



Transient Bodies in Hard Topographies: a guide for life together in Raimund Hoghe's *Sans-titre*

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ABSTRACT – Transient Bodies in Hard Topographies: a guide for life together in Raimund Hoghe's *Sans-titre*¹ – This paper argues that *Sans-titre*, by the choreographer Raimund Hoghe (2009), proposes that it is through a movement of release from the static forces of cultural representation that the subject may become closer to others as humans. In other words, the subject may thus build a relationship based on ethics. The analysis draws on a subjective interpretation that unfolds according to the narrative sequence of the performance, therefore trying to free itself from the *neutral* (and potentially simplistic) look commonly associated with traditional academic models, while at the same time raising new critical possibilities around reception aesthetics.

Keywords: **Body. Embodiment. Affects. Cultural Representation. Spectatorship.**

RÉSUMÉ – Corps transitoires dans topographies rigides: un guide pour le vivre ensemble dans *Sans-titre*, de Raimund Hoghe – Dans cet article, je soutiens que *Sans-titre*, du chorégraphe Raimund Hoghe (2009), conduit à l'idée que c'est à travers un mouvement de libération des forces statiques de représentation culturelle que le sujet peut s'approcher des autres, en tant qu'être humains – c'est-à-dire, construire une relation basée sur l'éthique. Cette analyse part d'une interprétation subjective et elle se développe selon la séquence narrative du spectacle, cherchant à se libérer du regard *neutre* (et potentiellement réducteur) des régimes traditionnels de régulation académique – au même temps qu'il révèle nouvelles possibilités critiques autour de la réception esthétique.

Mots-clés: **Corps. Incorporation. Affects. Représentation Culturelle. Réception Esthétique.**

RESUMO – Corpos Transitórios em Topografias Rígidas: um guia para a vida conjunta em *Sans-titre*, de Raimund Hoghe – Neste artigo, argumenta-se que *Sans-titre*, do coreógrafo Raimund Hoghe (2009), remete à ideia de que é por intermédio de um movimento de libertação das forças estáticas de representação cultural que o sujeito pode se aproximar dos outros enquanto humanos – ou seja, construir uma relação baseada na ética. A análise parte de uma interpretação subjetiva que se desenrola em função da sequência narrativa do espetáculo, procurando libertar-se do olhar *neutro* (e potencialmente redutor) normalmente associado aos regimes tradicionais de regulação académica – ao mesmo tempo em que dá a ver novas possibilidades críticas em torno da recepção estética.

Palavras-chave: **Corpo. Incorporação. Afetos. Representação Cultural. Recepção Estética.**

Prologue

In *Sans-titre*, 2009², the German creator Raimund Hoghe³ joined Congolese choreographer and dancer Faustin Linyekula⁴ for what initially appeared to be a confrontation between contrasting geographies and corporealities, raising the highly current issues of cultural belonging, exile and social exclusion – regular topics for both artists throughout their careers. As the performance progressed, however, Raimund and Faustin seemed to be freeing themselves from their patterns of constructed identity, opening up to the inquiring spirit of their moving bodies. It was through this embracing of the body's affections that they were able to mark out an empathic bridge, beyond the different historical legacies and physical singularities that, at the outset, distanced them.

At least, that's how I saw the performance: overwhelmed by the dramaturgical force of a dance built on (supposed) cultural oppositions, through which affective approximations were created. From this subjective reading, I argue in this article that *Sans-titre* proposes that a movement of liberation from the static forces of cultural representation can allow the subject to approach and connect with others as humans; in other words, build a relationship based on ethics. To this end, I shall draw on two different orders of perception: one based on my critical awareness as a spectator - as I describe the immediate (and contingent) impact of the performance's sequence of actions; and another, more scientifically grounded, in which I aim to situate that personal experience. For the latter, I shall use, among other references, Michel Foucault's thinking about body regulation systems and José Gil's perspective on the affects of the body.

