
Against Full Frontal

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Every thing, however banal, is, and is beautiful, insofar as it is a bearer of otherness (that) and impinges (this). If there was an aesthetic “cogito”, this—that would be it. But it is a “cogito” that is a “sentio”: I feel. Although it is “I” who feels, the existence the feeling verifies is not “mine”. It is immediately the world's. “I feel, therefore everything is”. Everything that is felt is: that. Differs. Which is why I also am, in this feeling. The world and I exist, in difference, in the encounter. In the feeling. Being is in sensation (Massumi, 1997: 745-782).

In the culture of the audio-visual archive, how and when do we shift from a logic of exposure and distanced visibility to one of encounter, feeling and an otherness at the heart of the self that is our openness to the world? In *Chaosmosis*, Felix Guattari writes of the value of an “aesthetic paradigm” which holds a privileged place in reorienting our experience towards the production of collective assemblages of enunciation (Guattari, 1995). I explore this production in Jan Fabre’s intermedial dance performance installation *L’Ange de la Mort* (2006), via a series of “missed encounters”, a detoured intersubjectivity that the performance stages in order to amplify the impersonality of sensation. In this way, the performance taps into a doubled rhythm on the edge of chaos—between intimacy and estrangement—as a means of generating the new. The rhythm is two-fold—an intensification of feeling that is simultaneously a loss of one’s self in feeling: a non-recuperated loss, an intuitive derangement of limitations such that you are no longer what you were, and you feel it, like a doubled heartbeat. In the above quote from Massumi, sensation as *sentio* is understood as an otherness that speaks within us, a folding of the outside in the interior that is an “aesthetic contraction” of sensation. Here, one senses what Guattari calls the “point of view of the other in me” (Guattari, 1995: 64). Against a logic of full frontality, understood as exposure and delimited self-presence, we are instead not before the work of art, we are in it.

How does the piece work, and to what end, to make us sense a chaotic rhythm, one where unity is found in chaos? How is this unity at once multi-sensorial, sensational and distributive? Sensation introduces an interval into perception, a

form of delay. If movement is a form of direct relationality, how might we understand the staging of relationality in this intermedial dance?

Rhythm is a sensational awareness of doubleness, what Stamatia Portanova describes as the “ontological duplicity” of the body; our doubled vision a mode of distracted attention that testifies to the eruption of a-signifying modalities in the production of what Massumi calls “movement-vision” (Massumi, 2002: 46-67). Guattari seeks to describe the creativity of an active schizo-ontology characterized by “being as the responsibility of the other”, which brings to awareness an “emergent alterfication relieved of the mimetic barriers of the self” (Guattari, 1995: 84). He asks:

How do certain semiotic segments achieve their autonomy, start to work for themselves and to secrete new fields of reference? It is from such a rupture that an existential singularisation correlative to the genesis of new coefficients of freedom will become possible. This detachment of an ethico-aesthetic “partial object” from the field of dominant significations corresponds both to the promotion of a mutant desire and to the achievement of a certain disinterestedness. Here I would like to establish a bridge between the concept of a partial object (object “a” as theorised by Lacan) that marks the autonomisation of the components of unconscious subjectivity, and the subjective autonomisation relative to the aesthetic object (Guattari, 1995: 13).

Fabre’s installation performance *L’Ange de la Mort* participates in such an emergent alterfication via a staging of missed encounters. In “missing their mark”, by failing to be enclosed in an encounter between subjects, these missed encounters unconstrain the vectors of intentional communication and enable a mutation of signification and sensation. Significantly, it is an intuitive participation in the rhythm of this alterfication--rhythm as *alterfication*--that leads to the characterization of this event as “against full frontal”--against the frontality of face-to-face conversation that we often associate with ethical engagement. Guattari’s “emergent alterfication freed of the mimetic barriers of the self” is an ecological ethics, engaged instead with a becoming intensive of the body, a participation in movement-vision that is about an accumulation of relative perspectives that disorient precisely in their ordinal force. In this performance, rhythm is the form of losing oneself precisely through intensity, a loss of footing that leads to dancing as qualitative displacement, what William Forsythe, performing on screen in Fabre’s piece, will describe as “dancing in the blue”. The installation event becomes a machine for producing alterity; to lose one(s) self in rhythm becomes a means of gaining new modes of subjectivity. Sensation becomes a mode of interactivity suited to an audio-visual age. I will explore where rhythm is invested in this installation performance.

Fabre's *L'Ange de la Mort* began as a text, written in 1996, to be performed by dancer and choreographer William Forsythe. Inspired by "un être androgyne, Andy Warhol" and dedicated to Forsythe, Fabre's notes indicate that *L'Ange de la Mort* is a "monologue for a man, a woman or a hermaphrodite". [1] Forsythe's difficulty in committing the text to memory led to the making of a filmed version of the piece, shot in the Musée d'Anatomie de Montpellier (Scholl, 2008).

