji, *Like Water* (2008); Christine Olejniczak, *Music for Pen and Pencil* (2015); Jonah Bokaer, *On Vanishing* (2011).

6. Performance lectures:

- From Joseph Beuys and John Cage to Xavier Le Roy, Thomas Lehmen, Tino Sehgal, Mårten Spångberg, Ivana Müler, Tim Etchel and many others.

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[32] See *De la letter à l'image*, a description of the Centre Pompidou's collection,

http://mediation.centrepompidou.fr/education/ressources/ENS-Lettre_image/index.html

The relation of text with other media in visual arts is theorized in Michel Butor's *Les mots dans la peinture* (1969), Michel Foucault's *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* (1973), and recently postgraduate studies in *Performance Writing* at Dartington College (Caroline Bergvall, Ric Allsopp…)

PART ONE

WRITING AND CHOREOGRAPHY AS HYPERMEDIA

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The event of writing

This chapter consists of three sections. In the first section – *The event of writing* – we delineate major facets of the contemporary phenomenon of writing. The transition from print to digital writing increased our awareness of writing technologies, gestures and culturally and institutionally specific practices of writing. Talking about the events of writing necessarily opens discussion about ephemerality and documentation, i.e. in contemporary discourses about liveness and mediation. Finally, the field of linguistics offers another significant origin of the idea of performativity – J.L Austin's widely discussed theory of performative speech acts – where performativity, at least in certain types of enunciation, occurs inseparably from verbal expression. Contemporary conceptualizations and practices of performative writing follow this tradition. They form an important part of the background against which we attempt to define the events and choreographies of writing.

In the second section – *Performative remediations of writing* – we see that the idea of *remediation* provides a productive ground for thinking about performance and writing. Performance and writing are considered to be media, with a capacity to frame and remediate each other. After a short outline of how writing appears in the discourses of media studies, we explain the general idea of digital remediation (Bolter & Grusin, 1999) and the ways it is applied to writing (Bolter, 2001). The studies of intermediality in theatre and performance have adopted the idea of remediation and adapted it to the specific materiality of theatre practices (Kattenbelt at al, 2006, 2010). Based on these premises, we consider our corpus of choreographies of writing (dances of writing and performance lectures alike) to be *performative remediations of writing*. In the discourses of (critical) media studies, both scholarly research and pedagogy are considered as processes of mediation. These complex processes involve various media, and their creative potential is increasingly being pointed out (Kember & Zylinska, 2009). Educational practices are therefore seen as self-reflective mediations capable of questioning the conventions, material heterogeneity and politics implied in

their use of diverse media. In order to envision the implications of textual/performative (re)mediations on the conceptions of knowledge, we turned to Derrida's views on unconditioned university (2001). Derrida distinguishes between two types of effects of the interplay between performance and writing: *oeuvre* (as textual content, as complete and marketable work) and *event* (as process, experience and transformative encounter with the "other"). Accordingly, in education, there are two types of labor linked to two conceptions of knowledge: the one that produces knowledge in the form of *oeuvres* and the labor of opening oneself towards new experiences and perspectives. Applying the concept of *choreographies of writing* in the contexts of education reveals that knowledge comes about not only in the form of texts, but also through choreographed events. Knowledge is thus *choreo-mediated*. Bringing choreography to light opens a commonly overlooked space for self-reflective creativity in educational mediations.

Finally, the third section – *Knowledge and the politics of choreography* – focuses on the political implications of the merging of performance and writing. Being reframed/remediated by performance, the medium of writing reveals its inherent performativity, its heterogeneous composition of text and act, i.e. of document and ephemeral event. Throughout the history of dance studies, writing (as both choreographic script and dance theory) engaged in a very dynamic relationship with dance performances. The shifts in their conceptual interplay impacted the status of dance among the other arts, as well as its capacity to create knowledge or to induce political effects. Drawing from Rancière's recent work on power as primarily a regulation of human movements in space, André Lepecki coined the term *choreopolitics* to point out the subversive potential of choreographed dance. Choreography as exploration of movements in space is always politically charged since it brings us knowledge/awareness of the conventions and limitations of our movements in various social environments. Applied to choreographies of writing, choreopolitics helps us look beyond what seems to be automatic gesture in the presentation of textual knowledge.

In the final part of the third section, we suggest the notion of *counterpoint* as a methodological tool for the analysis of the relation between textual content and choreographic aspects in the choreographies of writing. Counterpoint stems from music theory, originally describing the structure of the fugue: two or more

independent (i.e. non-harmonic) melodic or rhythmic lines that, nonetheless, somehow mutually relate. Borrowed from music, the term was applied to social theory by Adorno and Edward Said. Being composed of distinct "lines", counterpoint bears similarity with Foucault's idea of *dispositif.* In order to draw attention to the specific media self-reflexivity of merging the performance and writing, we rely on the specific use of counterpoint in dance improvisation. Choreographic counterpoint is an ongoing action, a sequence of responses of a dancer relating to what exists/happens around her: the space/architecture, movements of another dancer, demeanor of the audience or some other volatile elements of the mise-en-scène. Following this model, in choreographies of writing text and performance do not merely present two separate contributions to the overall "message". Instead, they are simultaneously unfolding and mutually defined contrapuntal "lines" that frame each other and contribute not to an imagined whole, but to self-reflective heterogeneity.

1. Choreographies of what?

What would be the joint name of such phenomena? On the one side of the metaphoric coin that this paper will try to forge are staged artistic performances that explore the activity of writing – its kinetics, materiality and eventness. On the other side, there are intentionally choreographed public lectures, i.e. lectures turned into conscious performances. The staged artistic performances reveal writing as it materially comes-into-being, whilst the lectures foreground writing's topic, content, agency and politics. Common to both sides is the intentional merging of text and performance. However, the fact that text and performance appear as distinct modes of expression does not imply that they pre-exist as essentially different, in the exact forms in which they come out together in the act of writing. More accurately, the performances of writing – in act and speech – explore the ways in which text and performance (re)define each other.

The general name of their possible combinations remains a conceptual challenge. Is it performance "of" and "on" writing or performance "as" writing? Or even more ambivalently without any preposition: writing performance? Aren't the words "staging" and "theatricality" more appropriate? Or it is rather the "act", "activity" and "practice" of writing that set a stage as soon as we turn the gaze towards them? Can

we talk about "live writing" comparing it with live music? Or to name it more emphatically: writing live!?

Susan Leigh Foster chooses the term "choreographies of writing" to name her performed lectures on embodied dance scholarship.[1] To clarify: The topic of Foster's speech/writing is the possibility and the modes of embodied scholarship. The idea comes from dance – since dance is an embodied practice, why wouldn't the critical and academic activities around it be recognized as embodied as well? Finally, Foster not only *delivers* speech/writing about it, but also *does* it by intentionally *choreographing* the whole event of verbal deliverance. Thereby, she embodies her scholarship, and uses choreography to call attention to it. Foster reflects upon embodied practices of scholarship through her own activity – at once verbal and performative/embodied. Therefore, the term "choreographies of writing" refers to both her topic and her method, whilst the term "writing" refers to speech and written text alike.

Foster identifies the meeting point between dance practices on the one, and their verbal interpretations on the other side, in the physical act – the "how" – of writing. In her performed lectures, the reading of her articles is accompanied by her unconventional postures and movements. Foster can therefore illustrate or undermine her talk by her movements and, in return, make verbal remarks on her physical activity. Foster is a renowned dancer and dance scholar. While she specifically deals with writings about dance and performance, as a form of verbal documentation and knowledge making, we will try to broaden the meanings of her phrase "choreographies of writing" to embrace writing on other topics as well. Yet we will remain in the domain of "studies" and education, including both research and pedagogy. So, alongside the examples of staged performances, which resemble public calligraphy, our corpus will include choreographed "readings" /lectures like the ones demonstrated by Susan Foster.

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[1] Susan Foster, performed lecture "Choreographies of Writing", The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, Philadelphia, March 21, 20011. http://danceworkbook.pcah.us/susan-foster/choreographies-of-writing.html

2.1. The series *Susan Foster! Susan Foster! Bodies of Work: 3 Lectures: Performed*

The notion of choreography implies the idea of *writing* – simply put, it is the writing (Greek *graphein*) of dance (*khoros*).

> But, then – and here is the problem and the challenge – *how* to write about a dancing body that was already, in some way, a writing that was already meaningful in itself…[2]

Following Foster's arguments, the interpretations of modern-day choreographies are a kind of re-writing in a different symbolic system and form of expression. The verbalizations of what happens in dance appear as meta-writing: subsequent, complementary, and metamorphosed. Which kind of writing does choreography represent then? Being a happening that precedes interpretations, does it hold a certain kind of primacy? Or, on the contrary, it cannot be cognitively understood at all without the more general idea of text and literacy? Thus formulated, the questions necessarily imply a hierarchical relation between writing/text and dance/event. The term choreography originates from 18th century French discourse on dance and has since had a dynamic history, which André Lepecki represents through the evolving relation between *dance* and *writing*.[3] Foster and Lepecki agree that the definitions of the two terms were not only always mutually dependent, but also traditionally subjected to hierarchical thinking:

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[2] Linda Caruso Caviland, "Reflections on *Choreographies of Writing*", published on The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage webpage: http://danceworkbook.pcah.us/susan-foster/choreographies-of-writing.html

[3] André Lepecki (ed), *Of the Presence of the Body: Essays on Dance and Performance Theory,* Wesleyan U.P, Middletown, 2004.

> Performing and writing are paired in a dichotomy in which each half does not just define the other by its opposition but actually struggles with the other for dominance in a hierarchy of ranking and power.[4]

So, again, we cannot refer to the practices of dance/performing and writing "as such" since these notions alter their meanings throughout Western dance history as well as across cultures. The specificity of the encounters of dance and writing on the contemporary theatrical (or textual) stages testifies to the complex actual institutional arrangements, practices and discursive paradigms. Here we think of the current status of dance as artistic practice, and about the politics of dance as related to other art politics. The current conceptualizations of choreography also reflect the institutional relations between the practice and studies of dance/performance. Furthermore, the conceptualizations of choreography reflect the relations between dance/performance studies, cultural and media studies and critical theory. Consequently, our choice of the term "choreography" for the purpose of naming the above described writerly and performative events implies reflection on dance/performance politics and on performance and/as knowledge making, whilst our study in a transdisciplinary manner combines the perspectives from mentioned academic disciplines.

 The specific meaning of choreography that we are going to rely upon is basically the one formulated by Foster. Therefore, by seeing writing as choreographed, we will refer to it as inherently kinetic (and dancerly), as at once writing and meta-writing, as a signifying activity and its heterogeneous reproductions. Aside from being iterative, choreo-writing switches forms and materiality; it is literally trans-modal and trans-formative.

2. Depictions vs. events of writing

One of the reasons for our preference of the notion of "choreography" over "performance" has been to reduce (if not completely to avoid) the confusion caused by the omnipresence of "performance" in contemporary discourses across

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[4] Linda Caruso Caviland, "Reflections on *Choreographies of Writing*", text published online at http://danceworkbook.pcah.us/susan-foster/choreographies-of-writing.html.

disciplines.[5] More importantly, however, the term "choreography" allows us to delimit the equally perplexing and elusive notion of "writing". That is the idea that writing is an activity that can be choreographed creates a specific definition of it. As already indicated, "writing" in our use includes the material production alongside the textual product. And further, it refers to graphically materialized text as well as to public talks/lectures based on previously determined (pre-written) content. It is both spatial and temporal, composed of signification and its materialities. Thanks to the dancing element, the notion of choreography brings into play the ideas of gestures, movements, activities and practices. And more importantly, it opens a surprisingly overlooked question of the eventness of writing – of what might, depending on the perspective, be implied into or slip away from Derridean iteration, constitutive for writing as an origin-less and anti-metaphysical principle.

Our choice to focus on the *event of writing* stays away from restating any kind of "origin" or "logocentric presence". The legacy of deconstruction is not in question. Still, there is something paradoxical in the encounter between writing and event. It launches a long set of oppositions – such as absence and presence; virtuality and liveness; meaning and matter; repetition and singularity; visible and invisible; and especially ephemerality and documentation. It seems that the events of writing at once reproduce these oppositions and make them crash or at least move around each other. The possible outcomes are yet to be discovered and observed. Rather than resolving the oppositions by theoretically unifying their poles – by let's say extending the notions of dance, event and writing, so that the one implies the others – we would like to bring light to the paradoxes and incongruities, as potentially creative force for new choreographies of writing.

In the history of writing in the West, there have not been many examples of the physical activity of writing being a subject of rituals or aesthetization, which would make writing have an end in itself.[6] Throughout the Middle Ages, the hand-copying of religious or philosophical texts involved rituals of preparations of the body and mind for the sacred task, whilst the activity of writing itself was considered a form of

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[5] See, for example, John McKenzie, *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance*, Routledge, London & NY, 2001.

[6] At least not to my knowledge. Any suggestions on this topic are more than welcome.

communication.[7] The practices of calligraphy in various cultures also draw attention to the moment of inscription, establishing a unique spiritual connection between such diverse components as the environment, the calligrapher's state of mind, his moving body, and emerging graphic signs. Finally, in modern art, the Futurists soirées, Dadaist performances and surrealist "automatic writing" inserted temporality into writing and explored its extra-textual elements.

Aside from these examples, the physical activity of writing remained largely unobserved – from ancient literate elites to the increasing global democracy of literacy. This does not mean that the gesture and activity of writing were as such hidden from anyone's eyes. Even when the skill of literacy was particularly rare among the population, writing served public goals and was exposed publicly. The monumental Egyptian scribes testify to that and so do the Christian frescos of Evangelists at work. However, the temporality of writing and its effects on anything else but the resulting text remained unmarked. The meaning was exclusively reserved for the text, while the energies involved in its production, the presence of a scribe, his motor skills and lived embodied experience of writing failed to attain significance. The value of invested labor, skills and affects was instrumental, for the sake of text; the performance of writing had no significance. The activity of writing could visually only be represented after the (f)act, thus becoming a paradigmatic or universalized scene.

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[7] There is a large corpus of literature addressing the habits, customs and rituals of the scribes in various traditions. See for example: Jonathan Paul Siegel, *The scribes of Qumran : studies in the early history of Jewish scribal customs*, University Microfilms, 1983. David Orton, *The Understanding Scribe*, A Continuum Imprint, London, 1989. Kim Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters: Literacy, Power, and the Transmitters of Early Christian Literature*, Oxford U.P, 2000. Emanuel Tov, *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts Found in the Judean Desert, University of Michigan*, 2004. David M. Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature*, Oxford U.P, 2005. However, the customs and habits mostly refer to inscription procedures and systematically overlook the events of writing. M. B. Parkes pays greater attention to the gestures and rituals in his book *Their Hands Before Our Eyes: A Closer Look at Scribes*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 1999.
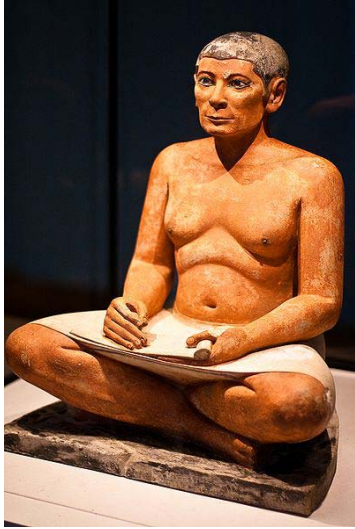
2.2. *The Seated Scribe* 2620–2500 BCE   2.3. Guido Reni, *St. John the Evangelist*, 17th c.

So, there have been diverse *depictions of writing* throughout the centuries and visual styles, as well as attention given to the materiality of already composed texts. Yet, the ephemeral embodied activity of writing-in-progress, be it public or private, has usually served as a mere instrument of fixing texts. Seen as records and documents, texts were culturally privileged over writing. In other words, writing has not been seen as performative, eventful and spectacular. It somehow managed to lead its secret life before people's eyes in various everyday settings.

2.1. Calligraphy and dance

The lived life of writing was reserved for calligraphic practices that consider writing an emerging reality in which textual graphics, gestures, bodies and surrounding space equally matter as elements of a complex and dynamic performative design. Although East Asian, Islamic and Hebrew calligraphy differ significantly in methods and aesthetics, common to all these practices is the ritualization of writing movements and the aesthetization of the event of inscription, including bodies, costumes, blank spaces on paper, colors etc. In the East Asian tradition, the inscription itself is a meditative practice, "the embodiment of the creator's fully attended mind":

> Calligrapher and ink painter merge their bodies and minds in order to produce dexterous and decisive brushwork. They use their own mind to capture the *chi* that moves their hands. In traditional forms of East Asian brushwork, creators usually

visualize the *chi* that stream from their body-mind unification and flow through the brush stem to the bristles and onto the paper.[8]

The body, space, scripts and material objects reveal a staging potential of calligraphy that have recently been broadly explored in various types of public demonstrations of calligraphic work. The most interesting for our study are dance performances that merge dance movements with ritualized calligraphic inscription. Calligraphic practice influences dance improvisations indirectly by being its inspiration or a model of a meditation in movement, as in the work of the renowned Paris based choreographer Carolyn Carlson. The collaborative work of Carlson, calligraphy artist Hassan Massoudy and French composer/singer Aimée de la Salle (2007) is based on the interaction between live chant, Massoudy's calligraphic inscription video projected on stage, and Carlson's dance improvisation. This multimedia performance continues the exploration of harmony between music, dance and writing, initiated in the performance "Métaphore", a collaboration of Carlson and Massoudy with the Kudsi Erguner Ensemble, premiered at the İstanbul Music Festival in 2005.[9]

2.4. Aimée de la Salle/Carlson/Massoudy, 2007   2.5. Carlson/Massoudy/Erguner, *Métaphore*, 2005

More temptingly, dance addresses the calligraphic tradition by employing bodies and dance movements as agents of both scribbling acts and evanescent scripts. One of the well-known works of this kind is the *Cursive* trilogy (*Cursive* (2003), *Cursive II* (2004) and *Wild Cursive* (2007)) by the Taiwanese choreographer Lin Hwai-min and the Cloud Gate Dance Theater. According to Kin-Jan Szeto, the *Cursive* trilogy

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[8] Sheng Kuan Chung, "Aesthetic Practice and Spirituality: *Chi* in Traditional East Asian Brushwork", *Art Education*, Vol. 59, No. 4, Jul 2006, p. 36.

[9] More on Carolyn Carlson's work can be found on: http://carolyn-carlson.com. Hassan Massoudy performs calligraphy publicly, solo or as a part of specific intermedial performances, together with various music ensembles, corps de ballet or solo choreographers: www.massoudy.net.

questions not only traditional identities, but also global hegemonic cultural/political powers and discourses on globalization. It does so through a critical dialogue between Asian aesthetic perspectives expressed through calligraphy and European-American modern dance that is an exclusive referential field for most influential dance theories and historiography.[10]

2.6. *Cursive*, Lin Hwai-min and Cloud Gate Dance Theater (2003)

2.2. Avant-garde writing events

Another tradition of foregrounding liveness and eventfulness of texts coincides with the development of modernist performance and body art, whose early precursors are the Futurist literary soirées and Dadaist shows in the Cabaret Voltaire. Contrary to more conventional theatrical forms, the avant-garde performances acknowledged not only the material aspects of texts – image and sound – but also the role of the body and overall setting in the physical emergence of text. The texts did not anymore figure only as scripts aimed to be played and represented on stage. On the contrary, performed texts were often deprived of narratives and even of semantic meanings. In the face of the horrors of the WWI, the avant-garde artists identified language as a

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[10] Kin-Jan Szeto "Calligraphic Kinesthesia in the Dancescape: Lin Hwai-min's Cosmopolitical Consciousness in the *Cursive* Trilogy", *Dance Chronicle* 33, 2010, p. 414-441. The *Cursive* trilogy was selected as the best dance choreography in 2006 by *Ballet-Tanz* and *Theaterheute* journals (p. 415).

crucial medium for the creation of nationalism and hatred. According to their new poetics, linguistic expressions needed to be subjected to radical experiments and remodeling with the help of other art forms. So, the public performative readings of texts, from Futurism to Surrealism, highlighted the role of the body, live interaction and complex settings as new artistic forces aimed to provoke and revive traditional "bourgeois" cultures:

> The recitation of a manifesto or of selected examples of Futurist poetry no longer aimed at interpreting a literary text with artistic finesse […] the Futurist reciter now served as an object the audience could react against.[11]

Performative readings of Futurist manifestos and poetry, as well as Hugo Ball's non-semantic and Tzara's simultaneous poetry recited as parts of Dadaist performances, truly draw attention to non-narrative and non-linguistic elements of texts – the image and sound of words, the texture of events. However, it is important to remember that these early performances – and early examples of body art[12] – comprise a significant textual element. They come about as explorations of the otherwise neglected material aspects and hidden potentials of *texts*. By bringing texts to light again, we by no means want to diminish the revolutionary shift towards the artist's body and live interaction with audience. Our aim is rather to point out the complex dynamics between textual and non-textual elements, important to understand the multimedia nature of such performances. So, we consider the avant-garde performances as historically relatively rare artistic explorations of the eventfulness of texts, i.e. we consider them as one of the paradigms of the choreographies of writing.

In addition, avant-garde performative readings provide us with concepts that could be helpful in better understanding contemporary intermedial choreographies of writing and their political potential. Let us take the example of simultaneous poetry, the poem "L'amiral cherche une maison à louer", recited on March 23, 1916, by Tristan Tzara, Richard Huelsenbeck and Marcel Janco, at once in English, German and French. The declamation was accompanied with a whistle, a rattle and a bus drum. During the

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[11] Gunter Berghaus, *Theater, Performance and Historical Avant-garde*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2005, p. 99.

[12] Amelia Jones, *Body Art / Performing the Subject*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1998.

performance, the loose narrative increasingly dissolved into random noises and movements on the stage.
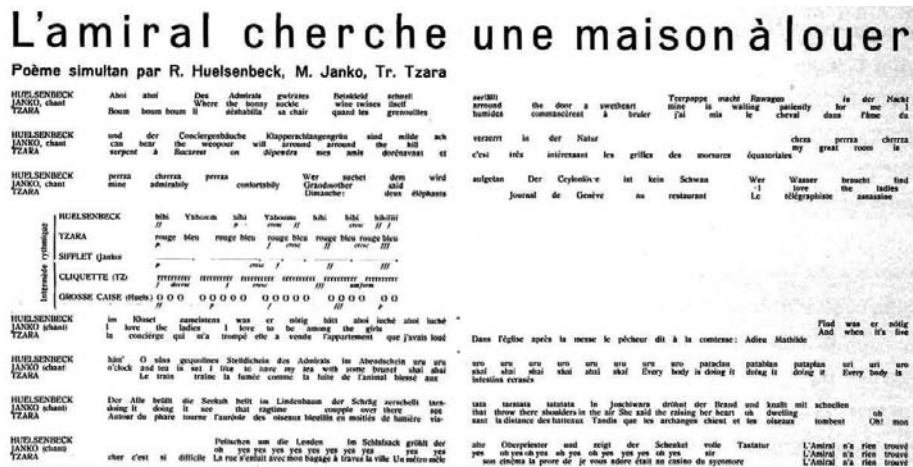
2.7. "L'amiral cherche une maison à louer" (1916) by T. Tzara, R. Huelsenbeck and M. Janco

Hans Richter, himself a participant in the Dadaist movement, describes simultaneous poetry as a:

> *contrapuntal recitative* in which three or more voices speak, sing, whistle, etc., simultaneously, in such a way that *the resulting combinations account for the total effect of the work*, elegiac, funny or bizarre.[13]

Public performative readings create complex and intermedial works of art, in which the public presentations of texts turn into interactive events. The quality of voice, other sounds, graphic signs, costumes and movements, alongside the (sometimes enforced) participation of the audience – i.e. the improvised choreographies – evidently do not function as mere tools to highlight the meaning of a text. Instead, they together create realities in which texts are embedded; the independent meanings of diverse elements reframe each other and are supposed to be mutually challenging. Richter suggests the idea of *counterpoint*, stemming from music theory, as a tool to recognize diverse polyphonies of intermedial performances and their overall effects. While Richter assumes a certain totality of such works and their outcomes, we find the idea of counterpoint to be apposite to describe not only the structure of *the complete works*, but also the ongoing dynamics of their creation, *their coming into being*. In the final section of this chapter, we will develop the idea of counterpoint

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[13] Hans Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-art*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1997, p. 30. (emphasis – MP)

into a methodological tool for the analysis of contemporary choreographies of writing and their political implications.

KARAWANE
jolifanto bambla ô falli bambla
grossiga m'pfa habla horem
égiga goramen
higo bloiko russula huju
hollaka hollala
anlogo bung
blago bung
blago bung
bosso fataka
ü üü ü
schampa wulla wussa ólobo
hej tatta gôrem
eschige zunbada
wulubu ssubudu uluw ssubudu
tumba ba- umf
kusagauma
ba - umf
(1917)
Hugo Ball
53
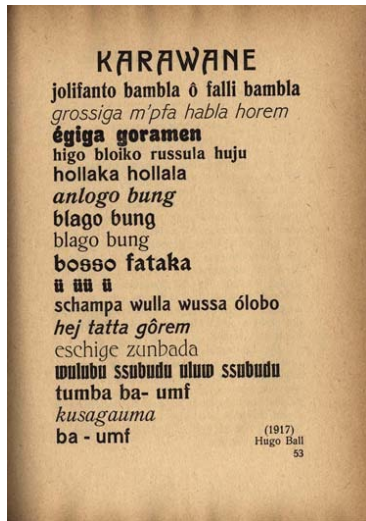
2.8. Hugo Ball's 1917 text "Karawane" and

2. 9. A reproduction of a 1916 photograph of Ball in his "cubist costume" at Cabaret Voltaire, Photograph by M. Janco

Our corpus of contemporary staged performances of writing continues and reexamines both the calligraphic and avant-garde tradition. They do it against the background of what we are going to call "the dusk of writing"[14] – referring to the "new materialist" reconsideration of post-structuralist views on writing and text, the technological shifts in media and communication and, finally, to the growing interest in material artistic practices as methods of thinking and academic research.

3. Writing technology, gestures and practices

In scholarship, the material aspects of writing have been subjects of various disciplines and the interest in them significantly increased at the beginning of the

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[14] The term characterizes the work of contemporary French philosopher Catherine Malabou. A student of Jacques Derrida, Malabou develops the concept of "plasticity", derived from Hegel's work, on the one, and neuroscience, on the other side. According to Malabou, the idea of plasticity reconciles philosophy with modern sciences, thus overcoming the deconstructionist linguistically based notion of writing. See: *La Plasticité au soir de l'écriture* (Éditions Léo Scheer, Paris, 2004), or in English translation, *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing: Dialectic, Destruction, Deconstruction* (Columbia U.P, New York, 2009).

digital revolution. Linguistics and the historiography of writing explore and classify diverse systems of writing, attempting to trace its origins all the way back to the first presumed uses of tokens.[15] The pioneers in communication theory and media studies focused on the impact that the technological changes exert on both the phenomenology of writing and the organization of societies that fundamentally rely on it. Such are the works of Harold Innis, Marshal McLuhan and Vilém Flusser.[16] Innis examined the shifts of communication media – between durable or "time-binding" (clay, stone) and more ephemeral "space-binding" and easier to circulate ones (paper and modern media) – and the effects they had on the rise and fall of ancient empires. In *Gutenberg Galaxy*, McLuhan highlights the revolutionary impact of print media on global culture and human consciousness. According to McLuhan, the invention of the printing press in the 15th century brought a rupture with the earlier scribal culture and facilitated the development of the main characteristics of Western Modernity – individualism, democracy, Protestantism, capitalism and nationalism.

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[15] The thesis that writing started as recording is to be found in still relevant Denise Schmandt-Besserat, "The Emergence of Writing", *American Anthropologist* (1982). More recent and widely influential work in the social anthropology of writing is the one of Jack Goody: T*he Logic of Writing and the Organisation of Society* (1986) and *The Power of the Written Tradition* (2000). Besides the attempts to trace the beginnings of writing, Goody examines interrelations of the forms of writing, on the one, and social and cultural institutions, on the other side.

A comprehensive view on writing forms is put forward in the recent study of Barry B. Powell *Writing: Theory and History of the Technology of Civilization* (2012).

The most interesting for our topic is the so-called "integrational" approach to language and communication developed by linguist and theorist of writing Roy Harris. The idea of integration refers to the fundamental dependence of language on non-linguistic activities: *La Sémiologie de l'écriture* (1994), *Signs of Writing* (1996) and *Rethinking Writing* (2000).

[16] Harrold Innis: *Empire and Communication* (1950); Marshal McLuhan: *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (1962); Vilém Flusser: *Die Schrift* (1987), reprinted as *Die Schrift. Hat Schreiben Zukunft?* (2002) and "Die Geste des Schreibens" in *Gesten: Versuch einer Phänomenologie* (1994). Flusser's view on gestures basically reasserts the influential thesis of Marcel Mauss about corporal techniques. Mauss offered an early 20th century anticipation of much later works on gender performativity explaining the ways our bodily habits not only shape our identity, but erase the idea of a given nature. Mauss' works also provides an original common ground for the study of writing and dance as transformative embodied practices. Marcel Mauss, *Les techniques du corps* (1934).

While the two authors foreground the technology of writing, Vilém Flusser brings light to the gesture of writing. Without asserting an essential difference between the human body and technology, Flusser succeeds to render the whole process of writing more complex and heterogeneous. That is to say, according to Flusser, the global and historically contingent mindsets are not only conditioned by the material aspects of the production and distribution of writing, but also by the complex ways people exercise the articulation of thoughts into written form. All elements that enable us to express and write – e.g. the system of writing, the habits and postures, the patterns of articulation of thoughts, the choice to write in the native or foreign language, etc – simultaneously inscribe themselves into our consciousness.[17] Flusser identifies the linearity of alphabetic writing as the strongest factor in modeling our sense of history, one that is getting fundamentally shaken with the transition to digital technology and hypertextuality. An inspiring follow-up on gestures of/and writing, as well as on gestures seen as media comes in recent compilations *Migration of Gestures* (2008) and *Gesten: Inszenierung, Aufführung, Praxis* (2010).[18]

At the turn of the 21st century, the technology of writing has been theorized from a post-humanist perspective in the works of Bernard Stiegler (*La technique et le temps,* three volumes, 1994-2001) and Catherine Hayles (*Writing Machines*, 2002). Drawing from the works of Leroi-Gourhan and Heidegger,[19] Stiegler understands technique as a form of memory that is necessarily being incorporated in "adoptive" (in terms of "adoption of techniques") and "prosthetic" human beings, thereby refashioning our temporality. Katherine Hayles explores the mutation that literature has been going through in the last decades – from verbal to techno-texts. According to Hayles, the new electronic formats require the re-conception and rewriting of all known genres. That is to say, the non-material content necessarily follows the changes of material technology, while at the same time a post-human hybrid and collective subjectivity is being produced. The contemporary studies of media and materiality follow similar

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[17] Vilém Flusser, "Die Geste des Schreibens" in *Gesten: Versuch einer Phänomenologie* (1994)

[18] Carrie Noland and Sally Ann Ness (eds), *Migrations of Gestures*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2008. Christoph Wulf and Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Gesten: Inszenierung, Aufführung, Praxis*, Wilhelm Fink, Paderborn, 2010.

[19] André Leroi-Gourhan, *Le geste et la parole*, 2 vols. (1964–65); Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technolog*y (1977, original: 1954).

lines. They provide a frame for writing to be seen as a complex medium, which we are going to elaborate in the next section.

Alongside studies of media technology, contemporary anthropology maps astonishingly diverse practices of writing across institutions – from administration, law making and economy, to media and communication, to education, science and literature, and finally to everyday life.[20] Despite the fact that writing has been a ubiquitous topic in the last decades, there has long been an evident lack of a truly comprehensive and transdisciplinary study that would explore its extraordinary richness and versatility. A noteworthy attempt entitled *Handbook of Writing and Text Production* came out recently, as a joint work of a significant number of authors in over twenty chapters revealing diverse facets of the contemporary phenomenon of writing.[21] The book is announced as a state-of-the-art research of "real-time" writing, covering such diverse topics as authorship, situatedness, collaboration, media convergence, genres, lifelong learning, economic value and crossing boundaries of distinct domains.

4. Liveness and mediation

This brief history of the studies of the material aspects of writing considers *gestures*, *technology* and collective *practices*. All three fields imply iteration, collective application and general perspectives. The event of writing remains out of scope. Under which circumstances can writing become a happening – like a specific football match, opening of an exposition, vine tasting evening or civil protest? Although such events are all ephemeral, they are worth of ethnographic, social, or media research. As Derrida indicated, the moment of writing matters when it brings the subject of the author into the present, as it is the case with signatures.[22] Nowadays, global social

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[20] See for example David Barton and Uta Papen (eds), *The Anthropology of Writing: Understanding Texually Mediated Worlds*, Continuum, London, 2010. And also *The Journal of Writing Research*: http://www.jowr.org

[21] Eva-Maria Jakobs and Daniel Perin (eds), *Handbook of Writing and Text Production*, De Gruyter Mouton, Boston & Berlin, 2014.

[22] Jacques Derrida, "Signature, Event, Context", in *Limited Inc*, Northwestern U.P, 1988.

campaigns, such as the ones organized by Avaaz, on their webpage offer the live thread of online signatures, performed by people all over the world.[23] The visibly increasing number of people supporting a certain social cause therefore becomes an ongoing series of events, at once live and mediated. This might be an illustration of how the old opposition between ephemerality and documentation transforms into a question of liveness and mediation.

Two opposing views on this topic are provided by performance theorists Peggy Phelan and Philip Auslander.[24] Phelan sees live performance as fundamentally irreproducible in its entirety. The various aspects of it can be documented through the use of old and new technologies. Yet the event as such has a paradoxical ontology of "disappearance" that can by no means be repeated or copied. Phelan finds in performance a privileged domain of auratic art that resists both industrial and post-industrial mass production and trade. According to Phelan, liveness remains essentially distinct from mediation. On the other side, Auslander claims that the mass media have already irreversibly changed our experience of liveness. Instead of asserting inherent or ontological differences between live events and virtual media, Auslander's argument is instead based on the viewer's experience. Auslander draws his argument from the work of the actor Robert Blossom called Filmstage (1966). Blossom conducted a series of experiments combining live actors and film and found that:

> …the competition between the actors' live bodies and the filmed images in these mixed-media performances was intrinsically unfair because the filmed images were inevitably more compelling.[25]

Auslander further enlists a number of examples that confirm Blossom's findings: the concerts, sport events or parties employing a large video screens attract greater attention of the audiences to what is happening on the screen. Auslander explains such

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See also: Sonja Neef, José van Dijk and Eric Ketelaar (eds), *Sign Here! Handwriting in the Age of New Media*, Amsterdam U.P, Amsterdam, 2006.

[23] See the website: https://www.avaaz.org/en.

[24] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, Routledge, London & NY, 1993.

Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, Routledge, London & NY, 1999.

[25] Philip Auslander, "Liveness, Mediatization, and Intermedial Performance", *Dégres: Revue de synthèse à orientation sémiologic*, No. 101, Spring 2000, p. 8-9.

audiences' preference through Walter Benjamin's postulate of our desire for proximity. The proximity that we are going to experience, according to Auslander, depends on the cultural dominance of the media in question.

> It is, then, distinctly possible that in a culture dominated by the televisual, live and recorded images are not perceived as intrinsically different - both are perceived as potentially televisual.[26]

Furthermore, the audience's experience of being co-present with performers and staged objects has in a way already been "contaminated" by the extensive daily exposure to virtual media. That would mean that we experience theatre in relation to film or TV, and as principally translatable into a video format. Or, in Auslander's words, "the equation turns out to be: Dance + Virtual = Virtual" (p. 10). Auslander's view implies not only that live events are just one of the media, but that they are necessarily subsumed under the new virtual experiences of culturally dominant media.

Other views on liveness that come from the studies of inter- and multi-mediality are mostly placed between Phelan's and Auslander's positions. Peter Boenisch, for instance, sees dancing bodies not only as a medium, but as a process of intermediation because they at once invoke the culture that sees bodies as representations – as texts to be read – and as ambivalent meaningless "body-signs".[27] Boenisch finds examples for such corporal intermediality even in the dance performances that do not involve any kind of virtual media – in the works of Xavier Le Roy, William Forsythe and Merce Cunningham. The point is that live events keep their distinctive traits as medium, although they cannot anymore be seen as unmediated. Taking into account that intermedial relations indubitably have a political aspect,[28] the authors of *Multimedia Performance* opt for non-hierarchical views on them.[29] According to Klich and Sheer, the notion of the "essentially live" and the ontological argument

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[26] Ibid, p. 10.

[27] Peter Boenisch, "Mediation Unfinished. Choreographing Intermediality in Contemporary Dance Performance", in Chiel Kattenbelt, Freda Chapple (eds), *Intermediality in Theatre and Performance*, Rodopi, Amsterdam, 2006, pp. 151-166.

[28] Jens Schröter, "The Politics of Intermediality," *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Film and Media Studies*, 2010, p. 107-124.

[29] Rosemary Klich and Edward Scheer, "Liveness and Re-Mediation", in *Multimedia Performance*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2012, p. 67-88.

suggested by Phelan turn out to be unsustainable, especially given the increasing use of digital media in contemporary live performances. That means that digital elements of the performance can be documented and preserved. Klich and Sheer instead emphasize a "mutual reciprocity, with two or more media coming together in conversation". Fluid media boundaries allow for an exchange between live and mediated, without establishing the authenticity or authority of either one of them.

Following the ideas of Klich and Sheer, our goal in this work will be to juxtapose live events and writing/texts (as a form of virtuality) and analyze their relations in a non-hierarchical manner. For this, we will also use the term "remediation", as defined in Bolter and Grusin's renowned work *Remediation: Understanding New Media*.[30] In the performance works that we are going to analyze, as well as in their educational/classroom counterparts, texts and performances – or rather, writing and events – are mutually integrated. The double logic of remediation will be discussed in more detail below.

5. Embodied and digital writing

The corpus of performance art pieces that we are going to analyze will not include digital performances of writing, even not the ones performed on traditional theatre stages (combinations of liveness and digital media). As we tried to clarify in the previous discussion, the reason for such a decision does not lie in the assumption of an essential difference between bodily and digital writing. On the contrary, we will consider performing bodies and co-present material objects as involved in the processes of (re)mediation. Therefore, the human bodies are by no means privileged as pre-mediated. The objective of our study is to show that any kind of writing activity acts as mediation. This applies to the most familiar handling of pens and papers, to writing *with* and *on* bodies, to writing that might feel "natural" and unmediated.[31]

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[30] David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, MIT Press, 2000.

[31] The post-industrial digital writing, industrial print, and pre-mechanized handwriting – all share the same trait of being *writing technology*: "All the ancient arts and crafts had this in common: that the craftsman must develop a skill, a technical state of mind in using tools and

There is however a relevant difference between digital and theatrical writing performance – a difference that does not question the mediality of the latter. Digital performances of writing, compared to the staged and embodied writing, represent a qualitatively and materially different form of mediation. On the one side, the computer screen might display verbal signs and meanings, as already composed or in the temporal processes of becoming. The screen can further create digital environments that include other images, sounds, movements and rhythms. Hence the screen parallels a theatrical stage. On the other side, all the involved media have the same digital material basis, which makes it significantly different from theater. The specificity of a theatrical stage lies in its possibility to incorporate heterogeneous materialities. Images, sounds, performers' bodies, texts, objects, projected videos etc. can appear in diverse material forms in the same theatrically framed space and time. Or, in the words of Chiel Kattenbelt:

> It is because of its capacity to incorporate all media that we can consider theatre as a hypermedium, that is to say, as a medium that can contain all media. Maybe it is because of this specificity that the theatre has always played and continues to play such an important role in the exchanges between the arts. In contemporary theatre, digital technology functions in the exchanges between the arts as an interface. To think this assumption one step further, we might say that at the level of the medium, *theatre is a physical hypermedium*, whereas at the level of sign systems *the Internet is a virtual hypermedium.* It is because it is a hypermedium that theatre provides, as no other art, a stage for intermediality.[32]

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materials. Ancient and modern writing are technologies in the sense that they are methods for arranging verbal ideas in a visual space." (p. 15) Furthermore, and in line with our argument, the oral tradition is, according to Bolter, one of the manifestations of technologies concerning text; it is a counterpart to writing: "Despite its apparent immediacy, however, oral poetry is no more natural than writing, just as writing with pen and paper is no more natural, no less technological, than writing on a computer screen." (p. 17) Jay David Bolter, "Writing as Technology", *Writing Space: Computer, Hypertext, and the Remediation of Print*, Routledge, London and New York, 2001, p. 14-26.

