



PERFORMANCE
PHILOSOPHY

'ALIVE' PERFORMANCE: TOWARD AN IMMERSIVE ACTIVIST PHILOSOPHY

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This article addresses key issues in performance, live, and time-sensitive art to lay the ground for new modalities of making *sense* of the artistic event. The work presented here is an assembly—or assemblage—of philosophical methodologies from the perspective of performance as creative/creating act and event. In terms of the approach being developed, performance becomes constitutive of the domain of sensing, intuiting, and imagining that which cannot be seen, grasped, or represented fully. A better explanation could be that performance *as* art, and unlike plastic and visual arts, consists of ephemeral, creative outputs (affects, vibrations, rhythms), which set the event apart from the 'ideal' object of the arts and humanities—the work of art. Thus, its content becomes invisible and un-textualisable through a purely aesthetic lens, in a way that other artistic phenomena are not.

However, this sudden invisibility, probably also caused by its fugitive resistance to economic and cultural grasp, produces certain blind spots in the aesthetic frame, especially if exposed to a view trained in textual/visual analysis, as is often the case. These phenomena are sometimes treated as 'objects' of a study with tools that happen to be at hand, such as semiotics, hermeneutics, or (Aristotelian) narratology. Instead, here, I carefully and cautiously seek a new methodology, which is by its very nature inconsistent and incomplete since the approach is empirical, phenomenological, and not limited to any particular theoretical result or model. This paper seeks to outline and promote such a methodology for an immersive *synaesthetic* study of performance, which, given the speculative state of the field, gives way to an affective and sensible methodology that (if not declared) can become suspect. So, I shall here provide some context.

Within the framework of affect, the present investigation situates performance as a relational—rather than representational—event that places things, bodies, environments, rhythms, and sensations *beside* each other, in forms of both appearance and abstraction.¹ Emanating from such encounters are the immediate energies and recurrent vitalities that put ‘things’—bodies—in relation with one another through a kind of intra-matter contact, or contagion. Affect studies, in their plurality, describe these abstracted elements and autonomous forces as seeping from and out of the very forms and expressions that distil them. They can be thought to belong to the body-thing whilst existing detached from it. They are passed and returned, never the same. These traces inhabit the space of performance as a kind of sensuous technology that supersedes any mystifications of the text and fixations on the ‘matter’ of things.

With the faithful blindness of a critical method that seeks to reintegrate these incorporeal, invisible, and inconspicuous forces within worldly actuality, I here focus on the conception of performance as an ‘alive’ event that escapes and exceeds so-called common (and commonly human) sense. It does so by stirring the sensuous and synaesthetic capacities of bodies as they oscillate between the poles of animate and inanimate, apparent and invisible, inconsistent and emergent, extinguishable yet performable. These formulations aim to reconnect the paradoxes and tensions in the work of affective transmission with some deep questions around politics, aesthetics, and ethics. This model of affective contagion, I argue, can bring forth crucial shifts and changes in the contemporary understandings of natural, cultural, and performance events, where human and non-human bodies and subjectivities re-appear not as wholesome, finite entities, but as capacious and infectious realities always already expanded and extendable.

Hence, in what is to come, I will work at the intersection of the perceptive and the affective to articulate a syn-aesthetic-political philosophy of the event- performance. Intersecting the writings of Brian Massumi and Peggy Phelan, with a host of other contributors, I will be asking what is left of an embodied and creative event that moves toward its end without being (fully) exhausted. Tracing its intrinsic and extrinsic modes of vitality—or *aliveness*—and virtuality—or *affect*—I will seek to reveal how its exemplary processual forms of emergence and dissolution project an *ontogenetic*, rather than ontological force. Against the illusion of permanence, against the ecstasy of here-and-now, against the liquidation of time and the walling of space, these ideas cultivate a *sense* of performance re-emerging at the liminal points of interaction, in the grey areas of sound exchange, in the secreted atmospheres of the sensuous, in the fluidity of movement and the density of attunement. In this misty climate, I hope, the reader shall find the premise (promise?) of things yet to come in the study of performance.

1. Performance—After the Vanishing

As an experiential framework and artistic strategy performance has historically drawn much of its energy and intensity from the 1960s and 70s tendencies to dissolve the materiality of the art object and expose the ‘not-seen’ in the frame of a creative and creating event—or “happening.”² Catching this page of history one could feel its heat, and for a moment grasp the fragments—the

mo(ve)ments³—of a strange kind of negative impulse igniting sensibilities, until, as the fervour dissipated in the following decades, it burnt to ciphers in the hands of chaotic post-(modern)isms.

But it is through the dense atmosphere of these dissenting movements and transmissions that I seek to articulate a conceptual framework and a critical methodology to relay the empirical history of an event that critically dissolves under the conditions of its exposure. This form of appearance is the result of the sensible encounter between the contingencies of the situation and the corporeal registers—or archives—that recognise and activate the rhythms, temporalities, dispositions, and singularities of its defining mo(ve)ments. These archives are as errant and slippery as the forces that generate them—affects—as they can hardly be grasped or observed.

In fact, the event of performance can be said to enact the crisis of representing something fleeting and phantasmatic that persistently proliferates outside of its frame (I will return to these arguments later in this section). As an aesthetic project, it foregrounds the work of the (un)conscious on real and imaginary times and spaces, curating a sustained on-goingness that unfolds an affective experience in presence, and *as present*: in the 'here and now.' But also, it works on the present as ahistorical anachronism, communicating the you-are-there-ness of any *then* present *now* already-past moment that Rebecca Schneider (2011) calls "fugitive." Fugitive time regains the charge of past moments on the run in the present. These leaky, syncopated, errant moments playing in the crossfire of time can make things feel "a little uncanny, or dislocated, or unsettling, or queer" (180).⁴ It is these feelings, I suggest, that constitute the un-resting force of performance and the potential to generate alternatives to its ontological versions.