In 2003, Fabre decided to reanimate this film in a new choreographic installation featuring dancer Ivana Jovic. In a carefully designed setting, Jovic gives an astonishing performance of a *folie à deux* (a shared madness, but also here in the sense of felt doubleness of virtual/actual--that rhythm that Deleuze describes as unlivable), a specifically modern form of madness and hallucination which is also fully shared by the participants. The intensity of her performance is rendered simultaneously close and available (by her physical proximity to the spectators, on a stage merely inches off the ground in the centre of the space), and technologized and distant (by her use of a microphone and by the darting of her directed attention between audience and screen, and her dramatization of private speech spoken aloud). We see her as a live body and a cinematic body--a dramatic presentational immediacy of alterity. Initially, the piece appears to be a reworking of the original monologue into a dialogic structure, with Jovic commenting directly on the image and speech of Forsythe. What becomes clear however, is that neither monologue nor dialogue is an apt description of the experience. Language and meaning continually devolve into a plastic immediacy, missing the mark of reception, snatched out of mid air to become a thing of breath, amplification, spit, and affective repetition. Forsythe's monologue alone does not create a closed space of an interior landscape--he appears spoken through by the thoughts he presents. The repeated "I" of the piece is like a foreign word, in its continual exchange with an Eye that is in both the live performance and in its rapid and fragmentary editing, particularly in the opening remark of Forsythe's first line: "I'm back from death". The film plays out during the performance on all four screens of the stage space, sometimes simultaneously, at other times in disjunction. The intimacy and immersion of the setting is continually and curiously doubled by the sense of an absolute attentiveness to and an unseizable fleeting of knowledge.

In March 2008, I went to a performance of *L'Ange de la Mort* at Montreal's Usine C, as part of the *Temps D'Image* festival. Entering into the space, audience members wound their way down a narrow corridor between the black folds of hanging curtains, before emerging into a square room, each wall (also black curtains) with its own large rectangular screen suspended in a vertical orientation in the middle of each wall. In the centre of the floor, a small slightly elevated platform was positioned in the middle of a surrounding sea of cushions;

the audience took their seats on the floor, some just inches away from the stage. Jovic lay on this stage, curled into immobility, her face hidden from view. The intimacy of the seating, an eye-level relation to the other spectators, meant that the audience was a part of the show as much as the visual spectacles of dance and projection were meant to attract the gaze. The sense of mass surveillance--at any moment, we could watch someone else watching the show or catch them watching us--and distributed spectacle--we couldn't help but pick up reflections of the performance's effect on the other faces in our peripheral vision--created the effect of a resonance chamber, a simultaneous scattering of attention that, even when the lights dimmed and the projection began, had refocused and distributed my sensory awareness in ways that I'm not used to when watching live dance performances. The setup was simple but extremely effective, and allowed Fabre to tap into the vast potential of "installing the body", a contemporary obsession of intermedial performance. [2]

In other performances I saw in that same winter, participation took tangible forms such as the invitation to close my eyes and take the hand of the person next to me, or in dancers repeatedly asking the seated audience to rise out of their seat as they apologetically scrambled past them to seats at the end of the row, only to immediately make their way out again, while wearing no clothes. [3] *L'Ange de la Mort* equally evoked a participatory sensibility in me, although I was not actively directed nor invited to shape the unfolding of the show. In this article, I want to explore this feeling of interactivity as emerging from three aspects of the piece: the screen that does not fix attention but solicits movement, the live performer as synthespian, and finally my own sense, during the performance, of becoming "all eyes". Through these three elements, I consider the stakes of the "aesthetic paradigm" for Guattari, as such a process of "emergent alterfication" or what we might think of as a "responsible anonymity" of qualitative change, and how intermedial dance performance has a privileged place for helping us think through the challenges of life in an age defined by the audio-visual archive. Dance's privileged place derives not from its longtime affiliation with presence and the materiality of bodies, but from its "paradoxical body", already doubled in its evocation of a complex temporality, always in the process of becoming something else (Gil, 2006: 21-35).

What Can an Angel Know of Death?

In the Talmud, the Angel of death is described as being "full of eyes", such that no one can escape his attention (Ulmer, 1994: 21). Being all eyes, like being "all ears", is thus primarily a mode of directed and focalized attention; the angel is continually looking for the sign or marker of imminent death. These are eyes that recognize and only see what they are already looking for, a limited form of perception. In Fabre's piece, however, the sense of being all eyes is invested to a

different end, one less concerned with a finalistic concept of death than with a Deleuzo-Guattarian notion of death as an intensive experience of de- and re-composition. An intensive vision is curiously not “grounded” in perspective. It is a vision that has become delirious precisely because of its doubleness, its accumulation of relative perspectives. This is not seeing one’s self through an other’s eyes: not a shared perspective, but the felt doubleness of the exchange between virtual and actual dimensions. A multitude of perspectives make our clair-voyance murky, opening onto a clair-obscur future that is the intimation of difference in itself; a figural mode of vision that hesitates between seeing and reading. In *Foucault*, Gilles Deleuze describes the tension between the visible and the articulable as that of a non-relation that is a relation (Deleuze, 1988: 33). It is not that there is an immediate contact or isomorphism between the two; rather, relation that is non-relation, where the impossibility to say what we see is defined by a gap of power or force--affect. Between the seen and the said, a world of feeling, more or less intense.

Offering a means of thinking this intensive mode of vision, Massumi moves beyond specular models of identification and towards the same kind of complexity of adjacent encounters that Fabre’s piece enacts. Distinguishing between ‘mirror-vision’ as a form of self-reflexivity and ‘movement-vision’ as a mode of self-referentiality, Massumi points out that no matter how we contort ourselves, we can never see ourselves in a mirror in the way that others see us—in movement. We might leap around and still try to keep our eyes on the prize, but the result will always be a blurred vision. Mirror-vision, or self-reflexivity, is thus necessarily always static (and positional). Mirror-vision consists not only in the necessarily static nature of our self-regarding gaze, but also in the way we imagine others think of us—we are clichés (clic) for other people, limited in our becoming by the habits of our roles. On the other hand, movement-vision (or self-referentiality), involves the body as subject *and* object for itself, an indetermination between the two; it is not reflective because it includes (many) other perspectives, producing a blur in the image. Here, bodily objectivity coincides with what Massumi calls “the body without an image (a mental picture or mirror image) [as] an accumulation of relative perspectives *and* passages between them” (my emphasis). [4] Another term for this is “event”. Movement-vision is thus fundamentally concerned with questions of the felt reality of relations, not just with the terms of relation: “where movement occludes both subject and object” (Massumi, 2002: 57). The viewer in movement vision is neither subject nor object, but virtual in that she is one with the movement; Massumi describes this as “relationality, freed from its terms”, an externality of relation (2002: 58). In other words, an intimation of difference rather than resemblance. In the same way, Fabre’s piece intensifies the “objectivity” of its primary subjects of enunciation, in order to explore and complexify the modality of subjectification through what Guattari, reanimating