This dual quality instinctively arises from my view as an artist-researcher. I am used to seeing artistic creations ranging from the implicated spectator to the most objective observer that seek to enhance critical value through the correspondence drawn between these two orders of perception. This is the same value that Bruno Latour (2004) recognizes in the critical gesture when released from the equivocation of neutrality: value that is built on the viewer's passionate interest; and from which unexpected conclusions and multipliers of the possibilities of meaning can be reached. This article therefore presents a perspective based on my experience as a spectator

and the epistemological questions that it can raise. It does not start from an external look that dwells (disciplinarily) on a case study – as a strictly sociological, philosophical or historiographical analysis would do. The traditional approach of such analyses aims to fit the object within the methodological principles and conceptual scope of the respective field of study. According to anthropologist Tim Ingold (2013; 2015), it is precisely in this type of *participant observation* – paying attention to what the experience itself has to say – that we learn to *know* the world around us *from within*. A world that, for Ingold, cannot be deepened in all its complexity by the mere collection of data underlying any disciplinary area, including that consolidated by anthropology itself (Ingold 2013). Thus, by basing my analysis on having been personally inspired by *Sans-titre* itself, I hope also to be contributing to the same effort to liberate the canonical processes regulating (Western) academic culture, looking for alternative forms of fluency and the production of knowledge within artistic studies.

Inescapable Baggage (or *Invitation to Dance*)

The sound of a piano is heard [I hear...].

Two men appear, on opposite sides, and stop at the entrance to the stage, seemingly looking at each other – Faustin Linyekula (on the left) and Raimund Hoghe (on the right). An African and a European. The latter has a clear deformation of the spine. When facing each other, the force of their physical differences precedes any other aspect. A black and a white. A 'normal' body and a non-normative body [Figure 1]. Very different in nature and impact, it is likely that they have both inherited a long line of discriminatory stories. It is very likely that, at one time or another, in this or that place, in the eyes of this or those people, they have been seen / considered / treated as excluded. Deviants from some cultural pattern. Known stories of social segregation. I suppose that we have all had some contact with them already. Either because we have been with them directly or as mere observers [– accomplices]. Although momentary, Faustin and Raimund's initial pause seems to bring about another type of dislocation: a new gesture is formed in [my] thought. A gesture belonging to the terrain of topographic contingencies, looking to place the immobile bodies; leaving them to the mercy of the (implicit) boundaries of exclusion. You can't escape them. And, with these, the urgent desire to free them [– to free me].

The dance has already begun. Before movement. Beyond intention.

(Notes on the performance's reception, 3rd November 2016, Teatro São Luiz, Lisbon).



Figure 1 – Faustin Linyekula (left) and Raimund Hoghe (right), in *Sans-titre* by Raimund Hoghe (2009).
Source: Image courtesy of Raimund Hoghe; Photograph © Rosa Frank (2009).

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At the beginning of the piece, the performers' static bodies show, above anything else, their circumstantial character. With no movement to destabilise their fixed image of themselves, the bodies are open to the symbolic reading of their physical aspects, taking my gaze into the world of pre-conceived ideas about their geographical origins, cultural patterns, social stigmas and other contingencies normalised by the forces of collective representation. Thus, they begin by showing me the marks of their historical-cultural subjection – what Michel Foucault (2013 [1975]) called *souls*. And it is these souls that figuratively shape the frame of reference on which my initial reception of the performance is anchored – on which I establish its starting grid. In the words of the philosopher:

This real, non-corporeal soul is not a substance; it is the element in which are articulated the effects of a certain type of power and the reference of a certain type of knowledge [...]. On this reality-reference, various concepts have been constructed and domains of analysis carved out: psyche, subjectivity, personality, consciousness, etc.; on it have been built scientific techniques and discourses, and based on it, the moral claims of humanism have been explored (Foucault, 1995 [1975], p. 29-30).

The figures of the bodies thus overlap the immanent quality of their physical presence, leading me to read them in terms of the *reality-reference* to which they are culturally linked. Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1999 [1945]) drew attention to the effect of pre-discursive determinations in the process of perceiving phenomena – determinations that are projected onto the consciousness of those who perceive through association with their past experience as a social individual. Later, Erving Goffman (1993 [1959]) would continue this idea in terms of human interactions, emphasizing that the *a priori* process of corporeal figuration acts as an involuntary reflex: whatever the particular agent, the other's body is immediately made a subject by a view seeking to place them within a certain socio-cultural structure. And more recently, Judith Butler (1990), similarly inspired by Foucault, further deepened the ideological constraints of the meeting when, based on the addressing of gender issues, she revealed its effects on the internal perception that we have of each other and in the way these perceptions (performatively) drive the forces of cultural hegemonisation.