[32] Chiel Kattenbelt, "Intermediality in Theatre and Performance: Definitions, Perceptions and Medial Relationships", *Cultura, lenguaje y representación*, Vol. VI, University of Jaume I, 2008, p. 23. Emphasis mine – M.P. The idea of *hypermedim* will be discussed later.

Digital texts can be generated by human agents or computer software.[33] In both cases, the "stage" of writing can be framed as a screen or have a wider frame and include, for instance, the keyboards, typing hands, typically bent backs, ergonomic chairs, private or public mis-en-scènes. Or, in Bolter's words: "No technology, not even the apparently autonomous computer, can ever function as a writing space in the absence of human writers and readers." (p. 17) So, it can principally be as heterogeneous and embodied as more traditional events of writing. The point is that the medium of writing is not equivalent to digital, even when it produces digital texts. On the contrary, it is always complex, multimedial and heterogeneous. And it can be choreographed. This actually means that what is valid for the performances of writing with pens and chalks applies to digital writing as well. The staged performances involving digital writing would certainly enrich our study. Nevertheless, since they open up a whole range of questions that are not directly connected with our argument, we decided to leave them aside from our current project.

Finally, the selected examples of choreographed lectures – by Susan Foster and Guillermo Gomez-Peña – do not include digital media. The difference between these, although unconventional, traditionally staged lectures with co-present audience, on the one, and the video or on-line lectures, on the other side, might be compared with the discussed distinction between digital and non-digital writing. There is a kind of structural, or medial, similarity between the selected performances of writing and choreographed lectures. So, the consistency in this regard was additional reason for our undivided focus on more traditional theatrical forms of "liveness". Yet, although

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[33] The computer programs gain increasing importance in generating not only simple or experimental texts, but the culturally significant ones as well. The Amazon's Kindle reading devices, for example, keep record of various aspects of users' reading habits – highlighted text, comments, the time we spend reading certain pages etc. – and communicate data to central Amazon's systems. The ways thousands of readers have treated a certain text are being statistically compared in order to model the most common ways of consumption of diverse textual genres. The commercial and political value and possibilities of use of such models is certainly huge and yet to be explored. Aside from that, they allow for a literally post-human production of textual cultures, where complete texts can be generated by machines, with no human authorship. No matter how terrifying or promising this might sound, it shows us that the "stages" of digital writing are not limited to the computer screen and include other realities even when human bodies become obsolete.

not included in the corpus, digital writing will be present throughout our text as one of the key aspects of the context of our work.

6. How do words perform?

The above mentioned "choreographies of writing" by Susan Leigh Foster fall into the category of "performative writing". Particularly fertile fields for the development of the term were feminist theory (Della Pollock, Peggy Phelan),[34] studies of writing across media (poets Caroline Bergvall, John Hall, Jerome Fletcher and others at Falmouth University postgraduate program;[35] digital writing – Ric Allsopp, Susan Broadhurst)[36] and dance theory (Andre Lepecki, Mark Franko, Susan Foster etc.).[37] The three disciplines draw the notion of performativity from two basic sources. The first is performance theory established in the 1960s as a crossing point of theatre, anthropology and rhetoric, and largely developed in the following decades. The second is initially linguistic J.L. Austin's theory of performative speech acts that inspired significant theorizations of performativity in the works of Derrida, Butler,

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[34] Della Pollock, "Performing Writing", in Peggy Phelan and Jill Lane (eds), *The Ends of Performance*, NYU Press, New York, 1998, p. 73-104. And Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, Routledge, London & NY, 1993.

[35] Caroline Bergvall, "Keynote: What Do We Mean by Performance Writing", delivered at the opening of the first Symposium of Performance Writing, Dartington College of Arts, 12 April 1996, http://www.carolinebergvall.com/content/text/BERGVALL-KEYNOTE.pdf.
John Hall, *Essays on Performance Writing*, Vol. 1 and 2, Shearsman Books, Bristol, 2013.
Jerome Fletcher, "Introduction" to the Special Issue "On Writing and Digital Media", *Performance Research*, Vol. 18, No. 5, 2013. His performative writings: http://www.jeromefletcher.org/#up.
http://www.falmouth.ac.uk/professionalwriting

[36] Ric Allsopp, "Writing - Text – Performance", *Performance Research*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1997, p. 45-52.
Susan Broadhurst and Josephine Machon (eds), *Sensualities/Textualities and Technologies: Writing of the Body in the 21st Century Performance*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

[37] André Lepecki (ed.), *Of the Presence of the Body: Essays on Dance and Performance Theory*, Wesleyan U.P, Middletown, 2004.
Mark Franko, *Dance as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body* (Cambridge U.P, 1993) and *Dancing Modernism / Performing Politics* (Indiana U.P, 1995).
Susan Leigh Foster, *Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance* (University of California Press, 1988); *Choreographing History* (Indiana U.P, 1995); *Corporealities: Dancing Knowledge, Culture and Power* (Routledge, 1995).

Kosofsky Sedgwick and other mainly feminist theorists. In both sources, the notion of performance is connected with the idea of text.

John McKenzie identifies two institutional origins of performance studies in the United States – the "Eastern", coming from the New York University, and the "Midwestern", the department of performance studies founded at Northwestern University in Chicago.[38] At the NYU the institutional foundation of performance studies was based on the works of theatre theorist Richard Schechner and anthropologists Victor Turner. In this famous "rebel narrative" of the establishment of a new discipline, performance studies split from theatre studies and literature. The new discipline focuses on the non-narrative avant-garde experimentations of the 1960s and, further, recognizes performances "beyond the proscenium stage", in carnivals, festivals, protests and other cultural rituals. On the other side, the performance studies department at Northwestern developed inside the institutional frame of the School of Speech, including oral interpretation, rhetoric and communication studies. Here the scholars argued for the idea of performance referring to "the analysis and dissemination of cultural texts, specializing in the adaptation of print media into an oral and embodied environment".[39] In both "strains of performance studies", the notion of performance referred to realms *other than text*, but was at the same time defined with regard to texts and textual cultures. Performance studies, therefore, generally draw attention to the elements that are not reducible to text and that were underexplored in classical theatre. In this way, performance art defines itself through struggles for independence from theatre and textuality. In performance art pieces, the text and narration lose their central position and become equal to all other elements of the mise-en-scène. The medium of text becomes just one of the media employed in a performative work of art.

In one of the most significant critical overviews of the development of performance art and studies, Marvin Carlson recognizes three disciplinary spheres – outside of theatre – that theorize performance: 1) anthropology, ethnography and studies of

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[38] John McKenzie, *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance*, Routledge, London, 2001.

[39] Shannon Jackson, *Professing Performance: Theatre in the Academy from Philology to Performativity*, Cambridge U.P, Cambridge, 2004, p. 9.

culture, 2) sociology and psychology, and 3) linguistics and literature.[40] The first two social sciences approaches were originally incorporated in performance theory by the NYU scholars who rethought theatrical performance through the idea of rites and off-stage social performances. The linguistic approach, on the other side, underpins the post-structural theories largely applied in performance analyses.

In the theories that draw from Austin's idea of performativity,[41] performance is a product or an effect of language and text, although it does not remain on the linguistic level. The idea is precisely to "do" something with words, to jump out into the extralinguistic field of "things". Austin's performative speech acts refer to specific enunciations that create realities by, for example, imposing an order, obligation, threat, or by naming an entity, giving a promise, an official acceptance, apology, etc. Such verbal acts, according to Austin, are not subject to the assessment of truthfulness. Instead, they can either succeed or fail. The principal condition for such verbal utterances to be successful or "felicitous" is that they happen in the appropriate context. The context should guarantee the consistent respect of social codes that regulate the application of performative enunciations. For example, a couple can validly be pronounced married by a priest, after the execution of religious procedures prescribed by the Church etc. If just one of the conditions is not fulfilled, the marriage will not be recognized as such by the community, i.e. the pronouncement does not create a new reality for anybody. Austin clarifies that the verbal utterances performed in a theatre context stay apart from his definition of performative speech acts because, in the theater, the created fictitious realities are exempt from social conventions. That is, no matter how authentically the social settings might be reproduced on stage, the performed agreements, promises, declarations or weddings have no validity in the real world.

Derrida expands the notion of performativity to a more general level of language. Franko explains that, contrary to Austin's view, Derrida does not restrict "the effectiveness of the speech act to the context vouched for by the I, the active, and the

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[40] Marvin Carlson, "Part 1: Performance and the Social Sciences", *Performance: A Critical Introduction*, Routledge, London, 1996, p. 9-56.

[41] J.L Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1962.

present of the performative enunciation."[42] Instead of that, Derrida makes a parallel between performative utterances and writing "as a mark," separated from direct spoken communication. Derridean inscription is based on an iteration of signs that is the very condition for the construction of "I, active and present." At the same time, the social codes that delineate the context do not exist as pre-given norms; they are as well based on iterability, on consistent repetitive applications. This means that neither text nor context can be completely defined. Nevertheless, Derrida claims that the conventional communicative situations noted by Austin do not "emerge *in opposition to* citationality or iterability" of inscription. [43] The citation goes beyond the intentional nature of Austin's speech acts, yet it is not a purely abstract rule of repetition. Franko explains: "the citation is a kind of verbal *artifact*, no longer speech, but thing (mark, text, inscription)" (p. 116). Although iterable, the citation does not erase singularity. Inscription in a Derridean sense relies on a citational chain that evokes a broader plan of codes, conventions and repetitions over a long time, which puts in question the "originality" of any particular context of enunciation. At the same time, each inscription is an *event* in its own right. It is a singular presence of "what takes place." Derrida's text on performativity and event that is particularly pertinent for our study is *L'Université sans conditions*, published in the wake of the new millennium.[44] The event in question is the expected and unavoidable change in the Humanities as a result of ongoing changes of our understanding of both *world* and *humanity* in an increasingly globalised world. Derrida examines the relations between 1) the traditionally constative nature of knowledge transmitted through academic institutions, 2) the specific performativity of "professing" and professorship, and 3) the eventness of knowledge transmission. Derrida understands an event as singular encounter with the "impossible", with new horizons, a reality that is yet to come. Therefore, teaching is not merely a *cause* or a way of knowledge transmission; it

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[42] Mark Franko, "Given Moment: Dance and the Event", in André Lepecki (ed.), *Of the Presence of the Body: Essays on Dance and Performance Theory*, Wesleyan U.P, Middletown, 2004, p. 115.

[43] Jacques Derrida, "Signature, Event, Context", *Limited Inc*, Northwestern U.P, 1988, p. 192.

[44] Jacques Derrida, *L'Université sans conditions*, Galilée, Paris, 2001.

"produces effects", "gives rise to what takes place"; it is a "practice toward the event".[45]

Judith Butler applies the idea of iterability as a creative force in the formation of gender identities. Performativity in Butler's sense refers to the repetitive bodily regimes that shape embodied materialities and create gendered bodies. In the works of both Derrida and Butler, performativity is not limited to language; it applies to material realities, but follows the rules of signification.

In *Excitable Speech* Butler reconsiders speech acts as public enunciations. She theorizes the performative effects of offensive speech and its categorizations and treatment by US law. Butler finds that a verbal utterance might be offensive either because of its "content" or because it is "conducted" in a certain offensive way. It is not the language itself that is offensive, but the whole setting in which it is used, including the offensive intention. Although both content and conduct are based on repetition and on social codes, the effectiveness of an insult depends on their specific combination as well as on the reaction of the receiver. The dyad of content and conduct does not simply mimic the relationship between speech act and context in Austin's view. It is rather a layering of the speech act itself, while the context is defined by the receiving end of an offense and by the state law.

Applied to media studies, speech acts in Butler's view turn to be a complex medium, or a hypermedial combination of text and performance. The performance implied in the idea of "conduct" differs from the notion of performativity developed in Butler's earlier work. Both the content and conduct of a speech act are based on iteration, and can thus be considered as performative, but they generate different meanings and effects that are not necessarily mutually linked. Conduct refers to a specific happening of a verbal message; it is closer to the idea of a singular event. That would mean that the use of language – *la parole* – always consist in a linguistic and a non-linguistic element as its constitutive parts.[46]

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[45] This is how Peggy Kamuf describes Derrida's idea of *event* in her "Preface: Toward the Event" to the collection *Without Alibi*, in which "The University Without Condition" is published in English translation (Stanford U.P, 2002).

[46] Butler is getting closer to materialist views of, for example, the distinction of *articulated* and *embedded* knowledge in actor network theory: "…Latour argues [in *We Have Never Been Modern*,

7. Performative writing

Let's return to the idea of performative writing. Taking into account the background that we have briefly sketched, what would be possible meanings and realizations of performative writing? It evidently does not refer to the performativity inherent to language and writing as such; otherwise the distinction "performative" would be completely redundant. It is rather a juxtaposition that allows for a certain autonomy of each term, without denying their conceptual links throughout history and across disciplines and various theoretical standpoints.

In the domain of performance studies, the term performative writing indicates a return of the now independent medium of performance to the medium of writing, from which it was initially separated. Scholars such as Susan Foster, Andre Lepecki and Mark Franko, who introduce the term performative writing in performance and dance studies, call for a rethinking of textuality from an altered point of view, i.e. from a point of view of performance and dance as forms of expression, media and disciplines independent from classical theater as well as from other types of textual expressions and forms of knowledge. Each of these authors traces historical transformations of the notions of performance and writing in the discourses on dance and performance. Their works often rely on poststructuralist theories, and especially on Derrida's notions of *trace* and *writing*, in order to affirm movement as a genuine form of expression. When it comes to the re-conceptualization of these general theoretical terms, Lepecki goes the furthest by noticing the lack of reflection on their kinetic aspects in deconstructionist theories. According to Lepecki, a dancerly element – movement – is inscribed in grammatology and, therefore, in any writing in general.[47] More

1993 – MP], in the practices of the so-called modern world the natural and the social are as intertwined as they are in so-called premodern *thinking*. This implies that there are clashes between the knowledge *articulated* in technoscience societies and the knowledges *embedded* in their practices. While the importance of a clear-cut distinction was loudly proclaimed, it wasn't converted into action. Therefore, *modernity* is a state we have never been in, for only our theories make modern divides. Our practices do not." Annemarie Mol, *The Body Multiple: Ontology in Medical Practice*, Duke U.P, 2003, p. 31.

[47] Lepecki asks: "Could writing and femininity happen without dancing? As for the first element in the question, I shall reaffirm: dance cannot happen without writing just as writing cannot happen without dancing. I shall corroborate this hysterical project with one instance of reversed teleology. The corroboration starts with yet another affirmation: that the conditions of possibility for Derrida's project on writing as *différance* and for his critique of presence are grounded on the imperative insertion of

commonly, however, the term performative writing refers to specific forms of writing, such as dance scores or performance criticism, that are closely linked with dance and performance practice.

The reconsideration of textuality in this context is often formulated as a call addressed to textual practices to reflect upon their performative referents.[48] Writings on performance are expected to acknowledge the material specificity of their topic, and further to reflect upon their own material and medial difference with regards to performance. Susan Foster goes a step further and, in her performed lectures, examines the possible ways in which a text can even mimic the verbally documented or studied performance piece. The discussion necessarily leads to questioning the dominant modes of knowledge production, as well as the forms of knowledge in terms of text and performance. The projects such as PARIP, the University of Bristol's program of practice as research in performance,[49] gain increasing attention and institutional support at the universities around the world.

In feminist thinking and applications of performative writing, the production of knowledge represents the largest stake. Donna Haraway's account of "situated knowledge",[50] the auto-ethnographic methods in applied social and anthropological research, the insertion of the authors' autobiographic details in significant texts in feminist theory – all aim at defining the social and cultural position of the one who has the privilege to speak, write and produce knowledge. Such textual procedures also point at political effects of apparently neutral codes of writing. One of the key texts on

movement in grammatology. For Derrida this movement is called deferment." André Lepecki, "Inscribing Dance", in André Lepecki (ed.), *On the Presence of the Body: Essays on Dance and Performance Theory*, Wesleyan U.P, Middletown, 2004, p. 137.

[48] PARIP — Practice as Research in Performance — was a five-year project (2001-5) directed by Professor Baz Kershaw and the Department of Drama at the University of Bristol: http://www.bris.ac.uk/parip. In this regard, significant is the work of Michel Bernard, Professor of Theatrical and Choreographic Aesthetic and the founder of dance studies department at the University Paris 8. As dance scholar with no formation in dance, Bernard recognized the significant impact that his corporal practice and what he called "sensorial scanning" had on his thoughts on dance. Bernard's ideas have been implemented in the dance studies programs at the University Paris 8.

[49] http://www.bris.ac.uk/parip

[50] Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective", *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1988, p. 575-599.

performative writing, "Performing Writing" by Della Pollock,[51] particularly analyzes the changes in textual codes and norms in feminist historiography, where the historical reality represents the performative subject of writing. The question takes very similar form as in the work of Susan Foster: how can writing become more performative, in order to better fit its subject?

In terms of definition, the notion of performative writing remains open. Pollock explicitly insists on its inclusiveness. That allows for a large variety of denotations of the terms performance and performativity. Performance could, thus, refer to a moment or event of writing that becomes the very topic of writing. Such performance reveals subtle materialities of the author's being in the world. One example for this is the book *Dancing Across the Page* by Karen Barbour, a professional dancer as well as dance and feminist scholar from New Zealand.[52] Barbour opens up her theoretical chapters with characteristic narrative vignettes depicting the very moment of her writing – the ambiance, sensorial experience, life situation, affects etc. Barbour reveals details about her own personality, such as wearing dreadlocks and tattoos, her travels to conferences, professional encounters or personal relations with her students and other scholars. The brief self-narratives incorporated into Barbour's theoretical discussions aim to situate her authorial persona in the frames of her live cultural and professional environments. Thereby, her textual procedures directly exemplify and enforce her arguments about embodied knowledge. The idea of embodiment introduces movements, affects and lived experience into the field of performative writing.

Performance can also refer to the effects that a text can make on its readers. The text can require a reading different from the linear; unconventional prints might impose the unusual manual handling of a book; the textual content might produce a physical reaction in readers' bodies, such as gut feeling or erotic arousal.[53] Last but not least, performance refers to the process of text composition, to writing as style, creative

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[51] Della Pollock, "Performing Writing", in Peggy Phelan and Jill Lane (eds), *The Ends of Performance*, NYU Press, New York, 1998, p. 73-104.

[52] Karen Barbour, *Dancing across the Page: Narrative and Embodied Ways of Knowing*, Intellect Ltd, Bristol, 2011.

[53] Adair Rounthwaite, "From This Body to Yours: Porn, Affect, and Performance Art Documentation", *Camera Obscura*, Volume 26, Number 3 78, 2011, p. 63-93.

process, decision making, editing etc. In this sense, the notion of performative writing continues the tradition of theorizing the act of writing in literary theory and rhetoric – from Barthes' idea of style as necessarily politically marked, to Paul de Man's views on rhetoric strategies of philosophical and literary criticism, to Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva.[54]

In all of the described cases, the notion of performance remains engrained in text, as a manifestation of a specific use of language. Yet, the use of this notion of performance has a politically significant impact on extra-textual realities. Della Pollock highlights one quality common to all performative writing, regardless of the variety of conceptualizations of textual performance: *self-reflection*. We find the same idea in Ric Allsopp's account of textuality in performance,[55] as well as in Kattenbelt's views on intermediality in theatre and performance.[56] Textual auto-reflection is more than just auto-reference. It is the acknowledgement of performance as an overlooked and unreflected element of text that overcomes textual content/message and produces additional meanings. Performance writing represents the attempt of text to reach out, rather than to incorporate other realities in itself. Jean-Luc Nancy sees the physical act of writing as a touching point, more precisely a touching line, between Western epistemological texts and their assumed otherness – ever provoking yet unreachable corporeality.[57] Though Nancy's philosophical work offers an interesting perspective on the link – touching – of performance and writing, in our analysis we will think performative writing and its constituents in terms of intermedial encounter and mutual remediation. Performance writing is, therefore, a figure par excellence of McLuhan's phrase "the medium is the message".

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[54] Roland Barthes, *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 1972.

Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, University of Minnesota Pres, Minneapolis, 1983.

Hélène Cixous, *Coming to Writing and Other Essays*, Harvard U.P, Cambridge, 1991.

Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Columbia U.P, New York, 1984.

[55] Ric Allsopp, "Writing - Text – Performance", *Performance Research*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1997, p. 45-52.

[56] Chiel Kattenbelt, "Intermediality in Theatre and Performance: Definitions, Perceptions and Medial Relationships", *Cultura, lenguaje y representación*, Vol. VI, University of Jaume I, 2008, p. 21.

[57] Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus*, Fordham U.P, 2008.

The performed lectures of Susan Foster go a step further as they put forward a theatricalization of textual knowledge. The message becomes theatrical not by bringing up performance and choreography; performance and choreography are always already in play. The public enunciations and the distribution of knowledge are performative. Foster however foregrounds performance as a medium and independent form of expression. She simply does that through her conscious play with the conventions of academic speech that normally go unnoticed, that we usually take as given, natural, unmarked. Thereby Foster demonstrates how performance "speaks" to us, and places text inside this performative play. More precisely, Foster demonstrates how the public appearance of text, a prerequisite for the formation of knowledge, generates performance as distinct medium.

Performative remediations of writing

1. Writing in media studies

The collection *Critical Terms for Media Studies* offers a concise yet comprehensive entry on "writing" by Lidia H. Liu.[58] Liu's text rightly points out the diversity of historical and existing discourses concerning writing. Nevertheless, Liu claims that, despite the persistent presence of this topic in various disciplines, it still represents a fertile field of exploration:

> Insomuch as the presence or absence of writing is always evoked, explicitly or implicitly, as a positive index in the ranking of human societies and their intellectual attributes, we need to come to a basic understanding of what writing is and what it does and ask why the stakes are generally very high in discourses on this subject.[59]

The high stakes include the political power of writing and literacy ever since their invention, colonial agendas behind the ideas of the evolution of writing systems from pictographic to alphabetic, the impacts of technological changes in the production of information on socioeconomic organizations, as well as the impact of writing on the "semiotic conception of the visual / verbal / spatial production of meaning". (p. 311)

Liu's article touches upon all the facets of writing that we have mentioned so far – technology, history, practices, gestures, recording, materiality and, last but not least, its relation to other media, primarily image and sound. The eventness of writing is not an explicitly discussed topic. However, the text gets close to it by invoking Leroi-Gourhan's paleontology of writing (p. 313), according to which hands/tools and face/speech came about together in the development of humans and equally contributed to the construction of communication symbols. Leroi-Gourhan not only believes that "graphism and language have never been mutually exclusive, just as

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[58] Lidia H. Liu, "Writing", in W.J.T. Mitchell and Mark Hansen (eds.), *Critical Terms for Media Studies*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 2010, p. 310-326.

[59] Ibid, p. 311.

gesture has always paralleled speech in the development of mind and language", but especially emphasizes "the mutual embeddedness of human labor and symbol making" (p. 313). We would say that language and communication happen or come about through embodied movements, physical objects, and events.

Another reference to non-textual, spatial and embodied aspects of writing occurs in the discussion of the limitations of alphabetic writing (p. 318). Liu firstly criticizes the colonial evolutionary theory of writing based on the belief in "the teleological march toward phoneticization", i.e. towards the alphabet seen as superior to all other writing systems. Liu admits though that, among writing systems, the alphabet is much easier to learn and reproduce, which further means that:

> The linearity, simplicity, and analytical powers of alphabetical writing have facilitated its dissemination around the world, although the same phonetic function is also capable of *suppressing the spatial, architectonic, and gestural dimensions of human communication.*[60]

Thanks to its "algorithmic potentials", it was alphabetic writing that first found its way to mathematics, typography, and electronic media and has, therefore, "come to dominate the world of communication". This would mean that, through the linearity and simplicity of alphabetic writing, the suppression of "spatial, architectonic and gestural dimensions" has been implemented in modern increasingly electronic communication. Consequently, it takes us even further away from the analysis of the eventness of writing, which is inherently gestural, spatial, and temporal.

To sum up, there are two apparently divergent ideas. First, our communication, spoken and written alike, necessarily involves non-textual elements, labor and movements. Second, the dominant form of writing in today's communication – alphabetic writing – tends to "suppress" these material and transient aspects of communication. This "suppression" is part of the message generated by the medium itself. It is the nature of the medium that directs our attention toward certain aspects of the message that is being conveyed, while some other inherent qualities of the message remain silent. The message as such is a complex and heterogeneous entity. We would assume that its various aspects form dynamic relations.

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[60] Ibid, p. 318.

Alphabetic writing frames the message in such a way that its content and virtuality come to the fore, while its other, let's say material, dimensions remain unmarked. Liu mentions *space, architecture and gestures* as such dimensions that are taken for granted and devoid of meaning in alphabetic writing. It is not clear why Liu selected these three dimensions and whether her list is exhaustive. Could we say, as well, that temporality, material things, human agents and their mutable relations, labor, movements, rules etc. belong to the same non-textual realm? In order to keep all the options open, we would consider communication to be embedded in live events, wherein events involve all mentioned and many other elements.

Taking all this into account, what happens when writing becomes the main motif – the main action – in the staged artistic performances? Or when public speeches and other modes of text presentation break the given unmarked conventions and underline the necessarily choreographed nature of the event of text/writing? Our work is dedicated to the specific performances of writing that juxtapose writing and performance precisely in such intermedial way. We named these performances *choreographies of writing*.

2. Intermediality and remediation

The idea of *intermedia* in arts first appeared in the texts of Fluxus artist Dick Higgins.[61] The ultimate intermedium was achieved in *happenings*, a new form of art between collage, music and theatre, inspired by the avant-garde art of the beginning of the 20th century. Higgins' idea was to offer an alternative to the concept of pure media, by blending different forms of expression in order to make a new whole. Critics claim, however, that Higgins' discourse on intermediality retained the clear distinctiveness (and thus a kind of purity) of different media.[62] More recent theories of intermediality, especially in theatre and performance, focus on the transformative power of the encounters of different media. The authors gathered around the two collections on theatrical intermediality aim to point out the dynamic nature of

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[61] Dick Higgins, "Intermedia", *Something Else Newsletter*, No. 1, 1966.

[62] Rosemary Klich and Edward Scheer, "Liveness and Re-Mediation", in *Multimedia Performance*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2012, p. 72.

mediation. [63] Their conceptualizations of intermediality are consistent with the idea of *ongoing processes of mediation.*[64]

However, it is the term of *remediation* that shifts the focus from the questions of media frames and scopes to the transformative processes, constant technological changes and struggles for dominance in the fields of communication.[65] Bolter and Grusin highlight digital media as principal field of remediation. Remediation happens when new media incorporate prior media forms and thereby refashion them (p. 273). According to these authors, remediation results either in a new medium giving homage to an older medium or in creating rivalry between the two. It is basically a hierarchical view of the relation of new and old media and technologies. More importantly, remediation relies on two opposite logics – *immediacy* and *hypermediacy* – based on the viewers' immersion in media content and their awareness of the process of mediation. Immediacy is at work when a medium tends to hide itself, to be transparent, and give an illusion of direct access to the subject of mediation. The example is linear-perspective painting, based on mathematical relationships between the objects of painting and their projection on the canvas. Hypermediacy, by contrast, unveils the process of mediation and allows for increased viewers' awareness about the processes of observation and experience they are involved in. Hypermediacy offers heterogeneous spaces and makes visible various acts of representation. One

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[63] Freda Chapple and Chiel Kattenbelt, *Intermediality in Theatre and Performance*, Rodopi, Amsterdam, 2006, and Sarah Bay-Cheng at al, *Mapping Intermediality in Performance*, Amsterdam U.P, Amsterdam, 2010.

[64] See, for example: Richard Grusin, "Radical Mediation", *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 42, No. 1, Autumn 2015, p. 124-148. Following the remarks on insufficient exploration of processes of mediation in contemporary media theory, Grusin specifies: "I do not, however, mean to limit the question of mediation to what media do or how they are built. Nor do I mean to limit mediation to media themselves as they are now conventionally understood. As I argue below, mediation operates not just across communication, representation, or the arts, but is a fundamental process of human and nonhuman existence." (p. 125) And further: "This affective mediation of collective human and nonhuman assemblages *operates independently of (and often more efficaciously than) the production of knowledge*. Like the way media operate affectively, mediation must also be understood ontologically as a *process or event* prior to and ultimately not reducible to particular media technologies. Mediation operates physically and materially as an object, event, or process in the world, impacting humans and nonhumans alike." (p. 126) Emphasis mine – M.P.

[65] David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, MIT Press, 2000.

example would be Modernist collage. Paradoxically, both logics manifest the same desire: "the desire to get past the limits of representation and to achieve the real" (p. 53). They complement each other and can even be found within the same works. Hypermedia imitate complex and heterogeneous experiences of reality. As for immediacy, "although transparent technologies try to improve on media by erasing them, they are still compelled to define themselves by the standards of the media they are trying to erase" (p. 54).

3. Digital remediation of writing

In *Writing Space*, the volume that we have quoted earlier, David Bolter applies the idea of remediation specifically to writing.[66] Specifically, Bolter examines the remediation of historical writing technologies – handwriting and print – in the contemporary electronic media:

> New digital media refashion the material conditions of print and handwriting, so the computer's virtuality refashions the writing space of the printed book and the manuscript. (p.18)

According to Bolter, the differences between historical practices of writing are primarily material and technological. They further underpin diverse cultural *writing spaces*, which involve much more than just the material artifacts. The genres of cultural texts, forms of literacy, political significance of texts etc. form parts of specific writing spaces. Following the dynamics of remediation, the new technologies either supplement the established ones or replace them. Digital writing thus establishes a complex relation with handwriting and print; it incorporates some of their elements, while making others obsolete. For instance, the functioning of a computer keyboard is based on the same principles as a typewriter.[67] Likewise, the reading surfaces on some types of electronic readers imitate the visual quality and

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[66] David J. Bolter, *Writing Space: Computer, Hypertext, and the Remediation of Print*, Routledge, London and New York, 2001.

[67] Bolter: "[Electronic writing] shares with the typewriter its keyboard (at least at present), its method of discrete selection of alphabetic elements, and its mechanical uniformity." Ibid, p. 23.

opacity of paper in order to provide readers with a sensual experience of reading as much alike the habitual reading of printed texts as possible.

Although Bolter does not explicitly refer to writing as a (complex) medium, he distinguishes its two general constitutive elements: materiality and signification. Or in other words: technology and virtuality, technique and culture.

> Electronic writing may also be virtual, yet *all previous writing technologies were virtual as well*, in the sense that they invited writers and readers to participate in an *abstract space of signs*. (p.18, emphasis mine - MP)

> The very *materiality of writing* binds writing firmly to *human practices* and therefore to *cultural choices*. The technical and the cultural dimensions of writing are so intimately related that it is not useful to try to separate them: together they constitute writing as a technology. (p. 19, emphasis mine - MP)

Although material conditions of writing do not determine how literate cultures write and read their texts, they function independently from the "virtual" content. Only together and through mutual interplay do these two distinct elements constitute diverse writing spaces and cultures. What happens, then, when a complex writing space, based on a certain type of writing technology, is being remediated, i.e. transposed and reframed, by a different technological space?

> Each [writing] space depends for its meaning on previous spaces or on contemporary spaces against which it competes. Each fosters a particular understanding both of the act of writing and of the product, the written text… (p. 12)

Bolter focuses on the possibilities and effects of digital technologies – one of the "most traumatic remediations" in the history of writing. Certainly, the double logic of immediacy/hypermediacy is at work here. Digital writing strives for transparency of the medium and, by a reverse motion and depending on circumstances, underlines the media encounters and hypermediacy. Bolter consistently considers the mechanisms of remediation in his analysis of the main historical writing technologies. In his review article, M. Barton summarizes Bolter's points:

> In the well-designed web page, Bolter argues, the image is far more than a visual aid to help understand the text. Instead, text becomes a textual aid that brings order and unity to the images. Authors can no longer think of text as a transparent medium

through which readers glimpse their ideas. Web surfers know that clicking a word on a web page may open a window, download a file, or bring them to another site. Words on the electronic screen are not always (or even usually) passive; they are active and usually serve as beacons. (…) Hypermedia, which Bolter argues is a kind of picture writing, "refashions the qualities of both traditional picture writing and phonetic writing" (p. 58).[68]

Important for our discussion is the fact that remediation brings to the fore the complexity and heterogeneity of the prior media technologies. The changes in materiality, or technological modifications, alter the whole system, the whole writing culture. The recipients are getting aware of the various factors that constitute meanings as well as diverse cultural practices of writing and reading. Furthermore, we argue that new procedures of immediacy and hypermediacy reveal what was transparent, unmarked and invisible in the previous writing spaces. Remediation, therefore, calls for reconsideration of the dominant relationships between the virtuality/meaning and the materiality/act of writing established through previous writing practices. Remediation provides new conditions under which the suppressed and transparent dimensions of older writing technologies become visible and prominent.

4. Performative remediation of writing

Bolter's views on the contemporary digital remediation of writing provide us with a model to understand another type of remediation – the placement of writing inside the media frame of artistic performance. Digital writing underlines the visual qualities of verbal signs and redefines the ideas of text and writing by introducing image, graphics and interactivity as their new key distinctions. What happens when digital performance gives place to a live embodied performance? Which features of the previous forms of textual and writing spaces – in our study, it is mainly handwriting and its variations – come to light then?

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[68] Matthew D. Barton, Review article of Jay David Bolter, *Writing Space: Computers, Hypertext, and the Remediation of Print*, Computers and Composition No. 19, 2002, p. 500.

To be sure, when it comes to the theatricalization of writing, there is no technological switch in writing spaces as it is the case in digital writing. Intentional public demonstrations of writing do not represent a large-scale cultural tendency and radical transformation in the material conditions of writing. The theatricalization of writing rather offers artistic experimentation with well-known and commonly employed technologies that take place in different institutional contexts. Writing with hands and/or bodies on a theatrical stage appears as a mundane activity, a kind of *objet trouvé* for the performative practice. Handwriting is a practice taken from a wider cultural framework and introduced in the institutional and conventional framework of artistic performance. Instead of a radical replacement of the technology, here we have a no less radical examination of a once prevalent technology, involving all thinkable and doable variations, de- and re-compositions. Hence we witness bodies and public areas used as writing substrates instead of papers, water used instead of ink, movement analysis of habitually automatically performed strokes, etc.

To answer the question how performative remediation re-conceives the notions of writing and text, we first need to understand the medium of performance. Digital space and live performance share a significant similarity as they are both *hypermedia*. Digital writing allows for forms of hypertextuality unfeasible in older writing technologies. The performative stage offers a unique frame for the simultaneous employment of diverse media – images, sounds, video projections, physical movements etc. Chiel Kattenbelt, Andy Lavender, Brigite Wiens and others agree that the theatrical and performance stage provided a historical model for Bolter and Grusin's idea of hypermedium:[69]

> In this sense multimedia theater also functions as a 'remediator', achieving a degree of intermediality through the deployment of various modes of representation within the frame of the performance. Like new media in Bolter and Grusin's formulations, theatrical performance can be seen as simultaneously immediate (sharing spatial and temporal coordinates) and hypermediate (referencing other media). Kattenbelt argues this position pointing out that theater is both a *hypermedium*, providing other media a

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[69] Chiel Kattenbelt, "Theatre as the art of performer and the stage of intermediality" (p. 29-41); Andy Lavender, "Mise en scène, hypermediacy and the sensorium" (p. 55-67); Brigit Wiens, "Hamlet and the virtual stage: Herbert Fritsch's project hamlet_X" (p. 223-237) in Chiel Kattenbelt, Freda Chapple (eds), *Intermediality in Theatre and Performance*, Rodopi, Amsterdam, 2006.

stage upon which they can perform as theatrical signs, yet also a transparent medium as it 'foregrounds the corporeality of the performer and the materiality of the live performance as an actual event, taking place in the absolute presence of the here and now' (Chapple and Kattenbelt, 2006, p. 39).[70]

The theatre and performance stage is a hypermedium because it provides a spatiotemporal frame for active encounters of heterogeneous elements – diverse media alongside principles of liveness and mediation, as well as corporeality and signification. Being a meeting point of differences, the stage enforces their mutual redefinitions and transformations. In other words, theater and performance integrate various artistic forms of expression allowing them to develop meanings in relation to each other.

Bearing in mind 1) the hypermediacy of the live stage and 2) the heterogeneity and complex dynamics inherent to writing technologies, which kinds of remediations of the act of writing can one expect in performance? If the double logic is always simultaneously at work through remediation, then the hypermediacy of performance might reveal what usually passes as immediate and transparent in the cultural practices and technologies of writing. We have argued that the most commonly overlooked element of writing is the ephemeral event of inscription. Thanks to the aspect of liveness in performance, the liveness of writing comes to the fore without denying the importance of the textual content. Furthermore, the complexity and heterogeneity of performance allows the complexity of writing to emerge before our eyes.

Writing itself is revealed not only as a specific technology – embodied, printed or digital – but as a performative hypermedium. The conventional frame of the performance stage unveils what is already the inherent quality of various writing practices, and this has further implications on broader cultural writing spaces involving oral, handwritten, printed and electronic texts (e.g. lectures and public presentations, graffiti, taking notes, posting on social networks etc). This means that, just like digital media, artistic performance constitutes a new writing space within the field of art, where text and performance can exercise the relations of either homage

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[70] Rosemary Klich and Edward Scheer, "Liveness and Re-Mediation", in *Multimedia Performance*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2012, p. 75.

paying or rivalry. Such remediation adds a new dimension to our general understanding of writing. Writing is based on repetition – on the level of signs and codes, on the level of literacy skills, and on the level of cultural re-inscriptions. These repetitions, therefore, involve diverse realms and enact heterogeneous elements. We want to draw attention to singular events through which the repetitions are realized – essentially heterogeneous events consisting in the virtual and material, in mediation and liveness. It is a specific form of repetition; whether we acknowledge it or not, our literary cultures constantly engage us in rituals of writing. In other words, hypermedial writing is as much a rite as meaning and knowledge making.

Staged performances of writing, even when they lean toward post-humanist perspectives, mainly employ human bodies in the physical action of writing. The bodies can write either individually or collectively, organized in complex embodied figures: writing mechanisms. In any case, demonstrated technology involves inscriptions of signs by and on the bodies. We might say that the embodied performances exhibit a twofold disappearance of writing. Firstly, in general use, typing increasingly replaces handwriting (bodily movements shape letters) in all cultural spheres in which it has extensively been used until recently (administration, education, personal writing). Secondly, in theatre context, the act of writing occurs on stage in limited time as fleeting bodily performance; the physical act builds itself into the written text and, on the spot, transforms into a document. Paradoxically, it is thanks to performative remediation – ephemeral by definition and itself disappearing (Phelan) – that the otherwise transparent aspects of writing becomes recognized and possible to observe. The light falls on the secret life of writing as "object, event and process" (Grusin, see above). Largely used until recently, handwriting along with embodied presentations of written texts, still lives in corporal memories of the audiences. As staged performance, handwriting might appear to be a little nostalgic, a campy *objet trouvé*. More importantly, however, the evanescent nature of both performance and writing paradoxically gives rise to a new self-reflectively heterogeneous *writing space*.

5. Actual and virtual work / *Oeuvre* and event

Derrida's reflection on the future of the Humanities, in the above mentioned essay *L'Université sans conditions* (see p. 19), delineates the current context in terms of "the third industrial revolution". Derrida refers to the well-known book of Jeremy Rifkin *The End of Work: The Decline of the Global Labor Force and the Dawn of the Post-Market Era*.[71] The first two industrial revolutions – the industrial implementations of 1) steam, coal, steel and textile in the 19th century and 2) electricity, petroleum and the automobile in the 20th century – did change the distribution of human labor, but did not recast the notion of work. As Derrida explains, "both freed up a sector where the machine had not penetrated. Human labor, nonmachine and nonsubstitutable by the machine, was still available".[72] However, the current electronic revolution, by introducing cyberspace, micro-computing and robotics, increases production, whilst simultaneously dramatically reduces the need for a human work force. Derrida:

> Here, no fourth zone where the unemployed can be put to work seems to exist. (…) Today, when agriculture, industry, and services lay off millions because of technological progress, the only category of workers spared would be that of "knowledge," an "elite of entrepreneurs, scientists, technicians, computer programmers, professional educators, and consultants."[73]

Derrida further questions the current status of labor and work (*travail*) in the fields of knowledge production, and especially, in pedagogy that does not produce authorial *oeuvres*. Aside from the main argumentative line, Derrida acknowledges that new technologies brought about new media and means of communication. Even though the work in media production does not offer such a great opportunity for massive employment, Derrida uses it as a basis to challenge "the place of work" when it becomes "nonmanual", "intellectual" and "virtual" (p. 257). More precisely, Derrida questions traditional distinction between real/actual/effective, i.e. work commonly seen as embodied event, on the one, and engagement in the virtual sphere, on the

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[71] Jeremy Rifkin, *The End of Work: The Decline of the Global Labor Force and the Dawn of the Post-Market Era*, Putnam Publishing Group, New York, 1995.