Lacanian partial objects, calls “partial subjectivities” (Guattari, 1995: 15). Movement-vision in Fabre’s piece is the experience of these missed encounters allowing subjects to escape the fixity of mirror-vision in their relation to self and others--a dodge in the self as emergent alterfication.

In *The Logic of Sensation*, Deleuze argues that the task of Francis Bacon’s work is to release painting from the dominance of the visual and to bring “before us the reality of a body, of lines and colors freed from organic representation”; this is the way that painting gives us “eyes all over”, rendering the eye an “indeterminate organ” (Deleuze, 2002: 37).

Although he initially distinguishes between simple sensation and complex, multiple sensation, he is interested in the way in which every simple sensation is immediately complex, in tracing the points at which sensations become coupled, enter into resonance (2002: 47). Here, the rhythmic unity of sensations becomes chaotic, plunges into what Guattari calls chaomosis:

This ground, this rhythmic unity of the senses, can be discovered only by going beyond the organism. The phenomenological hypothesis is perhaps insufficient because it merely invokes the lived body. But the lived body is still a paltry thing seek the unity of rhythm only at the point where rhythm itself plunges into chaos, into the night, at the point where the differences of level are perpetually and violently mixed (Guattari, 1995: 15).

Bacon’s aesthetic highlights the potential of moving from figure to figural, focusing less on *what* a body is than on *how* it is. Aesthetic sensation is the felt force of an encounter, the feeling of the event or the “feeling of what happens” (Massumi, 2008). Sensation (or rhythm) can be understood as the felt force of the interstice. Rhythm, as the felt togetherness of thought, movement and perception, should be understood not as a unitary synthesis but as an activation of force in the interstitial gap that brings things into contact with each other, a non-relation that is relation. Sensation occurs where rhythm meets chaos; in this encounter, disjunctive and competing temporalities--what Guattari calls a “polyphony of subjectivation” that “corresponds to a multiplicity of ways of ‘keeping time’” --are felt together via the intuition of duration (Guattari, 1995: 15). Deleuze describes this as “interminable presence”, like a smile that is beyond and beneath the face, or a scream that survives the mouth (Deleuze, 2002: 44). Beyond the experience of an intersubjective (or objective-subjective) encounter, the temporality of duration is filled by the distributed possession of a nexus, a double relation between a feeling and its felt intensity and the feeling of the feeling of intensity (Guattari, 1995: 15). In *L’Ange de la Mort*, the on-screen performance by Forsythe repeatedly evokes his own blue eyes, as the figure of both his capturing of the world (“I am constantly filming with my own blue eyes”) and of his possession by others; in the end, he seeks only to dance “in the

blue". In this way, movement itself becomes the modality of becoming in sensational, qualitative experience. Rhythm in chaos is thus a form of "partial subjectivity", that feeling of striving that signals the emerging of an autonomous creativity: "the feeling of verbal activity in the active generation of a signifying sound, including motor elements of articulation, gesture, mime; the feeling of a movement in which the whole organism together with the activity and the soul of the world are swept along in their concrete unity". (Guattari, 1995: 15)

Rhythm as sensation is marked by a duality, an intensive experience that sweeps us up in immediacy and a sense of being possessed from the outside, a radical opening of interiority such that interiority is only a folding of the outside, an unlivable volumetrics of bodily space, contortive, disjunctive, disorienting and yet effortlessly caught up in motion. Like in Bacon's introduction of a seed of rhythm into his chaotic portraits as deterritorializations of the body, in Fabre's piece rhythm provides a sense of in-consistency in renewed openness.

How did Fabre's piece activate the potential for forming "collective assemblages", or rhythmic structures, dancing on the edge of chaos? The response lies in a series of elements that compose the event, not least its own 'eventful' quality. Here, I will explore three main modes of re-potentialization that occur in the 'eventfulness' of the piece. Firstly, via the analysis of Jovic's performance in terms of the "synthespian", as a means of understanding the affective contagion of live/ lived bodies by the audio-visual archive. Secondly, by examining the screen images as inviting a distracted and distributive attention. In this performance space, the screens do not work as an invitation to scopopic mastery or the focalized, immersive attention that substitutes a world of light and shadow for 'reality', but redistribute our attention between and around them, allowing us to feel the sensation of image/ space relationality minimized in our usual experience of the 'cinema'. Lastly, by exploring the feeling I developed during the piece, of becoming "all eyes", as a mode of movement-vision particular to the perception of "emergent alterfication" and its ethico-aesthetic potential.

