



Where's the Passion? Or, Feelings are Facts, and Forms

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Where's the Passion? Or, Feelings are Facts, and Forms

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Abstract: Within the framework of performance, affects have largely been invoked to explain embodied visceral responses to texts. What I propose here is to introduce the dimension of affect as a matter of form. More precisely, to say that affects have forms is to say that affects inhere in forms (Brinkema 2014). In other words, it is not (only) that performance practices, strategies, and aesthetics induce affects, but rather, that these very matters are the formal compositions of affects. To demonstrate this claim, I will explore how performance structures incorporate the structures of affects. In particular, I will introduce a close reading of Yvonne Rainer's iconic work *Trio A* (1966) as a manifestation of the mechanisms of shame (Sedgwick 2003). Paradoxically, this applied affective structure gives form to a movement of mutual regard that can be reoriented 'towards an aesthetics of care' (Thompson 2015).

Keywords: performance; affect; aesthetics; care; ethics

1. Affective Forms

Within the framework of performance studies, the notion of 'affect' has largely been culled to account for felt, visceral, immediate, embodied responses to aesthetic events (see Shaughnessy 2012; Doyle 2013; Best 2014). In the field of critical inquiry, affect is what names the fluctuating and unstable energies that, in turn, enhance and diminish the capacity for action, movement and disturbances (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) of pre-individual intensity (Massumi 2002) and non-conscious intentionality (Wetherell 2012), resisting and evading structure, form, signification (Brennan 2004; Blackman 2012; Ahmed 2014). In *The Forms of the Affects* (2014), film studies scholar Eugenie Brinkema introduces a new critical dimension of affectivity that must enact the complexity of its definite specificity, '[o]therwise, "affect"—that thing so celebrated for