[72] Jacques Derrida, "The University without Conditions", *Without Alibi*, Stanford U.P, Stanford, 2002, p. 226.

[73] *Ibid*, cited phrase is from Rifkin, p. xvii

other side. Deconstruction of this distinction is meant to inspire new reflections on academic and theoretical work, especially in the field of the Humanities. On the other hand, both Rifkin and Derrida point to the potentially tragic consequences of "the end of work", and recognize that "capital plays an essential role between the actual and the virtual" (p. 227). Simply put, the capital determines what will be considered as actual, effective and productive work, which nowadays gets increasingly dissociated from the embodied human action. Consequently, many other types of human activities – including professorship as *professing* a doctrine, theoretical deconstruction and rather passive work of experience and passion – remain unrecognized as *work*. In other words, the third industrial revolution, by recasting the idea and value of production, renders other types of work invisible. In terms of our previous discussion, it renders them *immediate*.

One of the consequences, not particularly elaborated in Derrida's text, concerns the work – *travail* – as production of media. Paradoxically, precisely because of the flourishing of new communication media and technologies, their own (laborious and localized) production is pushed into the shadows of virtuality. I don't think here about the mass media industry and the labor it requires. What I have in mind is more basic emergence of a medium as a means of expression within particular circumstances and conditions of possibility: war photographs, street music, interactive digital poetry, classroom use of video projections or dance, merging of fiction and theory… The authors gathered around the collection *Interfaces of Performance* name such happenings *creative media*. In Derrida's words, these are events of *arrival* of the *impossible*.

Derrida repeatedly emphasizes the performativity of professors' engagement. Such performativity is first to be distinguished from the constative nature of traditionally understood knowledge:

> As traditionally defined, the university would be (…) a place, a single place, which gives rise only to the production and teaching of a *knowledge* [savoir], that is, of knowledges [*connaissances*] whose form of utterance is not, in principle, performative but theoretical and constative…[74]

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[74] Jacques Derrida, "The University without Conditions", *Without Alibi*, Stanford U.P, Stanford, 2002, p. 218.

The taught doctrine is certainly not performative act, but the act of professing a doctrine may be performative. The act of teaching is performative under condition of being "a performative profession of faith, a belief, a decision, a public pledge, an ethico-political responsibility, and so forth". The university teachers are invited to recognize the performative potential of their work in order to – and that is the main stake of Derrida's article – protect the "immunity" of the university, i.e. the strong resistance to any kind of external power aiming to reduce the freedom of speech, thinking and questioning absolutely everything:

> This freedom or immunity of the university and par excellence of its Humanities is something to which we must lay claim, while committing ourselves to it with all our might. Not only in a verbal and declarative fashion, but in work, in act, and in what we make happen with events. (p. 220)

The second distinction is the one between performativity and event. The performativity of professing is linked to the idea of event, but not equal to it. "Normative and prescriptive performativity" that produces *oeuvres* does not produce *events* in the Derridean sense. Derrida insists that the production of *oeuvres* "must remain foreign to the field of university work (…) foreign to their teaching". The *oeuvres* belong to the economy of trade and craft, and share the same kind of authority in today's world. Contrary to this, the authority of profession and professorship stems from the professed faith, belief and ethico-political responsibility. The university and desired new Humanities resist complicity with the external market conceptions of work. Furthermore, new Humanities tirelessly review their own work in terms of constatives, performatives, and the production of oeuvres and events. Hence the professors need to primarily get aware of the inherent performativity of their activities, and then to distinguish between performative production of *oeuvres* and *events*.

The relation between performativity and event is paradoxical at the very least, with a hidden contradiction:

> It is too often said that the performative produces the event of which it speaks. To be sure. One must also realize that, inversely, where there is the performative, an event worthy of the name cannot arrive. If what arrives belongs to the horizon of the

possible, or even of a possible performative, it does not arrive, it does not happen, in the full sense of the word. (p. 234)

The "event worthy of the name" can only arrive if it is impossible. Performativity is, if not condition, at least a setting for the event *to arrive, to come about*. Yet, if the event really arrives, it thereby denies performativity.

> The force of the event is always stronger than the force of a performative. In the face of what arrives to me, what happens to me, even in what I decide (which, as I tried to show in *Politics of Friendship*, must involve a certain passivity, my decision being always the decision of the other), in the face of the other who arrives and arrives to me, all performative force is overrun, exceeded, exposed. (p. 235)

The performance of teaching produces effects that are not completely calculable and predictable. It is eventful only if it involves the element of excess. By contrast, if it announces itself as "possible and necessary", it neutralizes its breaking through as event. As in other Derrida's works (on gift, forgiveness, hospitality, justice, friendship etc.), the play between possible and impossible "can no longer be determined by the metaphysical interpretation of possibility and virtuality".[75]

Mark Franko finds the *gift* to be a contradictory intermediary between performance and event. In his essay *Given Movement: Dance and the Event*, Franko demonstrates that dance can function as gift, thereby filling in the space between performance and event.[76] Dance has been theorized in two opposing ways: 1) as non-discursive "communication of movement", with implicit logocentric qualities of immediacy, presence and "liveness" and 2) in a poststructuralist critical perspective according to which dance emerge as mark, cut off from its "origin". Franko starts from Derrida's claim in "Signature Event Context" that communication cannot be limited to "the transmission of *meaning*", and focuses on the transmission of dance movement as a gift in dance pedagogy. Franko refers to Gregory Bateson's film *Learning to Dance in Bali* (1936-39) to demonstrate a pedagogical method in which the dance teacher literally moves the student's body, thus transmitting the impulse to move and sharing the same kinesthetic experience. The transmission from body to body is at once

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[75] Ibid, p. 234.

[76] Mark Franko, "Given Moment: Dance and the Event", in André Lepecki (ed.), *Of the Presence of the Body: Essays on Dance and Performance Theory*, Wesleyan U.P, Middletown, 2004, p. 113-123.

personal and cultural, since it derives from the specific teaching tradition. Dance movements are repetitive, have a performative basis, but each singular transmission of movements has a structure of the event. "Movement itself is a gift" (p. 122), claims Franko, while its inscription produces a new event. Dance is a gift "whose marks are choreographic" (p. 123).

Being placed between performativity and event, dance puts in play possible and impossible, actual and virtual. Dance interlaces writing with kinesthetic transmission in a dynamic and emerging manner. As such, dance and its choreography could be one possible response to Derrida's quest for unconditioned university, open for impossible events.

> The university without conditions is not situated necessarily or exclusively within the walls of what is today called the university. It is not necessarily, exclusively, exemplarily represented in the figure of the professor. It takes place, it seeks its place wherever this unconditionality can take shape.[77]

Thanks to its capacity to perform (to work) without producing *oeuvres*, dance resists the economy of craft and market. But what is then the relation between dance and knowledge/doctrine? Which kind of dance/choreography can at once 1) incorporate constative theorizations, 2) self-reflectively perform profession and 3) profess belief and give in to impossibility? How can we imagine dancing knowledge? And how does it relate to informed choreographies? Of course, I have in mind dances that remediate writing on stage, as well as consciously choreographed lectures that turn the classroom/conference room into a stage. How do these performances enact and entwine texts and choreographies, possibility and impossibility, actual and virtual? And which principles or powers regulate the distinctions – the contingent processes of differentiation – between all these apparently opposing categories?

6. Creative mediation

Artistic theatricalizations of writing create room for choreographic work. Common to all performances considered here is the exploration of the temporal/gradual

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[77] Jacques Derrida, "The University without Conditions", *Without Alibi*, Stanford U.P, Stanford, 2002, p. 236.

appearance and material forms of verbal signification. Such performances demonstrate more than what Freud called "the scene of writing;"[78] they offer writing's "mise-en-scène" – the arrangement of the stage. Although not necessarily static, the *scene* is already framed in a certain way. *Mise-en-scène*, by contrast, foregrounds the processes of preparation and direction in all their diverse aspects – stage design, lighting, space, sounds, material objects, technologies, bodies, costumes, make-up, acting, the relation to the audience and so on.[79]

Andy Lavender employs the term *mise-en-scène* in order to grasp complex interplays of heterogeneous elements in mixed-media performances, specifically in performances that use "two-dimensional projected images alongside live action":

> *Mise-en-scène* – literally, that which is "placed on the stage" – is more than merely a directorial arrangement of activities or an effect of the meeting of set and actor. It is the continuum that gives staged elements their effective relation one to another and, thereby, their affective relation to the spectator. (…)

> In hypermedial performance, *mise-en-scène* is a *network of mediations* that are also remediations, persistently playing back to its spectators both the modes of the piece and the culture's modes of aesthetic affinity. The effect is in many instances less to do with the direct production of meaning and more to do with *the production of a (meaningful) texture to the event*.[80]

Mise-en-scène in Lavender's sense refers to a merging of diverse elements on a live stage, thereby creating unique performance spaces and specific phenomenological experience for the spectators:

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[78] Sigmund Freud, "A Note upon the *Mystic Writing Pad*". The essay was initially published as a chapter in Freud's *General Psychological Theory* (1925). The text is available online at: http://home.uchicago.edu/~awinter/mystic.pdf

Jacques Derrida, "Freud and the Science of Writing", *Writing and Difference*, Routledge, London and New York, 2005, p. 246-291. (Originally published by Éditions du Seuil in 1967)

[79] In film studies, mise-en-scène has been regarded as the "grand undefined term". Brian Henderson, "The Long Take," in Bill Nichols (ed.), *Movies and Methods: An Anthology*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1976, p. 315.

[80] Andy Lavender, "Mise en scène, hypermediacy and the sensorium", in Chiel Kattenbelt, Freda Chapple (eds), *Intermediality in Theatre and Performance*, Rodopi, Amsterdam, 2006, p. 63. (emphasis added – M.P)

> We see the same space as both flatly pictorial and fully scenic, two-dimensional and three-dimensional. Likewise, we are presented with the meeting between the live actor and mediated actor-as-other… (p. 62)

The media involved are "contingent to the aspects of the staging and are themselves staged". They are not self-contained entities, but processes of mediations and remediations that mutually network.

We can compare the performances of writing with Lavender's examples of mixed-media performances where the emerging texts are counterparts to projected images. Lavender clearly points to the complexity of media relations, and furthermore considers them in the processes of becoming. Lavender also reflects on the agency that such remediations have in shaping distinctive experiences for the spectators. However, despite the praise given to complexity, Lavender's exclusive focus on media relations leaves artistic agency unconsidered. In contrast, we want to draw attention to the fact that networking of media, or rather of mediations, is also intentionally and creatively directed. The fact that the effects on the audience cannot fully be calculated does not completely erase the intentionality (and responsibility) of artistic work and of the production of media.

Lavender's author-less view of media is not an isolated case in this regard. Kember and Zylinska argue that a significant part of explorations in media studies rather focuses on media and their technological features as entities "out there", than on the strategic and transformative use of media as a means to artistic ends.[81] Our argument is not meant to be a critique. Following the ideas of Kember and Zylinska, the scholarly analysis, which in fact is a kind of remediation, of any other kind of mass or artistic media tends to render the labor involved in media creation seemingly transparent. In terms of Bolter and Grusin, this laborious production of media is subjected to *immediacy*. This is important not as a reaffirmation of authorship and individual skills and genius, but as pointing to a specific space for *self-reflection*. As it was noted above, the main effect of hypermediacy is to make us aware of the processes of mediations and strategies of representation. Artistic hypermedial

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[81] Sarah Kember and Joanna Zylinska, "Creative Media: Performance, Invention, Critique", in M. Chatzichristodoulou, J. Jefferies and R. Zerihan (eds.), *Interfaces of Performance*, Ashgate, Farnham, 2009, p. 7-23.

performances have the additional dimension of reflecting on their own production as an additional layer to the networks of remediations.[82] Kember and Zylinska not only acknowledge this creative aspect of media production in the objects of their study, but also regard their own analytical work as a contribution to "creative mediation." They explicitly reflect on their own performative article:

> …creative media is for us a way of enacting knowledge about and of the media by creating conditions for the emergence of such media. Of course, there is something rather difficult and hence also frustrating about this self-reflexive process – it is supposed to produce the thing of which it speaks (creative media), while drawing on this very thing (creative media) as its source of inspiration – or, to put it in cybernetic terms, feedback. But this circularity is precisely what is most exciting for us about the theory of performativity and the way it has made inroads into the arts and humanities over the last two decades. (p. 10)

Bringing to light the processes of production of media dispels the illusion of immediacy, and makes visible what was taken to be a transparent process/thing. And all of the things involved in the emergence of media enact a specific kind of knowledge. That is to say, the knowledge does not come *a posteriory*, as theoretical knowledge "about and of the media" essentially severed from its object; the knowledge itself is medial, embedded or enacted both in the observed medium and in the medium of observation.

In Derridean terms of work (*travail*), creative mediation combines production and passion/experience, craft and event, doctrine and self-reflexivity. It reflects on its own mediality and virtuality, as well as on the process and labor of its own production. Creative mediation is *performative*, as it does something by the very act of mediation – creates, enacts, happens – and it is *productive* as well. Kember and Zylinska see it as a performance of knowledge, whose products can materialize as either oeuvres or (impossible) events. It seems, however, that the focus of creative mediations is equally split between the product (materialized knowledge) and production (performance of knowledge):

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[82] See: Gabriele Klein and Bojana Kunst, "Introduction: Labour and Performance", *Performance Research*, Vol. 17, No. 6, 2012, p. 1-3.

> Working in and with creative media is for us first and foremost an epistemological
> question of *how we can perform knowledge differently* through a set of intellectual-
> creative practices that also 'produce things'. (p. 10, emphasis added - MP)

In staged mixed-media performances, these "things" move within three-dimensional space, and their spatial appearances and movements are thought-out, designed, and graphically scored. In a word, the "things, events and processes" (Grusin) as well as "the networks of mediations and remediations" (Lavender) are *choreographed*. Performative hypermediacy takes place – *arrives, comes about* – on a three-dimensional stage and involves the dialectic of liveness and mediation. It specifically renders visible – perceivably mediated – the otherwise invisible production of media and their choreographic engagement. To point out this specificity of staged remediations, we name such phenomena *choreo-mediations*.

7. *Choreo-mediation*

The term basically encapsulates a combination of the two approaches that we have expounded so far: 1) media discourse (from Bolter and Grusin to intermediality in arts to creative mediation) and 2) critical studies of dance underpinned by poststructuralism. The idea of *remediation* sets up a common denominator for performance/dance/theatre and writing/text/reading. Considered as media, or rather as processes of mediation, the two modes of expression do not form hierarchical relations. Instead, they both have capacity to frame the other, i.e. to creatively remediate.[83] On the other side, the notion of *choreography* amalgamates *dance* with *writing*. It refers to the possibility of dance, noted by Mark Franko,[84] to link performance and event in the Derridean sense – i.e. to link the citation/reproduction of codes with singular event.

Choreo-mediation therefore refers to stage setups that not only expose various media before the audiences, but kinetically enact the production of these media – e.g. a video

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[83] Performance remediates texts, as in the staged activities of writing, and text remediates performance, as in *performance writing* in the sense of Della Pollock (see p. 22-3 of this text).

[84] Mark Franko, "Given Movement. Dance and the Event", in André Lepecki (ed), *Of the Presence of the Body*, Wesleyan U.P, Middletown, 2004, p. 113-123.

in the process of projection, a text in the process of emergence. Such performative remediation is being *mise en scène*, and thus directed and choreographed. Through staging, performative remediation gets its specific material texture and an additional layer of being planned, prepared, and even pre-written (in the form of choreographic scores). Our idea of *choreo-mediation* introduces the complex interplay and interdependence of movement and writing into the idea of remediation. According to Bolter and Grusin, digital media incorporate and transform prior analogue media (photography, television, print etc.). Digital media are historically latest and therefore of a superior technological phase. Consequently, the processes of remediation seem to be one-directional: new media remediate the old ones, thereby creating new technological spaces and possibilities of expression. There is a kind of linear progression implied in such an idea of remediation.

However, if we return to theater and performance as historical models for hypermediacy and remediation (Kattenbelt at al, 2006), the idea of remediation gets new dimensions. First, contrary to digital media, the theatrical/performance stage consists of heterogeneous materialities, which allows the involved media to keep their various technologies while at the same time interacting, reframing and transforming each other. Second, it does not let the performance be the privileged overarching frame of remediation. As opposed to digital remediation, performative remediation engages in a volatile dialectics with the idea of writing that both precedes (in terms of choreographic scores, notations, charts) and follows (in terms of documentation) the performance. Performative remediation takes us beyond the idea of linear technological development; it is rather a phase in spiral transformative shifts from chart to movements and again to document, or from iterable codes to singular events to iteration again. Performative remediation is choreographed and thus structurally contaminated with writing. Finally, the third difference from digital remediation lies in the fact that staging of various other media (sound, image, video, bodies etc.) reveals their performative dimension – the processes of production. By contributing to theatrical hypermediacy, each medium turns to be hypermedial itself, consisting in media content/product and performative process of production. In the following section, we will demonstrate this in more detail in the case of writing as medium.

Choreo-mediation involves not only contents and technologies, but also productive labor (*travail*) and creative intentionality. The material production of such

remediation is exposed on stage alongside its products in the shape of various media, representations and modes of expression. So, aside from theatrical *hypermediacy* (Kattenbelt at al.), *choreo-mediation* enacts a *creative production of media* (Kember and Zylinska).[85]

8. *Choreo-mediations* in academic contexts

Whether the stage is framed according to conventions of artistic performance or of live academic transmission of knowledge, the activities of writing and reading taking place on it are necessarily choreographed. In both cases we encounter the *choreographies of writing*. The more these choreographies are conscious and self-reflexive, the more we are right to consider them as creative media.

Choreographed physical activities of writing materialize the kinetic aspect of writing as deferment – they theatricalize what Lepecki sees as the "insertion of movement in grammatology".[86] Their inventiveness lies in the materialization of the metaphor of writing as inscription. Through the staging of embodied writing gestures and movements, choreography refers on its own writerly nature – as notation and inscription. On the other hand, academic lectures have a structure of public performance, consisting in the stand (a *chair* or *cathedra*), proscenium, audience, speech, requisites, costumes (dress code), time frame, announcements etc.

Commonly, most of the elements of academic stages are largely conventional, with little room for improvisation. In his essay "The University Without Condition", Derrida presents his ideal of the university that guarantees the freedom of research

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[85] The intentionality at work here is the one implied in Derridean idea of gift. Mark Franko refers to it as to "choreographic giving". Franko recognizes the logic of gift in the "choreographic marks". He sees choreography as communication between the bodies, at once signifying and experiential (kinetic). Such communication does not rely on self-contained given subjects who exchange movements and kinetic knowledge as gifts between them. The exchange rather constitutes the very process of subjectivation. Mark Franko, "Given Moment: Dance and the Event", in André Lepecki (ed.), *Of the Presence of the Body: Essays on Dance and Performance Theory*, Wesleyan U.P, Middletown, 2004, p. 121-3.

[86] André Lepecki, "Inscribing Dance", in André Lepecki (ed.), *On the Presence of the Body: Essays on Dance and Performance Theory*, Wesleyan U.P, Middletown, 2004, p. 137.

and expression as well as respectful exchange of knowledge as transformative gift.[87] Following Derrida's thoughts, the first step toward a free and unconditioned university consists in teacher's conscious playing the role of faith professing, i.e. in the conscious performance of pedagogy. In order to transform the apparently immediate transmission of knowledge into a creative medium there needs to be at least a good will to question the institutional rules that necessarily shape the constative "message".

In other words, the professors/lecturers are invited to recognize their creation of the choreography of professing, thereby taking responsibility for it, despite the fact that its meanings and effects could not be calculated in their entirety. In Derrida's words, the professors take responsibility for the arrival of the impossible. Yet, they are not exempt from responsibility if the impossible fails to arrive, if they remain within the tradition of "normative and prescriptive performativity" (Derrida, p. 255). Setting up an event, the professors are authors (or editors) of their own appearance even if they choose not to intervene in the existing institutional norms – be it parodic or simply self-consciously observing. Whatever choreography happens in the classroom, it is chosen, and the choice of it entails responsibility.

The effects of professing choreographies are never devoid of politics. In certain occasions, the choice to perform completely in line with institutional conventions could mean that, through these conventions, academic "workers" align themselves with powers external to the (unconditional) university. These include state powers ("and thus to the power of the nation state"), economic powers (corporations, national and international capital), powers of the media, "ideological, religious and cultural powers, and so forth – in short, to all the powers that limit democracy to come."[88] The point is this: each event of teaching and transmitting knowledge is choreographed and charged with responsibility for both the content and performance. The lack of self-reflection prevents that the event of teaching is realized as a creative mediation open to uncertainty. Furthermore, the lack of self-reflection politically undermines the

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[87] Jacques Derrida, "The University Without Condition", *Without Alibi*, Stanford U.P, 2002, p. 202-38. According to Judith Butler's idea of performativity, mere consciousness of gender performativity does not suffice for transformative agency; there needs to be a parodic intention of the one who inescapably iterates social codes.

[88] Ibid, p. 205.

project of unconditioned university. This would, briefly, be the political stakes of *choreo-mediations* in academic contexts.

Knowledge and the politics of choreography

1. Writing is a hypermedium

Exposing writing (together with text and reading) on stage and before an audience ultimately results in recasting the concept of writing. Or it at least adds a new dimension to the idea of performative writing. The physical and semiotic activity of composing a text is remediated by performance. The performances that we have selected do not merely employ writing as one of the motifs, just one of the staged activities. Instead, they exclusively focus on writing, and hence merit the name *writing performances*. As a result, writing ceases to be only the content of the (framing/remediating) performance; it *becomes* performance. In other words, performance fully consists in writing, whilst writing generates performance.

One of the consequences: such performances reveal the hypermediacy of writing, which further concerns the whole range of diverse cultural practices of writing. Despite being transparent in most of these practices, the performativity of writing is always at work, with the inherent potential to turn text into a stage. Calligraphy, automatic writing, staged performances of writing and a few other practices are rare examples that bring the performativity of writing to the fore.

Unlike text, the notion of writing encompasses both medium and process of mediation. Writing is a hypermedium; text is just one of its choreographed components, alongside bodies, writing systems, signification codes, literacy, motor skills, writing substrates and tools, writing technology etc. Performance calls attention to the capacity of writing to communicate both verbally and kinetically.[89] Writing is

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[89] Mark Franko: "First: transmission in/as communication. As Derrida establishes in "Signature Event Context," communication cannot be limited to "the transmission of a *meaning*" [p. 172]. "To say that writing extends the field and the powers of locutory or gestural communication presupposes, does it not, a sort of homogeneous space of communication?" [p. 175]. Inscription and transmission become interchangeable sites of verbal and kinetic communication. Some communications occur without

heterogeneous as it intertwines gestures with verbal content, events with meaning, communication with transmission, the possible with the impossible.

Being inherently performative, writing provides material for choreography. The conduct of literate bodies engaged in the processes of graphical verbal expression is commonly considered as automatic, based on early acquired motor skills. Nevertheless, all elements of writing technology permit performative experimentation and can choreographically be rearranged in space. Staged performances of writing demonstrate that writing activity can be an inspiring subject of stage direction; its laborious emergence in time is actively being *mise en scène*. Writing becomes a creative medium able to reflect on its own production.

How can one "read" such writing? What are the implications of writing's hypermediacy on the hermeneutic of the message that is being conveyed through writing? Is "reading" still a sufficient tactic of understanding: reading of the content as well as of the gestures and other staged elements seen as texts in their own right? Or do we rather need to develop heterogeneous and self-reflexive strategies in order adequately to respond to writing performances? In other words, isn't the activity of reading itself already heterogeneous and performative, thus being a counterpart to writing performativity? Following Kember and Zylinska, analytical reading is already an occasion for self-reflexive creative mediation. As such it produces both "things" impregnated with knowledge (the objects of knowledge) and encounters/events that transmit experience (performances of knowledge).

The risk lies in treating text (verbal content) and performance (kinetic transmission) as two separate parts of the message, each with its own meaning, i.e. as two distinct units that can be "read" individually. Reading here implies the leveling of all heterogeneous elements of writing, and treating them as texts that can be transmitted into analytical meta-texts. It further entails that the *meanings* of performative and verbal elements – movements, gestures, bodies, spatial relations, language, textual

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evident intention: "A tremor, a shock, a displacement of force can be communicated – that is, transmitted" [p. 173]. The process of transmission itself is what links the force of the event to the force of giving. Further, transmission links dance with writing, as we shall see." Mark Franko, "Given Moment: Dance and the Event", in André Lepecki (ed.), *Of the Presence of the Body: Essays on Dance and Performance Theory*, Wesleyan U.P, Middletown, 2004, p. 118.

content etc. – are mutually comparable. Indeed, the choreographies of writing that we are dealing with – in theatrical and academic settings alike – embody/materialize the encounter of the performative and verbal realm in a specifically metonymic way: texts and their material coming (=dancing) into being are placed next to each other. For the moment we would leave the question of semiotic interaction between dance and text open. To be able to properly approach this question, we need to take into account the dynamic historical relations of these two seemingly opposing yet inextricably linked practices.

2. Writing for/with dance

The collection of essays *Of the Presence of the Body*, edited by André Lepecki, explores diverse discursive connections between dance and writing. In "Inscribing Dance" Lepecki starts from two pairs of oppositions – body and text; movement and language – and asks what defines the limits between them. Which historical, discursive and political forces influence distinguishing between them?[90] Firstly, Lepecki asserts that the opposing terms should not be treated as "categorical distinctions" and "closed units". Instead, he suggests that they are "constituted less as monads than as circuits of exchange, spaces of friction" (p. 124). It is noteworthy that this applies to all the above mentioned heterogeneous elements of writing.

Lepecki further transfers the instability between material and verbal realms to the institutional relations between dance and writing:

> The spaces of friction constituted by the restless tension between body and text, movement and language, indicate precisely a limitless contiguity among dance, writing, and femininity. (p. 124)

Gender issues, for now, stay aside from our analysis even though the aspect of femininity in dance and writing would be interesting and is not in discord with our arguments. We will focus instead on the fact that Lepecki, from the standpoint of dance history and critical dance studies, confirms our claim that dance and writing

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[90] André Lepecki, "Inscribing Dance", in André Lepecki (ed.), *On the Presence of the Body: Essays on Dance and Performance Theory*, Wesleyan U.P, Middletown, 2004, p. 124-139.

depend on each other in their definitions. Or, as Lepecki puts it, they are interstitially, insistently inscribed upon one another (p. 125).

Lepecki observes dance and writing from a historical perspective, following their discursive transformations from late sixteen century reflections on French court dance to contemporary dance theory. The political implications of Lepecki's article are twofold. First, his text affirms the contribution of dance and choreography to knowledge production and critical theory; it regards dance as critical theory. The notion of knowledge is extended, so that it includes not only documents (i.e. products and *oeuvres*) but also ephemeral performative events (and therefore experience, affects, exchange). Second, the text refers to broader social and political effects of the conceptions of dance, writing and their relations, which historically shifted from semiotic symmetry in the 16th century to radical separation in the 18th and 19th century and back to non-hierarchical views in contemporary dance theory. Each of these phases – symmetry/hierarchy shifts – impacted the status of ephemeral live events, dance and choreography as forms of artistic expression and knowledge production. The status of dance depended on its relation to writing that was, for the most part of history, identified with documentation. In the following paragraphs we will briefly outline Lepecki's historical account.

In the early French reflections on dance, the writing in question refers to *notations of dance movements* – the *dance scores*. Lepecki finds that dance, and its status among the other arts, has always been thought of in terms of dance's unfortunate evanescent materiality. Concerning writing, as early as in Thoinot Arbeau's *Orchesography* (late 16th century),[91] it got the role to record, document and thereby preserve dance movements. In Arbeau's work, writing was seen as an unproblematic supplement of dance, able to represent/replace it completely. This was based on the assumption of uninterrupted semiotic transfer from one to the other. A century later, Raoul-Auger Feuillet's notation method was designed to represent dance in complete absence of the bodies.[92] "Inscription preceded dances"; the dance masters composed choreographies using only writing tools, not much differently from book writing. Modern dance

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[91] 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*, trans. Cyril W. Beaumont, Dance Horizons, New York, 1968 [1589].

[92] Raoul-Auger Feuillet, *Chorégraphie, ou l'art de décrire la dance*, Paris, 1700.

historians regard French court dance as a political project.[93] The substitution of dancing bodies with written scores allowed the centralization of power within the Royal Academy, as well as the easier imposition of French cultural influence over conquered nations by the means of the dance manuals (Lepecki, p. 126).

Following Lepecki's account, the relation between dance and writing dramatically changed by the late 18th century. Jean-Georges Noverre's *Letters on Dancing and Ballets* testify to this change.[94] Noverre was the first to express his frustration with the inadequacy of writing to fully grasp the movements and gestures of the dancers. Lepecki refers to Susan Foster in explaining how this cleavage influenced the 19th century complete separation of disciplines, i.e. in this context, of dance, on the one, and *dance criticism/theory*, on the other side. In relation to writing, dance appeared to be excessive, unspeakable, while at the same time "haunted by disappearance and absence" (Lepecki, 128). Lepecki recognizes the echoes of this "crisis of representation" all the way to modern dance notations and contemporary dance theory, particularly in the work of Peggy Phelan.

The reason for all dance writing being seen as "an endless effort to counter dance's self-erasure" (p. 130) lies in a general cultural privileging of documents over unrepeatable events, presence over vanishing, and ultimately, History over sensory experience. Dance was seen as an irreparably "ahistorical, atheoretical, and apolitical realm". Lepecki here refers to Mark Franko's significant essay "Mimique"[95] according to which a new common ground for dance and writing was established thanks to the deconstructionist critique of metaphysical presence and its notion of *trace*. Deconstructionist theory applied to dance demonstrates the following:

> Both writing and dancing plunge into ephemerality. (…) The return to symmetry
> derives from the acknowledgment that both writing and dancing participate in the

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[93] In that respect, Lepecki refers to the works of Jean-Noël Laurenti and Mark Franko:

Jean-Noël Laurenti, "Feuillet's Thinking," in *Traces of Dance: Drawings and Notations of Choreographers*, ed. Laurence Louppe, trans. Brian Holmes, Editions Dis Voir, Paris, 1994.

Mark Franko, *Dance as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body*, Cambridge U.P, Cambridge, 1993.

[94] Jean-Georges Noverre, "Letters on Dancing and Ballets," in Roger Copeland and Marshall Cohen (eds), *What is Dancing?* Oxford U.P, Oxford, 1983 [1760].

[95] Mark Franko, "Mimique," in E.W. Goellner and J.S. Murphy (eds), *Bodies of the Text: Dance as Theory*, Literature as Dance, Rutgers U.P, New Brunswick, 1995, p. 205-216.

same motion of the trace: that which will always be already behind at the moment of its appearance. (Lepecki, p. 132).

Deconstruction radically reconsidered the status of the metaphysical presence on which the documental tradition was based. The notion of writing here encompasses both the notations of movements and dance criticism. It is important to note, however, that despite this new symmetry writing and dance cannot replace one another, as it was the case in Arbeau's and Feuillet's works. The symmetry is ontological, but not semantic; dance and writing cannot be translated one to the other. The symmetry also refers to their codependency:

> What come first? Dancing as writing or écriture as dancing? My point is that both are absolutely codependent, reshaping each other's blindness and ontology in an ongoing ontolingustic duet. (Lepecki, p. 138)

The distinction between dance and writing remains politically significant; dance acquires a kind of semantic and political autonomy. Moreover, when presence ceased to be the prerequisite for "knowledge" (p. 132), dance could finally gain its share in critical theory. Calling the metaphysical status of the document into question reaffirms dance and frees dance theory from an endless description of what was happening on the stage. According to Lepecki, it also opens the possibility for a different sensorial basis of dance theory, not anymore limited to viewing, but involving kinetic experience and other sensations as well.

At the same time, writing is here not anymore supposed to assist the political use of dance by means of *notations* that facilitate the spreading of cultural influence in colonized regions, neither does it need to rescue dance from vanishing by the means of *documentation*. The new symmetry made possible writing along dance ephemerality. Lepecki only sparingly notes what such writing could look like:

> …The motion of *différrance* initiated by the trace opens up a whole set of possibilities for dance writings: of considering dance's materiality not only as that physical motility temporally and spatially enclosed within the frame of the stage and the dancers' skins, but also as a symbolically charged imaginary space. (p. 134)

What has truly changed in contemporary dance theory to enable it to *move along* dance materiality (and not anymore against it) remains an open question. The point is,

however, that the new paradigm of ontological equality between dance and writing made room for different non-hierarchical politics of both practices. How does it reflect on the theories and interpretations ("readings") of dance and texts? And how can we apply such ideas in the understanding of our selected performances – *choreographies of writing* – where the realms of dance and text are juxtaposed in their materiality and create particular metonymic relations?

3. The motion and *choreopolitics* of writing

The idea of "writing along dance" acknowledges symmetry between verbal and dancerly expressions, as well as the principal impossibility of their mutual assimilation or substitution. The idea implies a *motion of writing* that accompanies dancing movements, follows and maybe mimics them. However, from the perspective of dance and performance studies, *writing along dance* remains a challenging proposition for which no handy prescriptions exist. Lepecki finds the impulse and the form of such a writing motion in the deconstructionist ideas of *différrance* and *trace*. Furthermore, Lepecki suggests that writing should go beyond its physical materiality and recognize "a symbolically charged imaginary space" within dance. We learn, therefore, that dance and writing share access to symbolical and imaginary domains, as well as the capacity to move. Yet, the relations between their material and symbolic spheres and the nature and scope of movements within and between them remain an open call for our imagination. A little bit further in his text, Lepecki gives us another hint:

> That is to say, it is not only the object (the dance) that is in motion; *the writer, the viewer, the spectator, is never, ever fixed as well*. (Lepecki, 134; my emphasis - MP)

The spectator-turned-writer, i.e. the spectator who also undertakes the job of giving a verbal account about what happens before her/his eyes, has to find a way to "write along dance". One way of achieving this, Lepecki suggests, is by admitting the essential volatility of one's own position as a writer (let's say as an authorial persona projected into text) as well as a spectator (prior to any fixed account of her/his experience). The question is: which conception of writing can embody such double motility of observing and verbally following dance (moving along it) and, at the same

time, acknowledge the imaginary and symbolic aspects of dance? The power of the question lies in its shifting the focus from the transposition of the content between the media towards a self-reflexive observation of the complex heterogeneity of each medium.

As we have shown, the choreographies of writing – in the form of embodied inscriptions and lecture performances – include different materialities and function as *hypermedia*, in which physical and symbolic spaces intersect in various ways. Given that we specifically deal with dances/performances *of writing*, we consider them as an inspiring model of thinking about more self-reflective and flexible ways of writing *apropos* nonverbal forms of expression.

How does writing perform movements in these specific forms of choreography? We have argued that performativity, and therefore hypermedacy, of writing comes to the fore thanks to performative *remediation*, i.e. the re-contextualization and placement of writing activity on a (more or less) conventional performance stage. Reframing of writing gestures and practices through performance art brings to light the otherwise overlooked and seemingly automatic side of writing; the focus shifts to physical experience and visual observation of writing. This said, we assume that there is a performativity inherent to writing, and the performance art only facilitates its unveiling.

To tackle this basic performativity or, more precisely, the eventfulness of writing, we address Derrida's essay "Une certaine possibilité impossible de dire l'événement", originally published in 2003 by the Edition d'Hartman.[96] Derrida opens up his discussion with the question: "Is saying the event possible?" The question highly resonates with our concern with the relation between writing, in terms of textual content and signification, and dance as a live and fleeting event. The event, of course, can be of any kind – historical, artistic, personal etc. However, Derrida's search for an answer starts with an observation of the very event of saying. Regardless of the content, every act of enunciation implies a spatially and temporally situated happening of address. Derrida writes:

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[96] The essay is translated into English by Gila Walker in 2007: "A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event", *Critical Inquiry 33*, The University of Chicago Press, Winter 2007, p. 441-461.

> When you address someone, even if it's to ask a question, before the question is formulated, there must be an acquiescence, an "I'm talking to you, yes, yes, welcome; I'm talking to you, I'm here, you're here, Hello!" (Derrida, 443)

Respecting Derrida's terminology, this "acquiescence" can be considered an event only under strict conditions, which he explains invoking some of the central ideas of his overall work – the gift, forgiveness and hospitality. The event worth of the name only "arrives" if it is totally unexpected or, put in Derrida's words, if it is impossible.[97] Since not every enunciation fulfills this condition, we will refer to the *acquiescence*, which comes before any act of communication, as the *situatedness of speech*,[98] which also applies to our idea of *writing*. The distinction between the situatedness (or event) and the content of enunciation, the latter seen as "naming, describing, imparting knowledge, informing" (p. 445) creates a cleavage inside enunciation, a differentiation that enables movement. Having in mind our quest for the motions of writing, this spatial situatedness of enunciation helps us delineate at least one possible sphere within which writing can move.

By further developing his argument, Derrida finds that the event as such, including the event of saying, principally evades verbal expression:

> ...The structure of saying is such that it always comes after the event. (…) As saying and hence as structure of language, it is bound to a measure of generality, iterability, and repeatability, it always misses the singularity of the event. (p. 446)

The act of saying is, therefore, a kind of a hybrid: an unspeakable situatedness/event that gives rise to speech. Derrida rather turns it the other way around: what really matters about the speech/event relation is that speech generates event when it occurs. Back to our question, Derrida helps us articulate a kind of dancerly trait built into speaking and writing, and independent from what is being said or written.

As the essay continues, Derrida considers the implications of the impossibility of an event to be verbalized. The event dwells in "secrecy and symptomatology", exposes

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[97] And further: "One of the characteristics of the event is that not only does it come about as something unforeseeable, not only does it disrupt the ordinary course of history, but it is also absolutely singular" (p. 446).

[98] Derrida makes clear distinction between this acquiescence to speech and performative speech acts (p. 458). We are certainly not following the line of Austin's theory here.

us to "nondialectizable contradiction" and, therefore, enforces a search for a new logic and new modes of dealing with it. This concerns the unavoidably deficient coverage of events by mass media, as well theoretical discourses and the production of knowledge about events:

> The difficulty is in adapting a consequent, theoretical discourse to modalities that seem to constitute so many challenges to knowledge and theory. The symptom, the "maybe," the possible-impossible, the unique as substitutable, singularity as reiterable, all seem to be nondialectizable contradictions; the difficulty is to find a discourse, that is not simply impressionistic or lacking in rigor, for structures that constitute so many challenges to traditional logic. (p. 458)

Derrida does not explore further whether the acknowledgement of the enunciation's inherent eventfulness and hybridity can help us to face and process contradictions in other types of events – the events that we aspire to grasp, but that seriously challenge our traditional logic. The choreographies of writing embody this cleavage and hybridity of enunciation: its situatedness, potential eventfulness and movement, as well as its production of symbolic and imaginary spaces of verbal expression. Exploring this hybridity might help us to envision what the idea of *writing along dance* – or *saying along event* – brings to dance theory. (And, for that matter, how this idea contributes to the writing of this very text.)

Essential to our view is the idea of *self-reflection*, which might entail a circularity mentioned earlier in the section about creative mediation in the domains of scholarship and theory. Self-reflection is based on the capacity of enunciation to reflect on the very event of its happening, even though this event might remain (or unavoidably does remain) ungraspable by words. One way a person can refer to the acquiescence of her current enunciation is simply to ask herself: "What (else) do I do when I speak/write?" Or, using Derrida's expression: "To which people and circumstances do I say "yes" by this very act of speech/writing regardless of what I say?"[99]

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[99] Is it possible to know the full range of effects of our doing speaking/writing? These are the questions that choreographies of writing ask. The questions might be impossible to answer. If the event – the dance – is unspeakable, then we certainly look into darkness. Yet we discover one thing: that our own speech/writing is far from being clear even to ourselves. There is an "opacity" that we carry with us

Choreographies of writing enact writing with a conscious focus on how it happens, on its performative excess. Embodied inscriptions experiment with writing's gestural and scenic materiality, while lecture performances explore institutional conditions of didactic speech. In all these cases, writing is embedded in a *mis-en-scène* and calls attention to its constructedness, choreography and volatile nature. Embodied inscriptions enact bodies, skills, tools and technologies of writing. The movement of writing that is in action here appears as gesture, i.e. a repeatable and automatized technique performed by literate hands and bodies. When exposed before spectators' eyes – anatomically dissected, kinetically analyzed and dancerly enhanced – these actions reveal surprisingly complex networks of relations beyond the apparent automaticity of writing. The movements flow between bodies and material objects, between the domains of thoughts, words, gestures and graphic inscriptions. Our writing skills are acquired through repetition and habit. However, in choreographies of writing the particular elements of writing activity, such as writing substrates, tools, technologies and bodily interactions, become subjects of experimentation. Each experiment and variation from the habit alters the hypermedial fabric of writing, and thus transforms the occurrence of the textual message. The verbal content intersected by choreography generates different message. Is it verbal? Not really; not anymore. The real question is: can "it" still be considered a message? And how do we process "it"? Certainly by somehow moving along.

