

On: The Third Space

Since the beginnings of my studies of dance in a collegiate setting, I have been piqued by these questions of why dance, why I dance, what can dance do positively, how can I do dance to enact a positive effect? Through the chew of this question and listenings for matching or further expletive words I have come across this ambient name: *The Third Space*. This name got my attention for several reasons. Primary; the acknowledgement of something fleeting, and imagined being created in a time/space place together. Second; since this space is undefined it seems to hold a limitless possible. Third, what does acknowledging/delving into this space do? Using what I view as the related possibilities held in the realm of poetics (as in: poetic combinations generating a more possible, language as enacting a type of performative presentation, or enacting a similar third realm of possible/impossible understanding), I will dive here. This paper as a small ocean, an encounter, and it's own history.

CASTINGS:

Drama AS Action

Interest AS Wealth

Alive in the world AS In a state of Urgency

The Conditions of Possibility AS Latent.

Issue AS IN Issuing From and Taking Issue With

Interest AS Desire AND ALSO AS Motivation

TANGIBILITIES AND FRICTION ARTICLES:

There can be very few facts, if any. Instead I will call my current truths; “tangibilities”.

Tangible 1. People sometimes come to performances.

Tangible 2. People perform.

Linked tangibles, /: when I watch performances I feel something or it does something to me, when I perform I feel something, when I perform I do something to me only possible in the presence of others/audience; *performative I*. I feel a certain heat created. This heat could be conceived of as: *the friction between two or more objects generating energy*. The objects are indefinite, e.g: my desire and my body, my actions and your eyes, my intention and your perception, our thoughts and our actions. The operative word here is ‘between’ or, ‘in-between’ or, ‘or’ or, ‘and.’ In Robert Venturi’s book *Complexities and Contradictions* I leafed through the pages at random and stopped, reading this passage: “The conjunction “or” with a question mark can usually describe ambiguous relationships.” I think that this is insightful both to understand what language does already and to broaden the question of what it can do. The word “or” is a conjoiner of two things. If repeated, more than two (ex. *Apples or pomegranates or potatoes*). When Venturi describes an ambiguous relationship AS using “or,” it is an “or” backed on only one side: “Or..?” The other side left blank is a sapid unknown. The question mark is like a tail reaching for an invisible branch from which to swing on. Left with nothing, the tail meets itself and its desire for a branch. I think that this “ambiguous relationship” can be a descriptor of a performative relationship (Venturi). Though there can be pretexts, introductions, gossip, and prepositions, rehearsals, and preparations, when entering into the performative no participants can explicitly predict what will happen. (This relationship lives in degrees; e.g. well known set work, new set work, work including an improvisational score etc.). We are thus drawn into the romantic “or..?” A romanticism tied with fear that makes the tenuous unknown performance so enticing. In an example scenario, one

might be very unhappy in their life and therefore go to the movies in order to see a possible “or...?” Whether it be positive or negative, I think that I can say that performance has the possibility of being transportational. For a time, in a beautiful ambiguous space, we can be transported into what we wish was real or glad that isn’t.

PLACE, SPACE, THE THIRD SPACE, AND THE ACTION OF THROUGH-ING:

What is the place? My dear friend left me a voicemail, and in a returning voicemail I said “so nice to touch... to touch base with you.” What I wanted to say was “so nice of you to reach out and touch” but that sounded perverse in my mind somehow and since our communication was not *now* tethered, but existing in another timeplace entirely (since the reception and response is not immediate), “base” seemed the more appropriate descriptor. I then wondered “what/where is *Base*?” In definition of the place, Base: Base might exist as a third figure in communication or shared experience. It implies that we are on the same team or, sharing a positive relationality. It can be a vessel, as in containing or holding a shared matter which can be returned to in a flexible time. In Nicole Mae Bradbury’s work *Practices in Heightened Awareness* she invented a very tactile mode of this by leaving ribbons as a non fixed mode of communication across time. “They were in metaphysical conversation with one another, despite whether or not they were in a shared or unshared space” (nicole). I have also gotten stuck on the term “on the same page as.” This phrase can be basically reduced to “we understand each other” but I’m interested on the spatial implications behind it. As in; the *reason* that we understand each other is because we have read the same contents, or have reached the same point at the same time. To translate this into a performative, I may desire an understanding (between a work and I, or an audience and my work), and therefore create a Pre-Position in order to ensure in some capacity that all of the participants share at least that vocabulary. A shared vocabulary that can then allow for a more