The provisionally static beginning of this scene therefore intensifies the perceptual paradox typically associated with our first impressions of someone. Although the bodies seem to assume an apparent centrality, they actually inhabit an image in which there is little (or even no) space for corporeality; for the possibilities of transforming the subject through movement and action. Returning to Foucault (1995 [1975], p. 30):

The man described for us, whom we are invited to free, is already in himself the effect of a subjection much more profound than himself. A 'soul' inhabits him and brings him to existence, which is itself a factor in the mastery that power exercises over the body. The soul is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body.

My opening experience of the performance is, therefore, conditioned by the overlapping of one perceptive dimension on another: the force of the bodies' cultural representations on the affective relief emanating from their physical presences – idea on flesh, virtual on face-to-face, structure on chance, History on spontaneity. And it is the *weight* of this semiotic assault that creates the inescapable context out of which the performance opens in me.

The title *Untitled* had directed my attention to the idea of emptying a context prior to the performance, but what the initial scene does is to show, precisely, the impossibility of that void. The meeting of two static bodies is enough to overflow with evocative meanings. They are live bodies, but they start out as ghosts.

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[It's only now I notice that...]

Against the back wall, centre stage, a small lit candle sets a tremulous rhythm. And downstage, also on the floor, a group of whitish pebbles traces, together with the candle, a line virtually separating the two performers. [A line connecting two symbolic poles? At one end, the search for transcendence represented by the lit candle and, at the other, the immanence of the Earth displayed by stones?] F and R [Do their names still matter?] finally begin to move towards each other.

(Notes on the performance's reception, 3rd November 2016, Teatro São Luiz, Lisbon).

Disciplined Search (or *Dance Steps*)

They finally pass each other, as if walking on different plateaus – never looking at each other. Then they change their starting points and try again, advancing on each other, with the same indifferent result, over and over again. [The impossibility of meeting]. After a while R stops, finally, facing the black back wall, and slowly raises his crooked left arm. F comes and stands beside him, making the same gesture, gracefully. Both stare at the dark wall. [Uncharted territory].

They separate [...].

R starts laying sheets of white paper on the floor, methodically covering the rectangular perimeter of the stage. Straight lines delimiting a territory [of investigation? Are his habits of Western scrutiny driving him towards a more intellectual relationship with the world?]

Meanwhile, F begins a small dance, in which he hunches his torso in a cadenced manner, in unsteady movements, as if imbued with vital uncertainty. Never stopping, he then slowly moves backwards, half crouched, with his feet firmly on the ground - never losing his tactile connection to the Earth. He goes to the small pile of pebbles. He circles them – it is his research ground – before picking them up [Figure 2]. He then moves towards the candle, using the stones as he goes to make a visible line marking the way [back to his Roots?].

Each of them seems to be looking for the best way to relate to the other, appealing to their own cultural references and physical rituals. R seems to seek help from the reason

represented by the blank sheets – with which he surrounds F – and F uses the materiality of his body expressed by his tactile relationship with the stones, using them to try and reach the dimension in which R moves / thinks. Although divergent, the individual impulses to approach the other are activated, in motion.

(Notes on the performance's reception, 3rd November 2016, Teatro São Luiz, Lisbon).



Figure 2 – Raimund Hoghe (left) and Faustin Linyekula (right), in *Sans-titre* by Raimund Hoghe (2009).
Source: Image courtesy of Raimund Hoghe; Photograph © Rosa Frank (2009).

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Following the figurative logic suggested by the static nature of the initial image, the performance continues to summon up my *symbolic conscience* – to use Roland Barthes' concept (2009 [1964]). The performers' movements now seem guided by the desire to get closer, to overcome the differences that, apparently, separate them, but they are out of sync. Even when they finally come together, they stand side by side, without looking at each other, in search of a gestural synchrony that ends up further emphasising their corporeal differences. This misencounter seems to lead them into a search for different paths of self-exploration that may create a bridge to the other. For me, trying to make sense of the possible meanings the dance brings into play, what they actually end up doing is taking refuge within their well-known rituals of relating to the world, according to the cultural standards against which they question themselves as social beings.

R is involved in a structured search, trying to delimit (objectively) his research space. The economy of his gestures reveals a body that moves with the sole purpose of expressing the rationality of its decisions. F begins another type of search, apparently guided by the inner rhythm of his body, moving in step with the sensation of being in contact with the ground he treads together with the empowered icons (the pebbles) of this immanent relationship with the Earth. Despite the great difference in their approaches, both are seen to have *docile bodies* dominated by the *disciplines* (returning to Foucault) of their cultural systems:

Thus discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, 'docile' bodies. Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). In short, it dissociates power from the body; on the one hand, it turns it into an 'aptitude', a 'capacity', which it seeks to increase; on the other, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it and turns it into a relation of strict subjection (Foucault, 1995 [1975], p. 138).