Lecture performances deal with different kinds of repetition, habits and automaticity – the one upon which the continuity of educational institutions is based. The conventions are often implicit, but clearly define the modes of appearance of a scholarly text/speech in public spaces within the institutions. The institutional conventions regulate physical movements and spatial arrangements, thereby creating elaborate choreographies of lectures. Just like any other public space, educational scenes and stages are covered with invisible but effective maps, clearly delineating routes along which the texts and human actors move. Such spatial borders contribute to the establishment of authorities, disciplines and points of exchange; they as well contribute to the definition of knowledge. Lecture performances export these conventions from the traditional educational institutions into museums, galleries,

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any time we join a discussion, theorize or present our knowledge. Still, this does not mean that our speech and writing cannot move along this very opacity.

performance venues etc. The conventions are, therefore, re-contextualized and then turned into objects of performative experimentation. They are necessarily transgressed. The movement of writing is realized as displacement and straining of institutional and disciplinary borders. Such movement has physical and spatial manifestation, but it also has symbolic and political implications.

The choreographies of writing embody *writing that moves* and, one can assume, might be able to *move along*, to *write along* nonverbal phenomena, whose excess is unspeakable (and maybe even eventful in Derrida's sense). What enables its movement is its spatiotemporal situatedness, singularity and hybridity – a cleavage that makes writing non-identical to itself, intertwined with other physical and imaginary spaces. Such deferral between content and the situation that contains it at once creates a critical distance for self-reflection and, paradoxically, testifies to an intrinsic inability of writing to grasp the full range of effects of its hybridity. *Writing in motion* is writing that deliberately gives in to the unknown, i.e. that unfolds with awareness that the resulting text comes about always already immersed in and interwoven with its own unfathomable otherness. When it comes to knowledge production, writing in motion reveals that knowledge is necessarily imbued with the unknown and unforeseeable.

Given that writing moves towards the unknown, how can we think about its politics? And what would a hermeneutic of such a heterogeneous and incongruent entity look like? The first question we will briefly try to answer now; the second concerns writing at another level – meta-writing on/along choreographies of writing, on/along events, on/along dance. The next and last section of this chapter is dedicated to it.

André Lepecki addresses the politics of movement in his essay "Choreopolice and Choreopolitics: or the task of the dancer".[100] Drawing from the work of Hannah Arendt, Lepecki defines politics as "a general orientation towards freedom". The figure of the dancer is, according to Lepecki, paradigmatic for such an orientation and subsequent movement towards freedom. Lepecki later invokes Foucault's notion of conformity as well as Rancière's "kinetic theory" of power and the distinction of

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[100] The text was initially published in Portuguese language in 2011, in Brazilian academic journal *ILHA* ("Coreopolítica e coreopolícia"). The English version of the essay is published in *The Drama Review*, Vol. 57, No. 4, 2013, p. 13-27.

politics/police. Both police and politics are regarded as regulations of movements in public spaces. While the police ensures that the citizens respect "predetermined pathways, established routes for circulation", the politics inspires a freer "choreographic imagination". Lepecki writes:

> In contradistinction, we can say that choreopolitics requires a redistribution and reinvention of bodies, affects, and senses through which one may learn how to move politically, how to invent, activate, seek, or experiment with a movement whose only sense (meaning and direction) is the experimental exercise of freedom. (p. 20)

Lepecki's terms *choreopolicy* and *choreopolitics* emphasize the organizational aspects of public movements. Both ways of mobilizing political power are subject to choreography. Choreography maneuvers between the opposite actions of 1) following conventions, habits and repetition and 2) exerting change, difference, challenge and excess. We can imagine the mentioned "established routes" as an invisible map drawn across the whole public sphere. Choreopolice strives to preserve existing demarcations, while choreopolitics playfully transgress borders. We would say that such transgression requires a prior awareness of the existent limitations, a kind of spatial and kinetic thinking. Chorepolitics before all call for awareness of one's own movements, habits and aspired directions. Dance comes as creative negotiation of the borders, as well as a daring initiative and collective engagement.

PART TWO

EMBODIED INSCRIPTIONS:

THE FORSYTHE COMPANY'S *HUMAN WRITES*

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William Forsythe's conceptual interventions in classical ballet

It can start at any point…[1]

Classifications and periodization in modern and contemporary dance do of course carry a risk of mere labeling and masking singularities of individual choreographic works. The markers – such as classical and neo-classical, avant-garde and neo-avant-garde, modernist and postmodernist, modern and contemporary, but also theatrical, performative and dancerly – are being clarified and problematized in comprehensive scholarly overviews of the 20th and early 21st century dance.[2] Michel Bernard, a contemporary French dance theorists, actually argues that the need to historically situate the works of art comes from the desire to fix and conquer what escapes us most in the experience of art, its enigmatic side. So, the classifications come out of "désir d'identification", which is according to Bernard closely connected with the "désir de valorisation". Chronologies reveal our western quest for uni-linear progression ("progression unilinéaire"). Such understanding of time is, however, in contrast with the time experienced while dancing and does not allow us to grasp dance's constitutive qualities. Instead of scholarly holding on progression and linearity (while the artists remain skeptical about such classifications), Bernard invites

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[1] The phrase is a hallmark of Forsythe's dance vocabulary and practice. Caspersen, Dana, "Decreation: Fragmentation and Continuity", in Stephen Spier (ed), *William Forsythe and the Practice of Choreography*, Routledge, London and New York, 2011, p. 93-100.

[2] See for example Sally Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Postmodern Dance*, Wesleyan U.P, Middletown, 1987. Or, Michel Bernard and Véronique Fabbri, « Généalogie et pouvoir d'un discours : de l'usage des catégories, moderne, postmoderne, contemporain, à propos de la danse », *Rue Descartes* 2, No. 44, 2004, p. 21-29. Both texts explore the use of classificatory terms and periodizations as applied to dance.

us to a search for new forms of enunciation that would be able to highlight and restitute temporal experience of dance itself.[3]

In more immediate reactions to contemporary production – dance announcements, reviews, and criticism – the meaning assigned to chronological and clasificatory categories remains much less elaborated and therefore less problematic. Such terms figure here as different type of currency – they resemble to labels, yet not so strictly bound to fixed referents or criteria. In current dance reviews and criticism,[4] classificatory terms do not function as embracing fields or explanations, but rather as a grid that helps us orient in this flourishing art form, at once archetypal and new, broadly explored and yet hardly definable. In the case of the Frankfurt based choreographer William Forsythe, such a grid serves at least to show us in/through which fields "between" and "across" known classificatory landmarks his work resides and moves.

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[3] Bernard concludes that the new way of speaking/writing about art will only be possible when the specialists, theoreticians, critics and public in general get ready to shift the focus and re-discover the functioning of their own sensations, ready to perform a "sensorial scanning" on themselves. In other words, the new creative discourse on art will emerge when judgments about art are replaced with a learning attitude. The recipients are invited to learn about their own sensations and furthermore about "leur propre processus créatif dans le sentir". (The latter is Paul Valery's criterion of what defines an artist; Bernard expects the audience to truly adopt artistic approach). Instead of valorization, a new collaborative engagement re-constitutes the creative process – art ceases to be a subsumed object of observation; it becomes a creative impetus, it affects (and infects) audience with its playfulness. "Les conditions de ma perception doivent finalement se trouver en rapport avec un système de production de sensations de la part de l'artiste." According to Bernard, we should allow dance to literally move us, or to move our thoughts toward our sensorial experience of dance. Instead of sticking with the linear time of expected progression, the critics take part into the multidimensional time of sensorial experiences – they take part in the open play. "…J'aimerais qu'il y ait un grand débat et qu'on parle de notre manière de percevoir, de sentir un spectacle: quel est votre vécu, comment vous percevez ? Ce n'est pas le problème de la valeur, mais des décalages dans la manière de percevoir."

[4] Here I think of current (nonacademic) dance criticism, including performance announcements, reviews and interviews with artists, which significantly impact the reception of presently performed dance pieces. More precisely, I refer to criticism published in cultural sections of online newspapers, TV and radio stations (e.g. *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Flaneur*, and their counterparts worldwide), as well as on specialized websites dedicated to cultural events and festivals (e.g. ballet.co.uk, dancemagazine.com, themovementresearch.org, labiennale.org, festival-avignon.com bam.org, etc).

Forsythe is, then, usually placed between classical ballet and modern dance experiments, and seen as at once ballet savior, deconstructionist and radical transformer. In order to locate his work, the reviews further enlist the binary pairs of neo-classical and contemporary, dance and theatre, performance and visual arts, entertainment and hard-core post-structural thinking, innovation and reformation, politics and fun.

William Forsythe started his career as a ballet dancer in Florida, trained with Nolan Dingman, one of the original dancers of George Balanchine. The founder of The New York City Ballet, Balanchine is widely recognized as the most influential choreographer of classical ballet in the United States in the 20th century, known for his de-emphasizing the plot and foregrounding the dancers' movements in his ballets.[5] The training in Balanchine's style certainly made a great impact on Forsythe's later choreographic work. After dancing in Joffrey Ballet in New York, Forsythe was appointed Resident Choreographer of Stuttgart Ballet in 1976, and few years later, in 1984, he became a director of the Ballet Frankfurt. Over the next 20 years Forsythe created numerous ballet pieces that provided a significant place on the international dance scene both for his innovative approach and for the institution of Ballet Frankfurt. The most significant works include *Artifact* (1984), *Impressing the Czar* (1988), *Limb's Theorem* (1990), *The Loss of Small Detail* (1991), Alie/n A(c)tion (1992), *Eidos: Telos* (1995), *Endless House* (1999), *Kammer/Kammer* (2000), and *Decreation* (2003).[6]

In the early 2000's Frankfurt's municipal authorities wavered in their support for Ballet Frankfurt, requiring from Forsythe to return to more classical repertoire. Forsythe's withdrawal in 2004 led to the foundation of the more agile The Forsythe Company, an ensemble of 18 dancers that further pursued multi-faceted and highly collaborative creative work developed in previous years. The Company is based in Dresden and Frankfurt am Main and financially supported by these cities, as well as by the states of Saxony and Hesse. The greater independence and flexibility of the smaller ensemble allowed the company to broaden the fields of choreographic

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[5] Anatol Chujoy, Phyllis Winifred Manchester (eds), "Ballet in Motion Pictures by George Balanchine," *The Dance Encyclopedia*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1967, p. 645-656.

[6] http://www.theforsythecompany.com/details.html?L=1

explorations towards the areas of performance, installation, video and visual arts, as well as educational digital media.[7] The major works produced by the new ensemble include *Three Atmospheric Studies* (2005), *You made me a monster* (2005), *Human Writes* (2005), *Heterotopia* (2006), *The Defenders* (2007), *Yes we can't* (2008), and *I Don't Believe in Outer Space* (2008).

After 10 years of prolific creative work and extensive international touring, the company announced a change of director that will occur in September 2015. William Forsythe will continue to be associated with the company as an artistic adviser, while the former dancer of Ballet Frankfurt Jacopo Godani is named as the company's new artistic director.[8] Though almost anecdotal and coming from non-written sources, it is interesting for our further discussion what William Forsythe has indicated as one of the main reasons for his withdrawal from the directing position in the Company. During a public conversation with the artist, organized last November (2014) after the performance of the piece *Study #3* in the Parisian Chaillot Theatre, Forsythe explained that his interest in details and subtle movements requires more intimate performing spaces, and therefore can hardly satisfy the commercial needs of big theatrical venues. Hence he decided to rather focus on educational projects addressing dance professionals and interested laics alike, which would also allow him to further explore the possibilities of dance representations and "translations" into other discursive forms and media, by using new technologies.[9]

The interest in alternative modes of dance education was explicitly expressed in the time of Forsythe's transition from Ballet Frankfurt to The Forsythe's Company. When at that time asked what his future work would consist in, Forsythe answered: "Projects that at the moment are more education based. I'm trying to figure out how performance could be a form of *physical education*, or *kinetic education*. If I have to compensate for the architecture of theatre, what would this look like?"[10] So, when the Forsythe's Company started creating new pieces, the thoughts about discursively

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[7] http://www.bam.org/artists/williamforsythe, 25.02.2015.

[8] http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/05/23/william-forsythe-to-no-longer-run-forsythe-dance-company/

[9] Discussion publique entre William Forsythe et le chorégraphe Noé Soulier, Théâtre National de Chaillot, Paris, 06 décembre 2014.

[10] http://www.theartsdesk.com/print/43, Interview with W. Forsythe by Ismene Brown, held in 2003. Emphasis mine – MP.

shaping and transferring knowledge about dance became an integral part of their aesthetic work; both choreography and dance became significantly self-reflexive and in search of additional modes and media of expression. "I keep trying to test the limits of what the word choreography means," Forsythe claimed repeatedly in various interviews.[11] In my opinion, the company's strong interest in *creating knowledge about dance*, along with their high ballet dancing expertise and mould-breaking attitude towards conventions, represent the point of conversion of other foremost traits of the company's work:

- the reflection upon the interaction between choreographer and dancers;[12]
- the development of collaborative approach and recognition of diverse artistic contributions – which includes dance improvisation seen as creative choreographic work, sound and light design and so on;
- the investigation of new ways through which the audience can creatively be involved in the plays;
- the expression and transmission of "kinetic intelligence" and dancers' bodily experience to the audience, as well as stimulation of physical empathy;
- the conception of choreography as at once organizational and discursive work, or in other words, as constant questioning and modification of its own premises.

The creation of dancing knowledge, or less poetically, knowledge about dance, we will name "choreographic thinking", which is close to Forsythe's term "choreographic idea", elaborated in his programmatic essay *Choreographic Objects*.[13] Forsythe identifies his incentive as "education". We will rather avoid using the term education, because it can be misleading in this context. Forsythe's work is not directed toward the creation of schools or any kind of institutionalized scholarship. Neither does it intend to profile its audience by treating them as subjects of education. On the other side, Forsythe is indeed interested in making choreographic thinking recognizable as such, in fixing "choreographic ideas" or concepts, and finally in transferring knowledge about dance into other discursive modes and media. The notion of "thinking" reflects better the processual nature of the activity in question. Thinking

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[11] http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/18/arts/dance/18solw.html?_r=0&pagewanted=print

[12] More about this subject in: Sorignet Pierre-Emmanuel, « 4. Le chorégraphe et ses danseurs : des relations ambivalentes », *Danser*, La Découverte , «TAP / Enquêtes de terrain», Paris, 2010.

[13] http://www.williamforsythe.de/essay.html

does not imply the existence of an already given content that is about to be shared or transmitted; it is an ongoing questioning even in the moments of suspension of what one may have known as choreography or discrete thoughts.

Heightened awareness and explicit questioning of the institutional codes that regulate relations between diverse actors on the contemporary dance scene have led to the postulation and exploration of the political aspects of the Forsythe Company's work. The notable example is the recently created platform *Weaving Politics*, focused on exploring the politics of dance through a series of lectures, conferences and artistic projects.[14] The platform brings together the most significant authors in performance and dance studies, including Peggy Phelan, Andre Lepecki, Mark Franko and Julia Kristeva. At a conference held in Stockholm in 2012, Forsythe's piece *Human Writes* – to which this article is dedicated – was performed as a paradigmatic example of dance's immersion in and reflection upon the contemporary political world in the broadest sense. Furthermore, dance politics is one of the main interests in the work of Gerald Siegmund, one of the German scholars who, together with Gabrielle Brandstetter, mostly explored Forsythe's work.[15]

There is an array of topics overtly thematized and reflected by The Forsythe's Company that are recognized as political. In her text on diverse forms of politicality in dance, Ana Vujanovic distinguishes: 1) political *topics* and open political engagement; 2) politics embedded in *medial, discursive and formal aspects* of performative play, and 3) politically charged *conditions and modes of artistic production*.[16] It seems that Forsythe's engagement with politics manifests itself on all levels mentioned. It starts from the works that thematize current political issues, such as the Iraq war (*Three Atmospheric Studies*) or the treatment of immigrants in Europe (*Alie/n A(c)tion*). Further on, it is the company's questioning and redefinition of the conventional relations between choreographer, dancers and audience, not only on the

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[14] http://www.weavingpolitics.se

[15] Gerald Siegmund and Stefan Hölscher (eds), *Dance, Politics & Co-Immunity*, Diaphanes, Zürich, 2013. Aside from scholarly texts, many actual dance reviews and interviews foreground politics as an important facet of Forsythe's work. E.g. *New Your Times*' interview with Forsythe *Is it dance? Maybe. Political? Sure.* www.nytimes.com/2007/02/18/arts/dance/18solw.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

[16] Ana Vujanović, "Notes on the Politicality of Contemporary Dance," *Dance, Politics & Co-Immunity*, Diaphanes, Zürich, 2013, p. 181-191.

formal level of performance, but also on the level of authority, recognition and creative contribution, which are being reflected against the background of classical ballet education, discipline and material production. Not only are dancers recognized as co-creators, shaping the play with their individual expertise, musicality and acting talents; many of the Forsythe Company's performative installations search for the ways to involve the audience and inspire it to participate in the play.[17] Finally, there is also the awareness of the current art market and commercial needs that influence artistic production, implied in the mentioned reasons for Forsythe's withdrawal.

To sum up, what Forsythe names "physical" or "kinetic" education[18] – most remarkably developed in his *Improvisation Technologies* and *Synchronous Objects* – primarily explores the relations between dance and other media, through which dance can be "understood", and knowledge about it discursively shaped, systematized and transferred inside as well as outside of the professional dance world. The idea of making various aspects of movement and dance perceptible to lay audiences (i.e. to teach their eyes to see the qualities of transient movements) and possible to classify and archive primarily opens the question of dance's discursive qualities, and further of revealing and deciphering the language of dance through other media. These questions are in Forsythe's work inextricably linked with a self-critical examination of all other aspects of dance – formal as much as interpersonal and institutional. That is where the political interest in his work starts.

In this chapter we will analyze Forsythe's Company's "performative installation" *Human Writes*, in which a number of dancers and audience members in physically creative ways re-write *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. The specificity of *Human Writes* is that it juxtaposes the media of choreographed movements on the

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[17] About the co-creative role of the audience in Forsythe's plays see: Gabriele Brandstetter, "Political Body Spaces in the Performances of William Forsythe", in Markus Hallensleben (ed), *Performative Body Spaces*, Rodopi, Amsterdam, 2010, p. 57-75.

[18] Fosythe: "I think what I have introduced is the idea of *intelligent sensation*. I say to the dancers all the time, what you know is what you feel with your body. You don't need to think more, you need to feel, proprioperceptively, more. Dancers are not told that they can consider themselves as sensorially intelligent. From my point of view, there is no more interdiction towards the limits of what ballet sensation can be. So as practitioners of ballet, they can *think deeply into ballet with their bodies*, and find out what the limits of that thinking are." (emphasize mine, MP)

https://www.classicaltv.com/theinformer/didwilliamforsytheinventthemodernballerina

one, and verbal articulation on the other side. Our analysis of *Human Writes* will primarily focus on the relation between dance and writing activity, whereby writing is seen as a physically engaging process of graphical fixing of verbal content. We will observe this relation against the background of Forsythe's general interest in "translating" or "transforming" dance into other discursive forms, as well as his successful merging of dance theory and practice. We will further consider how the way writing is conceived and physically performed in *Human Writes* shapes the idea of "meta-writing" or writing about the performance – i.e. performance "readings", interpretations, critiques. In other words, how the self-reflexive performance of writing anticipates its subsequent verbal processing and takes a position in that regard. Within the reflection upon meta-writing, we will examine the validity and interpretative potential of "political assumption" in understanding William Forsythe's work.

Choreographic thinking: performing art and theory

We choose to start from Forsythe's idea of *choreographic thinking* – knowledge making and sharing, coding and de-coding[19] – as an entrance point to a general overview of his work because a) it encompasses most of the major characteristics of his work and b) it is a topic that connects Forsythe's work with numerous artistic projects that consider artistic production a form of exploration and knowledge making. Many of such projects have marked the last century's art, from avant-garde and John Cage, to situationists and theatre labs, and finally to the most recent conceptual art or "art in the age of culture". The idea is not to place Forsythe's work into a field of certain artistic movement or style, neither to pinpoint the historical influences. The 20th century dance references that we are going to discuss would serve to indicate the active part that Forsythe's work takes in broader discussions about the emancipatory potential of contemporary art.

Avant-garde experiments in the domains of theatre and performance art (from Arteau and Brecht to Richard Schechner) challenge the autonomy of art within society, postulated by mainstream modernism. The questioning of artistic conventions has been accompanied with blurred borders between art and life, the latter understood as a broad spectrum of social and cultural experiences, as well as individual day-to-day existence. A particular disciplinary relation that has been brought to light by avant-garde is the one between art and theory, in terms of abstract concepts or systematic scholarly processing of artworks. Compared to other art forms, dance has remained somewhat aside from this current, given the fact that it had long belonged to the field of entertainment; an activity way too corporeal to be entitled to thinking or

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[19] See *TkH Journal / Walking Theory #14, Self-Education: Self-Managed Educational System in Art*, http://www.tkh-generator.net/portfolio/tkh-14-self-education-self-managed-educational-system-in-art-s-o-s-project/

theorization. Therefore the ideas of dance conceptuality or dancerly/choreographic thinking came to dance later than to visual and plastic arts, or even to performance:

> The experiments with the dance were, in their long twentieth century history, anti-theoretical and if the role of theory appeared, it had pedagogical or poetical functions (Rudolf von Laban, Mary Wigman, Merce Cunningham, Trisha Brown); (…) The generation of choreographers and dancers, which appeared during the late 1990s, conducted an unusual change towards the theoretisation of choreographical and dance work.[20]

The "modernist civil mainstream", according to Miško Šuvaković, took the anti-theoretical stance. It was based on modernist premises that the aesthetic creative practice consisted in a specific material and sensorial engagement with the medium, focused on exploration of its possibilities as well as its limits. The work inside the medium is distinct from systematic thinking; it actually precedes any thinking:

> As far as high modernism is concerned, the theory always followed the creation as the critical and poetical interpretation of a work of art that came into being from non-transparent creative intuitions, which meant that the criticism and theory of art possessed subsequent representational functions in the process of understanding, archiving and valuing the unattainable creative act and its effect, or in other work, its product.[21]

Following the pro-theoretical avant-garde, postmodernism (and its contemporary "post-post" challengers) continued to defy the autonomy of art and question its role in the broader frame of cultural production. Not only has the artistic creation acknowledged its sources in pre-given theoretical concepts, it has furthermore extended the realm of *thinking* by embedding it into the materiality of non-verbal media. When it comes to dance, a breakthrough of concepts in this field was accompanied by the denial of the autonomy of the institutions of dance. The dance

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[20] Miško Šuvaković, "Theoretical Performance," translated by Dragana Starčević, *Maska* 1-2 (90-91), Ljubljana, 2005, http://konferenz.uni-leipzig.de/echo2013/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/suvakovic-THEORETICAL-PERFORMANCE.pdf, p. 6.

[21] Ibid, p. 1.

(post)postmodernism has targeted the "technical fetishism" of classical ballet. In other words the nonverbal thinking is examined through dance:[22]

> The choreographers and performers (Jérôme Bel, Xavier Le Roy, Mårten Spångberg, Tina Sehgala) are interested in the introduction of the conceptually or theoretically constructed positioning into the *rhetorical systems* of modernist and postmodernist dance, but also in the execution of theoretical performances (verbally determined dances, *performances*, workshops, lectures). The role of *theoretical performance* in dance is dramatically obvious since the theory represents the means of attack on technical fetishism of dance as well as on choreographical rhetorical aestheticism.[23]

Šuvaković examines the struggle between pro- and anti-theoretical principles, i.e. between art theory and practice and its shifts through the main modern and contemporary artistic trends. Dance historian Sally Banes finds the relation of art towards life to be the main artistic watershed during and beyond the 20th century.[24] The roots of both mainstream modernism and everything that followed she finds in diverse practices and poetics of the modernist avant-garde. Banes distinguishes: 1) *the purist avant-garde*, "from Manet, Cézanne, and Matisse through cubism and then onto the abstract expressionism of Pollock", whose subject is the artistic medium as such "rather than the world, the flesh, and/or the devil as they exist off-canvas";[25] and 2) *the integrationist avant-garde*, embodied in flourishing forms from Dadaism and surrealism to pop-art, Fluxus and beyond, where art and daily existence intertwine:

> Where the dadaists attempted to dissolve the boundary between art and life by bringing life – in the shape of ordinary, mass-produced urinals, combs, bottle-racks, and snow shovels – into the art world, the constructivists attacked the border from the

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[22] The idea of non-discursive or "non-propositional" thinking is usually associated with neo-platonic philosophy, namely with the activity of Nous in Plotinus' views. See for example Mark Alfino, "Plotinus and the Possibility of Non-Propositional Thought," Ancient Philosophy, 8, 1989, p. 273-284.

[23] Miško Šuvaković, "Theoretical Performance," translated by Dragana Starčević, *Maska* 1-2 (90-91), Ljubljana, 2005, http://konferenz.uni-leipzig.de/echo2013/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/suvakovic-THEORETICAL-PERFORMANCE.pdf, p. 7

[24] Sally Banes and Noël Carroll, "Cunningham, Balanchine, and Postmodern Dance", *Dance Chronicle* 29, 2006, p. 49-68.

[25] Ibid, p 51-52.

opposite direction, attempting to bring art to life by fabricating everyday artifacts with a pronounced aesthetic dimension.[26]

Banes sees the principal channel through which the life mingled with dance in "ordinary mundane movement", a form of *objets trouvés*, clearly distinguished from "perceptibly dance movements". Through that lens Banes examines contrasts and combinations of modernist ballet techniques and experimental dance practices, curiously personalized in the well-known joint projects of Merce Cunningham and John Cage. Contrary to expectations, Banes places the two artists in opposed camps: Cunningham's virtuosic loyalty to the ballet medium reinforces the ballet autonomy and, as such, stands in contrast to Cage's introduction of everyday sound to music and recognition of music outside of the limited artistic domain. Banes identifies Cage's motivation as an "extreme form of aesthetic egalitarianism" – the egalitarianism of sounds – transferred to the perception and experience of art through the collaborative works with Cunningham's dance:

> For Cage the concert-cum-dance is an aesthetic training ground wherein the spectator is encouraged to savor the aleatoric conjunctions (and disjunctions) of sight and sound, in preparation for perceiving afresh the world outside the performance.[27]

Dance experiments and new poetics have flourished from the 1960s onwards, while the ballet has also persisted in its traditional repertoire and techniques (especially dear to Frankfurter authorities). Besides a huge material and financial asymmetry between the two, the division is also marked in terms of theoretical inclinations, conceptuality and choreographic thinking.

The position of the Forsythe Company is rather unique in this regard, since they combine high ballet expertise with a frisky desire to incessantly challenge, defy, deconstruct and overcome it.[28] Forsythe maintains a specific guard towards his predecessors, insofar as he does not reach for the common denial patterns; he instead explores the heritage of classical ballet to its limits and beyond. In other words,

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[26] Ibid, p. 53.

[27] Banes, p. 59-60.

[28] Forsythe: "I've stuck with ballet; it defines a very precise spatial environment" and "I haven't worked my way out of ballet but rather into it", cited in Valerie Lawson, "The man who stood ballet on its head", *Sydney Morning Herald,* 28th of September 2001, p. 16.

Forsythe exceeds the limits without burning the bridges behind. The analysis of movement, comprised in the strong focus on the medium, marks the works of the Forsythe Company. Their performances are extremely daring and technically virtuous. In this regards, Forsythe is a consistent Balanchine student, or following Banes, he is in line with Cunningham. At the same time, strong self-reflexivity, deconstruction of all conventions from formal to institutional, including the power and authority interplays within the company and in relation to the audience, delineate the framework of Forsythe's theoretical/educational project. The objective lies in detecting the agency of all actors and in negotiating rules that everybody is subjected to – a form of Cagean egalitarianism in the sense that before art all are equal: producers, performers and recipients. From one piece to the other, the Company repeatedly re-invents modes of participation, collaboration, sharing, and above all, mutual creative stimulation and respect. Such an approach is significantly different from the performances conceived as provocations, which also aspire to involve the audience. The provocation implies that the participating audience remains re-active, even in the cases when they chose to perform violence and threaten the life of the deliberately passive performer. [29] The provocation excludes negotiations and joint creation of the mutual relationship. The goal of the Forsythe Company, on the contrary, is to create opportunities for the positive and creative agency of the audiences in the production of the atmosphere of joyful and collaborative work.

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[29] Such are for instance the paradoxical turns in the works of Marina Abramović, to mention one of the most well-known artists. In the paradigmatic *Rhythm 0*, the artist stands on the stage completely motionless, leaving a set of objects – including a knife and a loaded gun – available to the audience. The audience members gradually free themselves to apply the objects on the artist's body. They become increasingly violent and ready to cause harm in order to provoke Abramović's reaction. The provocation turns to be mutual. The artist is exposed physically, whilst the audience unpremeditatedly exposes their violent drives and desires. Nevertheless, despite the ultimate power to harm and to even take one's life, the audience has no control over the meanings of the performance. Although performed with a clear awareness, their reactions are forced out into the open by the carefully designed setting. See: Teresa Brayshaw and Noel Witts, *The Twentieth Century Performance Reader*, Routledge, London & New York, 2014, p. 20. "Provocation is a constant characteristic of Abramović's work, both in the political and the cultural sense, and she is therefore in a line of artists, from the Futurists to Stelarc who have used deliberate provocation to persuade their audiences to reflect on issues."

the Forsythe Company explores how art can be lived on the spot. The targeted spectator is the one who at first is least interested in the performance.[30] The aim of their work is to awaken the interest in dance and to involve the audience in an intimate dancing experience. That is why the large venues cease to satisfy the needs of the performances and rather disclose the whole industry as exploitative. That is the reason for the use of microphones to enhance the sound of dancers' breath. And finally that is why the creation of new collaborative settings is one of the strongest creative drives of the Forsythe Company's work in recent years.

The Forsythe Company's art seduces everyday life through play and playfulness. The overall experience of dance history is not opposed to that. On the contrary, the extensive knowledge about dance allows an ever greater versatility, flexibility and adaptation of the play to the needs of diverse participants. Forsythe uses a huge repertoire of movement exploration in order to create an initiating experience for their audiences, which would in a perfect world extend beyond the stage, into daily life. Choreographic thinking and the production of knowledge about dance are a significant part of Forsythe's pro-theoretical educational project. In following text, we will discuss them in this light.

<div align="center">*</div>

Two of Forsythe's works are particularly "educational", aiming to explicitly demonstrate the basis of choreographic thinking: an interactive installation and dance film *Improvisation Technologies*, first published in 1994, and a joint project with Ohio State University's Computing Center and the Department of Dance, which in 2009 resulted in an interactive website named *Synchronous Objects*. The underpinning idea of choreographic thinking, as well as the broadest implications of such projects on the notion of choreography, have been summed up in Forsythe's programmatic essay *Choreographic Objects*.

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[30] Discussion publique entre William Forsythe et le chorégraphe Noé Soulier, Théâtre National de Chaillot, Paris, 06 décembre 2014.

1. Choreographic writing: *Improvisation Technologies*

Improvisation Technologies introduces Forsythe's original approach to (generation of) movements.[31] The interactive CD-ROM was initially intended for the Forsythe Company's purposes in the training of new dancers. In subsequent years it has been re-edited (in 1996, 1999 and 2011), broadly exhibited around the world and won prestigious awards. It proved to be very effective as a didactical tool.

Forsythe is thought of as an innovator and someone who broadened the vocabulary of ballet. Forsythe's contribution, however, is not an inventive appendix to ballet; it rather explores the material basis for any dancing movement that he metaphorically describes as "writing" in space.[32] His conception of movement implies a re-thinking of both the dancing body and space. Erin Manning, inspired by Whitehead's process philosophy and the work of Deleuze and Guattari, points out the "ontogenetic" potential of movement to create events and material relations as well as to switch our experience of time.[33] Manning's ideas apply to dance movements in general, as well

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[31] William Forsythe, *Improvisation Technologies: A Tool for the Analytical Dance Eye*, CD-ROM and paperback edition, Hatje Cantz, 2012. The subtitle of the first edition read *Self Meant to Govern* (1994)

[32] It is precisely the idea of writing through which we are going to approach the interplay between verbal and textual on the one, and gestural and performative aspects, on the other side, as it is realized in *Human Writes*.

[33] In *Politics of Touch*, Manning develops her idea of *ontogenesis* in order to "resist a repositioning of the body as ontological." She explains: "Sensing bodies in movement are ontogenetic. They are ontogenetic because they are always in genesis, in a state of potential becoming. An ontology of the body presupposes a concrete category of Being. Yet, bodies evolve in excess of their Being: they become. Becoming-bodies signal a certain antagonism within politics of the state. (…) Ontogenesis is a slippery category: it is that which is not yet. I cannot write the body in advance of its creation, of its movement. The body will remain in an antagonistic relation to its accountability." Erin Manning, *Politics of Touch: Sense, Movement, Sovereignty*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2006, p. xxi. Manning further develops the idea of ontogenesis in terms of "the malleability of concepts that move, the expressivity of thoughts as they become feelings, the ontogenetic potential of ideas as they become articulations" (*Relationscapes: Movement, Art, Philosophy*, The MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 2009). The concept of ontogenesis, both in terms of bodily becoming and thought articulation, frames Manning's analysis of the work of William Forsythe in her online published texts: *Propositions for the Verge: William Forsythe's Choreographic Objects*, and *Choreography as Mobile Architecture* http://www.senselab.ca/inflexions/volume_3/node_i2/manning_1.html, http://www.performanceparadigm.net/index.php/journal/article/viewFile/134/133

as to creative movements that she detects in other art forms. What is characteristic for Forsythe is his conscious choreographic engagement in revealing the movements' ontogenetic potential at work. With the help of the metaphor of writing, borrowed from broad cultural practices, Forsythe marks dance's ontogenetic capacity and processes.

In the phenomenological theories of text in recent decades, the focus has shifted from the establishment of fictional worlds as "intentional" objects (hermeneutics and reader-response theories) to the research of new media and discursive materiality, based on Heideggerian view of text as *techné*.[34] While Ingarden, for instance, decidedly argued that physical characteristics of texts do not interfere with the pure activity of consciousness in the construction of intentional worlds,[35] the pioneering theories of new media emphasized the importance of the material form and technology of text production in understanding of their meanings, poetics, and cultural significance.

Forsythe focuses on the embodied practice of text production. In his work, it is the deleuzian ontological/ontogenetic emergence of matter, forms and rhythms that is identified as writing. Writing is at once a creative choreographic/improvisational work, and a creation of new spaces, objects, ambiances, and potentialities. By foregrounding the physical activity of writing as ontogenetic, Forsythe performs a move from a phenomenological universe to materialist multiverses of writing.

Another specificity of Forsythe's conception of movements, as opposed to traditional balletic modes of bodily postures and displacements, is his pluricentric view of dancing bodies. Gabrielle Brandstetter names this process "defiguration", [36] and it first applies to bodies, but also heavily affects dancers as subjects and identities. Forsythe's *Improvisation Technologies* do not privilege limbs, neither necessarily need to start from the body's center of gravity; they can be initiated in or "written"

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[34] Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in David Farrell Krell (ed), *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, Harper, San Francisco, 1993. p. 311-341.

http://www.nyu.edu/projects/nissenbaum/papers/heidegger_concerningtechnology.pdf

[35] Roman Ingarden, *Das literarische Kunstwerk. Eine Untersuchung aus dem Grenzgebiet der Ontologie, Logik und Literaturwissenschaft*, Max Niemeyer, Halle, 1931.

[36] Gabriele Brandstetter, "Defigurative Choreography: From Marcel Duchamp to William Forsythe", *TDR*, Vol. 42, No. 4, The MIT Press, 1998, p. 37-55.

with absolutely any imaginable outer or inner organ or tissue of the body. Forsythe's general choreographic organizational principle – "it can start from any point" – applies as well to minute actions and moves.[37] The body is freed from a stable center of movements, so that the movements can be generated, consecutively or simultaneously, from any point on or under the skin, which can be seen as the body's temporary centers. How does such a view impact on dance rhetoric and the "figure" of the dancing body? According to Brandstetter, Forsythe "abandons the notion of *figure* as unity", seen as a physical form of the body as well as a figure in dance rhetoric, i.e. "the unity of a movement figure and its rules of combination in the vocabulary of ballet". Brandstetter explains:

> In subverting the art figure of their ballet bodies – molded into instruments of presentation *through laborious procedures of inscription* – the dancers become "transformers" of themselves. A dissolving of the outlines of and connections between the parts of the body occurs through the continual isolation of single parts and their conventional coordination. Screwings, twistings, and multiple initiation centers of movement impulses allow the bodies to appear as *polymorphous figures.* (…) The unity of figure, even as "operative unity," is not given.[38]

Forsythe's improvisation techniques design the dancing body as heterogeneous, "polymorphous", and in constant process of transformation. At the same time, by "writing" imaginary spots and lines, or by indicating planes and geometric solids, the movement establishes the space. The moving body is not just an object in space; it performs space. Or, as Ismene Brown put it: "It's almost a movement of space (…) changing the line, giving the line options, rather than making lines."[39]

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[37] W. Forsythe: "Now, a point is not necessarily a geometric point in space; it means any categorical observation. The object, a condition, language: anything can be the place where something can start. Nothing has to start in any particular way that's determined by history or practice or anything. It means that it starts from anywhere. (…) [It is a point of departure] to a movement, or a larger organization, like a choreography." From "William Forsythe in conversation with Zachary Whittenburg", *Movement Research*, 2012. http://www.movementresearch.org/criticalcorrespondence/blog/?p=5213

[38] Gabriele Brandstetter, "Defigurative Choreography: From Marcel Duchamp to William Forsythe", *TDR*, Vol. 42, No. 4, The MIT Press, 1998, p. 47. (emphasis mine – MP)

[39] "Q&A Special: Choreographer William Forsythe Over Time", interview with William Forsythe and Dana Caspersen by Ismene Brown, http://www.theartsdesk.com/print/43
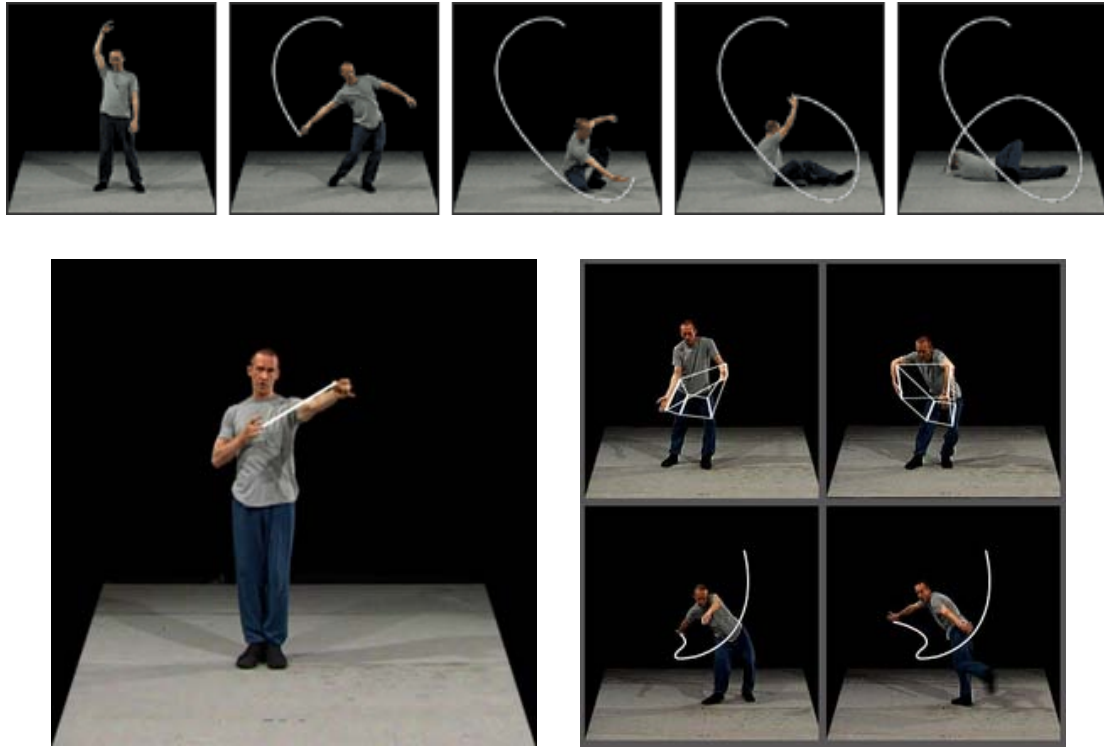
3.1. William Forsythe, *Improvisation Technologies* CD ROM (1994)

Improvisation Technologies had no big ambition of creating a new methodology. The movements are rather simple "visualization of space", intended to help dancers to increase awareness and distance themselves from learned techniques and habits, which have unconsciously shaped their instinctive moves. For the lay audience, these easy-to-perform movements introduce playfulness in mundane activities. In both cases, the techniques enhance awareness of an open-ended interaction between body and space – it is a training of the eyes and sensorial apparatuses to better perform and/or read "writing" of dancerly texts, whose spatiotemporal unfolding creates specific ambiances.

