

POSTANATOMICAL BODIES – MICRODANCES -

UNDOING THE PANCHOREOGRAPHIC

Capitalism and the choreography of affect

Jaime del Val – Institute REVERSO

jaimedelval@reverso.org

ABSTRACT

I will propose an approach to understanding power operations in current capitalism in terms of affective production, and to understand the latter in terms of an analysis of movement and choreography. The panchoreographic is a set of technologies of information society that distribute discreet choreographies globally, inducing unprecedented standardisations of affect. These underly specific sensory anatomies that account for representation (the camera-screen) and textuality (discreet verbal movement), them being constitutive of cartesian dualisms and of the subject's exteriority to the object that underlies power operations at all levels. I will give examples of certain practices undertaken by Reverso in which cameras are transposed onto the skin, inducing a transformation of sensory anatomies and a setting to motion of a radical choreography of experience in which there is no condition of exteriority to the world, but rather one of immanence. This deterritorialisation of the interface induces a dissolution of the body's anatomy and a questioning of normative categories such as sex and sexuality. The *Intrabody* appears as potential technology for the proliferation of emergent non-violent becomings.

THE PRODUCTION OF AFFECT

If we may understand affect as an effect of the movements that bodies are constituted of, from the molecular to the molar scales, then we may approach the question of the production of affect through an analysis of movement, and more precisely choreography.

Affects are both emergent and reiterative of frameworks for their own interpretation. Yet it is important to note the specific contingencies that produce affect in more or less open frameworks, that put larger or lesser constraints for emergence, that produce conditions for greater or lesser coercion and violence in the relationality of the forces that constitute affect. We may trace the genealogies of such frameworks in the choreographies and emergent improvisations of movement of the forces. From verbal movement, to interfaces, choreographies of vision and hearing, to dance, there is a wide variety of movement frameworks for the production of affect.

CAPITALISM OF AFFECT

Contemporary capitalism is one that is concerned primarily with the production of affects and desires of consumers, indeed with the production of desiring and affective subjects.

Capitalism of affect is a recent evolution of technobiopolitics that directly aims at the production of affect and desire for the enhanced

performance of economy at a global scale, where consumers of the first world, and at times in third world countries also, are assimilated in regimes of unprecedented global violence, which is effectively hidden through the glamorous surfaces of the systems of affect production.

Continuous assimilation of consumers in the economic regime implies the efficacious concealment of the global unprecedented violence on which the system operates, since it pretends to address free democratic subjects. There is indeed an inflationary and parodic instrumentalisation of humanist discourses at the basis of marketing rethorics: we are made to believe that markets are satisfying preexisting universal desires and needs. At the same time marketing specialists have a very conscious constructionist approach, they are well aware of the capacity to produce reality, which they exercise. Finally marketing plays intensively with questions of emergence: how to anticipate emergent desires and preemptively appropriate them is an essential question for effective marketing techniques.

How are affects produced in this crossover of hipermodern humanist rethorics, constructionism and emergence?

PERFORMING ANATOMY - PERFORMING THE DUALISM – THE PANCHOREOGRAPHIC

Interfaces, such as the mouse, the keyboard, the joystick or the wii distribute discrete choreographies that we perform daily. Music videos, pornography, publicity, cinema and ubiquitous commercial music do so as well. They constitute the *Panchoregraphic*: a complex ensemble of technologies that distribute standardised discrete choreographies globally, hidden behind the façade of entertainment, information, communication and diverse rethorics of liberation and modernisation.

An interface of significant relevance which is common to all mainstream technologies of information society is the camera-screen paradigm. The camera-screen performatively enacts the framing of the subject and the object. It is through the parameters of Framing-Fixity, Distance-Exteriority, Focus and Exposure, that vision is identified as that of a viable subject. Hearing and proprioception are shaped accordingly to vision.

Thus subjectivity is construed in terms of its sensory anatomy as fixity, as the lack of motion: it is the world that the subject looks at that is in motion. This wrong assumption has posed enormous and fruitful challenges to the notion of humanist subject which we propose to take further in this essay.

I suggest that the condition of exterior vision is not only constitutive of the subjectivity-objectivity divide and all its cartesian correlates, but that it is also a condition of possibility for power to operate: it is the exterior look

that reduces reality and experience to measurable cartographies, it accounts for the *materialisation* of power. Indeed western science as we know it is unthinkable outside the paradigm of the exteriority of vision.

To make movement into discrete measurable and repeatable fixities has been the obsession of western civilization over many centuries, to materialise movement, to objectify it. HCI –Human Computer Interaction- works through the continuous production of discreet parameters for movement, indeed of new kinds of discretisations, through new sensing technologies.