The performers' movements, their corporealities, are now the result of what Foucault called *the instrumental codification of the body* (1995 [1975], p. 177): the effect of the (subjectively incorporated) mediating forces of cultural regulation. This relationship between culture and corporeality has been addressed by several authors, namely by Deidre Sklar (1991), for whom cultural knowledge is embodied in any and all physical movements - including the intertwined effects of history, identity values and affectivity coming from the collective memory of their respective communities. The bodies thus move in accordance with determined cultural devices. In using *devices*, I am thinking of Giorgio Agamben's (2005) definition, leading on from Foucault: the network established between the various elements (discursive, institutional, legal, etc.) that act on the subjects in a power relationship. The impact of this game of correspondence may differ qualitatively from individual to individual, but no one can escape the general devices set in motion by the social framework to which they belong.

In my view, R and F's singular movements therefore show them to be partners in subjection, inseparable correspondents of the respective devices whose signs they now reveal. Even when moving, the symbolic perception prevails, since R and F's agency seems to stem, above all, from the meaning

of their gestures. Their bodies are given no space for any other type of non-significant impulse. In the words of Foucault:

Place the bodies in a small world of signals, to each of which is attached a single obligatory response: it is a technique of training [...] that ‘despotically excludes in everything [...] the smallest murmur’ (Foucault, 1995 [1975], p. 166).

They are, therefore, bodies moving in the *world of signals*, within which they see themselves as subjects acting against the image they have of themselves in the context of a particular culture. It is this representational recurrence of the body (turned into a symbol) that seems to take over the performers’ movement, leading them (apparently) to ignore *the smallest interior murmur* – the smallest occurrence.

It is clear that this *murmur* has always existed, potentially, as an agent of resistance to the power structures governing societies. It is the *murmur* that comes from critical reflection, from which Adorno and Horkheimer (1985 [1947]) founded (a long time ago) their negative dialectic, emphasizing non-identity thinking, which seeks to move away from hegemonic discourses on culture. It was in the wake of this post-cultural shift that much of postmodern critical thinking would reinforce approaches to theoretical questioning (e. g. gender issues, postcolonial and decolonial studies, ethnic-racial relations) that have sought to reveal plurality; from which it becomes possible to recognize *difference* within the wider scope of human affirmation.

It was due to this displacement from the margins of performance to the *space-between* – as Boaventura Sousa Santos (2018) calls it – that I found myself challenging the *prison* to which I began to subject F and R’s bodies. It was then I realised that, with the passage of time and the exhaustive rhythm of their actions, their bodies were revealing more subtle aspects of their movements. Certain intrinsic qualities were seeming to acquire, almost imperceptibly, a forceful reaction to the uniform processes of body regulation, which led me to free them from their disciplined bodies. For example, the non-conforming design of R’s movements expressed in the mechanical (and, at the same time, fragile) form, as he crouches to place the papers on the floor. There was also the delicacy of F’s movements in contrast to the roughness of the floor (where he so resolutely slides) and the

stones he holds. Small corporeal innuendoes taking me to the world of affects and, consequently, to a relationship based on empathic forces.

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F now dances vigorously to the sound of opera. A certain quality of fusion emerges. [Almost subversive.] However, R has just delimited the stage space with sheets of paper, isolating F within.

[Bach, Purcell ... classical music continues. There is something permanent about it. Perhaps the depiction of R / the choreographer's Western view.]

F takes off his shirt. He collects the pebbles and draws a circle around them - his body is now his research ground. With these stones, he then begins to isolate different parts of his body, delimiting different areas of inquiry: an arm (in various positions); his trunk; part of his leg ... Then he lies on his stomach with his forehead resting on the floor.

(Notes on the performance's reception, 3rd November 2016, Teatro São Luiz, Lisbon).

Raising the Head (or Duet)

Slowly [like the rhythm of the whole performance so far], F places the pebbles along his back. His search is now completely focused on his own body, based on his own vertebrae. [The roots].

R enters the perimeter delimited by the sheets and lies down beside the candle, perpendicular to F's body. A new crossing route has been drawn. [Was F, with his attention refocused on the body, the reason why R approached?].