Performance, therefore, can become an exemplary laboratory for sensing, recognising and registering its present and passing mo(ve)ments as consistently dissolving recurring actualities. However, the question here emerges of how to attend to, and account for, the ever-vanishing reality of the being of/in this 'particular' event. Brian Massumi's notion of the event as a "supplementarity"⁵—an excess rupturing linear notions of space and time—provides a key for tuning in to the dispersed yet incipient ontology registered here:

The event is superempirical: it is the crystallization, out the far side of quasi corporeality, of already actualized spatial perspectives and emplacements into a time-form from which the passing present is excluded and which, for that very reason, is as future as it is past, looping directly from one to the other. It is the immediate proximity of before and after. It is nonlinear, moving in two directions at once: out from the actual (as past) into the actual (as future). The actuality it leaves as past is the same actuality to which it no sooner comes as future: from being to becoming. (Massumi 2002, 58)

I would like to emphasise the elements of likeness between this definition and the assumed directions of the event—the happening—that performance actualises. Translating Massumi's notion to the context of performance might yield something like: the event's being is itself 'becoming' through the vanishing of the present into the past *and/as* the future. Now, let me replay these equations through a more familiar refrain: "[p]erformance's being becomes itself through

disappearance" (Phelan 1993, 146). And finally, allow me to rephrase it differently: the being of performance is itself *a becoming-otherwise* through the disappearance of its present presence into past and future actualities. To be sure, all these rhetoric articulations differ from each another, but they are nevertheless a *semblance* of one another in immediate, relational proximity. I will now attempt to reactivate their 'semblomatic' value by turning to Massumi's later work, in *Semblance and Event*, in the attempt to requalify the affective ways in which disappearance becomes something *other(wise)* than itself *within* the event of performance.

Massumi speaks of the event as something passing, its potential (for change) only fully defined at its culmination: "[a]n experience determinately knows what it's been only as it peaks—which is also the instant of its 'perishing'" (2011, 9). But what is effectively brought to pass by an occasion's passing? For Massumi, this movement instils a "technique of existence" through which the nonsensuous⁶ form of the event can be "*perceptually felt*",

not so much 'in' vision as *with* vision or *through* vision: as a vision effect. It is a lived abstraction: an effective virtual vision of the shape of the event, including in its arc the unseen dimensions of its immediate past and immediate future. (17, original emphasis)

This immersive abstraction occasions *felt* experience through what Massumi calls a "semblance:"⁷ "the form in which what does not appear effectively expresses itself, in a way that must be counted as real" (23). Detached from (ocularcentric) representation, this mode of objective extension projects a real *sense* of actual things.

Some twenty years before, Peggy Phelan wrote: "[w]ithout a copy, live performance plunges into visibility—in a maniacally charged present—and disappears into memory, in the realm of invisibility where it eludes regulation and control" (1993, 148). The event-performance here emerges as the visible of what cannot be seen, of something that does not appear (visually) but rather that recedes into embodied techniques and fugitive forms of indiscernibility. Phelan's intent was to propose the move between matters of visibility and invisibility as the possibility to "value the immaterial", of *becoming* "unmarked", through an "active vanishing" that "refus[es] [...] the pay-off of visibility" (6). In a conversation with Marquard Smith ten years later, she reprises her earlier, and since much debated, motif:

I was trying to delineate a possible ethics of the *invisible* [...]. I wanted to talk about the failure to see oneself fully. This failure is optical, psychoanalytical, and ethical. [...] I was suggesting that this central failure, instead of being constantly repressed by culture, might be something we could acknowledge and even embrace. If this were possible, I thought perhaps a different ethics, a richer encounter between self and other might become actual and actual-izable. (Phelan 2003, 296, original emphasis)

For Phelan, this alternative ethics always encroaches upon the folds of embodiment and disembodiment, appearance and (ultimate) disappearance: "I was trying to make clear that the ephemeral, indeed the mortal, is absolutely fundamental to the experience of embodiment, to the

facticity of human history itself" (293, original emphasis). What I sense in both Phelan's and Massumi's insistence on events passing out of sight, on the abstract *as* real, is a concurrent call for the need to pragmatically attend to the process of re-actualising the nonvisible and the nonsensual, or what Massumi calls the *virtual*.

I would like to pursue the role of this discursive and intuitive likeness in disentangling some historical and disciplinary lines and directions in the categorical situation of performance as 'live' art. Since things are not (only) as they appear, my aim is not a clear extensive or intensive definition of what performance 'is' or 'is not'. Rather, my interest attends to what is *vital* in the 'live' of performance. The 'is' of performance is its 'being', the progressive form of which is 'becoming'—perpetually happening. This tense reality indicates how the aesthetic event is an ongoing genesis driven from the past and towards the future—really only a semblance that we *sense* through our stark contact with the extraordinary in the ordinary. Hence, I shall begin by returning briefly to Massumi's earlier work to articulate the particular and singular operations through which the virtual extensions of settled situations can dislocate thought and bodily order beyond the boundaries of familiar experience.

2. Stranger Horizon

In *Parables for the Virtual* (2002), Massumi provides a key for approaching the 'real abstraction' of everyday life. This terminology requires that we extend but not abandon Marx's mature social theory by dealing with the nodal concept of abstraction—and the revolution of everyday life—as the ability to extract (or indeed exploit) value from creative, embodied action. The terms of this critique, however, have been limited by the tendency to oppose the concrete to the immaterial, the lived to the abstract.⁸ In Massumi, however, actual abstraction constitutes a necessary element for understanding lived creativity in the making. So, if for Marx actual or real abstractions are constitutive of social worlds and exist prior to their conceptualisation, for Massumi abstraction must be understood as a realm of lived possibilities, of potentialities, prior to figuration, meaning, and indeed materialisation.

Massumi revisits the relation between abstraction and two points of empirical concern: perception and materiality. These matters are drawn together via one technology of abstraction, namely, the *biogram*: a diagram of the incarnate, perceptual dimension where the senses combine and meld.⁹ This dimension finds expression in synaesthesia, a neurological phenomenon of hypersensitivity where one sense triggers another sense—for examples, the experience of 'seeing sounds', 'hearing colours', and the like.¹⁰ To put it in lay terms, sensory information is transduced via two different systems of perceptual reference: the visual and the proprioceptive. In 'normalised' perception, the latter system of reference disappears behind the visual, cognitive regime. The case of synaesthesia, however, registers a moment in which the proprioceptive map comes to the foreground and 'interrupts' vision.