The Indeterminate Presence of the Synthespian

Caught up in the act of dancing, we often describe the experience as "losing oneself" in the rhythm – rhythm, as a modality of possession, is a staple of ritual. In Fabre's piece, dancer Ivana Jovic plays on the sense of rhythm as a possession that creates a doubled subjectivity. She channels figures such as *Dracula's* Renfield and *Lord of the Rings'* Gollum, alternating between servile subordination in her address to her "master" (the screen presence of William Forsythe), a sly

and maniacal resistance via the incorporation of Forsythe's speech and gestures (playing off the dual meaning of possession), and a stunning performance of a paradoxical body, in that all she does amplifies the gap of self-possession and sensation. Fabre's piece plays on this sense of complex rhythm throughout, in a monological exchange between master and servant, live and recorded, the fleeting and the preserved, difference and repetition.

Jovic's paradoxical body immediately undercuts any sense that the live performing body is self-evidently present, by drawing on the disjunctive gap of the visible and the articulable through a process of self-fabulation and narrativization. The opening of the show stages this gap not through spoken language but through sensible sound that rhythmically infects all future instances of language with its resonance--we are made to see speech via bodily performance and delay. Lying curled up on the platform from the time that the audience has entered, in a bra top and shorts, Jovic begins to move discrete parts of her body in segmented and disjunctive articulations. Every movement is accompanied by a guttural noise, like a rusty machine grinding to life, at odds with the evident control of each gesture. The noises sound like a body in pain, but the visual image is of smooth but segmented control. These noises are amplified by her head-set microphone--they at once emanate from the body and are disjunct from it, the voice instead animating a sense of an interior landscape that is not that of a subject, but rather an exterior made interior, a folding in place--the topological reversibility of 'movement executed, movement described'. Jean-Luc Godard once said: "to describe is to observe mutation", and this is the precise sensation Jovic's coming into being evokes. [5] These a-signifying sounds set the stage and infect, by affective contamination, all speech that follows, which never resolves into the fully articulable but remains full of excess information. Through the rest of the performance, her speech is thus always what Guattari calls "full speech", a completely embodied intelligibility in tension with sensibility.

Jovic's performance is cinematically possessed in several ways. The live performing body indicates the way in which cinema, that cornerstone of the audio-visual archive, generates new types of bodies, new habits of being. In *Foucault*, Deleuze writes of a:

disjunction between seeing and speaking, between the visible and the articulable: 'what we see never lies in what we say' and vice versa. The conjunction is impossible for two reasons. The statement has its own correlative object and is not a proposition designating a state of things or a visible object; but neither is the visible a mute meaning, a signified to be realised in language, as phenomenology would have it. The archive, the audiovisual is disjunctive (Deleuze, 1988: 55).

The break or gap between sound and image in cinema is for Deleuze the best illustration of this. In the same way, Jovic performs an audiovisual body, giving the piece a richness that does not simply oppose her live body to Forsythe's recorded image. Instead, Jovic's performance makes us feel the gap characteristic of, but not limited to, an audiovisual archive, between the visible and the articulable. As Deleuze writes, this gap, a paradoxical non-relation that is also a relation, is one of potential, force or sensation. It is in this way, and not merely through her explicit citation of familiar phrases from Gollum, that Jovic's performance evokes the synthespian, where frequently voice acting (rarely synthesized) contaminates a body language not properly its own, while the body contaminates the voice. In this way, a chaotic unity is produced.

Jovic literally performs a series of "aesthetic contractions" via her contortionist movements in the limited space of the stage, and via an emphasis on processuality, – where words are not expressed in a manner divorced from context but are affectively contaminated by the matter at hand. As she responds to Forsythe's presence on the screens around her, she alternates between a slavish address to her master and a sly subversiveness, that includes a mocking "stuttering" of his speech that becomes more than simply parody. Jovic's cut-up engagement with Forsythe's image (only responding to certain words, often repeating a single word obsessively as Forsythe's speech rolls on, unconcerned) reanimates the recording. It also gives the impression of madness described earlier, as an "externalized interior monologue". As audience, we see what she sees, we hear what she hears, we too are infected by images that appear at times like hallucinations, and that seem to solicit and ignore our response, an audiovisual 'madness' demanding a schizoanalytic approach. The seeable and the sayable are reciprocally lived via the figure of Jovic. The proximity of her performance lent a slight echo to her speech as well, a bare resonance between our live perception of it and its transmission through the microphone and surround sound set-up. Jovic was able to exploit this gap in order to continually undermine the fullness of her own presence, to animate the gap of our seeing her saying, at several points in the performance. In her commentary on Forsythe's image, the disjunction of the missed dialogue operates as a staging of complex rhythm, the "polyphony of subjectivation".

At this point, a clear distinction between live and cinematic bodies becomes difficult, even untenable in this performance. Between them, as Guattari describes it:

alterity as such becomes the primary question. For example, what finds itself fragilised, cracked up, schizzed, in delire or hallucinating when confronted with the status of the objective world, is *the point of view of the*

other in me, the recognized body in articulation with the lived body and the felt body, these are the normalized coordinates of alterity which give their foundation to sensible evidence (Guattari, 1995: 63-64; my emphasis).

Guattari's notion of the "point of view of the other in me" is more akin to Massumi's movement-vision than to mirror-vision -- not as 'seeing oneself through the eyes of another', but as the "accumulation of relative perspectives and passages" between them. Fabre's use of film in this installation suggests that cinema less mirrors reality than provokes these sensational delires.