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3 its resistance to systematicity—becomes not only what does not resist, but in fact what
4 confirms every time the same model of vague shuddering intensity’ (xv). The way into
5 this approach unlocks affects not as themes, narrative strategies, or constructions of
6 identity, but as formal elements. Within this project ‘[t]reating affect as a problematic of
7 structure, form, and aesthetics is an attempt to reintroduce particularity to any
8 consideration of affects’ (xvi).
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13 Along these lines, I want to take things a step further and invoke the affective in
14 applied terms as a material that impresses itself and its specificity upon the expressive
15 and physical forms that performance-making takes. In other words, it is not (only) that
16 performance practices, strategies, and aesthetics induce affects, but rather, that these
17 very matters of forms are infused with the modal/tonal/nodal qualities of affects. In
18 return, form, structure, composition provide the vocabulary for articulating the
19 particularities of the affective matters, making their reading possible. To exemplify how
20 specific performance structures resemble the structures of specific affects, I will offer
21 here a close reading of American iconoclast performance maker Yvonne Rainer’s iconic
22 work *Trio A* (1966).
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31 *Trio A*¹ was initially conceived as the first section of a larger project titled *The*
32 *Mind is a Muscle*, devised for three dancers (David Gordon, Steve Paxton, and Rainer
33 herself) and first presented at the Judson Church Theatre in New York in 1966.² This
34 short composition³ consisted of a constant flow of continuous and non-repeating
35 movements with no accent or emphasis, performed in-group simultaneously but not in
36 unison.⁴ The phrasing was composed of task-oriented actions focused on dynamic
37 distributions of energy and weight and seamless transitions featuring no interaction with
38 the audience. These are the artist’s impressions on this dance: ‘The quiet plodding,
39 unmodulated continuity, avoidance of the audience gaze, absence of musical support,
40 and nonhierarchical organization, all contributed to a feeling of constraint’ (Rainer
41 2010, 49).
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51 Whilst many witnesses of *Trio A* remember the trepidation surrounding its first
52 performances, and many others have later become fascinated with the black-and-white
53 filmic version,⁵ many observers found its introverted aesthetics rather abstruse.
54 Lambert-Beatty recounts: ‘Indeed, critics at the time of *Trio A*’s debut described this
55 brief dance as “a long business”, and “a sort of boring continuum”; even a sympathetic
56 writer like Jill Johnston of the *Village Voice* likened *Trio A* to “woolen underwear”
57 (1999, 90). To the artist’s own admission, this is a demanding and challenging piece of
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3 work, both to perform and to watch. Mostly for its utilitarian approach, aesthetic
4 restraint and self-contained logic, the dance has long been associated with a certain lack
5 of affect.
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8 So, it may perhaps seem paradoxical my intention here to read the specific
9 minimalist and formalist aesthetics of this seminal performance piece as reflective not
10 (only) of the generic affectivities inherent in theatrical performance, but as an epitome
11 of a particular structure of feelings—shame. And more, the way in which this
12 movement text is composed, I contend, *is* the form of the affect of shame itself, which
13 rewrites its morphology into the scene. Once more with feeling: in *Trio A*, shame is both
14 exteriorised in the *form* of the text and *is* the text. What's more is my proposition that, a
15 performance work that can initially seem resolutely self-enclosed and securely detached
16 from its audience, can only be fully understood through the specific affective dynamics
17 of shame as internally defined by an intimate sense of 'careful' attention for others. The
18 intersubjective microforms that normally ensue around the affective expressions of
19 embarrassment, in turn, give formal disposition to a demand of ethical coexistence that
20 reorients the practiced dynamics of this work 'towards an aesthetics of care' (Thompson
21 2015).
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32 Following James Thompson, I will discuss the 'effective ends'⁶ of the feelings
33 provoked by Rainer's shame-full performance as they inhere in its formal registers to
34 rediscover 'the intimate correlation between the political and the aesthetic at its heart'
35 (2009, 3). Although the operative structures at play in *Trio A*—and Rainer's wider
36 opus—do not strictly pertain to the territory of applied theatre, community-based
37 performance or participatory arts, I am interested here in pursuing how this work might
38 provide a different way of thinking about the praxis of performance, which can then
39 define 'a new orientation to the practice and the political ambition of that practice'
40 (Thompson 2015, 432). Hence, I will be asking what an aesthetics of care may look and
41 *feel* like in performance works such as *Trio A*, where the tactics, executions and
42 multimodal re-iterations tracing its movements are (over)wrought⁷ with the mix of
43 different circumstances of the artist's professional and personal life to the point of
44 becoming its own ethnographic project of care for the self *and* others.
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55 Ultimately, this close reading will be devoted to querying the concept of form in
56 performance; to practicing its conceptual elaborations; and to critically applying its
57 *affective* resources in ways that will hopefully clarify 'a vision of politics that asserts a
58 contract of mutual regard that extends far wider and demands a more fundamental
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3 realignment of human relations than one might at first assume' (436). The impulse here
4 is to express these possibilities beyond, or rather 'beside', human expression, rebuilding
5 the non-human or inhuman aspect of affects into the space of encounter with, and a
6 contact between human aspects. This methodological approach is as speculative as it is
7 pragmatic in driving towards new ethical, political, and aesthetic ends. And further,
8 rewriting affect into the scene of formalist and applied aesthetics incites the
9 reorientation of the praxis of performance toward the expression, creation, intuition and
10 vitality of form in organic relation with the autonomy of feelings (see Langer 1953),
11 particularly as they offset pervasively human aspirations and intentions.
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20 **2. Unseemly Underbelly**

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24 No to spectacle.

25 No to virtuosity.

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27 No to transformations and magic and make-believe.

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29 No to the glamour and transcendency of the star image.

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31 No to the heroic.

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33 No to the anti-heroic.

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35 No to trash imagery.

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37 No to involvement of performer or spectator.

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39 No to style.

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41 No to camp.

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43 No to seduction of spectator by the wiles of the performer.

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45 No to eccentricity.

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47 No to moving or being moved.

(Rainer 1974, 51)

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50 No, these are not the latest Arts Council's benchmarks for public funding of the
51 arts. This peremptory list of injunctions is perhaps the most celebrated postscript in the
52 history of (Western) performance history.⁸ In 1965, Yvonne Rainer (in)famously, and
53 unwittingly, drew what immediately became regarded as the NO Manifesto; a dogma
54 and a mantra to reform the future of performance making. Although Rainer had warned
55 at the time: 'It is only to define more stringently the rules and boundaries of my own
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3 artistic game at the moment' (1974, 51), her negative tactics became crystallised into
4 the very emblem of the avant-garde revolution of the 60s and 70s.