1.1. Writing: movement improvisation and video recording

Despite its modest initial objective, *Improvisation Technologies* demonstrates two basic features of Forsythe's project of kinetic education: the necessity of a multimedia approach to movement analysis and the metaphorical link between dance and writing. The illustration of Forsythe's improvisation principles and decoding of movements rely upon video recordings, interactive digital programming ("computer generated and

animated shapes, forms and figures"), as well as upon verbal accounts. The accompanying spoken explanations include suggestive instructions for the imagination and mental visualizations that, according to Forsythe, induce inventive bodily reactions. In another video – a documentary following the creation of *The Loss of Small Detail* – Forsythe uses particularly suggestive images to explain his improvisation to a visiting student:

> I got there through geometry, for example, by following something. I had this curve here, observed it and traced it like that [demonstrates a movement with his arm - MP]. I know where my heart is and I try to trace it [i.e. the demonstrated line – MP] with my heart. Then I have an association, for example where the heads of my kids are…[40]

The given instruction proposes the following procedure: a dancer observes a line or a shape in her environment, then picks a point on/within her body which she is going to consciously focus on, and finally moves in such a way as if she draws or "writes" the observed line with the selected body part. In this concrete example, Forsythe chooses his *heart* as a temporary "starting point" for his movement; the rest of the body is temporarily peripheral to that conscious focus, but free to move on its own. Following the inner logic of Forsythe's associations, the next line to be written will be an imaginary touching or caressing of *his kids heads* again with his physically sensed heart, or with some other body part. The imagined lines and particular body parts are just "starting points" for complex movements to occur, the movements that involve the whole body, along with the vivid imagination and sensorial experience of the movement. What Forsythe calls "writing" – embodied drawing of imaginary lines – actually embraces complex sensorial, cognitive and imaginative experiences. Furthermore, following Brandstetter's ideas, through the ongoing motion, the moving body constitutes and constantly transforms itself, while at the same time generating the performative space. The "writing" of a line starts form a selected "point" (a

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[40] William Forsythe and Dana Caspersen, *From a Classical Position & Just Dancing Around?*, DVD, 77 min, NVC Arts Studio, 2007.

Valerie Lawson describes similar procedure: "He takes this position one step further by what he calls disfocus. The dancers don't gaze out, but "stare up, roll their eyes back." Like a hypnotist might suggest, Forsythe asks them to "put [their] eyes in the back of [their] head." Their movement becomes "very water-like, shaky, unusual and serpentine"." Valerie Lawson, "The Man Who Stood Ballet on Its Head", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28th of September 2001, p. 16.

temporary center) and simultaneously creates the event of complex interplay between body and space.

Improvisation Technologies elegantly represent the geometric shapes produced through the described procedure: Forsythe's body is the sole living and moving entity, illuminated against the shallow, dark, box-like background. The subsequently added white lines enhance the contrast, while movements are accompanied with verbal explanations. Altogether, the video recordings significantly help a viewer visualize and understand the suggested improvisation techniques. The video material is intended to teach and inspire movement experiments of its audiences: trained dancers willing to overcome their learned and automatized moving habits as well as lay enthusiast interested to explore and consciously experience new possibilities of movements. Still, how does this visual recording relate to dance improvisations performed by Forsythe as well as by dance students who would use this video as a didactic tool? In other words, how does the *Improvisation Technologies* DVD contribute to Forsythe's idea of writing?

Seeing movement as writing establishes a kind of equality (or reciprocity?) between the performance that is being recorded and the process of recording. Recording/notating dance and writing about it, therefore, appear as writing about writing, or meta-writing. Dance called "writing" acts as a mirror that reflects the activities of both notation and interpretation, and reveals the performance (kinetic, sensorial, affective activity) constitutive to all signification, symbolization or creation of discourse, i.e. to abstract activities usually implied in the idea of writing.

The improvisation named "writing" establishes a pluricentric, "defigured" body, which simultaneously creates multiple lines, shifts its conscious focus from one body part to the other, experiences and constantly transforms itself while interacting with space. Forsythe's writing primarily appears as a complex heterogeneous event, with an end in itself. Such writing does not progress linearly, with the sole aim to produce a lasting text. Although the imagined and illustrated lines/shapes could be understood as dynamic embodied hieroglyphs, they are not really meant to be read/deciphered. Contrary to the common understanding of writing, here the lines and abstract ideas of geometric shapes serve as a tool to generate movements, space and events.

The short video recordings, however, focus precisely on these lines. The improvisations are presented in a form of a catalog (or, for that matter, a hieroglyphic alphabet), grouped under the following categories: rotating inscription, U-ing and O-ing, room writing, inscriptive modes, reorganizing, and spatial recovery. The set of video recordings document the variety of improvisation techniques, metonymically represented by diverse "written" lines and shapes. Although they visually represent the entire moving body, highlighted are only the "starting points" of complex movements: body parts and lines on which a dancer temporarily focuses. The internal embodied experience of movements and their ontogenetic potential remain untranslatable into the graphic medium. Compared with conventional idea of writing, the DVD should be understood as a counterpart of a graphic text, while the embodied experience is the counterpart of the inscribed meaning (logos) that is supposed to be transmitted and sensually and kinetically decoded by dancing viewers. Truly, it is the experience of improvised movements that Forsythe aims to pass to the audiences.

If movement improvisations are considered as writing, the DVD becomes a kind of meta-writing. What connects the two media is apparently the idea of trace visually represented by lines. At the same time, different status given to lines marks the difference between movement improvisations and film: while in dance the lines serve as instruments and "starting points" for embodied movements, their visual representations are the central theme as well as objective for the making of the DVD. The DVD corresponds to the idea of writing as recording, fixing, documentation and duration. Ultimately, the DVD recordings comply with the metaphysics of presence. Contrary to that, Forsythe's decision to name his improvisation techniques "writing" challenges such metaphysics and brings an original dancerly contribution to grammatology. The improvised embodied writing precedes the recording and forms its content. That said, the embodied writing can play a subversive role, confronting every attempt to fix and record a certain content with its own technological limitation and, more importantly, with its transient material production.

1.2. Writing: incision, inscription, caressing

The abstract lines in *Improvisation Technologies* will evolve into strokes and readable letters in some of the latter Forsythe's performances and installations, e.g. *we live*

here (2004) and *Human Writes* (2005). In these performances, movement improvisation indeed produces words and even the entire texts, thus providing an artistic contribution to the discussions about writing gestures and ever changing technologies of text production. Nevertheless, when we consider writing primarily as a production of (readable/decipherable) texts, its material and experiential aspects become a secondary topic. Furthermore, the material and embodied process of production functions as a mere instrument to document textual content/information.

Derrida's grammatology denies the speech the status of a direct, un-mediated expression and transmission of meaning/idea/logos that, over the centuries of history of philosophy, made speech being considered as prior to writing. Liberated from this metaphysical hierarchy, both writing and speech appear as media whose specific materiality shapes expressed meaning through e.g. the tone of voice, accentuation, spacing, homophony etc. The materiality of the medium can alter or *differ* the discursive meaning, but itself refuses to be "translated" to language. In a way, Forsythe's emphasis on movement might be interpreted as a kinetic and embodied contribution to grammatology: spacing, homophony and hieroglyphs leave the page and attain new corporal and dynamic forms.

The individual techniques proposed by Forsythe might resemble an alphabet, consisting in a set of lines, shapes and bodily movements. However, these techniques are not accompanied by any rules of sequencing and, therefore, not supposed to constitute a new language of movements with a specific morphology and syntax. Quite the contrary. Besides de-centering and de-figuration of dancers' bodies, the aim of such improvisations is also to deconstruct the language of classical ballet in terms of 1) ballet vocabulary and structure and 2) the literacy of dancers' bodies acquired through long-lasting ballet trainings. Forsythe's improvisation techniques do not intend to help dancers unlearn ballet, but to overcome the habit of being unconsciously moved by what was inscribed into their bodies through years of a specific ballet practice. The improvisation, thus, implies a special kind of awareness of movement languages a dancer might incorporate and produce. Yet, the improvisation is not a language in itself.

When such improvisation is called writing, does it add something new to grammatology? Can free and intentionally unstructured movements – anti-linguistic

in a way – reconnect with written words? How can we then describe the interaction of the two means of expression? And, finally, is this all a completely peculiar topic or it can open a new perspective on our thinking of writing as a broad cultural practice, e.g. writing of a personal letter, an academic article, or a law?

Improvisation Technologies suspend text and focus exclusively on the movements. That, at least in an experimental setting, allows us to consider movements of/as writing as free from any textual *telos*. On the one side, instrumentalized writing is the one believed to be secondary to language/logos, as well as any writing that neglects its own production, gestural and embodied aspects for the sake of a graphic record. On the other side, dancerly writing appears as self-sufficient; it maps and designs (or in fact de-figures) both body and space, on the spot. Metaphorically, we would describe such writing as *caressing*.

To explain this we will compare Forsythe's descriptions of improvisation techniques with Kafka's paradigmatic image of writing presented in his story *In the Penal Colony*. In one of the video lectures, Forsythe opposes dancerly writing to writing "with a knife or with a pen". His following instruction says: "Use the surface of your body and imagination of how the lines can form and manifest. *Not as if you are holding an instrument of writing*".[41] The instruction suggests that a dancer's body is not a mere instrument, neither are its movements reduced to handling another technological tool. The body is rather a medium of writing that writes and is being written at the same time. It at once produces the complex traces (invisible to bare eyes but visualized through digital intervention in the video) and background substrate that receives them. Consequently, dancerly writing, aware of its embodiment, is *heterogeneous* and *multidimensional*; it allows for multiple events to happen simultaneously.

Instrumentalized writing, on the contrary, is linear, one-directional and teleolgocially oriented toward text. This applies to any writing reduced to content/information meant to be fixed, preserved and, at a later point, received and effectuated. Information is effective when it is etched in memory – human or artificial – and thus incorporated. Paradigmatic image of such writing we find in Kafka's story *In the Penal Colony*. The

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[41] William Forsythe, "Inscriptive Modes", *Improvisation Technologies: A Tool for the Analytical Dance Eye*, CD-ROM and paperback edition, Hatje Cantz, 2012. (emphasis mine – MP)

colony of prisoners and their guards, founded on an isolated island, develops a peculiar culture centered around a writing machine, which at once pronounces a verdict and implements it on a prisoner's body. In our interpretation, the story discloses the violence involved in the undivided determination of fixing a line, followed by an absolute objectification of the receiving end of writing. The phenomenology and mechanics of writing in the penal colony correspond to conventional writing with a pen. However, the specificity of colony's writing machine is that it does not write over an inorganic substrate, but a human body. The result of a one-directional inscription (with knives/needles in this case) is a complete dissolution not only of figure and identity, but of life itself. Such inscription objectifies and abuses not only the living writing substrate (a prisoner's body), but also the sophisticated executing machine. The community's dynamic and purpose are reduced to employment and technical maintenance of the writing machine as an effective means of production and incorporated reception of information.

In his verbal instructions, Forsythe evidently plays with this Kafkian reference. His idea of dancerly writing implies that body ceases to be an object and instrument: employed in the "machine of writing" or passively exposed to cultural inscriptions. A dancer's body plays all roles in the writing show, and plays them as an active agent. The fact that it is being decentered and defigured, thus, does not have violent implications; it rather frees the body of any incisive delineation.

In conventional one-directional writing, everything except the message is instrumentalized, while the dispersive, atmospheric and palpable qualities of the performance of writing remain completely excluded from the picture. These qualities are foregrounded in the above cited Forsythe's illustrative example of one of the improvisation technologies: he encourages dancers to be aware of their whole bodies (the limbs as well as the internal organs including heart), then to move along an imagined line, e.g. as if touching one's kids heads.

This is just an example that Forsythe informally gave to a student in a dancing studio. Given the context, it is hard to believe that the image was premeditated; more probably it just came intuitively. Nevertheless, it provides a tender metaphor for what can motivate dance improvisation understood as writing. The image suggests that writing recognized as autonomous from external objectives – free to move in multiple

directions – can perform warmth and tenderness. Consequently, the perspective broadens and incision transforms into caressing.

In *A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event*,[42] Derrida draws attention to the situation and event of verbal exchange. Derrida recognizes the happening of a certain kind of acquiescence prior to any speech – an unspoken "yes" addressed to one's possible interlocutors. Although unmarked and, in terms of time, simultaneous with speech, this initial silent "yes" is a condition of any communication. Such acquiescence directs people's attention towards one another and actually contributes to community building.[43] *Improvisation Technologies*, by experimentally suspending text from writing, actually point out to other qualities of the situation in which writing happens. Later on, the performative installation *Human Writes* brings the text back to Forsythe's idea of writing and further explores the possibilities of creation of temporary communities. In *Human Writes*, dancers' performances are truly aimed to produce texts – the individual articles from *The Declaration of Human Writes*. Nevertheless, thanks to the choreography designed by Thomas and Forsythe, the physical performances (of writing) remain the autonomous forces in creation of the encounters among dancers, as well as between dancers and audiences. *Improvisation Technologies* are significant for our topic because they foreground this autonomous performative aspect of writing – its ability to shift the focus from the exchange of (verbal) products toward the exchange of mutual recognition. We use the metaphor of *caress* to represent the transient moments of recognition of space and inclusive attention generously given to all surrounding objects, human and non-human. *Improvisation Technologies* inspire us to see writing as a heterogeneous event that certainly requires different type of reading – at once cognitive, imaginative and performative. One possible political consequence: opposed to writing reduced to a production of text as a form of goods (or, in Derridean words, *oeuvres*), writing-as-caress resists assignment of a change value.

Finally, we would like to add that although *Improvisation Technologies* place body and movement in the center of presented techniques of "writing", they do not point to a specific bodily intelligence complementary with one's mental capacities (Merleau-

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[42] Jacques Derrida, "A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event", *Critical Inquiry* 33, The University of Chicago, Winter 2007, p. 441-461.

[43] Further in his essay, Derrida reflects on community through his idea of gift.

Ponty). The idea is not even to draw attention to gestures and present body as a part of writing technologies in a post-human landscape (Flusser). *Improvisation Technologies* rather reveal a possibility of different choreographies of writing – choreographies that involve creation of events, encounters and temporary communities based on collaboration rather than exchange. They implement movement improvisation into the idea of writing broadly understood as a process of signification and discourse making. The question is what choreo-political effects of such implementation would be. We will look for answers in our analysis of *Human Writes*.

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Improvisation Technologies show us that choreographic thinking inextricably links dancing writing on the one, and technological and multimedial meta-writing, on the other side. The two are not being "translated" one into the other; they together constitute the same choreographic idea. Rather than consisting in a determinable content, the choreographic idea calls for an open-ended exploration of the heterogeneous and multidimensional relation between the moving body and space, as well as between movement and other discursive forms. The results are not to be imagined in the form of a specific "figures" or language of movements, but in the form of liberating experience of dispersion of habitual centers and determined vectors of inscription.

2. Writing about writing: *Synchronous Objects*

The three years project *Synchronous Objects* (2009-2011) was realized in collaboration with an interdisciplinary team from Ohio State University. In 2005, Forsythe made a video performance *One Flat Thing, reproduced*, based on one of his previous dance performances, now adapted for video recording. The characteristic of the dance lies in its geometrical structure consisting of a number of tables, neatly aligned in parallel columns and rows, on which at any particular moment a group of dancers perform simultaneous actions. *Synchronous Objects* gathered specialists in graphic design, computer programming, geographical mapping and statistics, as well as visual artists. The objective was to collect as many data from the video as possible,

to quantify the underlying organizational structures and principles, and to present the results visually in the form of what is called *synchronous objects*.

The processes of visualization could rely on the existing tools from the digital mapping and charting repertoire, but often also required fashioning of completely new devices and techniques to visually catch transient phenomena that usually escape the naked and untrained eye. The created maps, charts, complex images and interactive programs function as diagrams in the sense of Deleuze and Guattari. Massumi and Manning explain that "diagrams exist in the dimension of the virtual and help to construct, 'a real that is yet to come, a new type of reality'".[44] *Synchronous Objects* indeed constructs new types of reality. It does not simply "translate" dance (or dance video) into another medium/language. Manning rather employs the term "transduction" or "transductive recomposition".[45] Manning's terms actually refer to the cuing system and choreographic structure inherent to the dance of *One Flat Thing, reproduced* itself. In my opinion, the interaction between dance, video and digital synchronous objects brings the same kind of choreographic action to another level. Video and synchronous objects are neither *representations* nor *translations* of dance as a specifically evolving "event-time"; by trying to reflect its structure, or in Manning's words its "mobile architecture", these objects rewrite dance writing. They transduct dance into objects that encapsulate, reflect, or in fact co-construct the same choreographic idea.

Still, the important difference is that, unlike dance, these objects are certainly synchronous and fixed, and do preserve choreographic thinking in the objects technologically designed in a way that allows exact reproduction and scholarly approaches at different times and from different perspectives. They can therefore serve as references for more traditional forms of knowledge. In other words,

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[44] Erin Manning and Brian Massumi, *Into the Diagram: Two Public Lectures*, December 13, 2011, Artspace, Sydney, http://archive.turbulence.org/blog/2011/12/11/brian-massumi-and-erin-manning-sydney/

Brian Massumi, "The Diagram as Technique of Existence: Ovum of the Universe Segmented", in *Semblance and Event: Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts*, MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 2011, p. 87-104

[45] Erin Manning, "Choreography as Mobile Architecture", in *Always More Than One: Individuation's Dance*, Duke U.P, Durham and London, 2013, p. 99-133.

Synchronous Objects can be considered as "meta-writing", an emanation of dancing writing that incorporates its structure as well as its ontogenetic potential, movement impetus and creative call. Being forms of such "meta-writing", dance notations and interpretations are certainly prone to being affected/infected by dance's mobile and movement/thought/idea inciting qualities. [46]

Synchronous Objects seeks to grasp the choreographic idea that has been materialized in dance and in its video recording. Nevertheless, this does not imply a platonic vision of this idea as a stable abstract content, independent from its material form. The idea is being created through the process of de-coding the choreographic structure of *One Flat Thing, reproduced*. So, the complex choreographic architecture of the dance piece, its multiple systems of organization, cuing of dancer's actions, contrapuntal patterns are being digitally dissected through a construction of objects that become works of art in their own right.

Synchronous Objects emerges from the intersection of arts and sciences, and testifies to the need for dance documentation and subsequent theoretical reflection. Though the rule of the game consisted in formal technological transpositions, the authors of the project explain that the goal in creating these objects was directed toward community: "to engage a broad public, explore cross-disciplinary research, and spur creative discovery for specialists and non-specialists alike." In other words, their objective is to encourage further creative engagement and transformation – a further dance of meta-writing. One of the project leaders, Norah Zuinga Shaw, writes: "Because we focused on the dance as a choreographic resource – rather than scoring it for the purposes of preservation – we were empowered to take this rigorous process of data collection into new creative spaces [...] to generate new possibilities for ongoing creativity and research, both in the studio and in the lab (2009)."[47] Once again, the emancipatory idea of sharing knowledge about movement, dance and choreographic

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[46] "Choreographic thinking is the activation, in the moving, of a movement of thought. It expresses itself not in language per se but as the pulses across embodiments and rhythms, the durations and spatializations that create a 'contrapuntal composition of complex relationships, patterns, and trends (Palazzi 2009)." Erin Manning, "Propositions for the Verge. William Forsythe's *Choreographic Objects*", INFLeXions, No.2, January 2009, http://www.inflexions.org/n2_manninghtml.html

[47] Cited in Erin Manning, "Choreography as Mobile Architecture", in *Always More Than One: Individuation's Dance*, Duke U.P, Durham and London, 2013, p. 103.

organization avoids the production of stable content. It is being fully implemented through a creative and playful engagement of the audience.
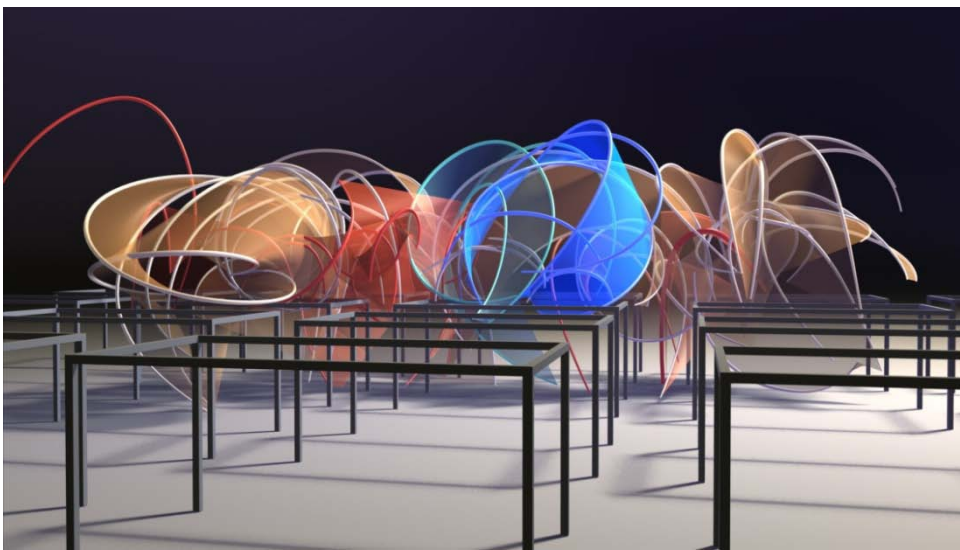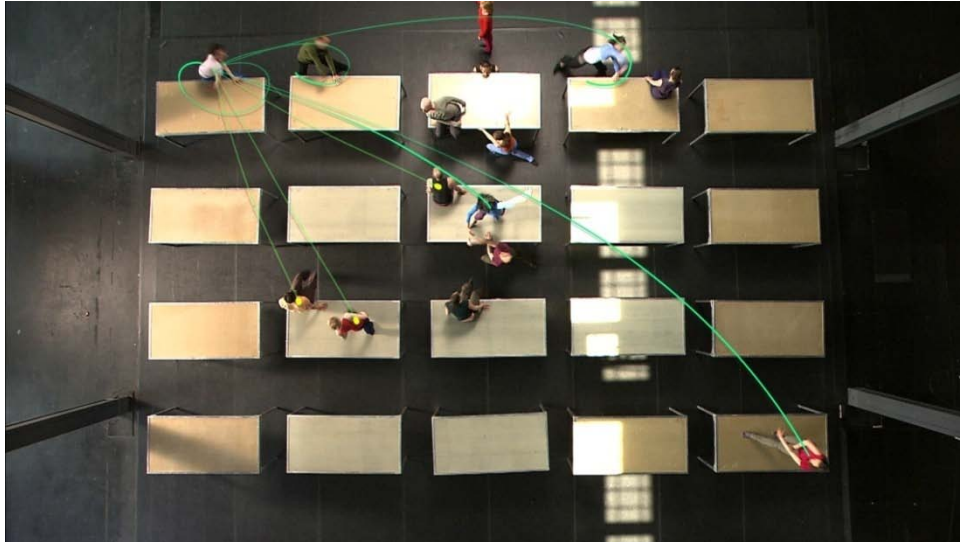
3.2. The Forsythe Company & ACCAD Ohio State University, *Synchronous Objects* (2009-2011)

3. Choreographing meta-writing: *Choreographic Objects*

Forsythe's essay on *Choreographic Objects* points to the "crises" not only in ballet, but more broadly in choreography. According to Forsythe, choreography was traditionally associated with dance, as an organization of dancing bodies in space. His essay announces, however, that choreographic principles can function beyond the traditional materialization of dance, i.e. beyond the presence of dancing bodies:

> Choreography and dancing are two distinct and very different practices. In the case that choreography and dance coincide, choreography often serves as a channel for the desire to dance. One could easily assume that the substance of choreographic thought resided exclusively in the body. But is it possible for choreography to generate autonomous expressions of its principles, a choreographic object, without the body?[48]

Although Forsythe restrains from clarification of what conditioned such an insight, the pieces of choreographic objects that he creates show that it has a lot to do with the change in our understanding of technology.[49] One should be careful not to jump too easily to conclusion that new technologies – in whatever forms or interfaces they appear – as cyborgs, robots, or avatars – are going to replace human bodies, even in ballet. The idea is rather that, in the naissance of new forms of controlled and aestheticized movements, the old-fashioned tools, including organic human dancers, wooden stage or simple material requisites, need to be rethought as forms of technology. One of the consequences is that the bodies cease being focal points on the stage; if they are present, they appear as dependent, integrated parts of stage technology. In a way, dancing bodies become just bodies at work, contributing to common tasks, which individually frees them from being spectacular – individual bodies of dancing stars. The acknowledgment that the bodies are unnecessary for the choreography does in a way imply that bodies become redundant in the emergence of new technological fields to which choreography independently moves. By the same move, the bodies are exempt from the traditional requirements that dance choreography imposed to them. Moving bodies prove not to be mere objects of choreography aimed to please the viewers; they become "desiring bodies" that use choreography as a channel for their impulse to dance.

Forsythe's view on technology is by no means nostalgic: "[t]he irretrievability of the choreographic enactment, though possibly engendering a nostalgic thrill perhaps also reminds the viewer of the morbid foundations of that same sentiment".[50] Forsythe is primarily interested in the playful and creative potential of new technological tools and paradigms. Thus, he conceives the *choreographic object* as a new form of

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[48] William Forsythe, "Choreographic Objects", http://www.williamforsythe.de/essay.html

[49] See: Stamatia Portanova, *Moving without a Body: Digital Philosophy and Choreographic Thoughts*, MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 2013.

[50] Ibid.

choreography that better reflects new possibilities. It is a choreography that becomes capable of overcoming transience and of materializing itself in durable material traces – i.e. in *objects*.

Durable objects – including *Synchronous Objects* discussed here – are more than a choreographic alternative to dance. They can be used as a-temporal or synchronous ground on which temporal event of dance can be projected, and thereby preserve the structure otherwise manifested through transient movements. Besides being new modes of choreography, choreographic objects have the capacity to document less durable choreographic forms. Unlike video or photography that catch the moments or perspectives on choreography from the outside, choreographic objects are themselves choreographed. Being an integral part of the play, they record not only particular instances of the performed event, but intend to grasp or to incorporate its inner structure (as it happens in the moment of their emergence), to make it visually perceptible and possible to archive.

There is a potential here that especially inspires Forsythe's further exploration of choreographic objects. Dance, as an ephemeral art form, has a chance to get veritable testimonies that would preserve its intelligible essence – the choreographic idea:

> The choreographic idea traditionally materializes in a chain of bodily action with the moments of its performance being the first, last and only instances of a particular interpretation. The idea's enactment is not sustained and cannot be repeated in the totality of its dimensions by any other means. As poignant as the ephemerality of the act might be, its transient nature does not allow for sustained examination or even the possibility of objective, distinct readings from the position that language offers the sciences and other branches of arts that leave up synchronic artifacts for detailed inspection. This lack of persistence through time, like the body itself, is natural and suspect at the same time.[51]

If it were possible to make dance accessible for study in the way other forms of knowledge allow for detailed and repeatable scrutiny, the benefit would be twofold. First, the languages of movements could be established as systems of distinctive units, which would allow us to understand and treat movements as intelligible forms of expression. Second, dance as an art form that was in western cultures traditionally

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[51] Ibid.

seen as based on raw-sense and illiterate bodies, and thus relegated to simple entertainment, could finally be recognized as a legitimate mode of knowledge production. Many of the Forsythe Company's performative pieces (including *Human Writes*) fall under the category of choreographic objects. They represent the instances in Forsythe's search for manifold manifestations of the choreographic idea, designed to finally make choreography accessible for systematic study, and maybe blur the border between its performance and scholarship:

> A choreographic object is not a substitute for the body, but rather an alternative site for the understanding of potential instigation and organization of action to reside. Ideally, choreographic ideas in this form would draw an attentive, diverse readership that would eventually understand and, hopefully, champion the innumerable manifestations, old and new, of choreographic thinking.[52]

To sum up, *choreographic objects* are performative pieces – Forsythe also calls them *performative installations* – that seek for durable objects of any kind that would emerge from choreography and incorporate its inner structure. Their heterogeneous nature, consisting in both choreography and material "objects", can best be understood through some examples. So, *White Bouncy Castle* (1997) creates a surreal setting in form of a huge inflatable bouncy castle, in which dancers and audience meet and share the moments of weightlessness, and the joy of free movements.[53] *Scattered Crowd* (2002) is an installation taking place in spacious halls of the Frankfurter Messe and various other museums that visitors gradually fill with helium balloons: "an air-borne landscape of relationship, of distance, of humans and emptiness, of coalescence and decision".[54] In *You Made Me a Monster* (2005) the audience members create sculptural configurations made of paper pieces representing parts of human skeleton. The sculptures "similar and contrasting, static and dynamic, object-like and organic –

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[52] Ibid.

[53] www.williamforsythe.de/installations.html?&no_cache=1&detail=1&uid=30
"WF: It's not reserved for children. It's not in itself childish, there's nothing childish about physics or ballistics. The trajectory of where you go, the parabolic experience, you travel on a parabola, at the very top of it, there's a tiny instant of weightlessness, and you begin to accumulate this. Dancers experience this all the time. So what we experience bouncing is a fragment of dancer reality. You feel it at the top of the bounce." http://www.theartsdesk.com/print/43, Interview with W. Forsythe by Ismene Brown, held in 2003.

[54] www.williamforsythe.de/installations.html?&pid=4&count=22&no_cache=1&detail=1&uid=22

form the creative tension of this multimedia room installation".[55] The recent *Black Flags* (2014) stages two industrial robots programmed to wave two huge black flags in a choreographically complex way that is supposed to be identically reproduced in various spaces and settings. "The waving flags translate the digital algorithm that controls the robots into a series of gestural movements in space that appear controlled, unpredictable, weightless, and measured at one and the same time".[56]

3.3. W.Forsythe, *White Bouncy Castle* (1997)   3.4. W.Forsythe *Scattered Crowd* (2002)

3.5. W.Forsythe, *You Made Me a Monster* (2005)   3.6. W.Forsythe, *Black Flags* (2014)

Human Writes (2005) is also such a performance – choreographic object. The projection of movements into durable traces is being accomplished through writing gestures. If choreographic writing from *Improvisation Technologies* is seen as a metaphor borrowed from everyday life and from the cultural practice of writing, then *Human Writes* brings together the two domains of this elliptic comparison: dancing improvisation on the one, and common gestures of writing on the other side. In other words, the performance materializes the metaphor of writing by staging the bodily

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[55] www.williamforsythe.de/installations.html?&pid=4&count=20&no_cache=1&detail=1&uid=31

[56] www.williamforsythe.de/installations.html?&pid=4&count=2&no_cache=1&detail=1&uid=62

activity of writing that at the same time engenders choreography and corresponds to the conventional practice of writing.

How is the theme of writing related to the split between dance and choreography? And, further, to the application of choreographic principles to objects beyond bodies, and to new technological domains? *Human Writes* stages handwriting or body-writing – i.e. choreography realized through literate human bodies. The only movement of writing that can be choreographed as a kind of dance is the one in which bodily actions shape the signs – letters, words, sentences. It is writing that is seemingly raw and deprived of technological mediation. (Typing, on the contrary, lets the writing device – a typewriter or computer – control and equalize the form of letters.) Hand-writing stands for apparent directness and absence of mediation, and therefore symbolizes the traditional equation between choreography and dance. According to Forsythe, contemporary choreography is not anymore limited to the organization of dance; it organizes other objects and technologies. Following this parallel, hand-writing – like dance – turns to be just one form of writing choreography. In other words, with broadening of the meaning of choreography, broadens the understanding of writing as a complex medium/process of mediation.

Choreographic objects, as a broader concept of choreography, transcend dancerly writing: they move from dance to a broader understanding of choreography which includes notations as well as other types of meta-writing or technological processing of choreography (e.g. *Synchronous Objects*). Once again, installations such as *Human Writes* demonstrate that meta-writing – or writing materialized as graphical objects/text – is subject to choreography. This time, it is choreography in the broader sense, expressed through choreographic objects. It is a choreography that transcends dance in the traditional sense; that even transcends the need of human bodies on stage.

4. From choreographic thinking to knowledge obect(ile)s

William Forsythe's *choreographic thinking* has an emancipatory aim. The choreographic practice and kinetic dancerly experience are more than just a way to come to cognitive or non-cognitive insights. The will to emancipate involves the practice of sharing and the idea of *knowledge*. Following our analyses, we distinguish

two models of knowledge that figure in Forsythe's work and are closely connected with his conception of "objects". One defines knowledge in terms of a *transmittable content* which does not necessarily need to be cognitive and verbally expressible, but can also be sensorial, affective and emotional. The other model of knowledge can be defined in terms of *impulse or stimulation to action* – the movement/choreography initiates further movements/choreographies, in different media. Such knowledge is not a subject of *translation* between media. The process at work here can rather be described as *transduction* of one whole complex and heterogeneous realm/entity into another complex realm/entity.

The essay *Choreographic Objects* reveals Forsythe's quest for choreographic counterparts to scientific "synchronous artifacts" available for "sustained examination". He seeks for synchronous and durable choreographic expressions that would allow and even initiate further intelligible and creative engagement. In Forsythe's text the desired follow up is clearly defined as "examination". So, there is something in choreography that has to first be preserved and then deciphered and explored – something that has potential to persistently provoke questions. Such a view assumes that the choreographic knowledge, besides manifesting itself as performance, also offers for examination certain transmittable *content*.

Forsythe's work further shows that choreographic knowledge is being designed and "synchronized" through the application of other media in the creation of "objects" – synchronous and choreographic. Alongside their durability, both kinds of objects are meant to incorporate the structure and quintessence of choreography. The objects are at once examinative, because they de-code and re-code the choreographic content, and inventive, because they create new complex realms. Manning goes as far as to claim that their inventiveness is *ontogenetic*.[57] In any case, the inventiveness of such objects opens the question of the nature of choreographic content that is being examined by them. Is it a set of ideas that can be reflected upon through different media, including the medium of text as well? Or are the ideas substantially conditioned by the medium of expression, and therefore never fully graspable in other media? Or are they just temporary and unstable concepts that can be experienced but not preserved? Is the choreography a unit that can be broken down into elements and analyzed? Or is there

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[57] See the discussion above, p. 15.

a heterogeneity and complexity that has to be grasped as fully as possible? How could that be achieved?

According to our interpretation, Forsythe's pieces show that the objects intending to grasp choreography in a kind of auto-reflexive way and not to merely record it prove to be choreographies themselves. This means that the action is at least as important as the content. Choreography happens, in the form of dance in a conventional sense or in the form of objects that come into being through action and initiate further actions. Objects incorporate choreographies; they *are* choreographies.

The specificity of *synchronous objects*, such as the ones emanated from *One Flat Thing, reproduced*, lies in the fact that they come after dance performance and dance video. So, they are spatially and temporally distinct from the choreographic works that inspired them. In that sense, synchronous objects represent any kind of creative meta-activity that comes after choreography and is initiated by it. Therefore, the notation or hermeneutic activities which intend to register and explore choreography should be considered as synchronous objects that are themselves choreographies in their own right.

Choreographic objects, the pieces played by the Forsythe Company, point out the processual and creative aspects of *objects* more plastically. In choreographic objects, choreographies and material objects meet on the stage, producing heterogeneous staged events. The objects, in the sense of synchronous material "things", do not come afterwards, produced by a completely new action and choreography. They emerge on the stage, as an integral part of choreography, or rather as one of its modes of expression. Emerging synchronous objects – such as balloons, fantastic skeletons, or hardly readable inscriptions of *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* – become actors on the stage, equal to bodies or movements. Choreographic objects are hybrid staged events that include transience alongside duration, movements alongside traces, processes alongside results, and settings alongside events. Consequently, the very idea of "object" is being reconceptualized. The objects are not only synchronous, such as diagrams open on our computer screen that we can repeatedly look at, at different times. Objects are not "things" in the traditional sense of the word.[58]

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[58] See: Bill Brown, "Thing Theory"*, Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 28, No. 1, Autumn 2001, p. 1-22.

A propos Forsythe's work, Erin Manning uses the term "objectiles":

> When an object becomes the attractor for the event, it in-gathers the event toward the object's dynamic capacity for reconfiguring spacetimes of composition. (…) *The object becomes a missile for experience* that inflects a given spacetime with a spirit of experimentation. We could call these objects *'choreographic objectiles'* to bring to them the *sense of incipient movement* their dynamic participation within the relational environment calls forth.[59]

Manning brings to light the potential of objects to project themselves beyond their material borders into emerging events. Using the metaphor of "missile"/projectile, she coins the term "objectile". Manning highlights the creative potential of objects to incite movements, experiences and choreographies. Objects are active and operative settings, with their specific agency. A cardboard, a mirror, a balloon or a bouncy castle, all are everyday objects that initiate interaction.

In *Human Writes*, the text of *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* hangs on the wall of the performance venue, and at the same time, it is being scribbled on numerous papers. The text is the object – at once material and signifying – that precedes and conditions the possibility of *Human Writes'* particular choreography.

After claiming the everyday nature of Forsythe's objects, Manning does not explore further their origin. She is interested in their potentials and agency, but does not open the question of their production. In many of Forsythe's choreographic objects, the material objects in question indeed appear as complete and already given, like for example the bouncy castle. In certain cases, it is the way these objects come to the stage that is the main performative event: the audience members bring the balloons and choose where to place them, or they compose unique skeletons out of paper-bones provided for them. However, even when the objects are part of the stage, their off-stage production can be an implicit theme of performance. Such is the case of *Black Flags*. The materiality and distinctiveness of two industrial robots is highlighted by their significant weight and the fact that they are concreted on stage (fixed with steel reinforcement and concrete). Nevertheless, the robots perform their role of moving huge and heavy flags only thanks to computer programs that shape their moves. And

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[59] Erin Manning, "Propositions for the Verge William Forsythe's *Choreographic Objects*", INFLeXions No. 2, January 2009, http://www.inflexions.org/n2_manninghtml.html. (emphasis mine – MP).

these programs prove to necessarily be site-specific. Namely, in order to achieve smooth movements of the flags the qualities of air circulation specific for the concrete venue need to be calculated into the computer algorithms. Consequently, besides being more than material, the robots are also in the process of becoming.

Based on these examples, we would argue that in Forsythe's conception of objects one of the crucial aspect is their coming into (staged) being. The objects could not be considered as a starting point of an action, which anyway "starts from any point". The objects are current material cross-sections of an ongoing transformative activity. The objectiles work in two senses – they are both being projected and hold a projecting force. This is in line with Forsythe's idea of choreographic writing. Choreographic objects are traces, elements of action and its residuals. Object(ile)s are in a state of continual emergence; though they are synchronous, they are never fully completed. They are also signs, standing for the action of their own production, referring to the diachronic reality of their creation.

Synchronous objects are not as complex as *choreographic objects*. They lack a diachronic dimension. The idea of *object* is anyway affected by what Forsythe finds out and demonstrates through choreographic objects. In synchronous objects we could still seek for content of choreographic thinking; choreographic objects draw attention to diverse modes, domains and scopes of knowledge. The conceptions of knowledge not limited to content actually foreground emergence, production, complex constellations and interactions of heterogeneous actors etc. The objects come into being through these actions and further initiate them.

At once performances and installations, the object(ile)s of knowledge include synchronous objects, their production as well as the events and activities induced by them. All together they form the new, post-dance concept of choreography, which permeates all involved media. This concept of choreography also challenges all objects that we otherwise consider to be artifacts, encapsulated knowledge, cultural testimonies. Choreographic objects, therefore, do not create knowledge reduced to content, e.g. the knowledge stored in ballet practice and in the history of its choreographic practices and paradigms. That is, the knowledge that would be worth to preserve and "examine". Choreographic objects seek to develop knowledge according to the principles of choreographic thinking. Such knowledge consists in the creation

of settings for actions, for movement research, its possibilities, freedom and media. It reveals that all artifacts are ontologically heterogeneous, and are composed of events.