Both Forsythe and Jozic as recognizable bodies are immediately doubled as synthespians, cinematic bodies that exist on screen and off. The synthespian (or "vactor"-virtual actor) is a term developed in the 1980s but popularized in the late 1990s, generally referring to digitally created actors. It remains, however, a portmanteau term. [6] Throughout its brief history, the synthespian has raised practical and philosophical questions about agency, ownership of images, the loss of a sense of history and lived embodiment in the face of simulacra, and the "disjunctive" nature of the audio-visual archive. That these questions repeatedly turn on the rights of the indexical referent (ie. the actor) behind the image indicates the limited view of subjectivity that effaces the labour and work of, for example, digital artists, an example of the deadening effects of what Guattari calls the capitalist assemblage that shuts down the potential of relationality as such. [7] Jozic's performance is repeatedly evocative of screen synthespians in several ways, and indicates the affiliations of the synthespian to madness, hallucination, delire and a reconfiguration of the normal coordinates of space and time. The synthespian is always a figure outside of normal time, whether the reanimation of a dead celebrity, a digital double that can perform with the live "model" of itself or the dinosaurs of *Jurassic Park*, giving us a vertiginous sense of history, emerging out of the past. These images of pop culture ripple the skin of Jovic's performance like latent parasites.

What is the conceptual value of the synthespian? One of its fascinating and disquieting elements centers on the question of the origin and source of performance. The synthespian is a felt assemblage--felt, because it can produce an effect that robotics researcher Masahiro Mori dubbed the "uncanny valley". Synthespians resembling humans were affectively acceptable to viewers to a point of about 95% similarity, at which point the minuscule vibration of difference becomes disquieting and even disturbing (Mori, 1970: 33-35). While this very intimation of minor difference in the face of iconic similarity can be a powerful source of subversive effect, there is nothing inherently creative or processual about the synthespian, its disquieting affects being easily contained in affections of laughter, fear, disgust, pleasure, boredom. However, as played with during Fabre's performance, the synthespian's special associations with the "re-

animation” characteristic of cinema in general, makes it worthy of an expanded consideration. The question is: under what conditions does the synthespian signal the presence of “emergent alterity”? Given that *L’Ange de la Mort* takes reanimation, dispossession and the indeterminate liveliness of the audiovisual archive as its central concerns, I’d like to look briefly at one of the most famous and contested examples of synthespian re-animation.

In 1996, Dirt Devil Vacuums premiered a commercial during the Superbowl. The commercial generated both delight and disgust in equal measure. [8] Using digital effects that were state of the art at the time, the ad’s creators re-edited a scene from the 1951 film *Royal Wedding*, featuring Fred Astaire dancing in a gymnasium with a coatrack, barbells and other objects, showing instead him dancing with a vacuum cleaner. The original scene, while a tour-de-force of virtuosity on Astaire’s part, is especially notable for two things--one, the animatic qualities of the objects Astaire partners and secondly, the way in which the sequence, in a mode characteristic of the dynarrative of musical numbers, makes sensible a “polyphony of subjectivities”, of objects and environment participating beyond the simple virtuosity of Astaire, as a “multiplicity of ways of keeping time”. In the original film, the dance is initiated as if by accident; Astaire braces himself on the coat rack in order to lean out of a door and pushing back into the room, finds the coat rack glued to his hand with a force of attraction. The entire sequence becomes less about a sense of partnering as an intersubjective encounter, and more about a reanimation of the spatio-temporal coordinates of the scene. Astaire sets a metronome running at the beginning of the scene, but doesn’t so much move to the beat as twist and push within it, frequently employing a spiraling movement to fold a visual rhythm against the sound, highlighting weight and gravity only to extend and delay their effects. The scene becomes a moment out of time, a stolen moment--a clock figures prominently in the background, he checks his watch on occasion, the metronome keeps its beat but the sequence itself steps out of clock-time. The sense of duration here is not determined by the long shots giving a spatial integrity to Astaire’s body or movements, but comes through the playful opening to potential that consistently reworks the set space. In the scene, Astaire doesn’t so much dance with discrete objects as he is caught up in their relation as attractors.

Royal Wedding is also the setting for one of Astaire’s most famous numbers, the “dancing on the ceiling sequence” to the song “You mean the world to me”. Here, Astaire enters a room with a stolen photo of his object of affection. He begins by dancing and singing to the photograph, but then places it on a table and redistributes the force of desire into the space as a whole. As the set rotates, the camera and all the furniture remain stable, and Astaire appears to climb the walls and dance on the ceiling. “You mean the whole world to me” passes through its seeming mark--the image of the loved one--and instead becomes a

mean of intensifying experience, expanding the potential to encompass and make literal the “whole world” of the song. Astaire’s array of movement possibilities in the space--tumbling, crawling, testing for the moment of gravitational stickiness as the room spins--is less about his visible mastery than his multiplication of positions: anything appears possible. He feels, we feel as viewers, the world in him.

Such potential is lost in the functionality of the vacuum cleaner ad. The object Astaire dances with remains stubbornly inert and functional, a dour tool of domestic drudgery that disenchants Astaire as well. While the labour of magic is made visible--foregrounding the work of special effects--the potential of this labour to disrupt conventional modes of capitalist value as coming into being remains a mechanical, as opposed to machinic, effect. [9] While Astaire’s animatic effect in *Royal Wedding* is determined by the length of the song--rhythm infecting and diverting narrative, only to be contained in song and dance numbers, what Guattari might call a “territorialization” of the infinity of animism--the Dirt Devil commercials remain a functional enchantment. Here Astaire is less an anarchic zombie than a robot performing precisely as we might expect him to. The deterritorialization of the image is affected by the internal edit of cut and paste digital effects--a swap of coatrack for vacuum – as a capitalist reterritorialization returning the image to its rightful place, productive of revenue rather than of new sources of experience. While the commercial had a certain popularity, it was also at the centre of legal and ethical debates on the rights of dead celebrities to control their own image, phrased in terms of “what they would have wanted”, a deterministic future anterior, and of the rightful recipient of the profits to be made. [10] Astaire is left to be what he was.