F carefully gets on all fours and moves, gracefully, like an animal, in what appears to be a primitive, ancestral gesture, guided only by intuition [Figure 3]. As he crawls, the stones fall randomly around the space, freeing his body from these small fetters. [The sound of stones falling on the floor is a whole different tune.] His dance is becoming more powerful, more vital, until he stands. Dancing, he picks up the fallen pebbles, but only to stack them on the floor once again. [This time, without any kind of solemnity].

F stops and faces R [- now there is no doubt]. He takes his time.

The moment thickens.

(Notes on the performance's reception, 3rd November 2016, Teatro São Luiz, Lisbon).



Figure 3 – Faustin Linyekula, in *Sans-titre* by Raimund Hoghe (2009).
Source: Image courtesy of Raimund Hoghe; Photograph de © Rosa Frank (2009).

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As F refocuses his attention on his physical presence, he seems to give in to his internal drives, gradually abandoning the disciplinary forces that had seemingly guided his efforts – powerless until that moment – to approach the other. His movement now seems less *choreographed*, invested by the energy flowing from his gestures rather than the dominating intentional predisposition. The design his body outlines has become unpredictable and, therefore, less susceptible to symbolic interpretation. As I see it, F has moved from being an eminently *semiotic* corporeality to an other rendered to the *physical body* – to use Erika Fischer-Lichte’s dichotomy (2005)⁵ – and, thus, more open to the immediate perception of the world – of the other. As José Gil puts it (2001, p. 177):

Diving into the body, awareness opens to the world. No longer as ‘awareness of something’, no longer according to an intentionality that would make it the giver of meaning, not putting an object before itself, but as an immediate adhesion to the world, as contact and contagion with the forces of the world⁶.

Affect theory is the field of studies that has most contributed to the construction of a conceptual basis for the recognition of this awareness of

the body-in-relationship. Starting from the Spinoasian problematization about what a body can do (beyond what is determined by the mind), it was Gilles Deleuze (2011 [2002]) who deepened the issue, seeing it not as the mere terrain of the subject's experience, but as a plane of immanence containing meaning in itself. For Deleuze, these bodily potential meanings are managed by affects; in other words, by the physical impulses making us capable of affecting and being affected by others. As José Gil (2001, p. 107) maintains, affects express "[...] a power and a force that immediately carry their meaning with them". Their understanding and influence are instantaneous, since they emerge from the actuality of bodies.

It is this affective potential that seems to impel F to relate more spontaneously to his own body, opening him up to a perception of direct contact with the other - possibly to better grasp and know him from a more intuitive perspective, with another type of clarity. For me, the order of perception now begins to reverse, creating a new receptive discontinuity, a new instability, which anticipates a more corporeal relationship with the performance. A relationship based on what Deidre Sklar (1991) has called kinesthetic-empathetic perception; in other words, the self-awareness of the network of sensations inherent to the particular movements of others.

My attention as a spectator is, therefore, also refocused on my physical implication – on the infinite and unpredictable possibilities opened up by the affective forces of the present. The meeting was never exclusive to the performers, but my appearance had never before been so (corporeally) summoned.

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[The epic crescendo of a musical passage sets the tone for what is about to happen]. R gets up, goes to the pile of pebbles and kneels beside it. F follows his movements, coming closer. Their looks now clearly recognize each other's presence. R takes off his shirt and lies down on his stomach – just as F had done before. F places the stones along R's deformed spine [Figure 4]. [R would not have been able to do it alone.] His hump is barely able to retain the stones that, together, show the distorted line of his vertebrae. [Never before has R's unique body been so scrutinized]. R is trying to replicate F's corporeal journey. [His body doesn't help]. While F puts his shirt back on and resumes his dance, R is struggling to remove the stones from his back, throwing them vehemently on the floor. The pebbles are now spread across the stage. [Lost remains of 'a small world of signals']. For R, the pebbles may not have represented the right path, but they cer-

tainly contributed to unveiling his clandestine body, hidden under the meaning of his actions. He is now bare-chested, lying on his stomach, openly exposing his non-conformity. [You can almost feel it.]

(Notes on the performance's reception, 3rd November 2016, Teatro São Luiz, Lisbon).



Figure 4 – Raimund Hoghe (below) and Faustin Linyekula (above), in *Sans-titre* by Raimund Hoghe (2009).

Source: Image courtesy of Raimund Hoghe; Photograph © Rosa Frank (2009).