Choreographic knowledge also involves participations and the sharing of experience. Dance and choreography create conditions for participation, contribution, empathy and common experience of dancers and audience. The knowledge is not substantive and static; it cannot be stored in archives. It is the impulse to move that is being transmitted – as inspiration for the audience, or as initiation into meta-writing, meta-creation, meta-performance, and meta-choreography. The knowledge is transmitted as a possibility, or an insight into possibilities to extend the space and to move differently. It is a kinetic experience of co-creation and contribution in ontogenesis.

In Forsythe's work, the idea of knowledge evolved from *Improvisation Technologies* to *Choreographic Objects*, from teaching the freedom of movement to choreographic explorations of "objectiles". It is a spectrum, ranging from stronger emphasis on content to demonstrations of heterogeneity and stimulation to action. What remains constant however is the idea of de-figuration, multiple centers and vectors, use of other media, hybridity, the will to involve the audience, as well as self-reflection and, last but not least: the metaphor of writing.

Performative installation *Human Writes*

1. Texts & writing in the Forsythe Company's work

Choreographic objects highlight the heterogeneity of choreography which embraces diachrony and synchrony, the ongoing activity and its product, the action of (choreographic) writing and the resulting inscription. The performative piece *Human Writes* stages the activity of writing as textual production, combining the media of text and performance. Given that in Forsythe's poetics choreographic writing is not a mere metaphor, but a type of bodily inscription in/of space, *Human Writes* does not simply materialize that metaphor through performance. The piece, instead, brings together and juxtaposes the two ideas of writing, the one that we experience in everyday life, involving literacy and the production of textual artifacts, with Forsythe's idea of choreographic writing which de-figurates, liberates, and transforms the body and space.

Speaking is common to many of the Forsythe Company's performances, ranging from articulate narration (e.g. *Yes We Can't*, 2010) to trans-sensical simulations of verbal communication (*Angoloscuro*, 2007), often with electronically distorted voices. Diverse material forms of texts appear in numerous pieces – as complex scores for dance improvisation (*Alie/N(a)Ction*, 1992),[60] instructions for the audience (*Instructions*, 2003), installations (*Choreographers Handbook* and *Wirds*, 2011, *Behaupten ist anders als glauben*, 2009), or performative compositions with ready-made letters (*Heterotopia*, 2006).

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[60] "We each started by choosing a page from the book, 'Impressions of Africa' by Raymond Roussel, picking a word or phrase, freely associating away from it to some other word that struck us and then making a short gestural movement phrase based on that word." Dana Caspersen, "It Starts from any Point: Bill and the Frankfurt Ballet", in Senta Driver (issue editor), "William Forsythe", *Choreography and Dance*, Vol. 5, part 3, 2000, p. 28.

3.7. *Choreographers Handbook* (2011)

3.8. *Wirds* (2011)

3.9. *Instructions* (2003)   3.10. *Heterotopia* (2009)   3.11. *Behaupten...*, (2009)

The gesture and procedure of writing appeared for the first time in the hybrid ballet *we live here* (2004), the last piece performed by the Ballet Frankfurt:

> Apart from moving, the dancers also have to act, sing, mime, and draw, which they do with increasing self-confidence. Dancers press their bodies against the back wall, a piece of black chalk in their hands, leaving marks whenever they move. Slowly the phrase 'Reason is Content' appears, before the wall is pulled backstage.[61]

[61] Gerald Siegmund, "On Monsters and Puppets: William Forsythe's Work after the 'Robert Scot Complex'", in Steven Spier (ed.), W*illiam Forsythe and the Practice of Choreography. It Starts from Any Point*, Routledge, London and New York, 2011, p. 31.

Some of the procedures discovered in the rehearsal process for *we live here* sparked the exploration of writing activity in *Human Writes*, a year later. The dancers improvise coming to the wall – a large vertical inscription space – in anything but straightforward ways. The contact between body/chalk and wall involves helping or blocking other dancers. The movements are highly repetitive until, line by line, some readable scribbles come out. A whole nest of lines is needed for each letter, while extremely variegated series of movements produce every line. The unconventional uses of chalk, discovered here, will serve as potent generator of movements in *Human Writes*.

Human Writes is one of the Forsythe Company's choreographic objects. Therefore, the simultaneity of action and its product applies to both ideas of writing enacted in the piece. In terms of 'conventional' writing and texts, a copy of *The Declaration of Human Rights* is placed on the walls of performance venues. The same text further reemerges on the stage arranged as a grid of tables on which dancers operate. Each dancer has a task to rewrite one sentence from the *Declaration*, while at the same time creating physical obstacles to her/his own writing. So, the readable text appears on some of the tables in the cases when the dancers' trials to write turn out to be particularly felicitous.

As for *choreographic writing*, the physical tasks and improvised movements stem from the *Declaration*, creating a specific setting and bodily inscription in space. In addition to fleeting choreography, the synchronous objects are generated in the form of more or less readable inscriptions which increasingly populate and materially transform performative space. In both versions of writing, the pre-text of the *Declaration*, as well as its more or less successful re-inscriptions, function as *objectiles*. The objects that are at the same time textual and performative show that textuality and performativity, rather than being discrete opposite poles, create a continual scale or field. Textuality and performativity are not the exclusive qualities of texts and performances respectively. They are only two of potentially numerous simultaneous qualities (or media) of objects seen as *objectiles*. In other words, the objects that are not seen as still images, but through a longer exposition that includes their coming into being, as well as their agency to transform the context and influence further actions.

In *Human Writes*, the objects that are being projected materialize themselves in the texts in-progress, the ones that are being written by dancers on stage. The articles from the *Declaration* are being re-written, repeated. It is a form of Derridean *iteration*, with the "differance" consisting in the specific materiality of a new script, and even further, in its specific choreography. Or, in Manning's words, the differance involves a whole new "evolving ecosystem", or "complex environments that propose dynamic constellations of space, time and movement".[62] The *differance* is "ontogenetic". The words and phrases written on stage figure as intentional objects – phenomenological, semantic and hermeneutic. In a word, objects to read. At the same time, and not less importantly, they are traces of writing, of involved physical energy, effort, sweat, ache, and kinetic ingenuity. The piece *Human Writes* literally demonstrates Forsythe's "writing choreography" – the event of writing, a material and even ontological hybrid. In other words, object(ile)s are hybrid, in their occurrence as well in their potential for action. When it comes to text as material object, its hybridity embraces the level of intentionality together with material, performative and sensorial experience. Included are sensual, affective, kinetic, contextual, and ambience qualities. The list is open-ended. In short, *Human Writes* juxtaposes and intertwines the conventional idea of writing (with an instrument, linear, text-oriented) with Forsythe's idea of choreographic writing.
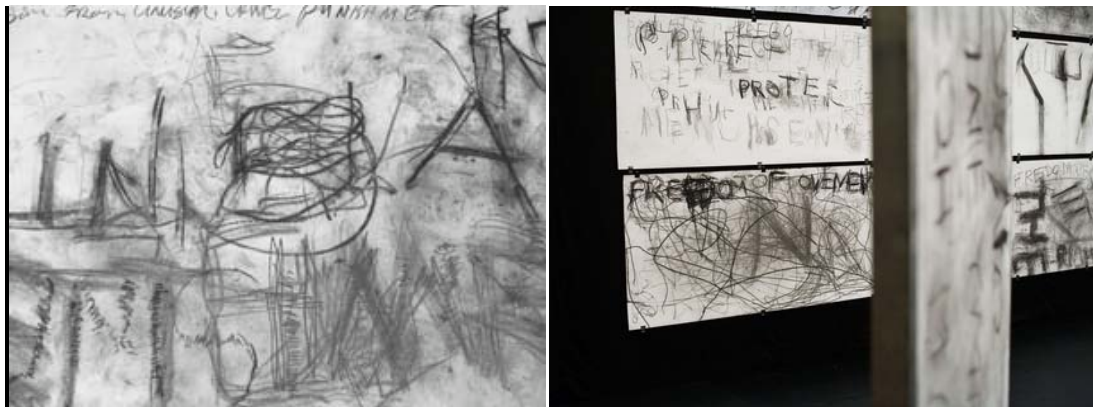
3.12. *Human Writes*, selected inscriptions hanging on the venue's wall

According to our interpretation, the main theme of *Human Writes* consists in a complex relationship between 'conventional' and choreographic writing. The

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[62] Ibid.

performance was premiered in 2005 as a joint project of law professor and human rights activist Kendall Thomas and the Forsythe Company. The rule of the game was to truly rewrite the individual articles from the *Declaration*, each of them on one of 40 to 60 tables (depending on the staging), initially neatly aligned but increasingly disordered in the course of the performance.

3.13. *Human Writes*, the stage at different points of the performance

Prior to performance, dancers chose their favorite articles from the *Declaration* as well as the language in which they were going to write. Then they lightly wrote short texts on the paper covering their tables, applying the automatic actions of their literate hands. The task of the performance was to rewrite, or rather to overwrite thus prepared text, over the course of two and a half to four hours (again depending on the staging), this time employing the whole body in complex physical actions. The actions were not limited to individual bodies; oftentimes they involved several dancers, tables and tools, organized in unique constellations and mechanisms of action.

Each dancer created her/his own procedures and strategies of writing, following one general and utterly paradoxical rule: *that the actions simultaneously lead to and impede leaving graphic traces on paper*. What was positively formulated as experiment in *we live here*, took a form of a paradoxical requirement for contradictory and conflicting action in *Human Writes*: concurrent striving and inhibition. The difference of writing in these two pieces is not so much technical as it is temporal. The time of writing in *Human Writes* stretches over a couple of hours, and the performativity of the piece highlights the conflicting directions embedded in complex writing actions. A physical drama was needed to make the utterly repetitive movements interesting for both the performers and spectators. The inevitable

resistance of matter and physical limitations, encountered in *we live here*, were amplified in *Human Writes* through conscious bodily sabotage. Basically, the dancers were to create systems of counter actions: the ones directed to produce adequate contacts of black chalks and white paper surfaces (dots; strokes; straight, curved or broken lines that would form parts of prewritten letters) and the others aiming by all means to hinder the graphic realization of such contacts.

The antagonistic roles were sometimes played by different performers – dancers and interested audience members – as in the record Gerald Siegmund made about his experience of the performance:

> A young dancer, Pipo Tafel, asks me to help him. As I write, he prevents me from writing. Equipped with a charcoal pencil, I begin to overwrite the letters on the table with thick black lines while the dancer grabs my arm and pulls it away. As I write he hits my arm heavily, performing an act of violence on my body. (…) To redress the balance, we exchange roles later on.[63]

More often, however, the *agon* was internalized, forcing individual bodies to at once strive and bind themselves, to constantly push beyond their physical limits. Such is Sigmund's other example:

> At other tables, a performer is tied up in ropes, hands behind his back, holding a stick of charcoal in his mouth as if he were gagged. His head is pressed onto the table where he is trying to write with his mouth.[64]

Siegmund recognizes the violence and labor of these activities and clearly links them with the content of *The Declaration of Human Rights*, primarily aimed to protect people from violence and exploitation:

> Considering that we are dealing with text from the Declaration of Human Rights this does not seem to be an insignificant act. (…) In the context of the performance, the ropes, originally designed to create a certain functional mechanism that makes

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[63] Gerald Siegmund, "Negotiating Choreography, Letter, and Law in William Forsythe" in Susan Manning and Lucia Ruprecht (eds.), *New German Dance Studies*, University of Illinois Press, Chicago, 2012, p. 202.

[64] *Ibid*, p. 202-3.

writing more difficult, take on different meanings that range from bondage to actual images of torture.[65]

However, in the interviews that I held with dancers, several of them claimed that the physical mimicking of suffering was not part of the choreographic rules; moreover, it was explicitly not recommended by the two authors of the choreography. The justification and potential sense of this authorial decision will be discussed in the next section. At this point, I would underline the primary intention of "making writing more difficult," as well as the openness of such performances for diverse interpretations that do not necessarily privilege the text of the *Declaration* (and moreover its mainstream humanistic interpretations) over the staged performative action.

Writing is made difficult when its automaticity breaks down; when seemingly direct and natural moves are being intersected with obstructive acts. Conventional writing is being estranged, whilst the automatic actions are revealed as just one way of mediation between "intentional" content and graphically materialized signs. Strangely enough, the performance of *choreographic writing* embraces *conventional writing*, as one of its themes, yet makes it almost impossible to achieve. The choreographic rule of the performance breaks down all the conventions of the conventional practice of writing, thereby opening up for analysis its tiniest elements. For writing to smoothly function, there needs to be a physical automatization that conceals its physical performance. We are never as aware of our writing/typing movements as when we first learn how to do them. The transmission from thoughts to written signs implies disguise or overlooking of the physical, technical and performative mediation, i.e. the performative activity of writing. The exclusive focus on the textual content entails disregard of performative qualities of writing. Therefore, in the case of *Human Writes*, the choreographic writing, despite apparent impediment of the production of readable texts, actually enhances the awareness of the complexity of the very act of writing.

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[65] *Ibid.*

2. Description of performative actions

The performers devotedly analyze all material, corporeal, kinetic, spatial, relational and contextual aspects of the material production of signs by using human bodies as instruments. Nevertheless, following the idea of choreographic writing, the potential multi-dimensionality of bodily/spatial inscription prevents bodies from being reduced to mere tools of writing. The bodies instead become its medium and active agents. Each dancer's internalized drama manifests through his/her playing a double role: the bodies alternately surrender to and counteract imposed instrumentalization. The emerging inscriptions combine the text of the *Declaration*, as an 'intentional' object, with more or less readable traces of experimental and conflicting physical activities.

The huge diversity and ingenuity of the dancers' strategies reveal what we take for granted when we write. In a way, they revive the pre-literal stage of one's engagement with writing. Writing is unbound from its one-directional determination, and this consequently opens it up for play. The dancers demonstrate a copious multitude of playful options. The writing surfaces lift up from the horizontal to the diagonal and vertical positions. The chalk traces are being applied from above, from below, or from various sides. The tables are fixed and the chalks moved by various body parts. Or the other way around: the dancers manipulate table surfaces to pull them over fixed chalks. The chalks produce lines by dragging across the paper, but also press against it, gently touch it, fall down, roll over, scratch or crumble. Absolutely all body parts are involved. Sometimes, a dancer's entire body functions as a stiff writing tool moved by others. The bodies are free or tied up, standing, sitting, lying, clinging, hanging, falling, sliding, pressing… They curl up or overstretch. The dancers write with one body part at a time, or use several of them in simultaneous writing on different surfaces. The moves go from wide to tiny and hardly perceivable; the applied force ranges from very harsh to moderate to gentle. The actions are performed individually or a number of dancers gather together to form complex writing mechanisms.

The performance reveals and deconstructs hidden physical mechanisms of hand- and body-writing. It brings to the forefront the ruling physical forces that shape both the body and textual outcome: efforts alongside resistances; steadiness alongside

movement flux; binding and freedom; tension and relaxation; positions and relations; repetition and variations; resistance to gravity and free play with it.

Vilém Flusser distinguishes diverse technologies of writing as shaping forces of our civilizational mindsets: carving in stone and clay, engraving in wood, coating parchment and paper with ink, impression and imprinting of lead letters on various substrates, typing on typewriters and keyboards, etc. According to Flusser, each of these technologies, accompanied with a specific writing system, has influenced the ways in which different historical epochs and cultures conceived time and dealt with the information produced and stored in writing. In terms of writing tools, *Human Writes* is limited to paper, chalks, tables, ropes and bodies. That does not prevent, however, abundant possibilities of their use, far beyond the scope of known and broadly exploited technologies. Writing by applying the dark substance on white surface, or writing by removing the coal powder until the white letters appear. Writing occurs in form of freshly drawn letters, but also as erasing, writing again, and writing aside. Writing over an already written text creates specific performative palimpsests. Direct application of coal on paper sometimes alters by use of an intermediary – bodies or objects serve as carriers of coal powder, which further stamp the letters on paper. Writing thus occurs as *multilayered* and *multidirectional*: written traces spread on papers and tables as well as on dancers' clothes and skin.

In early stagings, the dancers inclined to perform highly demanding physical tasks. The engagement with tables was excessively muscular and often dramatic. The bodies were engaged in a constant exploration of weight, width, textures, frictions, firmness and fragility of all involved objects. Other bodies were examined as parts of writing mechanisms – its motors, objects, mediators, obstacles, navigators and interpreters.

The texts are broken down into pieces – into individual words and letters, and further, into strokes, points, movements and procedures that produce infinitesimally small marks. Lines constitutive for letters turn into geometrical objects which can be seen as sets of points or colored surfaces. Each element could become an entrance point into a new geometrical dimension. An individual letter did not need to be limited to a single appearance/copy; its shape could be repeated multiple times, over the same lines, or the copies spread across the available surface.

The five dancers interviewed confirmed that there was no final shape of the text they were striving to achieve. The performance consisted in ongoing writing, a potentially infinite activity. There was no inherent trait of the inscription/text that would make it being considered complete. The performance ended when the time determined beforehand was over. The dancers could, on will, abandon their work in order to join others elsewhere, or continue the same work the following day. They could as well take over the temporarily or permanently left works of others. The readability of the signs produced was certainly set as an ideal, yet the performative procedures were not supposed to become automatic in order to achieve it. In cases when the procedures would turn out to be easy or repeatedly successful, the dancers were to come up with a new challenge. What makes all described techniques being writing is dancers' unquestionable aim to write perfect sentences (but not at the cost of automatization). Nevertheless, striving for perfect readability was just one of the conflicting forces on the stage. Given the difficulty of the obstacles imposed, it was possible to achieve the readability only with the help of chance. Most of the inscriptions, however, testified to numerous failures, which were legitimate parts of the game. The texts produced more or less randomly combined successful and unsuccessful signs. As a result, the aesthetic quality of the piece shifted from the material objects produced to the performance of writing.[66]

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[66] The authors of the performance decided to select certain inscriptions and expose them on the venue walls. Most of the interviewed dancers described this decision as contradicting to the idea of the performance. Such a selection implied that there was a difference in quality of the outcome of writing activities, i.e. that certain papers turned out to be more appealing or representative than others. Furthermore, some of the inscriptions were offered on auction sale in the aftermath of some of the first stagings of the performance, in order to raise money for non-profit human rights organizations. In that way, even varying commodity values were assigned to different material results of writing, regardless of their success in terms of readability. By introducing the question of value (and especially commodity value), the act of selling actually testifies to the possibility that aesthetically produced artifacts/objectiles can be involved in radically different kinds of performances, even the ones that undermine their initial intention. In other words, it is the current context and ongoing performance that completely re-signifies the object, which in this case consists in written words. Furthermore, if new performances involve arbitrary assignments of value to objects, they cut them out from the production process, petrify them as *objects*, and deprive them of the aura of *objectiles*. Such objects are cut off from the trans-medial transductions that have created them, and cease to be either synchronous or choreographic objects in Forsythe's sense.

2.1. Contrapuntal grid of simultaneous actions

So far, I have been trying to describe the technical inventory of the play, with no illusion that it can be fully comprehensive. The aim is, instead, to point out the versatility and inventiveness of the dancers' strategies. In the abovementioned essay on *Human Writes*, Siegmund offers an ekphrastic description of the play, based on his live experience. The readers get the feeling of space, sounds, textures, volumes, and forces. Siegmund's text creates a sense of temporal unfolding of numerous actions across the space, of the fragmented stage (each of the tables can be considered a stage by itself), and of incessant communication. Given that the last staging of the piece took place in 2012, it was not anymore possible for me to attend it. Instead, I had to rely on over 50 hours of its video recordings.[67] The videos were made for the Company's purposes only and not for public presentation. The fragments of actions and angles caught by the camera did not seem to be meticulously calculated and selected. For that reason, even a minute description of video sequencing would not appropriately grasp the overall experience of numerous continual actions. I will rather try to identify some general traits and illustrate them with few examples.

The writing of a sentence stretched over several hours draws attention to the temporal dimension of performance. From the perspective of conventional writing, the persistent and continuous efforts to produce a single line would be seen as utterly inefficient and uneconomical. Here, on the contrary, the composition of a sign comprises its previous conceptual and geometrical decomposition, revealing that any signifying activity is necessarily bound to a certain perception and treatment of time. During the performance, the signs/letters 'open up' different temporalities.

The persistent and long-lasting iteration of gestures, with variations, draws attention to the rhythms of performance. At any given point, there are as many simultaneous rhythms as there are different activities. The entire space of the performance stages an inconceivably complex contrapuntal grid. Aside from temporal rhythms, there were also the spatial rhythms of ever changing compositions, made of bodies, objects, and spaces between them. Graphic traces left on paper form parts of wider performative and visual compositions involving all visible elements. The professional performers,

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[67] See: Amelia Jones, "*Presence* in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation", *Art Journal*, Vol. 56, No. 4, Winter 1997, p. 11-18.

constantly aware of their immersion in space, consciously create unique spatial constellations that involve writing as just one of its numerous dynamic parts.

That reveals the multiplicity and overlapping simultaneity of different acts of communication. A letter, a word or a sentence form parts of written transmission of a message, whilst at the same time each element becomes a reason for a live communication on the spot. A deconstructed process of signification becomes a reason for multiple interactions. The letters are goal, but also the frame and initiation of communication.

2.2. Employed writing strategies, examples

Physical interactions between dancers, spectators, material objects and space can be evaluated using a full range of descriptions, from harsh and aggressive to subtle, delicate and tender. Each activity certainly has an affective aspect. We have mentioned that pathos – especially the one associated with the topic of human suffering – was to be avoided. However, it is unavoidable that certain relations and actions evoke some common practices and are, thus, perceived as bizarre, comic, grotesque, boring or dramatic. These and similar depictions belong to the domain of interpretation and aesthetic evaluation.

Example 1 – *The objectified and instrumentalized human body*: A young man lies on the table on his back, his arms stretched above his head, a pencil firmly held in his hands. Two other people make a sudden jolt of the table every few seconds. Each time, the young man's body moves slightly but suddenly and unpredictably. He is certainly unable to control his reactions, or the trace left by the pencil. They are rather results of opposed mechanical actions the man's body is subjected to.

Example 2 – *Grotesque bodies, harnessed in live writing machines*: The video recording frames the legs of a tall dark-skinned man and a woman's head and upper torso hanging upside down between them. The woman's arms are stretched in an attempt to reach the table surface and to write lines. The woman's body hangs down the man's back, her knees bent over his shoulders. The whole assemblage resembles a half-male half-female creature with its spine extremely bent backward.

3.14. Scenes from *Human Writes* – grotesque and sensual writing machines?

Example 3 – *Delicate transmitters of sensual reading*: Several people are seated one behind the other – the one placed the furthest from the table starts writing with a finger on the back of his neighbor who further transmits the felt and decoded content to the next person, in exactly same way. The last person writes on the paper what has finally come to her, through the chain of sensual-to-verbal translations.

3.15. Scenes from *Human Writes* – delicacy, struggle or commitment above all?

2.3. Audience participation

Compared to other works of the Forsythe Company, *Human Writes* is characterized by a dialogical relation with the audiences and by their participation in the performance. *Human Writes* challenges the conventional roles of performers and

audiences by creating conditions for their constructive and egalitarian engagement in choreography.

The two types of writing described in previous sections stand here for two types of communication involving all participants in the performance. One is the creation, transmission and reinforcement of written messages – articles from the *Declaration*, chosen for their meaning and significance to performers. The other is the communication that happens on the spot, necessary to plan and execute tasks and to interact with the audience. From the initial idea that Forsythe and Thomas forged together, the performance was supposed to create room for an active engagement of the audience. Thomas particularly accentuates the "concept of participation", indispensable in the context of human rights discussions:

> Is it enough for dancers interested in the question of human rights to choreograph movements for the audience [spatially] separated, in the dark, [thus reproducing the] classical model of spectators? Or can we think more creatively about the public to be participant in the project? Acting and exercising human rights.[68]

According to dancers' accounts, from its premiere in Zurich in 2005 to the last staging on the occasion of the 2012 *Weaving Politics* conference, the performance was developing the idea of participation – from physical engagement to discussions to the acceptance of conceptual interventions on the part of the audience. From the very beginning, the dancers were encouraged to invite spectators to help them in performing physically demanding tasks. Based on that general intention, Brandstetter characterized the role of the audience in *Human Writes* as *co-creative*.[69] Though it truly indicates the special status of spectators in this play, such a general description masks the variety of reactions and resistances that the two usually divided sides encountered on and around tables and human rights topics.

In 2005, "performative installations" such as *Human Writes* were still a novelty for most of the classically trained Company's dancers. Long performing time and drastically limited space for movements were the first challenges. On top of that, the

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[68] Kendall Thomas, public lecture and discussion at *Weaving Politics*, December 14-16, 2012. http://weavingpolitics.se/

[69] Gabriele Brandstetter, "Political Body Spaces in the Performances of William Forsythe", in Markus Hallensleben (ed), *Performative Body Spaces*, Rodopi, Amsterdam, 2010, p. 57-75.

audience, instead of being kept at a secure distance, dispersed between tables. The dancers were exposed to close looks, direct address and even physical touch. All this, of course, did not bring anything radically new to the field of performance art. Yet, the new setting made the experienced ballet dancers feel encaged, and vulnerable to a point they had never felt before. Finally, the long-lasting repetitive assignments seriously defied their pronounced drive to entertain others.

Despite all these difficulties, the dancers retained the basic authority to ensure that the rules of the game will be respected. The dancers were the ones in charge of conceiving the tasks, but also of presenting the rules to the audience, meaning that they were entitled to decide whether the spectators' interventions corresponded with the idea of the performance or not, whether or not their actions would be permitted. As one of the dancers honestly admitted, they played a kind of "police of ideas".[70]

Following again the dancers' perspective – the only one available to my research – the audience attending the first stagings was at least equally surprised and challenged. Though oftentimes enthusiastic and eager to contribute, the spectators-turned-participants found themselves faced with hard decisions. Being dressed up for an evening out contrasted with the dancer's casual clothes carelessly coated with black powder. Some of the spectators found the rules overly limiting, so they expressed a desire to contribute in their own way. Especially the idea of inhibited, agonizing writing and failing repeatedly caused frustrations on the part of the audience. The dancers' attractive athleticism might have been intimidating for many of the spectators, as well.

2.4. In search of symmetrical communication

The idea of communication, rather than being seen as an achievement, actually kept opening new questions. The first objective was to make the rules of the performance fully understandable and to clarify what exactly was expected from the audience. The audience members were supposed to understand and accept the role of helpers, and

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[70] From my interviews with The Forsythe Company's dancers: Jone San Martin, Katja Chernaeva, David Kern, Ioannis Mandafounis and Cyril Baldy. The interviews were held in Frankfurt, in the first week of May 2014.

thus resist the urge to impose their own will, take over the performance and abuse the confidence invested in them. One of the dancers describes it as follows:

> As always when we work with something that was a bit unknown, at the beginning we share it with the audience as well. So, we discover by doing. How to talk to the audience, how to ask them to help us, how far we could allow their help. Sometimes, the help became a game for them. Other times, they started directly, without being asked, or they started being artistically inventive on their own. That was not the point; the point was just to help us.[71]

Then, despite unavoidably different initial positions, the objective was to transform unequal powers into a consensus. Finally, the question was how to truly involve the audience in the most playful aspects of the performance, and inspire creative agency from their side, without compromising the framing idea of the performance.

To achieve a desired, more symmetrical communication, the rules of the game had to be, if not totally flexible for changes, than at least open for radical questioning and negotiations. The physical challenges needed to be reduced, so that all participants felt more equal and encouraged to play. That meant that dancers needed to contest their desire to perform, to constantly attract attention and entertain. From early to later stagings, the physical tasks became increasingly less demanding, so that the audience could perform on a more equal level. It was the persistent focus on the execution of the movements, regardless of their complexity, that became a channel for everyone's agency and playfulness.

2.5. Performing for/with an audience: *projection* vs. *focus*

Leaving the interpretations aside, the development of the performance can best be described in the terms used in dancers' jargon: *bodily expression*, *projection* and *focus*. The dynamic relation between these procedures largely defines the communication between performers and audience. Furthermore, it is closely linked with the topic of writing. On the one side, controlled *bodily expression* and the *projection* of a consciously fashioned personality on stage are parts of choreographic writing. On the other side, the strong and exclusive *focus* on particular movement

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[71] Jone San Martin, interview.

executions seems to narrow down the perceptive frame and reduce action. Thus understood, focus corresponds with conventional writing "with the knife or with a pen". This could also be a metaphor for performances in which the performativity is primarily calculated to produce effects on the audience – dancers perform for the audience. Focus is an important aspect of every performance, but primarily describes dancers' relation to themselves and to the action they perform:

> In *Human Writes* the goal is very strict: to manage to produce a line. It is like a Japanese martial art. You dive into your activity and do not care about anything else. You just care about succeeding in making it. (…) In *Human Writes* the projection is directed to paper, while on the stage [in other performances – MP], it is directed towards other people. This is a difference.[72]

Human Writes explores the dynamics between "performing for the audience" and "performing with the audience". Choreographic writing implies a complex reading activity on the part of observers, which involves not only trained and attentive eyes, but also a specific kinetic empathy – an empathy with dancers' expressed affects as well as with experienced sensations and underlying states of mind.[73] "Focus" is one of the entrance points into a dancing experience – through empathy or through the observers' own "sensorial scanning" and action.

The development in performing *Human Writes* shows a transition from prevalent performativity toward a sharper focus on one's own movements. Such focus was the experience that audience was supposed to be initiated to. The specific traits of choreography – the length of the performance, its repetitiveness, paradoxical requirements and lack of classical "plots" – required from both dancers and audience to tolerate unavoidable failures and occasional boredom, as well as to persist in making efforts that will perhaps prove futile. The audience was invited to surrender to the action, following dancers' example. The audience members were invited to properly "focus" as well, and dedicate themselves to the activities. Consequently, the dancers' performance had to balance between an inevitable "performing for" and newly discovered "performing with" collaborative visitors. Paradoxically, the point of

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[72] Ioannis Mandafounis, interview.

[73] See: Susan Leigh Foster, *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance*, Routledge, London and New York, 2010.

encounter was found in the concentration on one's own inner experience – i.e. the empathy and sharing of similar experiences – and not anymore in performing for other people's eyes.

In *Human Writes*, a conscious "focus" on the activity – equivalent to conventional writing – does not contradict the idea of multidirectional choreographic writing. Neither is choreographic writing reduced to visible physical expression. The seemingly opposed choreographic writing and one-directional conventional writing rather mutually integrate, thereby broadening the conception of *text*. Rewriting the text of the *Declaration* creates an invitation, frame and space for collaborative activities. The production of a written text actually incorporates on-the-spot communication, verbal and non-verbal alike. The contacts between dancers and audience, including their playful, exploring and innovative common activities, is being integrated/inscribed into a text conceived as *choreographic object(ile)*.

Both terms of *performativity* (physical expression for spectators' eyes) and *focus* (concentration on one's own action) keep us connected to the level of physical play. Although there cannot be a "neutral" description (without implicit interpretation), there are significant differences in the ways we verbally express a performance art piece. Here, the challenge is first to resist subjective rationalizations that fortify the distance between the performers and observers. The heuristic distinction between intermedial *translations* and *transductions* opens the question of what the spectators can really adopt from the performance and transmit it into their habitual performances and writings. *Transduction* refers to our intention to keep the performance going on – by accepting participation, or by incorporating its performative qualities into our meta-writing about it. In the case of *Human Writes*, transduction would require us to give priority to the dynamic between physical actions – *focus* and *performativity* – over free associations and metaphorical generalizations. When asked to describe their experience of the performance, the dancers consistently emphasized a certain "categorical" (i.e. freed from any concrete content) cognitive engagement: focus on physical execution of movements, and freedom experienced through it:

> We were cold in a way, less expressive. (…) To me it's like when you think about something you have never thought before. Like when you have to open a bottle of wine, and someone comes along with a toothpick and does like this... [shows the

gesture]. And you think: "oh, my god, why didn't I think of it before!" It is not the emotion; it is discovery. The moment of going "wow!"[74]

Nevertheless, when it comes to giving a meaning to the performance, even the choreographers' account is not completely immune to metaphorization – a jump from the level of live performative play to broader social and political context. The chosen text of the *Declaration* makes this performance explicitly political, but also threatens to overshadow its inventive choreography.

3. Contrapuntal interpretation

The Declaration of Human Rights gives to *Human Writes* an explicitly political dimension. This political document is considered among the most significant texts of the 20th century. It is noteworthy that the Forsythe Company did not choose any other text for their performative exploration but this one: to play with gestural aspects of its signifier (writing) to the extent that the signified (readable words) becomes indefinitely delayed.

How are we to understand this choreographic choice? In the interviews, the dancers explain that the preparations for the performance included discussions about the political background and complex process of composition of the *Declaration*. Several dancers emphasize that, according to their understanding, the ineffective global implementation of the *Declaration* was an important motive of creation of the piece *Human Writes*. The dancers also share the anecdotes about the audience members who got irritated by the performance seeing it as a blasphemy against this historically significant document.

The evident failures of writing performance could indeed be easily associated with "failures" in creation of universal law.[75] The fact that the *Declaration* is not a legally

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[74] David Kern, interview.

[75] An overview of various approaches to the topic of human rights could be found in Marie-Bénédicte Dembour, "What are Human Rights? Four Schools of Thought", *Human Rights Quarterly*, 32/1, 2010, p. 1-20.

A critique of the neo-liberal appropriation of human rights discourse: John Nguyet Erni, "Human Rights in the Neo-Liberal Imagination: Mapping the *New Sovereignties*", *Cultural studies*, 23/3, 2009, p. 417-436.

binding document explains its insufficient enactment in many contemporary situations around the world. In J.L. Austin's terms, in the situations of violations of human rights, the *Declaration* might simply be seen as an "infelicitous speech act".[76]

Interpreting *Human Writes* as either a critique of or support to the politics of human rights would imply that the performance is being "read", i.e. that it transmits a message. In other words, the performance would be assigned a verbal meaning and, therefore, translated into words. If we understand the unfolding staged events as pointing to the failures in legal enactment of the *Declaration*, we automatically neglect their physical complexity and *ontogenetic* potential.

One of the biggest challenges of this thesis has been to examine a different approach to choreographies of writing. According to my interpretation, the *Declaration of Human Rights* rather provides a textual background against which the distinctiveness of performance as a medium is highlighted. Text and performance are materially heterogeneous and mutually irreducible media. The idea of "performative remediation" of text allows us to preserve their distinctiveness, without questioning their thematic similarity. I suggest that the two media form a contrapuntal relationship. Textual and performative elements in *Human Writes* refer to each other, but remain distinct. They are not assimilated into a homogeneous medium and structural totality as it would be implied in the statement: performance is a critique of the *Declaration*, of the failures of universal law, etc.

The choreographies of writing, however, juxtapose different media highlighting their boundaries. In my opinion, they inspire a different, more self-reflective approach and interpretation. Being heterogeneous, choreographies of writing call for heterogeneous "reading" that is itself a process of mediation, involving texts, performances, and events.

Then, why do dancers rewrite the *Declaration of Human Rights* and not some other texts? I would say it is because the performance and text have a common theme – establishment of community based on mutual respect of personal rights and freedoms. Both choreography of performance and the *Declaration* deal with this topic with their respective means. The dancers perform writing in such a way that the emerging text is

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[76] Gerald Siegmund (2012) suggests an interpretation in line with this view.

delayed (in Derridean terms, it is both *differed* and *deferred*). *Human Writes* implements Forsythe's concept of writing from the *Improvisation Technologies* and juxtaposes it to colloquial idea of writing as graphic production of readable texts. Writing activity is at the same time focused on textual production and kinetically improvised. The communication with the audience is, therefore, twofold: a) through the text that is being written and b) through verbal and physical exchange between dancers and audience members.

The choreography generates events of encounters through which a unique temporary community is created. Writing in the sense of movement improvisation creates possibilities for contact, for inclusion, and collective engagement. The groups of dancers and audience members are gathered around particular physical tasks. The communication between the participants do not always goes smoothly. On the contrary, various tensions occur in the course of the performance. Some audience members happened to be irritated by the contradicting nature of the activity – simultaneous trials and self-sabotage. The others felt intimidated by dancers' athleticism or by the choreographic rule that prevented them to act independently. In *Human Writes*, the audience is invited to participate in making decisions about the concrete tasks and to negotiate power relations with dancers. The opportunity to contribute to the play provoked various reactions in the audience, ranging from initial confusion to excitement.

Dancers, however, face different issues. Being trained in classical ballet, they are used to perform at a larger distance from the audience. They find *Human Writes* challenging as it requires them to operate in limited space, to be exposed for a long time within audiences' reach. Furthermore, dancers are encouraged to verbally communicate with the audience and discuss issues that could possibly arise. For dancers, constant communication with audience is a step out of their habit and their comfort zone. Through these close encounters and collaboration with the audience, dancers explore their own expectations, habits, and the willingness to give up on their authority over play. They also experiment how far they can go in sharing responsibility for the play with the audience, without compromising the main choreographic idea.

The performance of *Human Writes* creates realities, objects, and temporary communities. The aim is not to envision ideal community, but one that can deal with its internal conflicts in the ways that ensure dignity and mutual respect between its members. These concerns link the performance with the topic of human rights. Rather than "speaking" or transferring a message, the performance produces events – specific artistic re-contextualization of the *Declaration*. In the discussion organized at the *Weaving Politics* conference, Thomas and Forsythe explain that *Human Writes* "contribute to the culture of human rights".

How can we grasp such an open contrapuntal performative piece? *Human Writes* inspires its participants and interpreters to observe their own practice as a counterpart to choreography of writing – a heterogeneous "meta-writing", consisting of verbal content/information and events through which (lasting or temporary) communities of knowledge are gathered. Just like choreographies of writing, the practices of meta-writing involve cognition, affects, emotions, perception, movements, contacts, spatial displacements, etc. And the concept of *choreopolitics* can be applied to crossing of borders within and between disciplines and institutions, theory and practice, process and result, production and reception, etc.

The knowledge embedded in *Human Writes* is not only cognitive understanding of the social and political issues surrounding the discourses of human rights. Knowledge also happens as dancers' free play located within the process of signification to which the audience is invited as well. *Human Writes* shows that the invitation for a common play, which is beyond the scope of discursive knowledge, leads to "re-distribution of sensible" and reshapes the temporary communities of dancers and audiences. Finally, knowledge refers to the capacity of self-reflection and community building, both implied in the process of writing.

At the end, the analysis of *Human Writes* opens up the following questions: What are (temporary) communities and cultures in which this text (my thesis) emerges? Which set of events enabled and influenced the design of this text? And which kind of events can the text generate? And, finally, what contrapuntal relations – between texts, performances, means of production, contexts, etc. – structure the choreography of scholarly writing and define its connections with broader cultures of knowledge?

PART THREE
CREATIVE PEDAGOGICAL MEDIATIONS:
GULLERMO GÓMEZ-PEÑA

CHAPTER CONTENTS

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Radical pedagogy of La Pocha Nostra

1. Borders and border-crossers
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3. Pedagogy, epistemology and knowledge production
4. Radical pedagogy vs. liberation philosophy and shamanic therapy

Performative educational speech

1. Performing against the backdrop of the "mainstream bizarre"
2. Performance artist as "a shaman who lost his way"
3. *Othering & Belonging* keynote performance
    3.1. Self-reference
    3.2. Temporary community of difference
    3.3. Politics between hope and fear of oneself

Lecture performance, a form of "post-pedagogical" writing

> We must begin *wherever we are* and the thought of the trace which cannot take the scent into account, has already taught us that it was impossible to justify a point of departure absolutely. *Wherever we are:* in a text where we already believe ourselves to be. *(Of Grammatology,*162).

1. When can lecture be considered as writing?

This chapter will focus on the second type of the choreographies of writing: lecture performance. The example that I am going to analyze is a lecture by performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña, given at the conference *Othering & Belonging* in Oakland, California. The conference was organized by the Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society at Barkley University, from the April 24 to 26, 2015.[1] Completely in line with the topic of inclusiveness, the conference welcomed diverse forms of academic and artistic events: conventional presentations, performances, dance shows, and workshops. It also provided a transdisciplinary context – including topics on medicine, the environment, the social sciences, policy making, the art and critical theory – for Gómez-Peña's performative lecture.