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6 Most notably, Rainer's work is inextricably interweaved with the abstract,
7 seemingly disaffected compositions of the 60s' minimalism, but it also sharply cuts
8 through very distinct structures of feelings that produce results not given or known in
9 advance but that remain in process. The artist herself takes a leap into this expansive
10 temporal frame when, towards the conclusion of her 2007 confessional memoir, she
11 expounds on the subject of her title—*Feelings Are Facts*:

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13 an adage of the late John Schimmel, my psychotherapist in the early 1960s,
14 [that] became an unspoken premise by means of which I was able to bypass
15 the then current clichés of categorization [...]. Ignored or denied in the work
16 of my sixties peers, the nuts and bolts of emotional life comprised the unseen
17 (or should I say “unseemly”?) underbelly of high U.S. Minimalism. While we
18 aspired to the lofty and cerebral plane of a quotidian materiality, our
19 unconscious lives unravelled with an intensity and melodrama that inversely
20 matched their absence in the boxes, portals, jogging and standing still of our
21 austere sculptural and choreographic creations. (391)

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23 This revision posits that even a seemingly anti-affective genre of performance/art—
24 minimalism⁹—can be shown to be governed by radical structures of feelings. What I
25 hope to elucidate here is how, perhaps unexpectedly, the applied affective structures of
26 *Trio A* direct their formal (and formalist) elements, into the expression of differentiated
27 and differentiating forms of compassion.