understandable experience between all involved members. This is what I understand Rancière to mean when he writes: "It is not the transmission of the artists knowledge or inspiration to the spectator. It is a third thing that is owned by no one, whose meaning is owned by no one, but which subsists between them, excluding any uniform transmission, any identity of cause and effect" (Rancière 15). The thing subsisting between them is the emergent performance, made possible (in my reading of it) by the en-action of some mutual ground. This *Thing* which we can refer to in this sentence perhaps as "communication," passes through some tensile space that exists as what Rancière refers to as "the gulf," or, "the distance" and it is in this holding or vesselway that "something" can occur/is occurring (Rancière). "There is something - a form of knowledge, a capacity, an energy in a body or mind - on one side, and it must pass to the other side" (Ranciere). To me this is a point for 'the point' of dance, or dance performance, or performative actions. Performance gives a unique **platform** for something to be transferred. Something which I don't think could be transferred in any other form, as the *form* of performance is integral to the thing that is being communicated. In Lauren Bakst's book *more problems with form, or, desire notes, or still women* she describes performance as: "through form" and follows that "performing is the action of doing "through form." "Through form, again and again." So perhaps the thing that is being passed through or between is the *doing*, or the *action*. This fits with my conception of performance and specifically dance performance as *something that does something*, or that *is always doing something*.

Note: I think that this is also something that can happen through a painted work of art. On April 26th, 2019 I went to an exhibition of fine arts senior capstone work at UArts. While looking at what I took to be a portrait, it struck me that these too were third things. Not the thing (often abstract) that they are depicting, nor exactly the person that made them, but something which has an independent life/purpose every time someone sees them.

When I view Rene Magritte's paintings I view them as commenting on, or containing this third thing. When he paints what I see as being an apple and above writes "*Ceci n'est pas une pomme*" (*this is not an apple*), he is acknowledging this third life which is neither the thing that it is describing nor my perception of it, but a third thing of breath and flux (Magritte).

POETICS:

Poetics can be brought into this description of performative action when thinking about the passing through, and the 'what it is doing.' I'm interested in the propensities contained here, the possibilities. And if the possibilities are what I am searching for, than how to create what Isabel Lewis calls "the conditions of possibility" (Isabel Lewis - KDM).

In *The Paris Review*, fall 2004, Anne Carson writes this:

"I think a poem, when it works, is an action of the mind captured on a page, and the reader, when he engages it, has to enter into that action. And so his mind repeats that action and travels again through the action, but it is a movement of yourself through a thought, through an activity of thinking, so by the time you get to the end you're different than you were at the beginning and you feel that difference."

In a conversation with Jinsei Sato, he said that "there could be no art if the transferral of knowledge or information was pure." If we imagine that in this sentence "transferral" can mean: 'traversed,' as in the action of traveling/a journey in which things are lost and found. We could then say that this transferral or *traversée* (french for crossing, or traversing) is the "through" path resulting in a poetic exchange (Bakst). And that the "information" is the material which is being transported and transformed. This leads me again to the third space as the poetic intermediary and as the topology through which an understanding/information is traversing and generating something new. In his essay *Poetry and Abstract Thought*, Paul Valéry mentions this propensity of

language to act as a bridge or action. Quote: "Each and every word enables us to leap so rapidly across the chasm of thought, and to follow the prompting of an idea that constructs its own expression" (Valéry). I've also been thinking about dance and dance performance as a way of creating or generating something new. As an enabling, like Valery says, of "leaping rapidly across" (Valéry). In a similar way to that of poetics, dance/performance is also generating something doesn't exist, or wouldn't have before, by way of leaping. My favorite example of this in textual poetics is one that I used when explaining to a writer friend of mine what I was thinking about, and about how I am looking for effect. Somewhere within this exchange she remarked that she has had similar feelings (about wondering why she writes, or, "what it's all for"). Her husband, who was also a part of the conversation, said something to the effect of "you're always wondering why you are writing, but at the same time so inspired by and passionate about the writing of others." "You are also doing this!" He said smiling.