The conference was organized, however, at an academic institution. This is significant because the genre of lecture performance has its origin in the fields of arts, curatorial practice and art education; it is not often considered a legitimate means of academic expression. In fact, a unique characteristic of this particular conference, given its focus on inclusiveness, was its implementation of this goal in its own organization. The same thing could be said for the *Weaving Politics* conference which hosted The Forsythe's Company's *Human Writes*: it reflected its main themes in its own format and organizational procedures. Both conferences considered themselves "complex media" – discursive as well as performative, and theoretical as well as practical. In

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[1] The conference website: http://www.otheringandbelonging.org/director-letter. The full video of Gómez-Peña's lecture: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3565&v=II__VwRpIh0.

addition, they provided room for discussion about their own situatedness within broader cultural contexts, which, together with their contents and formats, contributed to the politicality of the overall events. The readiness of these academic institutions to critically regard and flexibly approach their own practices seems to be an important condition of the integration of artistic works into scholarly discussions.

4.1. Guillermo Gómez-Peña at *Othering & Belonging* conference, video snapshot (2015)

Gómez-Peña's keynote speech at the Barkley conference is, above all, an artistic performance that involves narration together with a specific costume, voice modulations, repetitive movements, incomprehensible ritual chants, laughter provoking gigs etc. In the duration of almost one hour, Gómez-Peña reads his poems, performative texts, and what he calls "philosophical tantrums". Some of these texts had already been published online on the website of Gómez-Peña's performance company La Pocha Nostra,[2] while others had already been repeatedly performed at different occasions, and posted on Youtube.[3] There are some parts of his speech,

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[2] For example, except from the beginning, the following tantrum is almost entirely incorporated in Gómez-Peña's speech at Barkley: http://www.pochanostra.com/dialogues/2008/03/23/new-philosophical-tantrum2008/. The published text covers the topics of democracy, hope, love, the role of art and dreams in creation of the communities of difference. These topics are important in setting the general tone and function of Gómez-Peña's speech.

[3] E.g. Guillermo Gómez-Peña at TEDx, on radical arts, communities and dreams: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1KkjVpc5Go.

however, which seem to be written specifically for this occasion. His speech is a collage challenging each listener to integrate its textual fragments. Its themes range from a utopian vision of a world ruled by artists, the possibilities of hope and love in today's world, a poetic and playful deconstruction of the word "academia", a critique of monolingual conservatives, blessings of all countries considered a threat to US national security, to the eulogy of the politically and culturally marginalized people. It is hard to identify an inherent trait that would make such a collage qualify as a lecture, even a performative one. What frames the speech and gives it the quality of a lecture is rather the educational context in which it is performed. So, while the artistic narrative performance contributes to critical reflection on academic practices, the academic context provides the performance with the character of a lecture.

Nevertheless, the question remains: what justifies our choice to include such a performative *speech* in our idea of choreographies of *writing*? The *embodied inscriptions*, represented in this work with the *Human Writes* performance, correspond to the colloquial idea of writing. These performances – some of them creations of dance companies – stage physical acts/gestures of writing and create texts in written/graphical form.[4] On the other hand, aren't speech and writing two distinct media that cannot be reduced to the same thing?

In the introductory discussion of this thesis, the dictionary definitions of "writing" helped me point out the heterogeneous nature of writing as a medium and clarify basic distinctions between text and performance, as well as between writing and choreography. Let us recall: the Cambridge Dictionary definition of "writing" includes 1) the activity of producing words and written works, 2) the produced written texts and 3) the individual style of writing. The embodied inscriptions are in accord with this definition, though they strongly emphasize the event and performative aspect of inscription (sometimes to the extent that the emerging text is unreadable or indefinitely deferred). The colloquial understanding of writing, however, would not

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Or, the poem *Academia* performed at Pigott Theater, Stanford University, as part of Performance Studies International 19 on June 28, 2013: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0oEQFDOXHrc.

[4] The examples mentioned in the previous chapters: *Performative Writing Machines* by Diego Gil, *Act of Writing* by Shelbatra Jashari, *Like Water* by Taysir Batniji, street performances of Eleonora Fabião, etc.

allow us to include speech in the same category. The gestures and activities of producing words are different in speech and writing.

The embodied inscriptions expose the medium of writing in its complexity. Through performative remediation, they reveal a hypermedium of writing, consisting of both physical performance and verbal signification. From the point of view of kinetic spectacle, speech seems to be much less performative and seemingly less interesting than physical performance and dance. Or, within the performance, spoken text would function differently then staged kinetic activity of writing. Given that the choreographies of writing are staged performances that remediate texts as well as the technologies of their production, how do they distinguish between speech and writing? This question might propel further discussion about different technologies of writing, e.g. handwriting compared to print or digital writing.

The choreographies of writing highlight the material aspects of signification. In that regard, the gestures and activity of writing appear to be far more bodily engaging and spectacular than the gestures and activities of speech. Could we, then, say that choreographies of writing employ the means of artistic performance only to embody and underscore the Derridean inversion of the metaphysical favoring of speech over writing?[5] According to Derrida, the metaphysical tradition established a strong hierarchy between the two forms of verbal expression. From Plato to Hegel, the spoken word was entrusted with a direct/unmediated expression of verbal meaning (logos), while writing came as a secondary documentation of speech.

To overcome the historical privilege of speech, Derrida develops the idea of writing as a general epistemological principle. Opposed to pure logos, writing embraces language together with graphical and material elements such as spacing, homophony, accents, etc. These material elements of writing intervene and change the verbal meanings despite the fact that they cannot themselves be translated into language. Derrida distinguishes between 1) the common practices of writing instrumentalized in fixing texts and 2) writing as an overall principle of signification. Instrumentalized writing serves as a means of documentation and results in complete and static *oeuvres*, which Derrida identifies as "books". Contrary to that, writing as a general principle produces the fabric of what we can know in the form of open-ended "text".

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[5] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, The Johns Hopkins U.P, Baltimore, 1998.

The latter idea of writing is not media specific and may, therefore, include images, sounds, architecture, constellations of material objects, movements and, of course, speech:

> If "writing" signifies inscription and especially the durable institution of a sign (and that is the only irreducible kernel of the concept of writing), writing in general covers the entire field of linguistic signs. In that field a certain sort of instituted signifiers may then appear, "graphic" in the narrow and derivative sense of the word, ordered by a certain relationship with other instituted – hence "written," even if they are "phonic" – signifiers.[6]

According to Derrida's grammatology, speech is a form of writing, one of the materializations of the general principle of inscription. Just like graphic writing, speech is a complex medium consisting of language and voice. The materiality of voice – i.e. intonation, accentuation, timbre etc. – remains a heterogeneous element non-translatable to language, yet capable of altering the verbal meaning. In other words, speech is also a medium whose content and form both contribute to communication.

Then how does speech relate to the idea of writing implied in the choreographies of writing? Do choreographies of writing, following the ideas of grammatology, completely subsume speech under the broader category of writing? I employ the term "choreographies of writing" precisely in order to bring together performative pieces that stage both graphic/embodied inscriptions and spoken lecture performances. My aim is twofold. First, I intend to draw attention to performative mediation of textual content that can appear in either graphic or spoken form. Second, I aim to envision the creative potential of such heterogeneous mediations, as well as their possible implications for pedagogical events and knowledge production. By naming both kinds of text production "writing", I adopt the grammatological metaphor that inverts the traditional metaphysical hierarchy between speech and writing. Furthermore, grammatology establishes writing as an all-encompassing principle and a paradigm for any production of information, regardless of employed media. According to this principle, the materiality of the signifier – i.e. the form/medium – matters as much as the signified concepts. So, the answer to the above questions is "yes": the

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[6] *Ibid*, p. 44.

choreographies of writing do retain the grammatological metaphor of writing, and they explore it further through their performative means. Consequently, speech is considered a form of writing.

2. The event of production of writing and speech

As staged performances, the choreographies of writing bring more into play than a mere embodiment of the Derridean "scene of writing". The hypermedium of performance is not equivalent to the graphics of writing and, therefore, cannot be reduced to a mere "form" of a signifier that enriches the meaning of its content. The choreographies of writing indeed highlight the complexity of the performance seen as a material medium, but they also embody a heterogeneous *event of production* through which both content and form emerge. The stagings of writing and speech generate *events* that exceed the acts of expression, including both content and form (text and performance, verbal and gestural language, as well as their materiality).

More than three decades after *Of Grammatology*, in his essay *Une Certaine possibilité impossible de dire l'événement* (2003), Derrida elaborates on the relation between the act of saying and the very event in which saying occurs. He avoids defining "event" by situating it in the domain of potentiality. What counts as an event cannot be already given, nor be predictable or calculable. Such an event happens as an interruption of linguistic orders. Consequently, the act of saying – itself based on repetition, iterability, codes and conventions – cannot be considered as an event. It might, however, create conditions for the event to come along.

The choreographies of writing are not equivalent to the "scene of writing". Besides the juxtaposition of the performative form and verbal content of writing, they produce a surplus embedded in the complex production of artistic performance and/or dance. Following Derida's idea of "event", this surplus might be understood as potentiality for something unexpected and even previously unthinkable to happen. Still, there is another meaning of "event" that we would like to draw attention to. Compared to the "scene of writing", the choreographies of writing produce a surplus that can be described as an event in more colloquial terms – i.e. a staged event, materially produced, and following certain "protocols and procedures of work".

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2.1. Multilayered politics of artistic events

In her texts on politicality of performance, Ana Vujanović distinguishes between the content, form and means of production as three different aspects of a work of art that independently produce political effects.[7] Engaged theatre and performance art from the beginning of the 20th century addresses political issues on the level of their content (themes, representations of reality) as a form of responsible reflection on social reality. The medium of theatre/performance has long been considered as a formal and politically neutral aspect of such works. With the development of performance art and (post)structuralist theory in the 1970s and 80s, the politics of the form/medium became a topic of discussion in arts. According to Vujanović, the arguments were based on the "theory of text, neo-Marxist theories, and theoretical psychoanalysis".[8] This shift implied that the discourse of performance might be considered as political even when its content does not explicitly address political issues. So, a performance is politically engaged when it questions its tradition, its institutions, its expected social role, the status of its audience, and common codes of reception.

Another shift of theoretical paradigms in the late 1990s and 2000s provided new perspectives in this discussion of the politicality of artistic works and performances. Theories of biopolitics, the political philosophy of Hannah Arendt and Giorgio Agamben, as well as sociological theories of complex actor-networks, brought to light the organizational and economic procedures involved in the production of performance as a "cultural and artistic artifact".[9] The impact of new digital technologies has also contributed to this turn:

> Contemporary art no longer 'reflects' social content by way of thematics, but immediately, in organization of the very economy of signifiers – thematics being merely its secondary effect.[10]

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[7] Ana Vujanović, "What we actually do when we… make art?", *Cine Qua Non* 8, Spring/Sumer 2014, p. 78-108. Vujanović applies the same three-layered analysis of the politics of performance art in her above cited text "Notes on the Politicality of Contemporary Dance" (2013).

[8] Ana Vujanović, *Performans i/kao politika*, lecture summary for the course Introduction to Performance Studies at the University of Arts, Belgrade: http://www.uu-studije-performansa.tkh-generator.net/2010/04/20/09-performans-ikao-politika-sazetak-i-lit/

[9] Ibid, the translation of this and the following fragments from this text is mine – MP.

[10] Miško Šuvaković, *Epistemology of Art*, TkH center, Belgrade, 2008, p. 147.

Vujanović enlists new topics related to artistic production: "blurred boundaries between *poiesis* and *praxis*, organization of public spaces, communication and collaboration within artistic collectives, virtuosity, choice between the complicity with the existing social arrangements and aspirations towards their transformation, balance between *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa* throughout Western history, and disappearance of politics as a specific social practice."[11] More specifically, the production of performance involves the questions of "attribution of artistic credits, licensing, authorship, participation in the art market, artistic methodology, production and exchange of knowledge, networking, participation in public sphere, *redistribution of the sensible*, etc".[12]

Vujanović situates material production of performance within the frame of its politics. It is important for our further discussion that the questions of knowledge production – and, therefore, education and pedagogy – fall into the same category. The foregoing clarification helps us identify the elements of performances of writing that are not fully represented in the grammatological model of "the scene of writing". The event of writing/saying embraces the verbal content and performative discourse while, at the same time, its own organization follows certain codes and procedures. Thus understood, the event provides yet another mode of mediation: that which makes various *choreographies* of writing possible. The choreographies operate on the level of procedures and protocols of performative events. They can either seek to reproduce the existing institutional codes and conventions, and thereby mask (i.e. render immediate) the process of mediation, or step out of conventions in order to reveal their own creative potential and overall performative hypermediacy.

Derrida understands "event" as a radically heteronomous interruption of a linguistic order, an excess that overcomes any given principle of iteration and codification. Since the idea of knowledge is based on iteration and codes, it follows that we can only learn what is already known within the given order. Only unpredictable events that evade expressions can bring novelty, interrupt and transform the order and, eventually, "change the course of history". Contrary to such a view, the performative

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[11] Ana Vujanović, *Performans i/kao politika*, lecture summary for the course Introduction to Performance Studies at the University of Arts, Belgrade: http://www.uu-studije-performansa.tkh-generator.net/2010/04/20/09-performans-ikao-politika-sazetak-i-lit/

[12] Ibid.

events that we aim to draw attention to belong to existing institutions and are based on the iteration of previous experiences and codes. The choreographies operating on the level of organization of such events certainly represent a form of language and, therefore, regulate happening of what has already existed as a possibility.

2.2. Codes vs. excess: choreography and dance

In his recent lecture on the politics of the so-called "post-dance", theorist and choreographer Mårten Spångberg differentiates between *dance* and *choreography* as completely different practices in terms of their relation towards the new and unknown.[13] As expected, choreography is based on given codes and repetition, while un-choreographed dance directs itself toward the unknown, i.e. something yet to happen. Despite being so different, dance and choreography are not mutually opposed and certainly do not exclude each other. On the contrary, Spångberg credits choreography with the capacity to create the conditions of possibility for the *potentiality* to occur. Choreography does indeed embed knowledge that can be employed in the project of its own transgression. According to Spångberg, the potentiality is materialized in the form of free dance movements, liberated from the subject/body who executes them. Choreographic knowledge is supposed to help dancers improvise and, in that way, liberate dance from their own desire to organize movements. In other words, dance that truly opens toward the unknown cannot be a means of expression of a subject; the choreographic knowledge should actually enable the subject to withdraw and let dance express itself.

Spångberg's notion of *dance* corresponds with Derrida's idea of event and non-knowledge. The liberating *choreographic knowledge* evokes Lepecki's idea of *choreopolitics*: an organization of movements oriented toward rearrangements of public spaces in such a way that unexpected new movements can occur. Choreography, although not a necessary condition, can facilitate dance improvisation. Taking into account Vujanović's distinction between the three politically charged layers of a performance art piece – content, performative form, and procedures of

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[13] Mårten Spångberg, lecture at Post-Dance Conference in Stockholm, October 14-16, 2015. https://vimeo.com/151532717

production – the difference between Spångberg's terms of "dance" and "choreography" lies in the domain of content and semiotics. Unlike choreography, improvised dance evades "readings". Nevertheless, this semiotic excess does not prevent dance from producing political effects through its material emergence (or staged event in a colloquial sense). The politics of dance consist precisely of this excess.

The choreographies of writing incorporate two linguistic orders: 1) the written text and, 2) choreographic organization of the staged activity of writing (in terms of its technologies, the specific blend of performative medium and verbal content, as well as the relationship between the performers and their audiences). This applies to gestures of writing and speech alike. The choreographies could be conventional (such as common daily practices of writing or lectures, within mainstream educational traditions) or experimental (calligraphic or artistic aesthetizations of writing, or lecture performances). Conventional choreographies iterate the institutionally established conventions of production and, thus, render the choreographic mediation transparent. The inherent knowledge of codes and conventions serves to reproduce the choreography and certainly does not transcend it. Contrary to that, choreographic experiments highlight the medial and material complexity of the event of enunciation. They are still choreographies – which means that they rely on structures and codes – but they question their own form and modify traditional conventions instead of merely repeating them. Seen from Spångberg's perspective, experimental choreographies of writing are at least directed toward a novelty, trying to create conditions for the movements to free themselves from the constraint of individual expression.

All this might sound too abstract. What is really at stake here is politics that emanates from material form and production. Spångberg's notions of choreography and dance, as well as choreographies that repeat the codes and the ones oriented toward free dance, have significantly different political implications. Different *choreopolitics* are based on how movements unwind in relation to institutional and discursive codes/conventions.

Choreographies of writing provide an interesting model for the analysis of these relations because they juxtapose choreographic and verbal language – choreography and writing. In choreographies of writing, the relations between content, form and

material production are theatricalized, and the political implications of each can be more easily compared. The codes, structure, and meaning of choreography stand side-by-side with the codes, structure, and meaning of writing. Their meanings can converge, diverge, support, or undermine each other. The choreographies of writing sometimes stage performative contradictions – the situations in which different levels of performance produce contradictory effects. As an example, take a lecture on democracy given in a traditionally organized and authoritarian classroom. No matter how inspired the verbal content of the lecture might be, the overall political effects of the event depend on material elements of the performance as well. Despite the emancipatory intentions of the speech, the material production and performance might create the opposite effects on the students. Instead of encouraging students to practice democracy, the pedagogic performance disciplines them to surrender to authority and give up on their rights to express their own opinions and equally participate in discussions. Another example of a contradiction between content and production: critical theory and the critique of capitalism professed at costly and prestigious educational institutions with long histories of class-based exclusion. The choreographies of writing address the questions of complicity with the socio-political context and the possibilities of change. From a political perspective, the complicity with conventions of production becomes complicity with broader political and economic systems while the movements oriented toward novelty become experiments of subversion and create socio-political alternatives. The artistic choreographies of writing self-reflectively analyze the relations between different layers of politicality and their own situatedness within the art market and broader social contexts.

2.3. Knowledge production

In choreographies of writing, the question of politics becomes the question of knowledge production. One way of approaching this question would be to compare the political effects/knowledge generated by the content, performative form, and production, and then describe the inner contrapuntal dynamics of each performative piece. The other approach deals with the opposition between knowledge embedded in codes and structures (textual as well as choreographic) and the possibility of creating a radically new knowledge exceeding any given code. The latter topic is central in

post-modern theorizations of knowledge production: from Derrida's grammatology and psychoanalysis, to Rancière's *Ignorant Schoolmaster*,[14] to art epistemology and performance-as-research projects.[15] We will analyze Derrida's idea of the "unknown" in the next section, through Gregory Ulmer's interpretations of grammatology. In the above cited Spångberg's lecture, dance improvisation is considered as an alternative epistemology that can transcend cognitive knowledge. So, dance represents an embodied and kinetic version of Derridean "event" (the possibility of the impossible).

Back to choreographies of writing, the question is whether they only compare the knowledge embedded in different layers of the event of writing, or really address knowledge production in terms of reproduction vs. research and invention. In other words, besides the juxtapositions of textual and choreographic messages, do the choreographies of writing leave room for dance in Spångberg's sense? If the "impossible" event (creation, invention) comes along in the form of free movements, what would it interrupt and change? The course of the staged action (choreography) and/or the emergence of textual content (writing)? How can we think about a *dance of writing*, freed from dancing subjects and their desire to express themselves?

Forsythe's *Improvisation Technologies* were intended to help classically trained dancers recognize ballet movements as one possible language. His idea is literally to free the movements from bodily habits that have become automatic. Forsythe's choreographic knowledge serves to raise awareness of choreographic codes and to loosen the imprint of ballet practice on dancer's bodies. One the one hand, codified choreography corresponds with one-dimensional, teleological writing – inscription or incision. On the other hand, Forsythe's undoing of choreography for the sake of

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[14] Jacque Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, Stanford University Press, Stanford CA, 1991.

[15] See, for example: Miško Šuvaković, *Epistemology of Art*, TkH – centar, Beograd, 2008.

Irit Rogoff, "Academy as Potentiality", summit. non aligned initiatives in education culture. Oct 11, 2015. (text available online at: http://artxibo.arteleku.net/eu/islandora/object/arteleku:5930)

Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt, *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Inquiry*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2010.

Baz Kershaw, "Performance as Research: live events and documents", in Tracy Davies (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Performance Studies*, Cambridge U.P, Cambridge UK, 2008, p. 23-46.

Spångberg, Mårten, "Overwhelming, The Doing of Research", in *Adventure*, 2006: www.arch.kth.se/unrealstockholm/unreal_web/The%20Adventure%20Book.pdf

liberated movements corresponds to multidimensional writing or, to recall Forsythe's image, writing as "caressing". In Forsythe's vocabulary, *writing* stands for improvised dance, rather than for codified choreography.

Applied to *Human Writes*, this idea of writing is positioned between – as deferral or differance – graphical (re)production of the *Declaration of Human Rights* and the choreography conceived as an uncertain delay of the appearance of this text (creation of obstacles). The real dance of writing is situated in the time and space created by the choreographic decision to focus on text, but creates severe obstacles in the process of its graphical production. What happens on stage is an enormous feat of breaking the codes and disclosure of automaticity embedded in the activity of writing. An important part of the play is also the encounter between dancer and audience and the creation of unique temporary communities based on collaboration and negotiation on the rules of performance. There happens the "impossible" and unpredictable dance of writing, which perhaps creates a new knowledge. Both *The Declaration of Human Rights* and Thomas' and Forsythe's choreography create the conditions for novelty (which may or may not happen). If novelty does happen, the knowledge is certainly not cognitive, but of a different kind: ontogenetic, embodied, experiential… Nevertheless, the implications of such knowledge are not less political; they are primarily related to the creation of inclusive temporary communities.

2. Gregory Ulmer's "applied grammatology"

The theoretical reference that greatly corresponds with the questions of my thesis is Gregory Ulmer's study *Applied Grammatology: Post(e)-Pedagogy from Jacques Derrida to Joseph Beuys* (1985). Ulmer is interested in what the new audio visual, electronic and performative media bring to pedagogical practices:

> My argument is that applied grammatology will be characterized by a picto-ideo-phonographic Writing that puts speech back in its place while taking into account the entire scene of writing. (…) It is both a move beyond conventional pedagogy and a pedagogy for an era of electronic media (with *poste* meaning m this context television station or set). My purpose (…) is to open the question of the nature of the educational presentation (the manner of the transmission of ideas) adequate to a

poststructuralist epistemology and to air some of the rhetorical and polemical notions relevant to a pedagogy of general writing.[16]

Ulmer's study is based on Derridean views on "the scene of writing", which represents specific ways of interweaving language with the materiality of signs. According to grammatology, writing ceases to be a mere instrument in production of finite texts; it rather describes the basic mechanism of the processes of signification, a continuous production of an open "textuality". The graphics and materiality of a signifier matter as they intervene into – *differ* – the meaning. Ulmer "applies" the ideas of grammatology on what he names the "scene of teaching", understood as a pedagogical event through which didactic contents are created and transmitted. Through grammatology, Ulmer explores the possibility of a "post(e)-pedagogy" – a pedagogy that can creatively implement new technologies as well as new conceptions of knowledge:

> …every pedagogical exposition, just like every reading, adds something to what it transmits. It is not surprising that a pedagogy committed to change rather than to reproduction would seize upon the irreducibility of the medium to the message (apropos of education as a form of communication) as the point of departure for its program (to be discussed further m terms of the pedagogical *mise en scene*).[17]

Ulmer's work provided a relevant frame for my research. My initial questions were, indeed, focused on how Derridean "scene of writing" transforms into performance art and dance events and, then, how performance and text interact. The staged performances of writing broaden the idea of "the scene" by embracing such diverse elements as textual meanings, gestures, performative provocations and audience participation. It seemed to be more adequate to observe these multi-channeled interactions as dynamic "events of writing". Further on, the question of knowledge production proved to be relevant in the performances that self-reflectively juxtapose textual information and performative action. Within the current paradigm of art as research and knowledge production, performative remediations of texts, intentionally or not, draw attention to heterogeneous means of production of meanings and experiences. In these performances, texts and activities of writing are employed as a

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[16] Gregory L. Ulmer, *Applied Grammatology: Post(e)-Pedagogy from Jacques Derrida to Joseph Beuys*, John Hopkins U.P, Baltimore and London, 1985, p. 157.

[17] Ibid, p. 164.

backdrop against which other material conceptions of knowledge emerge. With the term "choreographies of writing" I sought to address the relations between the distinct and medially/materially diverse elements, as well as their contexts and possible "contrapuntal" effects. The form of lecture performance fits well in the frame of choreographies of writing, as it also involves performed texts and choreographed events. Furthermore, lecture performance engages even more explicitly with the contemporary theories of knowledge production, where Ulmer's work is an important reference.

How does my research relate to Ulmer's work within the field of "performance as research and production of knowledge in art"?[18] Briefly, Ulmer envisions the post(e)-pedagogical scene of teaching as an amalgamation of didactic aspirations and staged/performative format. He recognizes post(e)-pedagogical teachings in the already existing works: Lacan's seminars, Joseph Beuys's performative lectures, Artaud's theatrical pieces and Sergei Eisenstein's films. My thesis relies on the same poststructuralist views on writing, but combines them with the concept of (performative) remediation. Furthermore, contemporary art and performance studies open up the question of production of artistic discourses within wider *dispositif*, including institutions, cultural, socio-political, ideological, and aesthetic elements that organize knowledge and power relations. By exploring the idea of choreographies of writing, I attempted to add this dimension to Ulmer's post-pedagogy. I considered Ulmer's idea of pedagogy as "stimulation to creativity" against the background of contemporary politics of art and performance. Namely, creativity, equivalent to Derridean "event", might also be seen as alternative way of artistic production.

Ulmer focuses on the interplay between textual and non-textual elements and their contribution to re-conceptualization of knowledge and rearrangements of the relations between lecturer and his/her audience. I tried to integrate these diverse levels within the idea of choreographies of writing, seen as processes of potentially creative mediation. Contrary to structured "scenes", choreographies of writing highlight the dynamic and ever-changing nature of the events; they foreground the various

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[18] Ana Vujanovic, "Performans kao istraživanje i proizvodnja znanja u umetnosti" (lecture abstract), 25.03.2010: http://www.uu-studije-performansa.tkh-generator.net/2010/03/20/03-performans-kao-istrazivanje-i-produkcija-znanja-apstrakt-literatura-itd/#more-742

(institutional) links between the scene of writing and its context. Furthermore, choreographies of writing cover not only unconventional and innovative post-pedagogical teaching, but also all forms of conventional organization of lectures as well as their performative parodies.

The perspective provided by media studies allowed the distinguishing between text and performance as different media, each with specific materiality, contents and forms of expression. That introduces different, materialist views on hybrid performances and their potentials for multi-channeled and heterogeneous communication. In addition, performative remediations open question of hyper- and immediacy, which relate to employed technologies and might have political implications. That is to say, remediations of writing can either highlight or render invisible certain traits of the incorporated medium.

Radical pedagogy of La Pocha Nostra

1. Borders and border-crossers

Guillermo Gómez-Peña is a renowned Chicano artist. Born in 1955 and educated in Mexico, he has been based in the United States since his early twenties. Gómez-Peña's work first gained international recognition in the early 1990's. The most discussed works from this period are his collaborations with the artist Coco Fusco – the performances *The Year of the White Bear* and *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West* (1992-94). During a two-year international tour, the pieces were performed in major museums and art festivals across Europe and North America.

In *Two Undiscovered Amerindians*, the two artists exhibited themselves in a large cage, dressed as "authentic" indigenous inhabitants of a long-undiscovered island near the Mexican cost. The performance evokes the freak shows and centuries-long practice of exhibiting indigenous people before curious audiences in colonizing countries. Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco dressed up in "ethnic drag": peculiar costumes combining pieces of traditional indigenous clothing with modern American accessories. The events were videotaped, including the activities within the cage and the impressions of the audience. The video documentation is considered a part of the performance. The reactions of the audiences are particularly interesting as they reveal that a considerable number of people naively mistook the performers for real indigenous people. The misunderstanding disclosed the colonial arrogance and underlying racism in parts of the audience.

4.2. Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco, *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West* (1992-94)

In the following decades, Gómez-Peña has continued to explore a variety of issues related to colonialism, including differences in cultural, ethnicity, class and gender identities. His performances are relentlessly provocative, requiring that the audience take a position with regard to the exposed bodies and identities.

In another example, the *Cruci-Fiction Project* (1994), Gómez-Peña and Roberto Sifuentes attached themselves to the large crosses in Marin Headlands Park in San Francisco to draw attention to the discrimination of people of color. Some three hundred guests were invited to the performance. Fliers were distributed asking the spectators to take the performers down "as a gesture of political commitment". The audience only realized the severity of the situation after three hours. The radical trust demonstrated by Gómez-Peña and Sifuentes gave the spectators power over their lives, pointing to the precariousness of individual lives and responsibility of communities.

4.3. *Cruci-Fiction Project* (1994)

In some of Gómez-Peña's performances, in which his and other performers' actions do not urge the audience to react directly, the displayed bodies and images still tend to

transgress the common identities and thereby draw attention to the audience's positioning in the stratified social realities. Gómez-Peña's method became recognized as "reverse anthropology"[19] because of its deliberately selective treatment of the audiences:

> One of our strategies is to occupy a fictional central space, fully knowing that it's fictional, and to speak always from this fictional center, to push the dominant culture to the margins, treat it as exotic and unfamiliar. We operate in the realm of contingencies and inversions.[20]

In the last decade, Gómez-Peña and his San Francisco based performance troupe, La Pocha Nostra, have developed a collaborative method of engagement with international artists and audiences named "radical pedagogy". The method is explained in detail in Gómez-Peña's notable study *Ethno-Techno: Writings on Performance, Activism and Pedagogy* (2005), and, a few years later, in *Exercises for Rebel Artists: Radical Performance Pedagogy* (2011).[21] The two volumes describe La Pocha Nostra's entire production process for their collaborations with various artistic collectives around the world. The process includes the selection of collaborators, sets of workshops lasting from a couple of days to a couple of weeks, rules of good conduct in the newly created community, elaborated collective exercises, and the production of final shows. The participants in La Pocha Nostra's workshops are mainly local artists and students of arts, humanities, and social sciences. Sometimes local universities provide space and organizational support for the workshops and shows.

One of the main themes of La Pocha Nostra's performative poetic is the crossing of borders between cultures, institutions and identities.[22] The workshop participants are

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[19] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Performance Studies", in Henry Bial (ed), *The Performance Studies Reader*, Routledge, London and New York, 2004, p. 43-57.

[20] Guillermo Gómez-Peña, *Ethno-Techno: Writings on Performance, Activism and Pedagogy*, Routledge, London and New York, 2005, p. 246.

[21] Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Roberto Sifuentes, *Exercises for Rebel Artists: Radical Performance Pedagogy*, Routledge, London and New York, 2011.

[22] One of the most common criticisms of Gómez-Peña's work targets his understanding of borders. Unlike other Chicano artists/writers, who see the positive aspects of border in the possibility of synthesis, *mestizaje*, and a creation of a "third place", Gómez-Peña keeps relying on (often binary)

trained to detect typical identitarian formations in their cultural contexts and traditions. They are then encouraged to physically express these identities through their bodies, costumes and a whole set of personal and culturally specific assets. The symbolic images are being employed in the individual and group exercises, such as *the walk* and *forming communities in the darkness*, *running blind*, *discovering the other "Others"*, *poetical anthropology*, developing a *collective "pop archeology bank"*, *impersonation of one's favorite subcultures*, etc.

Through exercises, each participant is exposed to others in playful, but at times also personally demanding, ways. The exercises are accompanied by discussions through which the participants reflect on the relationship between their designed images and the sometimes radically different images of others. It is a process of constantly negotiating personal borders and of creating hilariously hybridized images. The exercises lead to the creation of picturesque living sculptures and theatrical sketches with verbal interaction and narration. The sculptures are either static (*tableaux-vivants*, *human murals* and *instant living museums*) or dynamic (*activated human murals*, *performative conflicts*, *human altars* and *dioramas*). Towards the end of the training, the group selects some of the most intriguing results of these exercises to form the basic imagery for the final shows. The whole process aims to provide stimulating environments for free imagination and expression from all participants. The participants are particularly trained to grow toward personal flexibility when it comes to various borders and border crossings.

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distinctions: "In contrast, Gómez-Peña's border, unlike Anzaldria's, relies on the binarism the border provides, on the double (and multiple) articulation it offers. Gómez-Peña's work rages against essentialisms (…) But (…) seeks to preserve the various realities meeting head to head in the border, and the dualities which juxtapose them; the categories, he implies, are still vital." John Ochoa, "Bordering on Madness: The *Licenciado Vidriera*, Guillermo Gómez-Peña and the Performance of Liminality", in Benigno Trigo (ed), *Foucault and Latin America*, Routledge, London and New York, p. 89-90. In my interpretation, it is precisely this differential distinction of the two sides of a border that enables mobility, contrapuntal choreographies and *choreopolitical* activism.

SINGLE IMAGES

• *Zapatista guerrilla or Indian shaman jumping rope or working out on exerciser or treadmill*
• *PLO or Zapatista supermodel*
• *Aztec drag queen boxing with hanging dead chicken*
• *Burning witch bound on a pole using black leather rope with ritual artifacts around them (Race can dramatically alter the reading of this image)*
• *Arab/Chicano homeboy in drag (Pendleton, turban, dark glasses, baggy pants and skirt)*
• *Blonde woman in full burkha doing strip tease*
• *Black woman in KKK outfit doing strip tease*
• *Baywatch refusé/Gringa neoprimitiva*
• *Intercultural fetish adverts (duets)*
• *Lesbian fetish seen through the male gaze*
• *Homoerotic images/actions performed by supermacho stereotypes, i.e. militia in drag*
• *Katakali punk dancer*
• *Inverted minstrel or full body minstrel*
• *Nude body on a surgical table with the words written on torso: "Occupied territories" (you may add one prop to frame the content culturally).*

INTERACTIVE IMAGES

• *"Asian bride in search of tender Anglo husband (write your phone number on my body and persuade me you are the one)"*
• *Authentic "African Queen" sitting on a throne while white men from the audience kneel and shine her boots*
• *Arm-wrestling between two symbolically opposite personae (whoever wins invites audience members to arm-wrestle)*
• *Female performer arm-wrestling with audience members (across race, gender, and class)*
• *Male/female playing strip poker with audience members*
• *Staging an Aztec sacrifice using a "gang member" instead of a priest (the "victim" is a blond audience member dressed by us as an American tourist visiting the Third World)*
• *Shooting booth: "Shoot the immigrant while crossing the border"*
• *Zapatista lap-dance on a blindfolded audience member.*

Diorama created by the audience during the performance of Ex-Centris.
Tate Modern, 2003. Photo: Hugo Glendinning

4.5. The list of instructive examples of *hybrid personae and ethnocyborgs*, and the photograph of a diorama, from the book *Ethno-Techno*, p. 121 and 129.

The above-described examples testify to the overt politicality of the works of Gómez-Peña and La Pocha Nostra, evident in selected topics as well as in the performative strategies and procedures of production. The contents mainly focus on the symbolic representations of social inequalities and burning political issues of violence and marginalization. The provocative hybrid images are highly politically charged. The performative principle of border crossing and hybridization enhances the political messages of each work's represented contents. Finally, the performative pieces are often auto-referential, and they seek to create spaces for critical reflection on their own production. This involves the material conditions of the entire creative process, active negotiations on the relations between participants, as well as the relation with audiences.

La Pocha Nostra's radical pedagogy aims to transform its subjects through re-signification of shared inter-subjective spaces; they map borders in order to transgress them. The troupe maintains a critical, ironic and humorous distance in relation to various cultural discourses represented in their works. Furthermore, the general question of the role of performance art in contemporary society pervades their works:

> Gómez-Peña (…) is a master rhetorician who appears to offer pointed social and political criticism but who also critiques the privilege of offering advice; by calling attention to the spectacle of wisdom, he at once exploits and questions the place of wisdom itself.[23]

La Pocha Nostra do not only offer critical commentaries of socio-political issues, but they also consider their own productions to be "cultural artifacts" that – both consciously and unconsciously – borrow from cultural repertoires of representations and material forms of production. Gómez-Peña and his fellow artists aim to create alternative artistic cultures through their practice of genuine creative collaborations and tireless questioning of interpersonal power relations. "Radical" pedagogy explores the possibilities of excess, provocation and transgression through fabrication of hybrid identities and, perhaps more importantly, through self-organization and alternative material (i.e. socio-economical) ways of performance art production and transmission.

2. Contrapuntal choreography

The prolific artistic opus of Guillermo Gómez-Peña crosses generic borders, as well as borders between media and languages. Besides performance art, it includes photography, video, audio, installations, experimental radio and cyber-art. Gómez-Peña is a prolific author of multilingual poetry, essays and performance theory, all of which come either in printed form, published online or as video recorded speeches. In line with Gómez-Peña's educational aspirations, his spoken performances often take the form of lectures held in alternative artistic spaces of knowledge production as well as at universities. Gómez-Peña's keynote speech at the *Othering & Belonging* conference (2015) belongs to the latter group. We selected this lecture precisely

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[23] Ibid, p. 84.

because of its mainstream educational context, one-hour length and free internet access. The lecture includes fragments from various Gómez-Peña's writings and covers a range of topics significant for his overall work. The conference focuses on identities, inclusiveness and politics of difference. One part of the conference is dedicated to creative and critical education (e.g. the contributions by bell hooks and Shakti Butler) which is significant in the current context of technological developments and increasing social inequalities. The current social context is also marked by rising demands at U.S. universities, including the top ranking ones, for a greater awareness and concrete actions toward overcoming the historically enduring practices of racial exclusion. Considering Gómez-Peña's opus and activism, his lecture fits very well in this context, in both its content and performative strategies.

The specific encounter between Gómez-Peña and his audience (consisting of other participants and visitor of the conference) gives to this keynote speech a character of a lecture and opens the question of its educational/pedagogical ends. The institutional context, typically associated with production and sharing of knowledge, combined with an artistic text and its elaborate performance, forms a specific *choreography of writing*. In the terminology of our work, the combination of the narrated text and performance of speech exemplifies a heterogeneous medium of *writing*. The plane of *choreography* involves the material organization, status of participants and their mutual communication, as well as the situatedness of the event within the broader institutional and social context.

We will analyze Gómez-Peña's lecture as an event of performative remediation of his pre-written texts that happens in the frame of the academic conference. The choreography that integrates various levels of this event will be observed as a set of contrapuntal relations. The counterpoint links text, performance and their context as distinctive elements that together form a complex open structure. Such a structure produces heterogeneous pedagogical (and therefore political) effects irreducible to simple one-directional transmission of knowledge and information.

We recognize counterpoints on several different levels:

a. The textual content juxtaposes sharp social criticism with a utopian vision of societies based on inclusion, unrestricted mobility, creativity and love.

b. The performance of speech actively relates to its content: Gómez-Peña brings into play unconventional costume, props, gestures, manner and tone of speaking, hybrid language ("spanglish") and other elements that create a discourse parallel to the verbal narration. The split between text and performance enables ironic distance and humorous effects. Moreover, the performance establishes an alternate reality, which is a key for textual interpretation. In this particular case, the repetitive gestures, chants and incense suggest a ritual/ceremony which modifies the meaning of spoken words.

c. The performative speech occurs within a broader event that includes the audience, institutional context and complex material organization. The choreography of writing describes how the performance interacts with the given context – whether it reproduces or breaks the academic conventions, affirms or challenges the spectators' common sense. The choreography "speaks" in its own way, as a kind of material language of "procedures and protocols", juxtaposed to verbal and performative discourse.

d. The relation between the order (conventions, codes, languages) and excess (novelty, transgression) is also of interest here. The event of speech implies the encounter between the performer and his audience (Derridean acquiescence), a "yes" prior to any kind of address and verbal exchange. Our question reads: in a lecture performance, which is a form of choreography of writing, what are the possibilities for an event in Derridean sense, an invention and truly creative pedagogical mediation? Or, put in Spångberg's words, can a *dance* of writing/speech emerge from given *choreographies*?