Massumi describes this experience as the sensual awareness and direct experience of the way vision is *always* already enmeshed with the other senses. Hence, biograms are:

more-than-visual. They are event-perceptions combining senses, tenses, and dimensions on a single surface [...] They are geometrically strange: a foreground-surround, like a trick center twisting into an all-encompassing periphery. They are uncontainable either in the present moment or in Euclidean space, which they instead encompass: strange horizon. (2002, 187)

Clinical studies treat synaesthesia as a rare and pathological condition to which only certain subjects are prone. Yet, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962) makes a case for the intertwining and blending of sensory modality to be inherent in the primordial, preconceptual lived experience of the world, he affirms:

Synaesthetic perception is the rule, and we are unaware of it only because scientific knowledge shifts the center of gravity of experience, so that we have unlearned how to see, hear, and generally speaking, feel, in order to deduce, from our bodily organization and the world as the *physicist* conceives it, what we are to see, hear, and feel. (229, original emphasis)

Synaesthesia is unusual only to the extent that the body has become estranged from direct experience and contact with the sensible, and entrenched in the objective (Cartesian) perspective of the world. Yet the biogram of the senses that overlap and blend is both an abstract *and* concrete way of being: not a tropological figure nor a cultural, historical, or artistic trend, not even a psycho-physiological dysfunction, but indeed an actual perceptual mode (or more precisely, an amodal perception) that generally recedes to the background of ocularcentrism (and logocentrism). These disorienting experiences of corporeality ‘hinge’ on the lived practice of an abstraction—an *affectivity*¹¹—that situates the relationality of the event in the indiscernibility of sensory dimensions that allow embodiment to fold back on itself all the potential variations in itself (see Massumi 2002, 194).

There is here a co-functioning of the event and memory, Massumi explains: “[i]n synaesthesia, remembering is a perceptual event. It is a reactivation of a biogram for purposes of reaccess. If an event-perception is faced, then when a biogram is reaccessed isn’t the synesthete facing a previous facing?” (Massumi, 2002, 193). In response, I feel the biogram taking shape as the synaesthetic ‘spacing’ of affectivity that situates a ‘temporally’ re-mediated performance at the intuitive centre between the relationality of being in the event and the movement of continuous re-sur-facing. At this crux, we keep “*looking forward to our own past and looking past into the future*, in a seeing so intense that it falls out of sight” (194, original emphasis). Ultimately, “synaesthetic perception is always an event or performance” (190).

In (and out of) view of Phelan’s riff of performance plunging into visibility as it dissolves into memory, and in the gamut of Massumi’s synaesthetic reassembling of resurfacing events, I want to return (to) performance as a cross-modal perceptual field where sensory modes always come

into and out of each other, interacting through processes of affective genesis. Hence, the event-performance reappears as an *ontogenetic*,¹² rather than ontological, state of becoming through movement, intuition, transduction, composition, improvisation. It reoccurs as a form of distributed perspectives that considers complex, multimodal realities, that enacts the dislocation of space and time, and that reflects the interaction of unrelated elements. This creative process is accessible to anyone with access to affectivity, at any time, and again, through the gap of sensation.

The model of the virtual *as* actual, where the capacitated abstraction of bodies—read: things—is ubiquitous with the appearance of the event, can then help reframe what indeed remains of the ontology of performance: a perceptual ‘gap’ between experience and consciousness. In fact, if Benjamin Libet’s experiments prove that conscious awareness of stimuli from the environment lags actual perception by approximately half a second, Massumi’s search for lost time returns the full effect of this delay: “the half second is *missed* not because it is empty, but because it is overfull, in excess of the *actually-performed* action and of its ascribed meaning” (Massumi 2002, 29, my emphasis). What follows is a *forcefully* charged split mo(ve)ment that can then conduce to what is actually ‘happening’ in the event: the condition for deep affects/effects. This imperceptible yet intensely divaricate gap is perhaps the fullest form of the experience—its unedulcorated live potential, which I shall call *aliveness*.

Before proceeding, it is worth elaborating an outline of this ontogenetic process by attending to the specificity of an art work, and the specificity of the milieu in which the *synaesthetic* event operates. Societas Raffaello Sanzio’s *Tragedia Endogonidia* (2002–2004) is exemplary of a creative method that deals with affective forces drawing links between experience, perception, and materiality within a multimodal and multidirectional event. The company’s distinctive dramaturgy of image and sensation here interrogates the very ontology of theatre by both excavating and dismantling its representational systems (see Castellucci et al. 2007). The concrete overarching principle of this work pursues an existential oxymoron: if *tragedia* translates the epic drive towards inevitable endings, *endogonidia* implies the immortality of life forms that, possessing both sets of gonads (sexual organs), unceasingly replicate themselves anew. Essentially, things human and inhuman, and their blind cycles of death and (re)birth, exist side-by-side, wandering and roaming on and off stage.

The result is an open system that, like an “organism on the run” (Castellucci et al. 2007, 39), transmutes and transmigrates within itself with every changing season and shifting geography. In performance terms, this production spawned a cycle of eleven interconnected but discrete episodes in ten different European cities over three years. Likewise, actions, sounds, props, and other elements evolve and mutate as they are replicated and remodulated in different episodes. However, the graphic emblem, and one of the aesthetically consistent motifs of the cycle, is the (re)occurrence of “anonymous” acts of violence (see Castellucci et al. 2007, 14). All eleven episodes explicitly show signs of this ‘tragic’ impetus: in Brussels, a young police officer is beaten to a bloody pulp by his colleagues; in Paris, Carravaggio’s *Sacrifice of Isaac* is recreated over two washing machines; in London, a man cuts off his tongue and feeds it to a cat; in Marseille, a naked woman is exhibited, abused, and photographed in front of a group of gentlemen spectators; in Cesena, a

motored machine feeds arrows into a mechanical bow which slams them with full force into the opposite wall; and on and on.

The arresting power of these events has an aesthetic function but also operates as a *fissure* in representation. At stake here are strategies that reveal both the abstraction and the material force that spills out of scenes where affects and images continually clash. These practices *imaginatively* and *pragmatically* switch the register of violence as a force emerging from the realm of the *virtual*. As Thomas Crombez affirms in his examination of cruelty in Societas Raffaello Sanzio's work:

'pure' violence or 'naked' force is never visible to the human eye. Whenever we watch an act of violence, be it real or imagined, we are being subjected to powerful perceptive and conceptual mechanisms in order to be able to frame this event. [...] And what Castellucci does in the *Tragedia Endogonidia*—amongst others—is to bring these mechanisms to light. (Hillaert and Crombez 2005, 7)

These mechanisms, I propose, are an affirmative expression of a *synaesthetic* impulse that precipitates the visible of the invisible; the perceptible of the imperceptible.