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29 This analysis attempts to (b)reach the gap between the *form* and the *felt* in
30 applied terms. Through a close reading, I will approach Yvonne Rainer's creative
31 practice at the intersection of its aesthetic applications and their 'reflective' re-iterations
32 in written and spoken form. The textual re-realizations of the work, I propose, are not
33 identical with its embodied manifestations, nor are they its interpretation. Rather, one
34 and the other(s) are different, and not opposite, poles of reactivation for playing with the
35 artwork malleable material and unfinished potential. Via this 'openness', I hope to
36 dynamise the work into a process of 'becoming beside', to redirect its aesthetic spur
37 towards political and ethical viability. I will begin by turning my attention to the
38 minimalist operations enacted by the Rainer's determinedly unspectacular and
39 remarkably representative solo *Trio A* (1966)—perhaps the finest episode of her formal
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3 aesthetics—alongside its re-enactments in the artist’s subsequent and proliferating
4 performative reaffirmations of the work’s artistic ethos. By doing so, I hope to map out
5 the work’s affective moves alongside of the different forces and intentionalities that
6 transverse it.
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10 In her 2009 performance lecture ‘Where’s the Passion? Where’s the Politics?’
11 Or How I Became Interested in Impersonating, Approximating, and End Running
12 Around My Selves and Others’, and Where Do I Look When You’re Looking at Me?’¹⁰,
13 Yvonne Rainer is, in her words, ‘behoved’ to return to her seminal dance *Trio A* to
14 address her persistent concerns with the applied models of self-expression,
15 spectatorship, and the politics of art. Approaching this work from the experience of
16 having had to teach others ‘its complexities and contradictions,’ her chosen primary
17 point of access is the quality of ‘PASSION (shout)!’. Almost immediately, she produces
18 an assessment of her compulsive and perhaps redundant (self)interest in the work:
19 ‘Although this dance has already been theorized and expatiated on with great acuity
20 [...], I find to my amazement that I still have things to say about it and that the bloody
21 thing still has “legs,” so to speak’ (2010, 48). Indeed, the restless legs of *Trio A* have
22 come a long way, but I ask, what is that keeps them still alive and kicking?
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33 Given the qualities of task-like, work-like, matter of fact physical actions of
34 what is generally referred to as her body-based ‘minimalism’, Rainer’s followers,
35 observers and critics, and even her new and renewed audiences, might feel disoriented
36 by the modulated expression of the artist’s feelings about this work as in her
37 idiosyncratic address she soundly proclaims: ‘In response to the question – ‘Where’s the
38 passion?’ [...] I want to scream: PASSION PASSION PASSION! EXCESS,
39 EXULTATION, CATHARSIS, EXORCISM, MADNESS, RAGE, FEAR, PITY,
40 ENVY, CONFLICT, ECSTASY, MURDER, WAR, EPIPHANY, CRUELTY,
41 DUPLICITY, JOY, BETRAYAL, AMBIVALENCE, TERROR’ (2010, 48). Indeed, the
42 passion that had long infused modern dance since Isadora Duncan, making the ‘self’
43 expressed on stage indistinguishable from its overarching emotional states, the very
44 passion nowhere in sight of Rainer’s ‘selfless performance’ of her signature piece, is in
45 fact the generative yet occluded force of its original design:
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56 As far as *Trio A* was concerned, PASSION (shout) was a given; it resided
57 offstage, in the obsessions of the artist, among other excesses and more
58 quotidian expressions of emotion. While no emotions were consciously
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3 generative of or relevant to the movement phrases in the ultimate sequence,
4 they remained latent, submerged in the uninflected flow. (49)
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8 Rainer here sheds some of her reserve: for the artist, the pathos resides *elsewhere* from
9 the stage of artistic creation; in the steady flow of the everyday and the compulsive
10 spillages that move *her*, as they move underneath the formal gesture of the artwork.
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13 *Trio A* thus seemingly materialises as an exercise in self-constraint; its cool,
14 emotionally detached formalism synthesised by the ‘neutral body’—human scaled and
15 non-virtuosic, mainly absorbed in functional activities with directness and simplicity. Its
16 emotional source dispersed and displaced, only to resurface in the retrospective look of
17 the artist, who concedes: ‘It can be said that the performing self of *Trio A* takes care of
18 its self *and* its expression by a mode of expression that recuses the self’ (ibid.) The
19 mode of self-expression characteristic of this piece is thus an expedient; the result of a
20 ‘care’ for the self, who makes its charge—the matter of feelings—fall back and beneath
21 an aesthetic task-like, work-like, matter of fact ‘look’ that offers up its bodies to the
22 abstractive gaze of the spectator. PASSION, hence, can be thought of as the *motive* of a
23 recessive method played out by the performers in the spatial foreground of a stringent
24 form of execution, precision, and self-attention.
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34 This recessive trait is mostly expressed through the function of the performer’s
35 visual circuitry: ‘its imperative involving the gaze. The eyes are always averted from
36 direct confrontation with the audience via independent movement of the head, closure
37 of the eyes, or simple casting down of the gaze’ (Rainer 2009, 12). If the conventions of
38 dance composition—classical modern, or even postmodern—see the convergence
39 between the dancers and audience played out in a *pas de deux* of interlocking gazes,
40 within *Trio A* there is no coincidence at all between the seer and the seeing of the other:
41 ‘Contrarily, each *Trio A* performer not only avoids the gaze of the audience, but is
42 absorbed in monitoring the workings of her/his respective body parts rather than
43 engaging with whoever may be performing at the same time’ (Rainer 2010, 50). The
44 downcast gaze of the performer deflects all contact of sightlines between movers and
45 their unmoved witnesses. Yet, there is more to *Trio A* than meets the eye...
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54 ‘Looking-at’ and ‘being looked-at’—or the sense of self in performance as
55 expressed by the spatial and relational dispositions—is a central concern in Rainer’s
56 textual, and more generally artistic inflections, for, she explains her primary interest lies
57 in ‘the gap, or consonance, as the case may be, between the playful illogic of the artist
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3 and the expectant perceptions and preconceptions of the spectator' (54). These
4 tendencies become rearranged and somewhat inverted when she tackles the riddle of the
5 titular question—'Where do I look when you're looking at me?'—as she puts herself *on*
6 *the spot* of her own witnessing, of an outer (other) self: 'Whenever as a spectator I see
7 dancers staring blankly out at me [...] I lose the thread of the dance and find myself
8 asking, "Why are they looking at me? What does it mean? What are they trying to say
9 to me?"' (51).

15 For Rainer, these questions take on a particular urgency in the context of a
16 representational form—dance-performance—that often incorporates the gaze of a living
17 human being: 'it is the live presence of the dancer that more potently discombobulates,
18 leaving me unnerved by the ambiguity of the speechless gaze. From the vantage point
19 of a spectator I am prompted to exclaim to myself, "You lookin' at me? Trying to
20 seduce me? Accuse me?" As an audience member in a small theatre I always feel
21 compelled to look away' (52). This instance of felt and projected anxiety (about being
22 looked at in the act of looking at) and dread and desire (of being caught in the act and
23 be exposed to the gaze of the other) engenders an affective wound—the disease of
24 feeling ill-at-ease—whose sensuous conundrum can productively offset its own (and
25 the artist's) predicaments.