Barbara Creed suggests that despite arguments which suggest that a synthespian could in fact “perform” as well as a flesh and blood actor, it will still lack an unconscious, here understood as the source of a “heimlich” doubleness of actor and character that we as viewers recognize and respond to. Creed, for whom the synthespian is itself an angel of death, signaling the demise of cinema as a celluloid based life form, asks: “How much of the power of the experience of identification is derived from the spectator’s awareness---conscious or not--that the star as person and as character on the screen has undergone experiences common to the human subject?” (Creed, 2003: 167). This rather ironic mode of “recognition” of the unconscious as familiarity suggests something quite different from Guattari’s expanded sense of the unconscious as latency (a properly audio-visual use of this term), a sensibility of milieu as expanded relationality. It is this sense of milieu, of qualitative becoming--the world in me--that makes the link between Jovic’s explicit citationality and partial subjectivation of the synthespian and Forsythe’s screenic on-scenity.

The Screen As Jar

The film portion of *L'Ange de la Mort* was shot in an anatomy museum; Forsythe is hemmed in by long rows of display cases, and close-up images of the suspended decay of human flesh are continually intercut with these images and offered up for our eyes. Fragments of Andy Warhol films are also sprinkled throughout the performance. Like Jovic, Forsythe's performance dramatizes re-animation as an imperfectly subjectivized experience. The point of view of the other in me is initially (both in the text and in our recognition of Forsythe) that of the drama of celebrity and fame (of which Warhol is the great philosopher). Celebrity becomes less a form of ambivalent liveliness than a prolongation of death in life, a static contraction of sense. However, in the anatomy museum, the jars of fleshy bits are not only a memento mori, an anachronistic precursor to our contemporary preservatives of celluloid and video tape. The jars become complicated in their uncanny identifiability; in their inert objectivity, these morsels of flesh become reanimated by their availability to the eye. Like in Stan Brakhage's *The Act of Seeing with One's Own Eyes*, where light, shadow and colour are released from inanimate bodies in the filming of an autopsy, the apparitional quality of the jars as curved screens invites a movement of display, rather than staying as inert material of recognizable and dead images. There is a persistence and consistence to moving images that exceeds the subjective level, through a multiplication of the 'other' points of view in me.

The film only begins some time into the performance. Forsythe appears in a fixed shot at the end of a long passageway between display cases in the empty anatomy museum, out of place in his liveness, while being almost a part of the museum itself, in his exposure (wearing only a pair of shorts) and in his humble presence (there is little that is explicitly virtuosic about his performance). A strong sense of the vulnerability of being on display accompanies his filmed image, contrasting vividly with the self-possession that accompanies Jovic's aggressive territorialization of the small stage space. Forsythe's image towers over the space--he is larger than life. His doubled monumentality--both his celebrity and fame (a key theme of Fabre's original text) as well as his disproportionate scale (larger than Jovic) is made more resonant by a curious impersonality in his massive presence. An interior distance in his gaze is made all the stranger by the fact that the onscreen image is continually coming face to face (without acknowledging) with its own image on the screen opposite across the performance space: another example of the missed encounters that open other vectors of engagement for the audience to enter. The lack of recognition, the difficulty of seeing oneself is also part of a strategy of escape and fugitive movement. A live body in a dead setting, Forsythe doesn't rely on a display of vigor or vitality as a means of generating a contrast; rather, it is the thoughtfulness, the delay in his sometimes hesitant speech, his abstracted gaze

and the unpredictability of his twisting movements in a limited space, that contrast a sense of duration and uncertain directionality with the preservation around him. The rectangular screens of the installation are oriented vertically, not horizontally, as if made to the measure of the upright form of the body, not to the cut of the face. This horizontality, a 90° shift from the habitual screen, reorients our usual perception in subtle ways. A rectangle made to fit the whole body is at once the incorporation of an early cliché of filmed dance--that the whole body be constantly shown--and at the same time evocative of a casket, a box for the body, the limited space of a body without movement. The narrowing of the attraction of our frontal visible field, via the expanse of "dead space" (the black curtains forming the four walls of the space) on each side of the screen, activates our peripheral vision, opening it to the flickering images on the other walls and to the moving performer on stage. The stage space extends when the films first appear with the long corridor of the museum, lighted escape routes from the enclosed space that Jovic has made unbearably intimate with her proximity, her aggressive solicitation of the audience and her uncanny embodiment. When the films begin, she summons Forsythe to the stage, as he walks down the long corridor to assume a position directly in front of the camera in medium shot. "Welcome" Jovic hisses, "speak", reaching out to the image to call it forth, as if she was the puppet master pulling the strings.

The text of *L'Ange de la Mort* is recited by Forsythe and doubly remixed in the editing of the film (repeating words) and by Jovic, who intermittently recites along with Forsythe in a bored tone (she's heard this all before), at times racing ahead to lay down an oral carpet for his words to land on, at other times falling behind and echoing his voice, still other times deviating entirely to provide a commentary on what she sees and hears. Forsythe's monologue begins with the announcement: "I am back from death". Jovic picks up this "I" and repeats it throughout the sequence, shifting intonation, folding the sound into her body and releasing it changed, distracting us from Forsythe's Orphic testimony. The text plays on the idea of existing, of living on in memory in the regard of others, in the camera's gaze. Staring into the camera, Forsythe speaks, and each word triggers a spasm of shifting images:

Click
click
click
click
I
I
I
I [11]

A tension between command and description emerges: as Forsythe speaks “click” “click” “click”, the image disintegrates into a sequence of fast cuts, of close-up images of faces, bodies and above all eyes. The piece involves a kind of dispossession of the eye/I, as he continues: “I am back from death/ and on my way to the parting/ To the sound of a thousand cameras/ I am the seductive self-portrait of a monstrous landscape/ constantly filming my own blue eyes/ that infamous look/ that look/ the beginner and eradicator that studies people in flight/ I have seen these eyes/ I have seen my body in these eyes/ so many times/ over so many years/ at so many events/ I see myself again and always/ being famous is so simple/ But I live today/ After my death/ and so it is extremely difficult. To become again unknown” (Fabre, 2000).