My assumption is that here, just like in *Human Writes*, the choreographic, as well as written/spoken text, creates conditions for innovation. The event/dance, if it comes along, connects performers and audience in an authentic, though ephemeral, community. The community, in return, redefines individual participants, even if only for the duration of their encounter.

e. That leads to the counterpoint between the individual and collective. According to my interpretation, all elements of Gómez-Peña's lecture self-reflectively refer to the actual encounter between all participants, in the here and now. In the first part of the speech, after introducing the main points of his social criticism and outlines of his utopian vision, Gómez-Peña performatively announces: "But now let's get more

personal; let's bring the discourse home. Is this place, our setting, a democratic institution?" And a minute later raises a concrete question: "What is at stake here? What is at stake at this conference?"[24] Both auto-referential spoken text and ceremonial performance are performative expressive acts that establish a new and temporary interpersonal reality. In his essay "Culturas-in-Extremis" that will be discussed in more details later, Gómez-Peña suggests that the event of radical pedagogy primarily happens within the individual consciousness and experience and, consequently, strengthens the integration of the newly created temporary community.[25]

f. Finally, we can apply counterpoint to the relation of *writing* and *meta-writing* in terms of reception, understanding and response to the pedagogical event. Multimedial nature of the lecture, its material heterogeneity and multiple simultaneous discourses open the question of reception of such a contrapuntal input. The "message" is not only a message in terms of multimedial content; the recipients are active agents, who take part in the production of the event. Given the educational context and Gómez-Peña's pedagogical intentions, the complex product of the encounter between the lecturer and the audience should be understood as knowledge. An additional dimension of the choreographies of writing refers to what happens with the spectators who at once listen/read, interpret, and physically participate in the event, even if only by following the rule of sitting and keeping quiet. The audience makes active decisions whether they comply with the norms and conventions or participate in a norm-breaking performative event. How does the audience participate in Gómez-Peña's pedagogy? Which kind of emancipatory transformation could they undergo? In relation to the choreography of writing, the response by the audience becomes a form of "meta-writing" that integrates cognitive activity (a "movement of thought"), insights, affects, presence, gestures, active participation etc. *Meta-writing* is as heterogeneous and multilayered activity as the exhibited *choreography of writing*.

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[24] Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Keynote Performance Othering & Belonging, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=II__VwRpIh0. (12:15 to 13:15)

[25] Guillermo Gómez-Peña, "Culturas-in-Extremis: Performing against the Cultural Backdrop of the Mainstream Bizarre", in Henry Bial (ed), *The Performance Studies Reader*, Routledge, London and New York, 2004, p. 287-298.

3. Pedagogy, epistemology and knowledge production

In his abovementioned discussion on dance and choreography, Spångberg points to the need of new epistemologies that would transgress the domain of cognition and establish their base in movement improvisation.[26] In that way, Spångberg inaugurates movement as an alternative form of experiencing and understanding our realities. The question remains for me how the two domains through which we acquire knowledge about the world – cognition and movement – relate to each other. That is where, I believe, the choreographies of writing might offer a model for a contrapuntal synthesis of the two. The choreographies of writing call for an integration of various discursive levels with non-discursive elements of the events of exchange.

We suggest that the reception of such events should also be observed as a multilayered and heterogeneous process of mediation – a reflection of the hypermedium of writing. So, we can consider the reception of the choreographies of writing a kind of "meta-writing". That further means that the reception of these performances can also metaphorically be represented as either 1) one-directional incision from Kafka's parabolic story, or 2) Forsythe's caressing movement, liberated from previously acquired kinetic habits. (To remind, Forsythe's movement improvisation, called "writing", serves to help dancers "undo" the effects of classical ballet choreographic language on their bodies and movement imagination. The dancers are not supposed to forget ballet, but to experience it as just one possible means of kinetic expression.)

In line with Gregory Ulmer's grammatological propositions for creative education, the choreographies of writing call for an epistemology that involves content, medium and event, the conscious and unconscious, knowing and unknowing, self-reflection and opacity, inscription and resistance, etc. Ulmer, indeed, mentions institutions, along with performative/theatrical form, as a part of materiality of knowledge

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[26] There is a whole field of exploration of new epistemologies in arts that see artistic practice as a process of research and knowledge production in its own right. For our work especially interesting are the theories of knowledge that come from performance studies and dance: e.g. the above mentioned collection *Knowledge in Motion* by Sabine Gehem et al. (Transcript Verlag, 2007), *Epistemology of Art* by Miško Šuvaković (TkH – center for performing arts, theory and practice, 2008), Maaike Bleeker's concept of *corporeal literacy*, Bojana Cvejić's *Choreographing Problems: Expressive Concepts in Contemporary Dance and Performance* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

production. However, Ulmer does not make clear distinctions between theatrical medium (of the scene of teaching) and its social and cultural context. Compared with Ulmer's perspective, new materialist epistemologies bring into play broader *dispositifs* of knowledge production. The result of creative pedagogy – the innovation – should therefore be assessed taking into account additional criterion: the degree of its complicity with or transgression of the dominant "procedures and protocols" of production. So, the question is whether inventive knowledge can still promise radically new insights if it is produced within mainstream educational institutions deeply rooted in the dominant – Spångberg is clear: capitalist – system.

Gómez-Peña certainly aspires to produce social change through all the artistic activities he undertakes. The change that he envisions is a "radical" one that would offer an essential alternative to the mainstream realities. La Pocha Nostra defines their artistic method as "pedagogy", which implies a certain kind of guidance for the audience, knowledge production and raising the questions of epistemology. "Radical pedagogy", therefore, relies on the audience, initiating its members to take part in the creation of change, or at least, to share the artists' dream of a better world. Which kind of knowledge is at stake in this kind of pedagogy? Who creates it and how is it supposed to be received? Given the medial heterogeneity of the events – workshops, performance art shows and lecture performances – organized by La Pocha Nostra, what does their knowledge consist in?

Our assumption is that knowledge emanates from all employed discourses, i.e. from all elements of choreography of writing: its textual content, performative resignification of space in order to create a ceremony, crossing of institutional borders and situating the artistic performance within traditional academic context. The knowledge can hardly be imagined in terms of substantive information or skills; it is certainly not being transferred from the performers to audiences. Such transmission would imply a linear, "incisive", model of *meta-writing*, which, as we will try to show, is not a characteristic of Gómez-Peña's poetics.

On the contrary, we argue that Gómez-Peña is rather in favor of the multidimensional ("caressing") model of the creation of knowledge. His performative pedagogy generates new realities that involve all the participants along with their material environment. Gómez-Peña's performances, including lectures, are the counterpart of

William Forsythe's "ontogenetic" performative objects. More specifically, the performances strive for *community-genesis*. The knowledge is not a transmissible property, but an event of common recognition of the new, temporarily shared, inter-subjective reality:

> *So, dear foreign audience:*
> *Welcome to my conceptual set*
> *Welcome to my performance universe*
> *Welcome to my delirious psyche*
> *Welcome to my borderzone*
> *to the cities and jungles of my language...*[27]

The multifaceted performances – choreographies of writing – create conditions of possibility for such events through initiation of the audience into a greater border-crossing (i.e. *choreopolitical*) mobility, flexibility and self-reflection. Radical pedagogy is a path toward creative, self-aware and responsible forms of being together through temporary sharing of the same visions and dreams.

4. Radical pedagogy vs. liberation philosophy and shamanic therapy

There are two artistic models of education that bear significant similarities with La Pocha Nostra's radical pedagogy: Augusto Boal's theater of the oppressed[28] and Joseph Beuys's shamanic performances.

Boal uses theater as a means of critical education of larger populations. Trained educators theatrically represent realistic social situations of inequality and oppression. The targeted audiences include underprivileged groups, exploited workers, marginalized minorities, etc. The audience is encouraged to join the open-ended performance in search for constructive solutions of the staged problematic situation. Just like La Pocha Nostra's performances, the theatre of the oppressed seeks to inspire real social intervention. Nevertheless, Boal's idea of emancipation is based on

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[27] Guillermo Gómez-Peña, "Performing against the Cultural Backdrop of the Mainstream Bizarre", the version of the essay published on La Pocha Nostra website:

http://www.pochanostra.com/antes/jazz_pocha2/mainpages/bizarre.htm

[28] Augusto Boal, *Theater of the Oppressed*, Theatre Communications Group, New York, 1993.

liberation philosophy inspired by Christian doctrine and created in response to poverty, social injustice, and violation of human rights.[29] The emancipation implies large social transformation achieved through emotional growth of each individual. It is a transition from internalized oppressed/oppressive mindset toward a greater personal awareness of social dynamics. Such awareness is expected to eventually lead to a restoration of the ideal state of social justice.

Joseph Beuys was among the first performance artists to use the genre of lecture performance. Gregory Ulmer dedicates a chapter to Beuys's pedagogical practice and considers lecture performance as a paradigmatic example of the "scene of teaching". Ulmer pays special attention to Beuys's interest in shamanic practices, a recurrent topic in modern art. Ulmer considers shamanism as one of the most significant strategies of post-pedagogy:

> The most salient feature of Beuys's work is his adoption of shamanism as his presentational mode and even as his lived attitude. (…) The artist as shaman, however, turns out to be descriptive of a major trend in modern art, beginning with the "primitivism" of the early modernists (Gauguin, Picasso) and extending through to contemporary "abreaction" and "ritual" modes of performance and body art.[30]

Ulmer further explains the mechanisms and goals of shamanic practice incorporated in Beuys's performance art. In accordance with grammatological "scene of teaching", shamanic handling of collective energy combines the known with the unknown, transfer of information with creative impetus:

> Beuys stresses that he is interested not in providing solutions in the form of scientific or pseudoscientific theories, nor in transmitting information, but in *stimulating thought* – "I am much more interested in a type of theory which provokes energy among people and leads them to a general discussion of their present problems. It is thus more a *therapeutic methodology*" (17). This intention parallels the pedagogical aim of grammatology to stimulate creativity.[31]

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[29] Chris Howson, "Liberation Theology", in David Coghlan and Marry Brydon-Miller (eds), *The Sage Encyclopedia of Action Research*, Sage, Los Angeles, 2014, p. 508-510.

[30] Gregory L. Ulmer, *Applied Grammatology*, John Hopkins U.P, Baltimore and London, 1985, p. 230.

[31] Ibid, p. 238. The citation from Beuys: "Interview: 'If nothing says anything, I don't draw'", in Joseph Beuys, *Drawings*, Munich, 1979, p. 93-94. (emphasis mine – MP)

The important point here is that shamanic *therapy*, just like the ideology of liberation, implies a transformation, both personal and collective. The two practices are pedagogical since they seek to repair the current state of mind and social affairs, by offering guidance toward a desirable social harmony: from oppression to social justice and equality; or from disturbed emotional energies to their free critical and creative use. Apparently, the two pedagogies imply that both the initial and the desirable state are possible to define.

Gómez-Peña often refers to contemporary performance artists as "trans-shamans", proving to the fact that the topic remains present in contemporary art. In his keynote performance at the *Othering & Belonging* conference, Gómez-Peña's performative strategy is strongly associated with shamanic practice. However, his vision of the actual encounter with his audience, as well as the goal of their interaction, remains less clear than in the works of Boal and Beuys.

Gómez-Peña, indeed, defines the desired destination as freedom for everybody, overcoming of discrimination, a just and inclusive world without violence. Nevertheless, such a vision inhabits only utopian realms; Gómez-Peña does not invest in translating it into a language of really achievable goals. On the contrary, his vision remains a clear, eloquently articulated dream, reluctant to compromises. It doesn't seem that one-directional pedagogical undertakings can help real communities achieve such a state.

Even more problematic, however, is to define the existing situation and complex drives of real communities: what we want, what our means are, how capable we are to transform:

> We are all understandably tired of living in these dangerous times; in this fucked up city of…. *(I put my hand around my ear while looking at an audience member)*
> Yes I hear you, man. There's no place to hide anymore. No more instant utopias to be found with a lighter or a pill… (…) [We are] tired of performing the daily ritual of being human or partially human; of feeling like aliens inside our own bodies, or inside the body of our lover. *(I get increasingly more intense; preacher-like)*[32]

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[32] Guillermo Gómez-Peña, *New Philosophical Tantrum* (2008),

http://www.pochanostra.com/dialogues/2008/03/23/new-philosophical-tantrum2008/trackback/

Performative educational speech

1. Performing against the backdrop of the "mainstream bizarre"

Gómez-Peña's written opus thoroughly explores the multifaceted realities of borderline encounters in globalized world. He offers his "reverse anthropology" from the point of view of the exposed Chicano performance artist, embodying various symbolic traits of the cultural/racial/ethnic/gender/etc. "Other":

> My colleagues and I have explored the multi-screen spectacle of the Other-as-freak by "enhancing" our brown bodies… (…) We then pose on dioramas as "artificial savages", making ourselves completely available for the audience to "explore" us, smell us, fondle us, change our costumes and props, and even replace us for a short period of time.[33]

Even though his performances mostly address audiences in the US, specifically targeting middleclass self-understanding and beliefs, their main topics tackle globally spread phenomena: the influence of mass (and especially digital) media, corporate power, police violence, environmental issues, increasing social inequalities, political inefficiency of arts, etc. There lie the causes of the above-cited epidemic "tiredness".

The core of the problem is that we cannot fully comprehend the world we inhabit, and, therefore, we can hardly envision a sensible intervention. In that sense, artists and audiences seem to be equally incompetent. Gómez-Peña coins the term "mainstream bizarre" to describe the general backdrop of our contemporary trials to meaningfully exist and create arts. Mainstream bizarre refers to the dominant mass media practices characterized by the following:

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[33] Guillermo Gómez-Peña, "Culturas-in-Extremis: Performing against the Cultural Backdrop of the Mainstream Bizarre", in Henry Bial (ed), *The Performance Studies Reader*, Routledge, London and New York, 2004, p. 297.

a. "Spectacle of participation": new technologies and social networks encourage everyone to express their opinions, including the most extreme ones. What matters is a momentary exhibition of provocative views that will be forgotten immediately. Internet and mass media increasingly give an "illusion of citizen participation" that is actually ineffective in any significant decision making.[34]

b. "New global democracy" that allows people's insatiable voyeuristic desires to be met with absolutely any kind of content, from "extreme sexuality" to graphic images of war violence. Internet promises to satisfy interests of people from all parts of the political spectrum, including neonacists, KKK member and right wing terrorists. There are no limits to our desires, and everything is instantly available, giving us the illusion of unlimited "freedom".[35]

c. Depoliticized discourse on hybridity – the differences, juxtapositions and interchangeable identities have become "trendy" in the mainstream discourses. In Gómez-Peña's view, art markets and "international curators" have greatly contributed to depolitization of some potentially powerful artistic strategies. The mixtures of "high/low art, Third/First World, shamanic/high-tech, religious/pagan, insider/outsider art" have become common and highly stylized, but detached from genuin critical discussion. "It's nomadism for sale, glossy hybridity for rent, gentrified ethnicity, chic radicalism to be experienced firsthand."[36]

Consequently, art has become unable to compete with technologies employed in marketing and mass entertainment. More importantly, these industries has appropriated art's most powerful weapon – transgressive acts and imagery. It seems that everything is already there, on TV or internet, and every new invention is doomed to be taken away by mass media industries. Unlike Beuys and Boal, Gómez-Peña doubts the capacity of art to offer new critical or creative directions toward a better society. Instead, he admits that artists first need to redefine their roles and face "some tough questions":

> Is this phenomenon a breakthrough in terms of tolerance for true radical behavior or
> yet another confirmation that content and difference, in the age of infinite options and

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[34] Ibid, p. 289.

[35] Ibid, p. 293.

[36] Ibid, p. 296.

multidirectional promises, no longer matter? For the moment, *my performance colleagues and I are a bit confused.* We are carefully reviewing our image bank, our performance rituals and most specially, the language we utilize to frame them.[37]

2. Performance artist as "a shaman who lost his way"

Despite their dedication to creativity and imagination, the artists cannot offer answers, neither can they promise provocative stimulation for critical thought and action. They do not possess deeper knowledge of our time. And, alarmingly, they cannot anymore play the shamanic role. In the communities that practice shamanism, shaman is not a knowledgeable person, but the one in touch with healing and threatening spirits. Shaman could at least provide a guidance or mediation between the visible and invisible dimensions of the world. Beuys believed in artists as modern shamans; Gómez-Peña has serious doubts that anyone could understand the contemporary world in its entirety. The access to technologies, including the extremely destructive ones, has summoned the spirits we have not previously been in touch with. Or at least not to such an extent. Following the prevalence of new technologies and media, these "millennial" spirits have rapidly inhabited our world and our psyches without leaving us enough time to master the healthy relations with them. The role of the shaman remained vacant.

Gómez-Peña suggests, however, that the only way to deal with this situation would be to first confront ourselves despite the lack of shamanic guidance. Facing the demons within us is an extremely demanding, dangerous and uncertain path. That is precisely the path of a shaman. Those who master it can later help others. Gómez-Peña is sometimes mistakenly identified as a "new age shaman",[38] a role that is actually not in agreement with his sincerely admitted "confusion":[39]

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[37] Ibid, p. 293. (emphasis mine – MP)

[38] Gretchen Coombs, "Guillermo Gómez-Peña: A *New Age Shaman* in a Bohemian Theme Park", *Reconstruction*, 10/3, 2010.

[39] Gómez-Peña's art is certainly not associated with the new age feel-good versions of traditional spiritual practices.

> My shaman friends say that I am "a shaman who lost his way". I like that definition of performance art.[40]

Gómez-Peña rather suggests a figure of artist as "trans-shaman" – someone who is aware that he has lost direction and who can at least help us to realize the same. According to Gómez-Peña, the remaining strategy that art could still undertake would be to create space/ambiance/conditions for collective self-inquiry:

> Our objective (at least the conscious one) is to *unleash the millennial demons*, not to pontificate. We wish to understand our new role as performance artists in this new culture of extreme spectacle. In the process of detecting the placement of the new borders, it becomes necessary *to open up a sui generis ceremonial space for the audience to reflect on their new relationship with the Other* and his/her brown body. We believe that these dangerous performance games *trigger a long-term process of reflexivity in the psyche of the viewer* which hopefully leads to deeper ethical and political questions.[41]

The mentioned ceremony would resemble shamanic practice, but without a proper shaman. Both artists and audiences are invited to self-reflection, especially concerning their relations with others. If the individuals sincerely embark on this journey, they will face "dangers" within themselves, in the form of their own "millennial demons". The protective community is the only instance that could prevent a person from getting lost along the way. And that is the area in which art can intervene. The ceremonial space that Gómez-Peña aims to open up provides a starting and lending point for individual inner journeys. In Spångberg's words, the performance artists create *choreography*, which can allow for individual *dance* improvisations. Choreography is a form of language and knowledge and, as such, it is invested in creating conditions for free dance improvisation. In the performances of Gómez-Peña, such a dance is a metaphor for what is supposed to happen internally, "in the psyche of the viewer".

Spångberg explains that dance, as an "event" in Derridean sense, does not happen as a kinetic expression of a dancing subject. On the contrary, it can only happen as a

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[40] Guillermo Gómez-Peña, *Ethno-Techno: Writings on Performance, Activism and Pedagogy*, Routledge, London and New York, 2005, p. 33.

[41] Ibid, p. 298. (emphasis mine – MP)

movement that expresses itself, free from the constraints of the subject. Following this logic, the audience participating in Gómez-Peña's ceremonial performances is invited to "unleash" their inner demons in order to truly dance. According to Gómez-Peña, artistic triggering of such a dance "hopefully leads to deeper ethical and political questions". Only hopefully; there are no guarantees.

Derrida believes that the true "event" can change the course of history. In Spångberg's words, "dance" opens up the possibilities for new epistemology. Neither "event" nor "dance" is subject to our control; they come across on their own. The same applies to Gómez-Peña's idea of "a long-term process of reflexivity in the psyche of the viewer" – it may or may not eventually happen in such a way that it truly confronts us with our demons. Even if it does happen, there is no guarantee that we will find a healthy way out of that confrontation. The artists' role is to invest all their performative and choreographic knowledge to create a stimulating ambiance, i.e. to attempt to trigger a dangerous adventure of self-reflection. In case they succeed, new millennial shamans will be born.

3. *Othering & Belonging* keynote performance

3.1. Self-reference

The keynote performance at the *Othering & Belonging* conference is organized according to the above-described Gómez-Peña's poetic principles. In La Pocha Nostra's workshops and performance shows, the activity of the collaborators and audiences is evident: they are engaged in active verbal and physical exchange with performers; they are invited to the stage and allowed to participate in the performance as they want to. Contrary to these performances, in Gómez-Peña's lectures, the audience remains spatially separate, and he makes it clear:

> In this very moment my hope is located in your arms. I want to hug you. But there is a formidable border that separates me from your body. It is a three thousand year old theatrical convention – the *proscenium*. Despite of a century of attempts by the avant-garde arts to destroy it, it remains intact even in performance art. (18:30-19:00)

Is it then still possible to create a ceremony in which everyone participates? Certainly, Gómez-Peña attempts to produce such an effect combining his speech and

performance. His main technique consists of verbal references to the very event of speech, to the concrete "here and now" including himself and the present audience:

> Right now I am facing another abyss, my beautiful, beautiful audience... You! Can I stage-dive at fifty-nine? I would love to stage-dive into your arms! But if I miscalculate the risk, one of you will sue… Who would be sued? The foundation [that organized the conference]? Hm… I won't do it tonight. I just won't do it tonight. I cannot. (20:10-20:50)

The proscenium convention is respected in the lecture. Gómez-Peña represents this fact as if it happens by his choice, implying that he could as well decide differently. He defines the roles of the participants and describes the actual situation as if he performatively establishes it at his will:

> So, dear audience, today I am your mirror and you are my temporary community. I am in love with you and you are a bit scared of me, of the possibility of me asking you to do something outrageous in the name of art – like taking your clothes off in ritual time while singing upon mariachi opera. Because that's the reputation of performance artists, but I won't do it… this time. And I say "I love you", because my only hope is in your eyes, because, as my audience, you are my source of salvation and source of hope. And together we can change the course of history even if only for the duration of this talk. (05:40-06:40)

So, the current event and its participants are truly reflected in Gómez-Peña's speech. He precisely talks about them. It creates a kind of mise-en-abyme: we think about ourselves being here and thinking about ourselves, etc. As a result, Gómez-Peña's speech becomes a hypnotic self-fulfilling prophecy. Whatever he mentions happens to already be there: he, audience, room, voice, the "foundation" (i.e. the Haas Institute for Fair and Inclusive Society who organizes the conference), etc. Then, he makes a further step and defines the qualities of this encounter. He defines the common values that provide the cohesion of this particular community:

> If I say for the duration of this talk racism does not exist in this room, or no one here hates immigrants, gays or lesbians, is this an accurate statement? Well, yes, in the sense that artistic reality can overshadow social reality for 40 minutes. (08:05-08:35)

There his speech becomes hypnotic – artistic reality overtakes the situation, and the event becomes a desired ceremony in which Gómez-Peña, as an acting shaman,

defines the rules. Moreover, he performatively enacts a cosmogony by defining the limits of that newly created world – an inside opposed to the outside worlds. Both his words and gestures are effective performative speech acts, "even if only for the duration of this talk".

3.2. Temporary community of difference

In the next stage, Gómez-Peña describes in detail the ethical foundation of the created reality. In his description of the current performance, he basically uses the same statements that, at the very beginning of the lecture, portrayed his own artistic world. He creates an elaborate utopia that has performative qualities. Basically, it is an absolutely inclusive, non-violent world based on social justice; it values every single life, cherishes arts and intellect, and stimulates imagination. It is noteworthy that this world still has borders, but they are "easy to cross". The freedom is, therefore, defined in *choreopolitical* terms of freedom of movement.

Once again, Gómez-Peña's description is not a mere subsequent account of what he experiences in reality. On the contrary, the description serves as a performative act that establishes current social reality, i.e. constructs present community. The performative act implies that the accidental group of individuals gathered around the performance integrates into a community. Gómez-Peña elaborates on the topic:

> I wonder if community is still a source of hope. Community is one of our obsessions. We long to belong to a larger "we", because we are obsessed precisely with what we lack. But you know, locas, communities of the sameness drive me off the wall… (…) My community is not confined by ideological, national, or ethnic boundaries. Mine is a community of difference and, therefore, it is fragmented, ever-changing, and temporary. And that's how I like it. Besides, no one belongs to only one community, not even the Christian Right, not even my Chihuahua… (24:00-24:57)

Then he applies the concept in the "here and now" and determines the relations within his newly created community. The description easily slips into a dream:

> Some of you are my peers; others are total strangers in a virtual community of strangers. I long for my peers every night and, hopefully, you long for me as well. And every now and then when we get together, we lick each other's wounds and

dance until the morning after, like rabbit kangaroos. And then, we fall asleep in a circle of accidental bodies and we dream of a better place and a better present. (25:20-25:50)

All descriptions are imbued with irony. So, what is said may or may not really exist. Let us remember that the speaker is neither a shaman nor a priest; he is just brave or arrogant enough to act like them. He certainly takes responsibility for the meaning of the event by attempting to create a ceremony. The audience remains seated and, aside from occasional laughter, behaves in complete accord with conventions of an academic conference. Nevertheless, Gómez-Peña's performance manages to reinterpret their role and see them as a part of the ritual. The performance foregrounds the connections between them, their common focus of attention: the audience is a community of listeners, willingly exposed to Gómez-Peña's suggestive words. Their consent is obvious: moment by moment, they keep staying there, although they also have a choice to leave. They would stay anyway because it is their habit, yet another conference convention. However, in the frame of Gómez-Peña's interpretation, the audience's habit is transformed into an act of initiation. By staying in the room, the audience members confirm their belonging to present temporary community. The habit is revealed as a kind of collective trance.

Truly speaking, although Gómez-Peña withdraws from shamanic role, he still sounds very much like a priest. Or, as one of his didascalia reads: "(I get increasingly more intense; preacher-like)."[42] A traditional shaman leads the individual souls through the invisible and dangerous spiritual world until they find a new existential balance. Gómez-Peña, as an artist in post-shamanic era, cannot anymore take that role. The unique remaining entity that could provide protection is the community. The community provides an alternative to shamanic assistance. It cannot really help on the way, but can provide a safe harbor to wandering souls.

The ceremony established by Gómez-Peña combines shamanic and religious elements. Unlike shamanism, it does not focus on individuals, but address the collective. In that sense, it resembles a religious sermon. Yet, it by no means offers an instant refuge. In Gómez-Peña's words: "An institutionalized religion gives you the

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[42] Guillermo Gómez-Peña , New Philosophical Tantrum (2008),

http://www.pochanostra.com/dialogues/2008/03/23/new-philosophical-tantrum2008/

creeps." (15:40) The collective does not assimilate its individual members into a common identity. Created community is not "community of the sameness". On the contrary, "difference" is its main principle. So, the ceremony is like shamanism without a shaman, and sermon without a priest. What remains is the counterpoint between the individual and collective realms.

3.3. Politics between hope and fear of oneself

In such a frame, Gómez-Peña's speech functions as a chant. He offers a utopian vision, a dream filled with love, imagination and hope. Moreover, he attempts to seduce his audience into "co-imagining a better future for the borderless community of mankind". Yet he does so only to offer the audience a stronghold for their challenging individual inner journeys. Art, whose brightest achievements are being relentlessly appropriated by corporations, cannot lead people toward a better world. But it can still provide support for individual inquires. Gómez-Peña's version of such support is a suggestive utopian vision. Utopia counterbalances threatening "millennial demons". By enacting his utopian vision within present temporary community, Gómez-Peña fulfills what he sees as political duty of art:

> The fact is that first and foremost we make art because we love it and doing good with it is the effect we welcome. But we don't want to talk about this because we badly want to believe that art is necessary. Is it? I think it is. I think democracy cannot thrive without art, without the critical voice of the artist constantly testing its limits and possibilities. Without the ethical mirror of art reflecting the distorted features of power... (09:30-10:20)

Gómez-Peña's undertaking shows that responsibility does not go without fear. Despite its strong appeal, utopia is yet uninhabited space and people do not rush to it so easily. "I am in love with you", declares Gómez-Peña to his audience, "and you are a bit scared of me, of the possibility of me asking you to do something outrageous in the name of art" (05:40). The audience can comfortably stay in their seats, listen to the speech and sporadically laugh, but would they really do anything else to strengthen their community? From time to time, Gómez-Peña mockingly frees them from such duties (e.g. by promising that he will not ask them to do anything outrageous in the name of art, at least "not this time"). Truly, how can anyone be sure

that utopia will keep its promises? Just like other historical ideologies, it may easily turn into its opposite. The reluctance to embrace the utopian vision comes from fear of others, which ultimately reveals fear of oneself. In other words, fear of our own millennial, or perhaps eternal, demons. This is precisely the contrapuntal dynamic between Gómez-Peña's *autopoietic* chant and surrounding world.

Seen as choreography of writing, Gómez-Peña's keynote lecture combines text, performance and academic context in order to create (necessary but not sufficient) conditions for "event". Lecture is conceived as a ceremony through which the group of present people integrates into genuine community. The realm in which desired event could maybe take place is individual psyche of each participant. The event implies overcoming of one's personal limits through, in spiritualist terms, mastering internal demons. Given that, these inner personal events deeply concerns the community as they might increase empathy and a shared sense of belonging.

Reception and understanding of such choreography of writing involves direct participation. Consciously or not, the spectator indeed becomes a part of certain community. Given the academic context, such community should be considered within a broader knowledge culture. However, the knowledge created through Gómez-Peña's pedagogy seems to resist appropriations, either by mainstream educational institutions or commercial use. By keeping close connections with the low, dirty and dark human sides, Gómez-Peña's quest for knowledge is a quest for a new, post-shamanic, existential balance. The lecture ends with an excerpt from La Pocha Nostra's *Declaration of Poetic Disobedience*: [43]

> [Shamanic tongues]
>
> *To the lords of fear and intolerance:*
>
> *I say, we say:*
> *We, mud people, snake people, tar people*
> *We, bohemians walking on millennial thin ice*
> *Our bodies pierced, tattooed, martyred, scarred*
> *Our skin covered with hieroglyphs & flaming questions*
> *We, the witches who transform trash into wearable art*
> *We, Living Museum of Modern Oddities & Sacred Monsters*

[43] Guillermo Gómez-Peña, "The New Barbarians: A Declaration of Poetic Disobedience from the New Border", in Dominic Johnson (ed), *Pleading in the Blood: The Art and Performance of Ron Athey*, Intellect, Chicago, 2013, p. 234-238.

We, vatos cromados y chucas neo-barrocas
We, indomitable drag queens, transcendental putas
waiting for love and better conditions in the shade
We, bad boy & bad girls over 50
We, lusting for otherness
We, todos somos putos
We, 'subject matter' of fringe documentaries
We, the Hollywood refuseniks,
the greaser bandits & holy outlaws
of advanced Capitalism
We, without guns, without Bibles
We, who never pray to the police or to the army
We, who never kissed the hand of a bishop or a curator
We, who barter and exchange favors & talismans
We, who still believe in community, another community,
a much stranger and wider community
We, community of illness, madness & dissent
community of horny angels & tender demons
We, scotch, mescal and bleeding saliva
We, frail and defiant; permanently outraged but always tender
We shape your desire while you contract our services
to postpone the real discussion
We are waiting, still waiting for you to go to sleep
so, we can continue the party

[Shamanic tongues]

CONCLUSIONS

In my analysis of the choreographies of writing, the biggest challenge was how not to succumb to "reading" and thereby treat their heterogeneous elements as "texts". Reading implies that any discourse can be translated into a verbal message. By juxtaposing textual and non-textual elements, choreographies of writing precisely point to the irreducible medial differences and my task was to find a way to adequately respond to them. That was only possible through parallel reflection on my own interpretative attitude and procedures.

My initial questions about the relations between various media/discourses and their effects is crystallized in Hannah Arendt's politically charged question: "what do we actually do when we are active (Was wir eigentlich tun, wenn wir tätig werden)?"[1] Applied to choreographies of writing, including both embodied inscriptions and lecture performances, the question reads: what do we actually do when we write and talk? My interpretative activity is one form of writing and, therefore, a subject to the same inquiry: what do I actually do when I express my experience and thoughts about performances of writing? The process of understanding and shaping expression can be considered as "meta-writing". Therefore, what we find about the choreographies of writing has strong implications on the choreographies of "meta-writing".

The analysis of the selected performances principally revealed that the act of verbal communication generates events that involve the participants and their environment. The performances mainly explore how the events of communication contribute to the creation of temporary communities, located within broader cultures of material exchange and knowledge production. In these performances, the Derridean notion of

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[1] Cited in Ana Vujanović, "What we actually do when we… make art?", *Cine Qua Non* 8, Spring/Sumer 2014, p. 82.

"acquiescence" manifests through a temporary community that is (not necessarily temporally, but ontologically) prior to and a condition of any communication. The acts of communication, in return, give the community a particular form and, thus, shape the local culture.

The "event" can either be seen as a) a manifestation of its own material conditions and underpinning institutional discourses, or b) an interruption of the norms and conventions implied in such discourses, a breakthrough inthe expected course of action. According to the first definition, the event of writing would refer tothe situation and process of textual production, including the encounter between the performers and audience, employed technologies, the venue and broader social and cultural context. The knowledge embedded in such an event involves various discourses and their ever-changing mutualdynamic. It does not form an all-embracing content, but rather an ongoing, "contrapuntal" reflection and self-reflection.

The second, Derridean meaning of event implies a radical change and innovation. Besides Ulmer's post-pedagogy,the notion has also been applied in more recent theorizations of knowledge as creativity, especially in the arts. The event belongs to the domain of potentiality; to create conditions for it to possibly happen requires us to face the uncertainty and make it up with unavoidable failures on the way. The conditions we provide can be necessary, but never really sufficient. The eventalso depends on the unknown and incalculable element of chance.

What did we discover about the events of writing? Thinking about the event of discourse production, verbal and performative alike, helps us anchor the "meaning" in the complex and multidimensional context of its production. The event is an element of the codified and institutionalized practice, yet it has a potential to interrupt the codesand change their automatic reproduction. Writing –including textual content, performance and choreographic codes – is based on language and repetition. In the choreographies of writing, the activity of writing enables the encounters between performers and audienceswhile, at the same time, providing a backdrop against which these events can be recognized as potentially innovative.

The element of the unknown comes from unique temporary combinations of various actors, media, objects, strategies and discourses. The analyzed performances are particularly concerned with the temporary communities emerging from these events.

The knowledge implied in texts and choreographies serves to create conditions for the (possibly/otherwise) impossible encounters to occur.

William Forsythe starts from an inversion. In the *Improvisation Technologies*, he identifies writing with dance improvisation, opposed to the established language of classical ballet. According to Forsythe, writing is not reduced tothe activity directed toward a sole end – a one-directional "incision" of meaning into a lasting medium. Writing can also embrace the movements that freely explore the surrounding space and their own potentials. Forsythe introduces kinetic play in the material production of signs. The suggested multidimensional writing reveals different qualities of touch, including "caress", between executing body, its tools, and various substrates and spaces. Unlike common, text-centered writing practices, Forsythe's idea of writing foregrounds the free performance of movements.

In *Human Writes*, The Forsythe Company employs their idea of writing to graphically reproduce the sentences of *The Declaration of Human Rights*. The choreography of the piece, a form of language in its own right, suggests dancers to consciously obstruct their executions of writing gestures. So, the gestures are forced to make long detours from their initial direction toward paper, enduring hardship alongside free play on the way. The fixation of text is delayed, so that its material production could be temporally extended and kinetically emphasized. The process of multidimensional writing creates room for both spectacle and genuine interaction with the audience, ranging from discussions to physical collaboration. The legal text of *Declaration* and choreographic rule of the game together create a framework in which the concrete encounters emerge. That framework is designed as an invitation to play, to sharing of kinetic empathy, and to discussions about human rights in general and in relation with the actual common experience.

Interpreting the performance as either the critique or the support to UN policies on human rights would imply "reading" of its "message". Surely, the lack of global enactment of human rights law was a topic in the discussion that took place on stage. And so was the issue of appropriation of human rights discourses in political justifications of international military interventions. Nevertheless, the performance allowed for different opinions on the topics, and its material and performative aspects cannot be reduced to a straightforward verbal parole. The stagings of the performance

"did" and "produced" something on the spot before they "meant" something to us. They created specific events of encounter and exchange defining the contingent temporary communities. The conceptual creators of *Human Writes*, Forsythe and Thomas, claim that the performance contributes to human rights cultures. The performance reveals that the discourse of human rights includes not only the legal text and institutions responsible for its implementation, but also a myriad of events in which this discourse is employed. All that people do regarding human rights create complex, multifaceted cultures of human rights: enforcement, celebration, critique, defense, various appropriations, discussions, (unconscious or deliberate) violations, respect, etc. The human rights law aspires for global rule, but its application is always local,personal, and momentary. The application of the law is not only the matter of "incision" in the legally binding texts and human consciousness, but also of momentary events of inclusion, care, and "caress". The way this application happens in reality defines the community and its culture, to which *Human Writes*offers its contribution. It lets the *Declaration* and choreography create space for a temporary shared realitycentered on the topic/practice of human rights.

Guillermo Gómez-Peña also sees performance as a means of creation of self-reflective temporary communities. Despite being one of the icons of performance art,Gómez-Peña continuously engages in alternative and local artistic productions, involving artists, students and performance enthusiasts around the world. His recent books (2011, 2005) offer detailed instructions particularly for such productions: performance shows,workshops and trainings. Besides, Gómez-Peña is a prolific essayist and speaker addressing burning social issues, global alongside the locally specific ones. Without compromising the thematic and political cohesion, Gómez-Peña's imagery is extremely diverse and colorful. His hybrid identities are sculpted meticulously.

Based on his idea of borders and distinctive identities, Gómez-Peña's spoken performances operate on several contrapuntal levels: text/gestures, action/contemplation, inside/outside, violence/pleasure, utopia/reality, individual/collective, etc. The explicit reference to the very moment of speech, including deictic gestures and words, is Gómez-Peña's rhetoric topos. Both speech and performance are employed to delineate the temporarily shared space – an inside distinctive from the external world, locus of the ritual involving the self-selected

participants who just happen to be gathered around the performance. Gómez-Peña uses the privileges of a speaker to define the roles of the participants and give sense to the temporary community ("I am your…" and "you are mine…"; "in my/ideal world…"). His words and physical gestures both function as performative acts of enunciation aimed to create temporary realities, often working as self-fulfilling prophecies. All mentioned techniques draw attention to the "here and now" of the performative event.

Gómez-Peña's keynote performance at the *Othering& Belonging* conference functions as a self-proclaimed trans-shamanic ceremony, providing a frame for resignification (performative remediation) of all the elements of the event: speech, space, interpersonal relations, institutional and social context, etc. Therefore, the performer is acting shaman, the speech is his chant, and the venue is symbolically marked as a space of intense self-inquiry. The academic conference becomes, at the same time, the host and the opposing alternative to such a ritual. The knowledge that Gómez-Peña aims to provoke is the personal confrontation of what participant have brought within themselves – "the millennial demons" inhabiting each individual. Seen in this light, the temporary community of the performer and performance audience serves as a safe harbor from which each person ventures on a solitary journey through his/her own soul. The outcome is utterly uncertain, but it is critical for the community design. In Gómez-Peña's version of the choreographies of writing the individuals incorporate opposing drives binding them simultaneously to the current state of affairs and to subversive dreams of a better world. The immersion in the unmastered world of spirits and demons makes people being subject to their rule and unknowingly complicit with what they seek to overcome.

Arendt's question: what do we actually do when we write and speak? The two analyzed authors basically give the similar answer: we create temporary communities that encrypt heterogeneous knowledge. With different kinds of contents and discourses, we contribute to the knowledge cultures. The choreographies of writing create frames and conditions; the event eventually takes place in the domain of self-reflection/inquiry with regard to others.

And what could we say about the choreographies of *meta-writing*? What do we do when we interpret and create knowledge within the mainstream institutions? Aside

from verbal contents, through performances and events we create contingent temporary communities and, thus, contribute to a certain knowledge culture. Seeing our engagement as a heterogeneous contrapuntal choreography might help us reflect upon the performative and contextual aspects of our practice. Counterpoint describes a certain structure, but also refers to an ongoing process of interrelations between distinct (verbal and non-verbal) discourses that we, as academic researchers, enact continuously.

At the end, I would try to compare the choreographies of writing, as artistic performances, with the practice of critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogies are sensitive to power relations concerning knowledge production. According to them, the classroom should not be a place of one-directional transfer of knowledge, from teacher to students, but a "studio" for critical thinking and mutual exchange. Each participant "brings to the table" her/his own views that are to be negotiated through open discussions. The classroom practice is, however, a means to reach more general goals: to create politically aware subjects who will cherish personal freedom, respect different opinions and open dialog, and, finally, contribute to social justice.

Choreographies of writing certainly share some political concerns and can be considered as a critical practice in their own right. Being primarily artistic events, choreographies of writing explore the complexity and heterogeneity of the medium of writing and teaching. Compared to critical pedagogy, the choreographies of writing pose the following question: what is *all* that we bring with us to the events of collective (mainstream or alternative) knowledge production? What makes our encounters/communities possible? Who is left aside or outside? In short, which cultures do we contribute to by our overall behavior? The choreographies of writing enact the events of encounter and community building. Rather than providing a training ground for critical intervention in the broader culture, choreographies of writing draw attention to the culture that, in all its dynamic/contrapuntal heterogeneity, happens through them.

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