Self-Abandonment (or *Rite of Passage*)

R gets dressed again and starts gathering up the sheets of paper. With cupped hands, F carefully picks up the pebbles [– they are far from being harmless.] His hands are shaking. F presses the stones against his face and the sound of them knocking against each other highlights their natural origin, their natural presence. [Rocks.] His whole body is shaking now. [Is it a process of atonement?] Finally, he lies down, putting his head against the floor / against his hands / against the stones. Meanwhile, R has just finished picking up the blank sheets.

(Notes on the performance's reception, 3rd November 2016, Teatro São Luiz, Lisbon).

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By joining F on his journey of liberating the (inveterate) forces of cultural representation, R seems to have abandoned the security of his *docile body* to embrace a new experience, the result of which he cannot anticipate.

To do this, R opens his body to the unknown, to the unexpectedness of the meeting, making imitation a new point of contact with the other. He shows more than the patterns of display within which he is (probably) more immediately recognized, trying to focus on the immanence of the present moment and, consequently, on the possibilities of transformation (however violent they may seem) that open up to him as a corporeal being. Because, as José Gil (2001, p. 212) maintains, the body is often “[...] closed, insensitive to small perceptions, educated to the rigid tasks of *reality*”:

Opening the body is to make it hypersensitive, to awaken all its powers of hyperperception and transform it into a thinking machine. In other words, to reactivate it as a *paradoxical body*, which all the regimes of power over the body seek to erase, striving to produce the unitary, sensible body, finalised by the practices and social representations that are necessary for it (Gil, 2001, p. 212)⁷.

The *powers* that guide this opening are neither those related to cultural recognition nor those imposed by any discursive determination – which would entail corporeal restriction *a priori* –, but the powers granted by the event *per se*. As Foucault (1997 [1971]) argues, this means that there is no friction with the discontinuities, dilemmas, overlaps, *aporias* or even contradictions that the event may produce about any type of cultural abstraction; about any temptation to belong to an identity. It actually allows the momentary character of the present to set the rhythm of corporeal updating, dictating its own path towards subjectivation.

From the perspective (naturally contingent) of where I am, what therefore seems to prevail is R’s opening to F’s (affective) influence: to the transforming movement of meeting the other. For the philosopher and dancer, Kimerer L. LaMothe (2015), this opening is brought about by our capacity to renew sensory awareness:

[I]n order to sustain relations of empathy with others, we must constantly renew a sensory awareness of ourselves as movement, bringing it in line with the current scale and size and capability of our ever becoming bodily selves. And we must constantly stay open to being moved by new patterns of others as they appear to us (LaMothe, 2015, p. 129).

It is, therefore, about paying attention to the other without anticipating the future (with its limited possibilities of verifying past expectations), about not raising hypotheses or pragmatic conjectures. This is the only way

R can reappear as a *paradoxical body* - to return to José Gil –, capable of welcoming (without having to recognize) the existence of the other. But R is not alone on this journey: F's sensory awareness has also opened up, responding to R's movements with the same availability to (re)create the steps of the meeting. What R and F are doing, therefore, is participating in a joint rhythm of bodily becoming.

In creating this new meeting space, within which their bodies re-materialize through affective influence, the dance opens (indiscriminately) to all the bodies present, to all the possibilities of affective cohabitation. A new continuity network is established, and all the bodies are part of it. It is this inexorable feeling of inclusion that, suddenly, involves me (even more) in R and F's dance. The steps are theirs, of course, but they spread to my possibilities of movement, to my possibilities of participation / incorporation in that event – that time.

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Having stopped by the pile of papers, R rehearses the initial gesture of raising his twisted left arm in the air. Then he bends at the waist while spreading his arms [- reminiscent of a reverent gesture of greeting]. F gets up and does the same. They are now further apart than at the beginning of the performance, sideways on and drawing an invisible oblique line between them. They change places and repeat the gesture, each at his own pace, according to their individual corporeality. Sometimes, and for brief moments, their gestures synchronize. [The melancholy sound of the cello gives the sequence even more humanity.]

(Notes on the performance's reception, 3rd November 2016, Teatro São Luiz, Lisbon).

Starting Over (or *Life Together*)

R finally positions himself towards the back wall, repeating his gesture [of greeting.] F approaches, stands on his left and repeats (in his own way) R's movement. They are now very close to each other. At different rhythms, sometimes they almost touch each other. At a certain point, as their cadences synchronize, their gesture is blocked by sudden [human] contact. They stop and raise their heads – without ever looking at each other –, staring at the wall's empty blackness.