To become again unknown: just *a* dancer. The challenge, amplified in the doubled tension of the seen and the said, of how to estrange his recognizability, lies in the creative force of art. As Deleuze describes this in relation to writing: “to become is not to attain a form (identification, imitation, mimesis) but to find the zone of proximity, indiscernibility, or indifferentiation such that one can no longer be distinguished from a woman, an animal or a molecule--neither imprecise nor general, but unforeseen and non-preexistent, singularized out of a population rather than determined in a form” (Deleuze, 1997: 2). This becoming is always a becoming-mortal--how to weave a dodge in vision, via Forsythe’s movements which twist and contract in the limited space created in the paradox of an angel of death, the finite in the infinite. The impersonality of the creative force emerges in relation, beyond the intersubjective and positional dialogue of you and I. Guattari writes of “an active schizo-ontology” that will “find an emergent alterfication relieved of the mimetic barriers of the self”; this becoming in the space of multiple perspectives and the passages between them, is also the aim of Fabre’s piece (Guattari, 1995: 84).

The challenge: how to escape the fixity felt in the mirror images of other’s perceptions of us, feeling instead “anonymous” in the self, sensing “the point of view of the other in me”? How do we become unknown to ourselves? How to re-engage “movement-vision”? Forsythe’s monologue explores a tension between the sense of continuity that makes up the I and the sense that we exist largely for others. In this alternation, there is a gap that can open an other becoming--not to regain a lost self, to restore a subjective autonomy, but to *participate* in becoming. Forsythe goes on: “I am always everyone/ with my blue eyes/ Even though others possess my eyes”. Forsythe’s response to this fixed vision, like the curved jars of the anatomy museum inviting a slide in our fixed stare of exposure, is qualitative movement. Not mastery but movement: “I float and I dance; it’s the only thing I know how to do”. The effect of this continuity of movement introduces a felt force of difference into repetition:

Images
Images
Images
Images
See them with a different feeling
Images
Images
Images
Images
Some say images have no feelings (Fabre, 2000).

The text ends with the wish to “seek forgetfulness in losing myself in the crowd/I want to forget myself/ And dance in the blue”. This blue throughout the text has been that of his “blue eyes”, eyes that are repeatedly of a doubled vision--his own eyes which are also “cameras”, eyes which are “possessed” by others, even as they are a means of becoming everyone else. This doubled vision becomes movement-vision via an intensification of the movement between fixed positions--floating and dancing as the only possible response. In doing so, the eyes become a zone of qualitative sensation, what Forsythe describes as “danc(ing) in the blue”.

Caught (Up) In The Act

To see with feeling: that is the point. As spectator, I increasingly felt throughout the whole piece a strange sensation of becoming “all eyes”, a chaotic multiplicity and mutability of vision. Former theories of cinematic spectatorship have their roots in Freudian psychoanalysis and in Sigmund Freud’s theory of perversions, in models of mastery of the visual field. The traditional cathedral of cinema minimizes direct and peripheral contact with the spectators, and with all but a delimited set of sensory experiences and a focalized visual field. With digital and video technologies a kind of protestant reform of cinema has scattered screens into personal spaces and into increasingly mobile zones. At the same time, the computer screen has redistributed the space of the screen as a zone of multiple and at times competing points of engagement. The screen increasingly becomes an attractor geared towards interaction, a distracted intentionality and a full frontality of availability. Fabre’s design choices for the installation of *L’Ange de la Mort* are not revolutionary, and yet they pull against this full frontality of the contemporary screen in effective and affective ways. Clearly, the screen placement alone is not what generates the sensation I felt, of becoming “all eyes”, but the presence of the screen behind my back opened up for me an unusual zone of interaction and movement beyond that which we typically associate with interactive art. The performance evoked in me a strong sense of what Guattari terms the ethico-aesthetic in its feeling of responsibility and interactivity, with

chance and the unexpected as really two sides of the same coin. In *Chaosmosis*, Guattari argues for the aesthetic paradigm as a way of “re-enchanting” a world where too often a “disquieting strangeness” that signals the emergence of the new or unexpected, of process itself, is recaptured and reduced to known Universes of Reference (as in the recapture of Astaire’s delightfully uncanny dance in a tedious Heimlich of domesticity) (Guattari, 1995: 105). Throughout *L’Ange de la Mort*, the question of relationality is highlighted through a series of inquiries into the relations of subjectivity that miss dialogical clarity, escaping the closed circuit that reinforces a sense of (inter)subjective consistency and instead calling attention to the creative modalities of the *production* of subjectivities. Guattari argues that “the play of intensity of the ontological constellation is, in a way, a choice of being not for the self, but for the whole alterity of the cosmos and the infinity of time”, the seeking of new forms of value, an ethical alternative to capitalist binaries of value (1995: 53). Deleuze writes that “cinema spreads an experimental night” over us, a space for the recomposition of bodies; Fabre’s installation participates in such an experimental night in its invitation to spectators not to lose but to reconfigure their habits of perception, to sense their self-referentiality in participating in movement-vision (Deleuze, 1989: 194). Bearing witness to the becoming of a creative act means an ethical responsibility in this piece, not to interpret, but to open up to the disquieting and the strange--the way in which images have an undetermined life of their own.