The camera-screen paradigm spreads through the architectures of the theatre-stage-auditorium, the canvas-wall-museum, the page-book, and more recently floods in the ubiquitous proliferation of screens, cameras and, most significantly, interfaces in the society of information. One may argue indeed that for all its presumptions about participation of prosumers, Web 2.0 is but the extreme expression of the spectacular paradigm, where movement is increasingly discretized in the midst of new technologies of implicit power, control and affect production.

PERFORMING VERBAL MOVEMENT AND BEYOND

Along this line of genealogies of movement and power it may prove to be of interest to approach language as kind of movement: verbal and

written movement as choreographies of affect that are never quite as discreet as we sometimes presuppose. What are the kinds of verbal and written movement that count as language? It's a question of discretisation: when we recognise forms in sounds and gestures of the verbal and the written, language starts to outline itself. Yet when we speak we are deterritorialising the recognisable forms of language all the time: in our gestures and sounds there are always also less recognisable features, less identifiable, less reducible to signification, and yet I argue that these are crucial to the bodies' interaction and affect exchange: relation is not so much to do with communicating meaning as with embodying affect, and affect is never reducible to meaning. How is every gesture and sound we produce deterritorialising the presumed territories of language? How do gestures and sounds, proximities and proprioceptions converge and disseminate in particular circumstances, over longer periods, in the ways bodies interact, so that dialects, accents or completely new languages emerge?

Textuality/verbality and representation, as key paradigms of logocentric and technopositivist societies rely both on the sensory anatomies that reproduce the fixed exteriority of the subject, that account for its abstraction. Society of information is unthinkable without this anatomic foundation. Fixed framing and discreet movement as constitutive of sensory anatomies are thus at the very basis of the structuring of bodies that has allowed the articulation of binary divides.

I want to suggest that it is possible to intervene and reappropriate such technological constructions of sensory anatomies in a direction that radically counterposes the one that has been and is now hegemonic in global capitalism. I also want to suggest that standardisation of sensory anatomies is crucial for the functioning of markets, for the proliferation of contemporary regimes of affective production and for the perpetuation of global violence.

Is it possible to think of a different paradigm, where it is no longer possible to situate oneself in an exterior and fixed position, where it is no longer possible to produce an account of objective material world that is thus made available for power operations to map and measure, for violence to operate?

Traditionally critical discourses on the posthuman have proposed the idea of a heteroogeneous subject that is situated in a multidimensional and changing field, that operates according to multiple perspectives.

What if we have *no perspective* any longer? What if we live in a plane of immanence with the world? How could such an experience be brought together? Or do we experience immanence already at various levels?

POST-ANATOMICAL BODIES – PERFORMING IMMANENCE

What happens if we radically transpose the technology of representation?

Over the past two years in the framework of the Institute Reverso, we have developed a number of media performance projects in which surveillance cameras are placed on the skin, pointing to the skin, anywhere on the body for the performance of microdances, movements performed through looking at the image in such a way that the image of the abstract amorphous body fragments “moves” the body, rather than it moving through usual proprioceptive awareness. The Nietzschean idea that there is no doer behind the deed, no dancer behind the dance, no subject behind the action, takes over.

The parameters that account for the technology of representation have dissolved: there is no longer a distance and exteriority of vision, no single fixed framing, no clear focus and exposure: the eyes of the (former) subject are no longer placed in a face, but have transposed everywhere on the body, and move constantly in a triple or quadruple choreography of vision: the movement of the camera itself, the movement of the microdances that the camera sees, the movement of the partial lighting placed on the body, which has become its own stage in a complete circuit of self-production. Occasionally the body is also wearing the

projector thus choreographing the projection itself which can also be directed to the same body or to other bodies.

This radical choreography of vision is one in which sensing has become movement, (it always was, but it was presumed to be the sensing of an abstract fixity) in which the vision is in plane of immanence with the movement it is part of, since it is never fully possible to separate the microdances from the choreography of the camera, the lighting and the projection.

The body rendered by this transposition is irrerecognisable, only nearly legible, it has no clear defined anatomy, no binary sex and gender, no recognisable humanity, it proliferates in multiple becomings of sex and species, it is a becoming element and inorganic.

In parallel the voice is electronically processed life, spatialised in four channels, dissolved, amplified and multiplied, so that again the human gendered voice is no longer intelligible, instead a chorus of dissolving voices, nearly human, nearly organic, perhaps animal, perhaps inorganic, generates a decentralised field of hearing that again informs proprioception in novel ways and overlaps with the images of the postanatomical body so that it seems that it is the amorphous antianatomy that "speaks".

The audience has no fixed secured space. There is no division between their space and the space of the performer, at times performers approach the skin of the audience that becomes part of the landscape. A new kind of intimacy mediated by the surveillance camera, or rather a post-intimate relation in which there is no intelligibility that allows to fully recognise an action as public or intimate.