Slowly [like the whole rhythm of the dance so far], R raises his left arm ... to put it on F's shoulder. F reacts by raising his right arm ... to wrap it around R's waist. [A sideways embrace.] Then they start walking backwards, holding each other all the time.

They walk around the stage - sometimes stopping, but only to change direction, varying their routes, experimenting. They never look each other directly in the eye.

After some time, they turn to the front, facing the audience [Figure 5]. Arms always around each other. They stay there. Immobile.

(Notes on the performance's reception, 3rd November 2016, Teatro São Luiz, Lisbon).



Figure 5 – Raimund Hoghe (left) and Faustin Linyekula (right), in *Sans-titre* by Raimund Hoghe (2009).
Source: Image courtesy of Raimund Hoghe; Photograph © Rosa Frank (2009).

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In line with the narrative suggestion I've followed since the beginning of the performance, R and F's journeys of individual searching have led us to an impasse: rather than bringing them closer together, the cultural patterns of recognition and social interaction their searches were based on actually accentuated the distance separating them. However, as they gradually abandoned these behavioural response patterns, another type of consciousness seemed to arise – an awareness driven by the affective perception of their bodies-in-relationship. And it was this attention given to the melee of the live meeting that led them to build (intuitively) a new bridge of empathic connection, through which their bodies were able to open themselves

up to new possibilities of action and transformation of the subject. As LaMothe puts it (2015, p. 5):

This awareness is [...] *sensory*. It is not *conceptual*. [...] Rather, this awareness hums within us as an ability to receive and follow through with impulses to move. It opens within us as a vulnerability to being moved by the movements we perceive. And [...] it forms within us as a sense of having or being a 'self' – that is, someone who dances.

If *someone who dances*, as the author suggests, is someone who recognizes themselves through the impulse of movement generated by their relationship with the other and with the world, then that someone who dances is someone who commits themselves to the simultaneous condition of having and being a body. They are, to put it another way, someone who allows themselves to move between the conscious and the unconscious, between the will to structure corporeal experience and the willingness to let themselves be carried away by the chance of the event. It is precisely this back and forth movement, this coming and going between states of consciousness – this dance –, that unleashes the bodies' transformative potential. Following LaMothe's thinking (2015), the recognition of this potential – of this body in becoming – is related to an ethical issue, to meaning reverberating beyond the isolated experiences of the bodies – pointing to the human capacity of transforming the Self as a function of the relationship with the other:

The task in becoming an ethical human involves learning how to draw close *enough* to others so that we are moved *by* one another to unfold our capacity to give *to* one another in mutually life-enabling ways. It involves learning how to cultivate sensory awareness of how and why movement matters and to participate [...] in the *dance* that is always already happening (LaMothe, 2015, p. 136).

Following this viewpoint, a *dancing body* is one that engages in an effort to free itself from the static forces of cultural representation moving towards the meeting's affective forces – so that it can return to the former in a different light, better able to recognise new incorporative powers. As José Gil states (2001, p. 55), “[...] to dance is to flow in immanence [...]”:
it is to open oneself to the vulnerability of the body in its relationship with the other, thus participating, with another type of clarity, in the movement to recognize what it means to be human. Not to annul it as a cultural enti-

ty, not to reject the rituals and knowledge accumulated by collective memory, but to confront the bases of identity affirmation and the respective disciplines of corporeal subjection as a way of opening up to a new cultural topography, in which affects assume an important ethical and political transversal role.

When they look directly at us – anticipating the end of the performance – the embrace between F and R spreads into the audience. As a body dancing on the margin, the announced end now makes me apprehensive about returning to (once again) static territory. Not because I fail to recognize the possible meanings of my experience as a spectator, nor because I do not sense the subtleties (however inexpressible they may be) of personal transformation. It is rather that I do not see the most complete way of expressing them within the systematic forces of critical articulation, the specialized models of communication, the needs of framing target audiences and the current scientific economy's rules of dissemination. Perhaps I would have to erase myself as a *participating observer* and make the impartial critic reappear, able to extract from the spectacle the aspects necessary to sustain useful, *legitimate* thinking. However, that would be subjecting myself to the technocratic forces that have been directing science towards the (disciplinary) arrangement of phenomena within the circuit for the exchange and commercialization of knowledge. As Tim Ingold (2016) maintains, current academic production points to the neutralization of the (original) powers of transforming science: the cancellation of our ability to pay attention to what things (events) effectively *invite* us to reflect on.