The example I used was this: *An apple on a table is different from saying "there is an apple on the table" is different from the fact that the apple is red, is different from saying "this apple is red like a rose."* This was my way of illustrating the generative capacity of language to create of A Thing, something slightly different, still of IT but abstracted, by language, into something new.

I am wondering how to use this.

Here is a poem I wrote on October 22nd, 2018:

A golden apple sitting on a table

Is different than saying

"A Golden Apple"

Is different than saying

"An apple that is like the October sun at 5:00PM in the mountains of Italy."

In poetics there are infinite apples. We are each with our apples, and every time that an apple is mentioned at least one more apple is generated to everyone who hears it. But what is the point of acknowledging that there are infinite apples, and infinite apples waiting to exist? Perhaps the point is that, so long as we acknowledge but not name them they will not exist to us, or they will only exist without name. I think that one of the things that performance does for me is “name apples” into the finite time which is that of the performance. Apple generation is an analogy that I am using to say: “enact something,” or grab something from an infinite realm, and bring it into a physical realm, in which it then, for that time, exists only in as many forms as there are people to view it.

A fixed apple or apple on the table is performance. (After the fact, once the apple is only a memory, it immediately slips again into flux). Within this understanding I begin then to think of the performer or choreographer as more of a curator, setting the position from which the known apple will be viewed. This ‘curation’ is something I see coming up again and again in what I’m perceiving as *contemporary performance* or, to use a different term *performances which are happening right now* (timestamp 2017-2019). Katherine Profeta helps me understand this when she writes: “One could easily argue that the way one chooses to curate and frame preexisting information inevitably constitutes a creative act. The simple act of recategorization is certainly sufficient to create new meanings.” (e.g. putting the apple on the table, painting it blue, watching it rot.) This “meaning” is something that Venturi also references when speaking on architecture. He dares to, quote: “treat what {had}... been regarded as a deficiency in poetry; imprecision in meaning, as poetry’s chief virtue” (Venturi). I am interested in the idea that this imprecision, rather than failing to define, is actually succeeding in opening up the possibility for the unknown, and therefore for infinite things (circle back to the “conditions of possibility” (Isabel Lewis). I think that the curation which Profeta mentions is related to *the poetic* in the “recategorization.” If I say that

the apple is blue I am 'reategorizing' it, or perhaps redefining it and therefore creating a mode by which the viewer experiences something other than the known. I have been practicing definitions as a poetic and performative function. In practice 4 of *Live Practices: poetics and translation* I gave the audience a cast of characters before the piece began in order to curate their experience of the following performance into the terms of my desire for its reception. This paper includes a casting for the same reason. Note: I think that this curation could also be read as attempts to construct *The Third Space*. —————

Due to our training in a society in which we understand both things and each other primarily through language, we are apt to believe (at least partially) in definitions. When curated, this creates a confrontation between the known and the presented: e.g. *the apple on the table is very clearly red, yet someone is telling you it is blue. Or the apple is blue, and thereby in conflict with all of your preconceptions of apples previously.*

This confrontation is to me beautiful and performative.

AND ON FINITUDE:

And on finitude: on the reason that people go to see performance, live performance, the liveness, the finitude.

I've been thinking about the phrases "flash in the pan," and, "this too shall pass." Both of these idioms describe the fleeting event. And perhaps the event is more precious because it is fleeting. As though it is flee-ting *from* us, and we want it, are after it, and our faces are hot with the chase. Indeed, if the thing lasted for longer and was just the same in every other way, I wonder if we would want to see it as much as something which we knew to be finite. nicole Bradbury lent me the book *Time and Time Again* by John Zerzan, in which she underlined: "And still a minute can embrace eternity and a month can be empty of meaning" (N.J. Berrill), next to it writing quote:

“this is how I make performance.” I then imagine performance as an incredibly meaning moment, or performative practices as always pursuing/urging towards absolute involvement. Yet also, being precious or sought after only because they are just that; moments. Moments in “months empty of meaning” (Berrill).