Tragedia Endogonidia's open system aims to give an 'actual' multi-sensory experience that is not prompted by the function of cruelty, as both Hillaert and Crombez sustain, but by *the making of excarnation incarnate*. By that, I mean that the violence—the generative force of the *mise en scène* itself—extracts and transforms the forms, the colours, the rhythms, the volumes, the sensations into the experience of a *real abstraction*. That is, the apparatus at work reveals images, actions, and situations as products of finely tuned incidents of perception. For example, and with the help of Wouter Hillaert's first-hand account, in the scene of the savage beating previously described:

Everybody could see that the torture was fake all the way. The blood had been poured out before the action took place and the police batons were made of soft rubber. And still, this scene was quite horrible to watch. Especially because of the amplified sound of every beat on the victim's naked flesh, because of his spastic moves and his total silence afterwards. (Hillaert and Crombez 2005, 1)

Hence, the force-full effect of violence becomes isolated from habitual frames of perception. The making and witnessing of this action is enveloped by sound, vision, movement, and the lack thereof, creating an experience in which one sense does not override the other, but rather in which the senses and their organs split and reform, like the living organisms of the title. In suspenseful split seconds between expression and apprehension, this encounter pierces the membrane of representation only to demonstrate that the shield is always already broken. Such instances elicit a biogrammatic—or inorganic¹³—sense of sonority,¹⁴ aurality, tonality, visuality, and even 'hapticity': each subtly unhinged from their organic system, and the system of representation; no sooner slipping out than to seek ingress and participation elsewhere.

These instances are enacted and replicated on the stage-world, and on different world-stages; they double and triple, and multiply as by mitosis. This world of affects, this universe of forces, passes beyond everything we can identify; it becomes actualised without the vision—or spectacles—of

subjectivity, revealing instead 'other sides' to ourselves. Such eccentric position involves a kind of moving beyond the human; a kind of overcoming of the (molar) self that propels experience into a (molecular) world of becomings.¹⁵ In this sense, the mechanisms of affective forces are not the consequence of the material structures and actions onstage. Conversely, it is the expropriated, extricated, and exposed—the *excarnate*—system of affects that brings the latter into representation. The aesthetic, precisely, is activated by these invisible universes—the *synaesthetic*.

What is at stake in *Tragedia Endogonidia* is not a negative aesthetics of cruelty but an affirmative actualisation of virtual forces. These capacitated forms of (human and inhuman) life are the genuinely *ontogenetic* reincarnations—the being-becomings—of this performance work. Within the folds of situations at the limits of signification and interpretation, these creative acts demand us not to contemplate images but to harness sensations. Thus, the tragedy of violence here is less involved in the drive towards death, but indeed is absorbed in actualising the possibilities of life *in transformation*. Hence, the necessary *passing* of any present of the experience becomes irrevocably imbricated and inseparable from any past or future; a mutated incarnation of becoming anew. These notions of affective mutations engender a form of inquiry that travels across myriad temporalities, reaccessing and reassessing the social, relational space fostered through the practice of *alive* performance.

Finally, and returning to Massumi's intuitions and Phelan's implications at the point of a dissolve, I have here attempted to resituate the discourse on (the indeterminacy of) performance as the knowledge surging from an imperceptible affective force-fullness and suspense-fullness. Treading carefully its fugitive passages away from vision, one is easily led towards final extreme points. However, my interest in performance does not depend on an extreme account of the nonsensual smudge as the break and irruption of pure state; rather, it lies with the mutual transformation of co-affective events. Hence, in what comes next, I will move to the side of Massumi's dialectic semblance and toward the 'nonsensuous' remodulations and remediations of the multiple and fluctuating latencies of performance. The resting point of these mo(ve)ments might indeed return a 'stranger horizon.'

3. Sideshadowings

So far, I have argued for a conception of performance as an experiential loop, a recursive topology of a memory past and future, moving in non-Euclidean space and nonlinear time. This condition can recognise the quasi-corporeal dimensions both internal and external to its happening; it can acknowledge both the matter of 'fact' and the matter of 'felt' as they overlap and blend; it can posit itself in the in-between of affective relations, in the intervals that bleed through sensory dimensions. Through the split mo(ve)ments and open gaps of its eventfulness—*aliveness*—it can reappear, again and again, as a brimming virtuality emanating from multi-sensory bodies.

With these premises in mind, I now want to engage performance as a technique of affective modulation and sensory remediation. The creative processes it instigates can push beyond the scaffolding of the subjective/objective divide to embrace the production of singularities through

affective and bodily mo(ve)ments that occur, in and out of sight, all appearing 'beside themselves'. Suspended from what appears to be the sheer fabric of the material and the visual, its vibrating and quivering force—which I have called *aliveness*—reconstitutes its fugitive image. This 'semblematic'¹⁶ mode of sensing the perception of *something* happening—of seeing *with* and *through* actual form in visually imperceptible ways—foregrounds not only the appearance of the event but its *side*-shadows—its perceptual ghost doubling.

Here I use this composite term in relation to Gary Saul Morson's concept of "time shadows". Morson (1998) explains how in narrative "[t]he term foreshadowing indicates backward causation. A spatial metaphor for a temporal phenomenon, it is a shadow cast in front of an object; the temporal analog is an event that indicates (is the 'shadow' of) another event to come" (601). This shady figuration throws into evidence a predestined event where time becomes foreclosed:

When a storm foreshadows a catastrophe, the storm is there *because* the catastrophe follows; it is an effect of that future catastrophe visible in temporal advance much as the shadow of an object may be visible in spatial advance. Because the future is already there—is substantial enough to cause earlier events and to send signs backwards—foreshadowing ensures a temporality of inevitability. (Ibid., original emphasis)

However, Morson recognises how the genuinely eventful time of life does not indulge in this narrative symmetry but is instead set in open time with "loose ends". These more capacious and expandable endings consist of alternative courses of events and possibilities foregrounded by what Morson calls "*sideshadowing*"—the co-emergence of shadows cast on the present from the sides, adding an excess to the story that causes time to divaricate:

Alternatives always abound, and, more often than not, what exists need not have existed. Something else was possible, and sideshadowing is used to create a sense of that 'something else'. Instead of casting a shadow from the future, it casts a shadow 'from the side', that is, from the other possibilities. Along with an event, we see its alternatives; with each present, another possible present. Sideshadows conjure the ghostly presence of might-have-beens or might-bes. (601–602)

Sideshadowing conveys the sense of something more: the intensity and pressure of temporalities continually competing for actuality. In this figuration, the present 'here and now' splits to the sides of unrealised past potentials and realisable future occasions. The consequences for time are concrete:

[I]n sideshadowing [...] the actual and the possible, are made simultaneously visible. This is not a simultaneity *in* time but *of* times; we do not see contradictory actualities, but one possibility that was actualized and another that could have been but was not. Time itself acquires a double and, often, many doubles. A haze of possibilities surrounds each actuality. (602, original emphasis)

Hence, whereas the *foreshadowing* reveals the figure of an impending (no)future, *sideshadowing* conjures the weather, the atmosphere of actual events that might indeed have happened differently, that are 'present' as other possibilities, or that are yet to be/come possible alternatives.

These time shadows gain significance in the narrative of performance in the way their emergence can make its temporalities (be)come open and loose in the space of experience. By letting these registers exist 'together' and 'beside' each other, I intend to propose an *ecstatic* model of reaccessing, relaying, and relating the *event* whose "foreshadowings" convey a sense of the on-going experience of being *alive* in the cut opened by sensory experience, and whose "sideshadowing" cast its possibilities beside themselves, dragging it toward and away from its end, and beyond our foresight or foreshadow of it. These com-possibilities are invested with *affects* expressed as the virtual, ghostly co-presence of potentials emerging from a suspenseful gap.

To sketch something of a context for the collateral effects of these shadow projections, I shall briefly return to the emblematic workings of *Tragedia Endogonidia*. Starting from where we left off, the temporal experience of this open cycle implies human and inhuman mutability where any present is a *passing* experience. Within the malleable format of its multiple stagings, fragments, images, and echoes are organised, modulated, and rearranged both within episodes and throughout the cycle. They are meticulously sequenced and patterned, like chemical and biological elements, in a multitude of ways; working and tuning their coefficient expressions to reach maximum side-effects. Like the organisms on which they speculate, they meld and evolve across time and geography, as well as within each separate phase of transformation; every conception becomes inside itself a plan for the suspension and actualisation of other, separate realities. In his review of *Tragedia* and its multifarious proliferations—book, video, pamphlet, soundtrack—Daniel Sack notes:

Each episode presented a mutated incarnation of the same constellation of images and ideas, becoming itself anew in relation to each host city. [...] As director Romeo Castellucci describes the cycle's process: "It is not a finished show that is moved from city to city. Its moving around is the show; a rhythm that strikes; a transformed organism, like the different phases in the life of an animal or vegetable" [...]. In other words, this is a theatre that attends to the "passing moment" not so much in terms of its loss or disappearance, but as an organism's move elsewhere, a *step aside* or a perversion; *the performance becomes other than itself*. (2009, 147, my emphasis)

This process, according to Sack, permeates the further transmutations of these performative structures into textual, video, and sound media. These living remains proliferate like spores, outgrowing the system that originated them. Distended and stretched, they spread across indiscrete temporal zones, all beside themselves—formal approaches, theoretical underpinnings, the experience of witnessing, the doubling of memory:

the video memory takes seriously the claims of philosophers of process, such as Henri Bergson and Alfred Whitehead, that temporality does not operate in a uniform and measurable manner but is entirely elastic and malleable. In the same

move, the video transposes the cycle into the register of memory, into our own rearrangements of experience after the fact. (149)

The ensuing actualities of the experience escape from *re*-presentation by creating new performances that play against the internal logic of the event. These ongoing transformations deliver a model for thinking of performance remains as happening both inside and outside, transformed beyond and *beside* the fixed structures (of capture) that yet exist. In the writing of Joe Kelleher and Nicholas Ridout: "The afterlife of the work [...] is already to be built in, as it were, to the life of the work. But then to call it a life, and to conceive this life as a life that remains, is also to conceive a mutation, beyond the will or craft of the maker" (Castellucci et al. 2007, 6).

Tragedia Endogonidia originates a process that is processual and divergent in its forms of affective expressions. But also, it creates an 'ecology' of occurrences coming-together and beside one another. Moving across thresholds and propelling their force into and out of different vibrations—virtualisations—they make apparent both their coming into being and the imminent compossibilities of existing *otherwise*. These knotted events enact both the realisation of the possible, that is the "foreshadows" that always already resemble incarnate reality, and the actualisation of the com-possibilities of the event; the "sideshadows" of its *excarinate* potentials.

These multiple and simultaneous directionalities, I suggest, are expressed in performance as the technological and synaesthetic site of a reemergent and remodulated dispersal. Its pragmatic, generative strategies attend to the purposive disposition of elements constituted relationally, collectively and transductively—objects, people, environs, rhythms, sensations—in (col)lateral spread. It occurs as a particular and singular operational ecology of relational happenings. Thus, this event of contact and transformation decenters the human subject into a broader distribution that breaks the linearity of object/subject relations. Lastly, as a sphere of interaction (at least partly) distinct and separate from human activity and ordinary life at large, it presents a recognisable set-up for unpredictable and unimagined collaborations between different forms of life.

The result is an affective economy grounded in the processes of adaptation and disarticulation of the virtual mo(ve)ments connecting more- and less-than-human entities, exposing to view the inhuman aspect of the historical and material dimension of processual meaning and relational becoming. This very empirical experience arises in the 'present' of an existent world; that is, in the 'socialised' scene of historically, culturally, and politically embodied matter calling for the emergence of an abstract-virtual spatiotemporal sphere of the 'sensible'—and ethical—that can only be conceived as a non-consecutive re-enactment. In other words, experiencing visually and comprehending conceptually that which is visually imperceptible and conceptually incomprehensible constitutes the *eventfulness* of performance as an immanent force of becoming-human, becoming-otherwise, becoming-political; a moment of ontological unbinding that can disrupt, disarticulate, and deface the 'present' state of the body politic.