I prefer, then, to be an accomplice in *another* science – that which Ingold calls the *science of correspondence* (Ingold, 2016). It is, in other words, the science that is spread within a logic of reciprocity between the active forces of the world and the subjective forces of the participant. In this article, therefore, I offer myself as a correspondent of R and F's dance, thus trying to mitigate the effects of being subjected to the regulatory devices of Western academic culture, of which (inescapably) I am also part. I began by describing my experience as a spectator, the better to evoke the memory of my dance and allow new cognitive sensitivities, different facets of knowledge and other correspondences with the vital movement of wandering to reverberate.

*

[To the sound of Bach's *Bist du bei mir...*]⁸

The lights slowly fade – R and F remain together, face to face with the spectators.

In the darkness, the candle's flickering light is the last to go out.

(Notes on the performance's reception, 3rd November 2016, Teatro São Luiz, Lisbon).

Notes

- ¹ This work is financed by national funds through FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P., within the scope of the UIDB/00279/2020 and UIDP/00279/2020 projects.
- ² *Sans-titre* is a performance, created in 2009, by Raimund Hoghe together with the dancer and choreographer, Faustin Linyekula. In summing up the piece, Hoghe has expressed his indifference to everything that surrenders to the shackles of categorisation, alluding to migratory bodies as beings that move in a context *between* cultures: *untitled*. Regarding his choice of Faustin in the leading role, Hoghe has explained: "I chose Faustin [...] because, in spite of our obvious differences, there is a strong and invisible bond that connects us somewhat like a fraternity which already existed between us that we did not know about: we refuse to be victimised or to hold on to our past. To create something is to fight to keep our dreams alive". Available at: <<http://artistanacidade.com/2016/sans-titre-de-raymund-hoghe/>>. Accessed on: 22nd Dec. 2020.
- ³ Raimund Hoghe is a multidisciplinary German artist, who began in the performing arts by working as a dramaturge for Pina Bausch's Tanztheater Wuppertal. He has since written several books, made films, collaborated on television programmes, participated in various performance projects and won several prizes. In his dance creations, he always tries to develop corporealities that are not regulated by the normative bodily character. In his own words: "To see bodies on stage that do not comply with the norm is important – not only with regard to history but also with regard to present developments, which are leading humans to the status of design objects". Available at: <<http://www.raimundhoghe.com/english.php>>. Accessed on: 22nd Dec. 2020.
- ⁴ Faustin Linyekula is a dancer and choreographer from the Democratic Republic of Congo, where he founded Studios Kabako in 2001, embracing new artis-

tic fields such as cinema, video and music. His work on memory has been widely recognized, especially that related to the legacy of war which, over decades, has affected him personally, as well as his family and friends. This has led to him being invited to teach in Africa, Europe and the USA. His artistic activity has also focused on working with a number of Congolese communities on emerging socio-environmental issues, such as access to drinking water. For more information on his work, see: <<http://www.kabako.org/>>. Accessed on: 22nd Dec. 2020.

- 5 Erika Fischer-Lichte distinguishes the performer's form of presentation between semiotic and physical body – the first referring to the meanings put into dialogue in the scene; and the second to the quality of the performer's presence, through which “[...] the actor is experienced as ‘present’. At the same time, spectators, who are affected by this current, experience themselves as present in a special and particularly intense way” (Fischer-Lichte, 2005, p. 76).
- 6 In the original Portuguese: “Mergulhando no corpo, a consciência abre-se ao mundo; já não como ‘consciência de alguma coisa’, já não segundo uma intencionalidade que faria dela a doadora do sentido, não pondo um objecto diante de si, mas como adesão imediata ao mundo, como contacto e contágio com as forças do mundo”.
- 7 In the original Portuguese: “Abrir o corpo é torná-lo hipersensível, despertar nele todos os seus poderes de hiperpercepção, e transformá-lo em máquina de pensar – quer dizer reactivá-lo enquanto *corpo paradoxal*, o que todos os regimes de poder sobre o corpo procuram apagar, esforçando-se por produzir o corpo unitário, sensato, finalizado das práticas e das representações sociais que lhe são necessárias”.
- 8 *If you are with me* (My translation).

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