What does it mean to say that I felt “all eyes” during this piece, that this installation performance opened up the back space of the body, diverging from an intentional, directed notion of understanding and sense? What is the point of such a reorientation of the cogito towards a sentio, to return to Massumi’s terms? This sensational awareness of what happens behind my back, the feeling that at times I might be missing something that could simply be verified by turning my head to look at the screen (in which case I would miss what was happening on the other screen), the delirium of a multiplication of relative perspectives (to engage with the piece, I had to lose myself in its rhythm while feeling with intensity), all point towards an impersonal aesthetic as the world(’s) feeling. The strong sensation of the back space of the body’s engagement, in particular the feeling that my body was participating in a mode of perception that I could feel, but not synthesize into knowledge, could evoke what Merleau Ponty has called “the inhuman secret of the bodily mechanism” -- the autonomic processes that continually unfold behind our back (Merleau-Ponty, 1969). But in describing the place of force or sensation in the felt gap between the discursive and the non-discursive, Deleuze writes that: “Nothing is ever secret, although nothing is ever immediately visible or directly readable” (Deleuze, 1988: 51). My sensation of new forms of bodily perception--of being “all eyes”--was not one of terror but of creative potential, the feeling of being alive, the other (the world) in me that is not secret but latent, precisely making itself felt only in process. To be against full

frontal is to be caught up in such sensation--to avoid the revelatory lie that there is a truth behind images simply waiting to be exposed, and instead to feel images differently, to sense the difference in their repetition. As Forsythe performs onscreen, his danced movements contorting in the confined space between display cabinets, at times chopped into editing and then recomposing in long shot and long take, the refrain "I dance and I float and that's all I know how to do" suggests that such movement is the key to evading a fixity of the self as seen through specular vision. This self-evasion is synaesthetically seen in the visibility of the audience, as a shifting abstraction of mobile faces: neither mirrors nor "affection-images" capturing the affective valences of the piece and translating them into explainable emotion, but the expressive mobility of a mosaic of faces--a desubjectified series of subjective reactions, a multiplication of points of view--subject and object all at once. This distracted and mobile attention, as well as the distribution of the screens on all 4 walls of the space, likewise intensified both my own sense of peripheral vision and the back space of my body. Something was always happening behind my back, pulling against the full frontality of my own eyes and scattering their blue across the surface of my skin.

"I'm back from death": Fabre's *L'ange de la mort* asks us to feel that rhythmic edge where unity is doubled by an unlivable chaos, populated by a shared delirium newly available to us thanks to the disjunctive effects of the audio-visual archive. This archive takes us beyond the lived body to an indetermination of subject, object and relational milieu. Fabre's simple reorientation of spectatorial coordinates in the installation design of *L'ange de la mort*, subtly but effectively amplifies the relation/ non-relation between the seen and the said, participating in an emergent alterfication of spectatorial habit. The ethico-aesthetic drive of the piece reanimates the potential Benjamin saw in cinema as the art of the mass and of a distracted attention: how do we feel these "partial subjectivities" of a "cinematic body" as the potential of the crowd? If we think of the difference between cinema and dance as one of degree rather than kind (two arts of movement rather than an art of liveness versus one of record), then this type of intermedial dance performance opens us to a different mobility we can only partially incorporate--the (feeling?) of a partial subjectivity that we see thematized and embodied in Jozic and Forsythe's performances. Back from death. Still here. In the blue.

Notes

[1] Jan Fabre, "L'Ange de la Mort" (performance).

[2] See the recent issue of *Parallax* 14.2.

[3] Rubberbandance Group, "AV Input/Output", Place des Arts Cinquième Salle, Montréal, Québec, March 2008 and Dave St-Pierre (choreographer), "Un peu de tendresse bordel de merde!" at Usine C, Montréal, Québec, January 2008.

[4] This discussion of movement-vision versus mirror vision is in the article "The Bleed: Where Body Meets Image" (Massumi, 2002). See also the interview with Louise Lecavalier in the "Tangents" section of this issue of *Inflexions*.

[5] Cited in Deleuze (1989: 19).

[6] Thus the term *synthespian* can encompass digitally recontextualized footage of existing performances (as seen in *Zelig* or *The Sopranos*, hybrids of synthetic photorealistic bodies voiced by live actors who are sometimes also the movement template for these images (as in *Lord of the Rings'* Gollum as "played" by Andy Serkis), photorealistic non-human actors (the dinosaurs of *Jurassic Park*), non-photorealistic "skins" or traces digitally draped over volumetric recorded movements of a performer (as in *Ghostcatching* featuring Bill T. Jones).

[7] The writings of animator Norman McLaren on his own work offer an alternative to indexical analysis of the relation between "animator's hand" and animated images, which is one model of recuperating this "invisible labour". See, for example, McLaren (1976: 122-123).

[8] See, for example, Broydo (1997).

[9] Here, I draw on Guattari's (and Deleuze's) distinction between the mechanical and the machinic, turning on the distinction between assemblages geared towards the production of a repeatable same (the mechanical) and the production of something new (the machinic).

[10] For a discussion of the legal issues raised by the reproducibility of the *synthespian*, see Beard (2001).

[11] Fabre, Jan, "L'Ange de la Mort". Any discrepancies between the text of the performance and what is written here comes from my translation of Fabre's French text back into English. See Fabre (2000).

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