Hence, I reiterate the practice of performance to be a technology that redistributes the *aliveness* of relationality and contingency in the production of an *synaesthetic* event of *being becoming*—of perpetual happening. Its intensive duration casts aside whirling sensations, affects, and

mo(ve)ments as swarming spatial and temporal fragments—or sideshadows. This abstracted potential somehow just remains off to the side, as a perpetual remainder, as a not-yet-exhausted excess, a third or a fourth body; a more-to-come preempting what is yet to become. These recursive virtual counterpoints make things literally and metaphorically 'beside themselves' with the presence of their exteriorised potential.

In the introductory remarks to *Touching Feeling* (2003), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick advances the concept of the "beside." "*Beside*," she writes, "permits a spacious agnosticism about several of the linear logics that enforce dualistic thinking: noncontradiction or the law of the excluded middle, cause versus effect, subject versus object" (8, original emphasis). Beside (not beneath, behind, or beyond) is a spatial determinant that eschews the flat line of opposition and duality. Taking a "distinct step to the side" of any constitutive project of subjectivity invokes a logic that suggests multiple (Deleuzian) assemblages, wherein any "number of elements" may lie and operate "alongside one another" (6). Moving in this trajectory, I will next expand on the creative life forms of performance, human or otherwise than human, that share a spatiotemporal co-presence, which is also a spatiotemporal co-difference in which they exist all 'beside themselves'.

In what follows, I recognise how similar affective movements and potentials find their 'ends', without finalisation, in particular bodily experiences that surge within the frame of artistic, critical and aesthetic events that I here gather under the loose and slippery term *performance*. I argue that this technology of *synaesthetic* 'spacing' and 'timing' of affectivity situates a *remediated* encounter that places its intuitive fulcrum in the relationality of its *eventfulness*—in the mo(ve)ments of feeling-with the others, the many others, beside the self.

4. Catchy Feelings

In performance, the passage from event to experience, from experience to knowledge, and back, occurs in the affective co-presence (and co-attendance) of being beside-our-selves, despite and *because* of our singularities. In this context, Brian Massumi's notion of "affective attunement," or "feeling-with" (see 2011, 111–116) becomes useful. Drawing on Daniel Stern, Massumi articulates this experience as a dynamic mode of corporeal interaction that generates a sphere of "shared" affectivity. Like contagion, affective attunements reflect the complexity of collective situations where separate forms of life emerge together finding difference in unison and unison in difference. Crucially, processual forms of being-with-others are always at play in the relational milieu of performance in the conscious *and* unconscious ways in which individuals differently partake in the event, and by the forms through which typical *and* non-habitual responses emerge and are transmitted and caught.

I want to draw an analogy here between these ideas and philosopher Teresa Brennan's theories on affective transmission. Brennan (2004) similarly relays affect as an ever-present circuit of life energies that travel between people through a "process that is social in origin but biological and physical in effect", which she calls "entrainment" (3). Brennan mobilises this term from biochemistry and neurology to articulate the process "whereby one person's or one group's

nervous and hormonal systems are brought into alignment with another's" (9). The philosopher brings together evidence on molecular flux, body language, and shared rhythms in order to trace the transmissions between bodies—understood in a broad sense—through the ways they “feel the atmosphere” or pick up on the “mood” in the room. This affective climate is not simply ‘caught’ or transmitted between subjects; rather, “[t]he ‘atmosphere’ or the environment literally gets into the individual” (1).

Brennan’s work pays close attention to both biological and cultural factors that contribute to such disseminations; however, she emphasises that affect is a “profoundly social thing” (68). She carefully maps the power relationships that subtend energetic exchanges through which certain rhythms are subsumed by some-body, or blocked by others. Since affects evoke thoughts, individuals may become emotionally “entrained”, or attuned, even though the particular meanings one attaches to those affects will vary: “[t]he point is that even if I am picking upon your affect, the linguistic and visual content, meaning the thoughts I attach to that affect, remain my own: they remain the product of the particular historical conjunction of words and experiences I represent” (7).

Hence, affect is impersonal (and transpersonal) in *infection*, but personal in situated, individual effect—that is, in the movement to emotion, thought, and action. The transmission and escalation of energetic blueprints depends on a shared focus of “living attention” sensible to physical proximity, distance, or contact. Brennan likens bodies to transducers or conversion channels: far from being self-contained, they are porous and permeable; they are affected and affecting: “understanding the influences to which we are subject in terms of passions and emotions, as well as living attention, means lifting off the burden of the ego’s belief that it is self-contained in terms of the affects it experiences” (95). In the choreography of the I-Other relation, and in the concrete, experiential forms of non-conscious and proprioceptive transfers that take place through touch, smell, sight, movement, sound, taste occurring directly between bodies, the *sensed* tacit knowledge of oneself—and the relational milieu (the world)—doubles as an embodied way of being-with-others. Along such vectors and intensities, assimilations and blockages, contacts and separations, affects come to change the body’s biology through a kind of “social contagion” (53).

This metaphorical model of contagion is something I would like to reprise here in relation to the conception I have expressed of performance as a technology of *aliveness*; the shadow-play of a semblance that tunes in the affective force-field of events and resonates with the possibility of vir(tu)al transmission. This situation can express a form of practiced share-ability that Massumi calls relational “architecture”:

I’m talking about [...] the technical staging of aesthetic events that speculate on life, emanating a lived quality that might resonate elsewhere, to unpredictable affect and effect. Stagings that might lend themselves to analogical encounter and contagion. That might get involved in inventive accidents of history. I’m talking about architectures of the social and political unforeseen that enact a relation of non-relation with an absolute outside, in a way that is carefully, technically limited *and* unbounded. (Massumi 2011, 80)

Through mimesis or a 'contagion' of sorts, the *techné* of performance can express a sensuous rather than representational—an ontogenetic rather than ontological—activity by producing a reality in excess of its materiality. These accidents of histories, or sideshadows, conceive and generate responses; new perceptual events that echo the potential to affect the social and the political body. This, dare I say, is the *alive*—not the same as 'live'—condition of performance: not the "immediate" and "transitory present moment" (see Auslander 1999), not the 'here and now' of being 'there and then', not the image without a cut, not the record without a trace, not the memory without the flesh. But say, the brooding sense of a practice of living attention (living-a-tension), the durational intensity of the fore-echo of a return (see Massumi 2011, 113), the ungrasped pulse of a past yet to come, the hiccup of a sound reaching up to the cusp of silence; the ecstasy of feeling always "more-than-one",¹⁷ except, once again, not-one time, not even-space, already suspended—pure "aliveness" (see Massumi 2011, 146).