The project spreads in a variety of media, disseminating the body without anatomy like an antibody of form: performance in closed spaces, urban interventions, performances online and in private houses, video, photography, sculpture, architecture, with one or many performers, in large or small spaces, with one or many persons in the audience. Thus the project aims at challenging the anatomy of the social body and its disciplinary frameworks of power and coercion.

RADICAL TRANSPOSITIONS – FROM INTERFACES TO INTRABODIES

The transposition of the camera to the surface of the skin is a simple gesture with powerful consequences: it dissolves the distance, framing and focus that accounts intelligibility in representation (the intelligibility that we have embodied as synonymous to objectivity since the proliferation of the camera obscura in the XV century), it makes the object of surveillance unrecognisable and uncontrollable, it dissolves anatomical architectures into formless movement, thus working on the

constitutive boundaries of sex, gender and intimacy, it projects the moving body in new scales and dimensions of time-space and capability, it displaces proprioceptive feedback into a transposed antianatomy, redesigning the sensory anatomy and producing a closed circuit for self-production that disseminates in multiplicities of times-becomings.

The lack of distance and perspective generates a space of a body that is like an alien world and yet so near: it is not outside signification but rather disrupts the frames of reference, the distances of signification, and explodes the signifying body in a supernova of disseminations, where everything is sex and gender is nowhere, a body of pure excess: excess of dissemination, excess of intensity, excess of overflow. The outside of discourse is found in the excessive proximity, almost like an inside.

This transposition aims at counteracting the effects of technologies of control that operate through the production of affect as contagious choreographies (of vision, of hearing, of gesture, of kinetics, of thinking, etc.) distributed globally via interfaces of different kinds (mouse and keyboard, screen, software, algorithms, texts, joystick, mobile phone, mp3, disco, pornography....) and in the form of ubiquitous images and sounds, that constitute the Pan-choreographic as machine of affective production of bodies in late capitalism.

The loss of perspective situates motion and action in a plane of immanence: it is not about multiple perspectives of the body, but about an immanent becoming of the body as motion, projecting it-self as formless space, space without perspective, intensive space, with no predefined quantifiable scales, but rather with endless qualitative differential potentials: a space-without-extension, a space of pure intensity. The amorphous proximity is both alienating and absorbing, operating on the constitutive frontiers of form and anatomy, gender and sex, intimacy and legibility.

The body thus intensifies its becoming as intensive architecture, as it is projected in proprioceptive loops producing visual, sound, kinetic and proxemic space. The scale of the moving body is transformed, as time-space scale. The metabody/metalsex as relational body of movement doesn't permit ontological differentiations between the analogue and the digital. Emergence and territorialisation happen at all levels in the interactions of forces, where no level is priori discreet (this includes the level of computation in interaction design).

The life electronic processing of the voice works in the direction of transforming verbal movement, faciality and vocality. The new scale of micromovement redefines categories of ability and disability. In this new space of the body there is no representation and performance, but rather morphogenesis and metaformance, also in the relation with the audience, occupying the same space of the performers, who come in

contact with them at times so that the skin of the audience becomes part of the living environment: a coming in contact through the surveillance camera, that becomes a new kind of sex.

<http://www.reverso.org/Antibodies-microdances.htm>

The same experiment has been done in public spaces, in different cities of Europe and Latin America, through the interventions of the Pangender Cyborg, which projects its own amorphous antianatomies onto public buildings generating conflicting analogies with the anatomy of the social organism. At the moment we prepare the Microdances to be performed through the internet, in private houses and in especially built architectures and across other media, as metamedia and metadisciplinary project. <http://www.reverso.org/Antibodies->

[DISSOLUTION.htm](http://www.reverso.org/Antibodies-DISSOLUTION.htm)

The project of post-anatomical architectures is also one in which we have been developing different prototypes through interactive digital 3D models that avoid cartesian simulation of physical space, and remind of amorphous moving body fragments, like microdances of a digital body.

<http://www.reverso.org/arquitectura.htm>

We must also rethink space, not as physical entity but as relational intensity: rather than going along with the assumption that we inhabit and traverse space as physical, we should promote the thinking of

space in terms of how we produce it/are produced by it: which is the affective quality of space, how far space is but a projection of the intensities of movement, like time is the unfolding of movement, and therefore unquantifiable.

Potential low-tech projects for post-anatomical bodies will look into redefining issues of non verbal communication, architecture, and our daily choreographies, our projected space-times and relations of the body.