My attempt to recreate past or future things is an act of romanticism, correspondent to the ‘romantic unknown’ or the ‘not here.’ I think that recreations (like Profeta’s recategorizations) are by this definition inherently creative (Profeta). Along with this I also wonder if performance is always descriptive. Meaning that we only ever have the capability of knowing things that have been introduced to us, yet at the same time we are never able to regurgitate them accurately, leading to that afore mentioned performative traverse. Through the known, always resulting in something new. It is in this way that our daily *acts* of living are also performative, in that we are constantly using the things that we have inefficiently, and thereby creating continually something which has never existed and will never exist again.

I think that the ways in which performance are important in this life-ness, are the ways in which it we share this moment collectively, connectively, or in collection, in a space which is slightly separate or a heightened form of “the normal” (if “the normal” can even be established). This space, this Third Thing, is finite and perhaps only possible as the mutual issue(both meanings of the word) of all involved parties. A collective construction. When trying to imagine this I think back to Robert Venturi’s book, and the way in which there are cathedrals next to his philosophies (Venturi). When he writes: “Gestalt psychology considers a perceptual whole the result of, and yet more than, the sum of its parts” (Venturi). I read the “whole” as the performance, and the “parts” as the participants, parties, persons, involved in the performance. “The whole is dependent on the position, number, and inherent characteristics of its parts” (Venturi). The

performance is completely contingent upon, and as the result of, the context, conditions, and positions that the participants find themselves in.

DESIRE MOTIVATIONS:

Inquiring as to the motivation towards performative creation, witnessing the performative, and performative action —Note: Ranciere refers to “Drama” as “action”—, I am beginning to question the source of this motivation. Circling back to *TANGIBLE ARTICLES* 1 and 2: people coming to performances and people performing, I am now asking: *Why?*

During a poetry reading at The Kelly Writer’s house I listened to Laura Henriksen read and then speak about poetry and art (Henriksen). She said quote: “I’ve been thinking about excessive feeling as a type of wealth, and something that can again give a type of energy and how that also relates to the possibility of pleasure, especially at the end of the world” (Henriksen). Having processed this I am now casting interest AS desire and also AS motivation (e.g. motivation being desirable, valuable, and finite).

One facet of my motivation is *A Desire To Know*. Sometimes there seems to be a reluctance to study, or to delve, or to know, and I’ve been trying to puzzle it out. In performative contexts I have witnessed both reluctance to be shown something which is being performed or desiring to be performed, and an inherent desire show and to be shown it. Perhaps these things are confronting one another, and perhaps this confrontation is part of the rub creating the afore-mentioned friction. In proximity, in friction, there is the tenuous balance between pleasure and pain. As elegized Guy Hocquenghem says in *BEDS, COUPLES, SEXUALITY, RECUPERATION* “The threshold of pleasure results in pain” I think it is this threshold that we fear we experience when perceiving the performative. We are afraid of the performative closeness

because, extremes seem to go hand in hand. Extreme beauty and the grotesque, Wild Joy and Immeasurable Sorrow.

Another is *Need*. When I was at The CAMPING festival in Paris, Summer 2018, La Ribot expressed a search for the necessity, the NEED of dance. This is to me especially important in a time which Henriksen describes as “the end of the world” (Henriksen). It is very important to me that what I am doing is something which *needs* to happen/be done.

Circle back to the to the concept of a space, I've been thinking about human emotional states as physical places which have territory, terrain, and climates. After attending a panel discussion on the 2018 United Nations Climate Change Conference I drew a amorphous shape in my journal, within it writing “S.U. (State of Urgency)” This visualization helps me choose how I act in the states that I may be in, and the ways in which I can utilize my presence within them. Dance often feels like a state of urgency or urge to me. When it feels like urge it feels necessary. Walt Whitman writes in *Leaves of grass* “Urge and urge and urge. Always the procreant urge of the world” (Whitman). Reading this I cast: *Alive in the world AS In a state of Urgency*. I think that through all of this, that is all I can come up with as answer to the question why dance, or why I dance. I suppose I dance because I like being alive, and I like being alive with and next to other people. Dance creates this space for me to urge into.

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