Out of this suspenseful state emerges an impulse to move toward recognizing an infectious quality, some perilous potency, or just an un-common feeling—that, arising from sensible disarticulations, begs for cultural, social, and political attention. Approaching these concepts from what feels to be their 'side effects', I will follow the metaphor of carnal contagion into the material(ist) impulse to move toward refiguring an syn-aesth-ethic politics of 'uncommon-sense'.

5. Uncommon Sense

The incipient and recursive practice of performance can make manifest the 'likeness' of a politics of imperceptible socialisation that has at its heart a revi(r)t(u)alisation—that is, a re-transmission of the affective force of the event away from territorialising pulls and apprehensive logics of arrest. We might put these affective transmissions in relation to that potential described by Jacques Rancière (2010) for an event to disrupt, disarticulate, and disfigure the 'present' state of affairs of a body politic with an 'uncommon' aesthetic sense of partaking, enabling seeing and knowing in ways that are yet unseen and unknown: "[f]or critical art is not so much a type of art that reveals the forms and contradictions of domination as it is an art that questions its own limits and powers, that refuses to anticipate its own effects" (149).

Rancière refers to this agonistic process of art as *dissensus*, the relation-of-nonrelation that is experienced in-between the artwork's dynamic form and its re-presentation. This disjunctive quality, I suggest, constitutes the making of a semblematic event whose substance is involved in nonsensual *and* dissensual ways of 'being-with', in relational co-presence—with intimate others and extimate selves—without coalescence. This 'unassuming' relationality can disarticulate the power of stringent forms and aggregational norms via a *synaesthetic* politics of *aliveness* that sets off the self-differing and self-perpetuating momentum of unforeseen potential. This dissonant charge, I argue, becomes expressed in the event-performance through the affective resonance of its dynamic entanglements; that is, the concrete relational and situational configuration of feeling-with and beside others, in dissensual ways.

The galvanisation of these processes of sensory disruption is the *being becoming* of performance; the sensible fibre of the event that cannot be found in the maelstrom of everyday life. If performance bears a semblance to life, often pressing onto it from all sides, in the meantime, it remains somehow removed—or abstracted—from it in terms of intentionality and directness. The kind of mo(ve)ments of disorientation that it invokes are hard to experience aside from situations that operate as a breach in the mundane. Yet the nonsensuous compositions or co-movements of performance are singular and not common. They gain their force, not from 'cleaving things asunder', as Deleuze would have it (see Massumi 2011, 49), but from attending to nonsensuous virtual effects emerging from mutual contact, interaction, and transformation, with no need for extreme and violent rupture to turn everything into tacit, senseless matter.

But what forms does this technique of aliveness have to take to produce actual novelty rather than its reified form? In what way can this *synaesthetic* practice pragmatically diagram its procedures of abstraction to eventuate effective revitalisations that expose (if not resist) the regimes of power? Massumi's condition for occurrent arts is: "you have to leave creative outs. You have to build in escapes. Drop sinkholes. And I mean build them *in*—make them immanent to the experience. [...] Make a vanishing point appear, where the interaction turns back in on its own potential, and where that potential appears for itself. That could be a definition of producing an aesthetic effect" (2011, 49, original emphasis). The occurrent artist might offer a sonic reply: "Ring the bells that still can ring / Forget your perfect offering / There is a crack, a crack in everything / That's how the light gets in / That's how the light gets in / That's how the light gets in" (Cohen 1992).

An affective performance philosophy might conceptualise and mobilise the 'aesthetic affect' of a creative blind spot in and around the research and practice of performance. It would seek to return, again and again, to what might appear as the least hospitable place, but one that might offer the most critical and vital access route to the inventive charge of the event: the middle of the cut—the crack, the opening—as a fathomless aperture governed by a radically different logic than that of the representational norm of visibility—ocular-centrism. Cracks abound on the maps of existence, in the exploration of space and the reconstruction of time. Pursuing the incipient gaps in knowledge and experience in the folds of the aesthetic, I approach the event-performance as an actual *and* abstract device for thinking about, generating and re-imagining relational and ethical practices. Unlike the direct images we obtain from more obvious vantage points, breaks and holes offer an inflected sense of something unanticipated, something that broods from under the grounds of our cognition, eliciting further attention.

These zones of divarication and deformation are generative of variations that extract from the realm of the aesthetic the very abstraction that allows the cut to be open, elastic and resonant across practices and modalities of perceiving, and perceiving differently. From this sundering of experience a making *sense* of events emerges as the residual force of the semblance, whose unpredictable appearance disrupts, challenges, and resists attempts at representational capture; that is, it 'appears' in the suspension of all preconceived logics of (explicit) representation. This residue potential is what Roland Barthes ([1979] 1981) called the *punctum*: "the punctum is the appearance through the photo of an affective after-life. It is the strike of a life as a force, beyond

an actual life. In other words, as abstracted from it, as a real but abstract force of life-likeness” (Massumi 2011, 57).

The (biogrammatic) topography of performance, I propose, actualises the likeness of the striking force that cuts across the unique figure of an event of sensations where/when it wells on the cusp of its perishing. I have drawn attention here to this diagrammatic emblem as the indiscrete, indefinite singularity that relates to the apparent monadicy of the line between the virtual and the actual. The deep cuts and interruptions within this inorganic experience connects in affective ways to the folding and unfolding of “bare life”¹⁸—the incipient traces of embodied difference. This figurative element is the *differenciator*—the “dark precursor,” to say it with Deleuze (1993, 119)—which makes ‘different’ more apparent, the space between dissimilars that connects them through their difference. Its inherent abstraction—virtuality—is here posed as the emblematic value within the operative systems of artistic performance as the invisible, affective force that puts bodies into immediate relation to one another. It is, in other words, the visceral, suspenseful act that designates nothing less than a lure for thinking- and feeling-with others.