METASEX

The formless body produces multiples sexes and sex-events in a becoming that never sediments into actual sexes: a metamorphogenesis. Sex/desire is understood as movement, affective relationality that traverses all kinds of human and non-human movement in a proliferation of never ending formless potential sexes that do not relate to the binary constructions of biological sex and gender, and at the same time may refer to them continuously, dissolving their constitutive anatomical boundaries.

The postanatomical body is an occasion to set to motion a proliferation of sexes: sexuality understood as events of production n sexes, as Deleuze and Guattari suggest, that do not necessarily relate to the gender binary. Traditional accounts of sexuality are based on an

arbitrary zonification of the body in terms of functional reproduction, reducing biological sex to the anatomical production of the genitals. But desire flows through multiplicities of intensities in motion. How is my look drawn by diffuse forces of desire that traverse bodies in their ways of looking, ways of moving, ways of standing, ways of talking, that is, of different kinds of movement?

Metasexuality is not only about a conception of sexuality and desire that traverses all possible anatomies, but more particularly one that focuses in the diffuse nature of movement as post-anatomical. Metasexuality traverses all human and non-human movements. Every relational body is a mode and an event of sex.

Metasexuality is post-intimate. Intimacy is a biopolitical technology of control of bodies that takes form through choreography and anatomical production: in the realm of post-anatomy the conditions of possibility of intimacy have dissolved, sex can only be a common relational event. Metasexuality is a post-queer move, since it operates in a plurality of movements outside-inside and through binary and textual constructs in the domain of metaformativity.

COMMON BODY

The question of which lives matter, of what counts as a life can also be revisited in terms of the relationality of movement. Different kinds of discrete movement, such as verbal movement, account for distinctions between species, races, classes, disabilities or abilities, genders or sexualities in order to establish hierarchical asymmetric relationalities.

How to promote the proliferation of non-discrete kinds of movements, that flow over existing divisions and territorialisations? Indeed we should understand the metabody of movement as a Common Body in the sense of Social Commons: can we define a "right" to nonquantifiable relationality, that questions contemporary production of standard relational bodies and their specific articulations in movement-space-time discretisations? This goes well beyond articulating new legal figures within existing anatomies of the social organism, and requires rethinking this anatomy altogether in the direction of a post-anatomical common body. This implies a radical rethinking of technology.

We must rethink interfaces, not as the mediation between a faciality of an abstract subject and a machine within information transmission and communication, but of a intercorporeality within the relational body: from interfaces to *intrabodies*. We must rethink interfaces not as discrete simulations of real movement within practices of signification, but as metasignifying relational fields for affect formation.

TOWARDS A QUANTUM EXPERIENCE

Producing new experiences of immanence will be increasingly necessary in our globally dualistic tecnopositivist worlds, while at the same time operating strategically in situated mulperspectivism. We need a radically pluralistic politics that enables us to work both through existing worlds of relations, undoing some of its forms of coercion, while at the same time experimenting with new movements beyond cartesian dualisms. We must operate both inside/out and through existing normative territories, working with its own mechanisms, *amorphous choreographies within the body politic*; and outside in the realm of new formations, liberating amongst the viruses of simulation an antibody of form, an impossible affect, a non-identifiable desire.

Relational ethics and ecology of immanence is one in which the moving (dancing) bodies constitute one single yet diffuse relational body of becoming and becoming-with: in such a dance violence and coercion are not subject to enter into play.

We need to work towards a technoaesthetics of the non-quantifiable, a proliferation of qualitatively different forms of movement according to which no accounts of superiority, superation or superhumanity are possible, as in eugenics, but indeed of qualitative relational

differentiation and specificity. This involves a thinking of the body, beyond the text, a post-philosophical enquiry.

A moving-dancing body projects itself in multidimensional time-spaces. In fact for the purpose of physical sciences it might be the case that it is much more efficient to approach the quantum realm through notions of choreography rather than visual representation and fixity. And it may be the case that through operating on this plane of immanence we may induce a *quantum-experience* to our daily life.

The kind of ethics and ecology that may be proposed in this field of immanence and relationality is an open question, yet we venture that such reappropriations of technologies of control are necessary fields of aesthetic and political operation in our times, if we are to go beyond the prescribed anatomical limits to our knowledge and self production and into a more open horizon of emergence.

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Jaime Del Val (Madrid 1974) is a transmedia artist of old a new technologies of sound, image, space, body and text (painter and digital artist, composer and pianist, performer and choreographer, virtual architect); multidisciplinary activist (environmental, post-gay/post-queer); philosopher and theorist of the body, director of REVERSO in which he promotes diverse initiatives in the crossroads of the body, arts, technology, critical theory and political action. His work in performance, dance and technology, electroacoustics, video and virtual generative architecture as well as in fields of critical theory has been extensively presented, awarded, performed and exhibited in Europe and America..