This diagrammatic configuration becomes fleshed out beside any phenomenological or psychoanalytical, embodied or immersive, wholly specular body experience. Specifically, what takes place in the *gap* of the disappearance of the imagistic body of the self-possessed subject is the range of relative perspectives in which the body is subject, object, and in-between; its emergent qualities interlocking, distributed, contingent, and multiple. What is left is a continuous *process* transposed on a temporal scale of interstitial nodes where empirical space is distantiated and the relational engendered by the distribution of affective architectures and topographies. This is a manifestation of the virtual: it belongs to the virtual. It is real but also abstract, with a potentiality of mediations and transformations that actualises the event-full process of being-becoming, becoming-intense, becoming-other, and now, becoming-with-others. I have called this *alive* performance.

In this sense, performance indeed *reappears* as a sensuous experience of nonsensuous relations, as a form—or technique—of life fundamentally shared. Its affective currents arise spontaneously and often come to pass ‘unrecognised’, falling outside of consciousness. They are activated and disseminated; kinetically and synaesthetically yoked together across sensory, spatial, and temporal disparities. They operate through vision but are not contained in or by it. By manipulating rhythm, movement, scale, and light differentials, this practice of abstraction makes its subject appear and disappear with the mimesis and artifice necessary for the event to return its repeated invocations and re-orientations. It can produce a visual experience of essentially invisible realms: shared phantoms or shadows that “might be better off called a fictive relational reality” (Massumi 2003, 12); incorporeal interactions of separate forms of life that emerge together in occurrent affective attunement. From this perspective, *alive* performance can envelop *a universe of felt relations* and constitute a “tacit archive of shared and shareable experience” (Massumi 2003, 9); a register of semblances in which no-thing consistently reappears. An affective archive that is returned in the flesh-and-blood of things burning with, always with, the many others, in intensified contact.

What we experience in this archive is an intensity mobilised through proprioceptivity and viscosity; a folding in and out of subject-object relationality in a 'sensitive' time-form. The cellular structures of this inorganic semblance of bare life can be articulated as the critical practice of a vital *and* virtual archive of experience: the visceral sensibility of the temporalities of the flesh; all flesh, human *and* inhuman. These incorporeal registers are here activated as a temporality of habit and memory that recognises the excitations of life that *reappear—remediated, remodulated, recirculated*—across possible futures of opened-up pasts, hence remaking the historical present of performance as something lived, alive, still happening, and more. The pragmatic implication of such interpretive gestures is an syn/aesth/ethic theory of performance and research that traverses the *alive* bodies and matters with an immersive activist philosophy.

Notes

¹ For Patricia Clough and her co-authors (2007) affect itself is a physical energy that unites a variety of human subjects through and with nonhuman objects, helping to constitute social relations separate from and prior to our ability to decipher meaning (65). The particular inflections that this writing takes will bypass this subject/object division in favour of a more ubiquitous relation of elements existing alongside one another in perspectival turns.

² I do not intend to begin, or end, with the naiveté of origins or telos, but rather right in the middle of a raw topography in which we can collocate some critical moments and movements in the arts.

³ I will be using this bracketed form throughout to figure the continuous encroachment of the space of the moment with the time of movement.

⁴ Notably, Schneider follows on: “[t]hey can also feel like downright bad art,” but what matters perhaps is that they feel differently.

⁵ Massumi (2002) writes:

call the perpetual future-past doubling ordinary events supplementarity. The exemplary event is the transposition of supplementarity into the lure of unity. Transposed supplementarity in the mode of being of the pure event. (64, original emphasis)

⁶ That is, a perceptual feeling or sensibility delocalised from any specific object and subject as if it were a detached emergence.

⁷ Massumi draws this concept in large part from Walter Benjamin's concepts of “mimesis” and “nonsensuous similarity” and Susanne Langer's theories of perceptual movement in art.

⁸ As Marx and various interpreters remind us, abstraction is taken to divorce the subject from the product of their own performance. See Marx (1990), but also Lefebvre (1972); Horvath and Gibson (1984); Toscano (2008).

⁹ The biogrammatic concept is extension of Massumi's notion of a diagram, evocative of the double articulations between forms of content and forms of expression.

¹⁰ Notably, synaesthetic conjunctions involve all the senses in various combinations, including smell and touch. How can we forget here Proust's cookie taste for soggy crumbs reactivating the forgotten sight of a little madeleine? Or what about the multi-modal sensory maps of Camillo's legendary “Theatre of Memory”?

¹¹ For, Massumi writes: “affect is synaesthetic, implying a participation of the senses in each other: the measure of a living thing's potential interactions is its ability to transform the effects of one sensory mode into those of another” (2002, 35).

¹² Ontogenesis is a concept that fuses together the thought of Massumi, Gilles Deleuze, Baruch Spinoza, Gilbert Simondon and Henri Bergson.

¹³ The incorporeal dimension of the *biogram* resonates with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the Body-without-Organs or 'BwO'—an extensive form of becoming that exceeds the organic form (see 1987, 153).

¹⁴ The syneastetic sonority of this work deserves better and greater attention that I can grant here. I remand the reader to the reading of Alan Read's analysis in *Theatre, Intimacy and Engagement: The Last Human Venue* (2009), especially pp.165–170, and Daniel Sack's (2009) review of this work.

¹⁵ Molar and molecular are Deleuzo-Guattarian terms that switch the register from subjectivities to assemblages; from being to becomings; from the human to the inhuman: "[t]here is no becoming-man because man is the molar entity par excellence, whereas becomings are molecular" (1987, 292).

¹⁶ This is a term that I coin to address performance as emblematic of the workings of the "semblance."

¹⁷ Massumi draws this definition of being from Gilbert Simondon. See also Erin Manning's *Always More than One* (2013).

¹⁸ I am mobilising this term from Giorgio Agamben's controversial work *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1988). Briefly here, "bare life" can be defined as "life exposed to death", especially in the form of sovereign violence (88).

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Biography

Annalaura works across performance and academia, and between London and Liverpool. Since 2015, she holds a lectureship post at Liverpool Hope University in Drama and Performance Studies. Her current practice explores performance as a frame that renders interesting collaborations between the so-called human, nonhuman life and immaterial agencies. The ensuing critical and physical forms focus on anomalous or fragmented bodies in relation to affective politics, radical activism and cosmopolitics. Always passionately seeking meaningful collaborations and participations to further these concerns, together with others.

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