34 Rainer's affective choreographies figure as a particularly resonant (and
35 pervasively familiar) articulation of a range of expressions often associated with shame.
36 In 'Shame, Theatricality, and Queer Performativity', Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick,
37 expanding on the work of Silvan Tomkins, turns to shame as the 'keystone affect' in
38 the process of self-development. Shame, befalling infants at a very early stage, is a
39 disruptive moment of loss of feedback from others, of refused or negated return (of the
40 gaze). This is an absence of contact that individuates the subject whilst intensifying the
41 ambiguity of an intrinsic relation to others: 'Blazons of shame, the "fallen face" with
42 eyes down and head averted [...] are semaphores of trouble and at the same time of a
43 desire to reconstitute the interpersonal bridge' (2002, 36).

51 Rainer's fantasies of self-projection take shape as a staged interaction—a
52 theatre of fugitive gazes—that up-sets deeply introverted performative inclinations,
53 gestures and utterances rooted in the experience of shame. In re-playing her emotional
54 responses to sudden exposure, I argue, the artist re-performs a disruptive moment in the
55 circuit of visual communication resulting in a turning of the self away from sight, and
56 towards an abiding relation to an 'other,' by whose gaze she is made flesh, but whose
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3 view of herself she cannot control. Under scrutiny, suddenly an outside appearance
4 transpires which escapes her own grasp, a skin that is more immediately accessible to
5 others than to herself, as Sedgwick with Tomkins suggests: ‘shame effaces itself;
6 shame points and projects; shame turns itself skin side out’ (38).
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10 The function of this tripling mirror—effacement, projection, extroversion—is
11 further complicated by the fact that the embarrassment to which the scene is intensely
12 linked is seemingly projected onto an ‘other’—that is, the spectator—whom Rainer
13 impersonates in the recreated context of watching a live event. This scenario resonates
14 in the performative sequences proposed in the lecture room of ‘Where’s the passion?’,
15 where the narrative of *Trio A* is depicted and reactivated as the piece is enunciated,
16 instantiated and re-performed within the frame, in a multiple sequence of showings,
17 viewings, auditings and readings.
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24 To break it down step by step: when the author gives voice to the attempt of
25 ‘unpacking’ her work, the sign-language interpreter by her side faithfully retraces the
26 effort with her upper body, whilst fellow performer and official transmitter of the dance
27 Pat Catterson¹¹ takes her legs on the journey of demonstrating it. Once a first cycle of
28 the dance is completed, Rainer stops in mid-sentence, passes the commentary on to two
29 other fellow performers and begins to end-run around a younger dancer who executes a
30 second sequence of the composition. As this series draws to an end, almost in a loop,
31 Catterson returns to the stage to action the score once more, accompanied this time by
32 the notes of *In The Midnight Hour* by The Chambers Brothers, and is joined eventually
33 by the previous performer who completes the whole course. All the while looking
34 away—the downcast face of the performers never meets the gaze of the audience.
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43 By the end of the representation the audience have seen, heard, witnessed,
44 imagined, and moved along to the piece a countless number of times as this ‘picture’
45 continues to roll before their (minds’) eyes. The result though, I propose, is that what is
46 carefully eluded—the shameful feeling—paradoxically stands off from this figuration,
47 moved back from it visibly, palpably, traceably as an open chasm now suddenly
48 perceivable in the formal aspect of the work. The result *is* the representative power of
49 shame and its meaningful expression. Only, the formal countenance of *Trio A* has
50 succeeded, time and again, in evading the subordination to its effects through an
51 appearance that displays the facial clearing of embarrassment itself—looking away
52 from sight. We cannot overlook at this point the fact that part of the ‘appeal’ of this
53 piece (from a performer’s perspective) comes from being allowed to show a face which
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3 eludes, in the most direct and subversive manner, the compulsion to return the gaze.
4 Yet, the exceptional case of the prototypical face of shame is the fundamental aspect of
5 the history-creating process of this much admired work of art.
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8 What I want to suggest here is that the narratives of shame add another spin to
9 the story of *Trio A* releasing an affective force that ruptures, invades, espouses, and
10 deceives, sometimes all at the same time. This particularly susceptible affect is
11 theatrically drawn into the scene, if expelled by Rainer's will to banish its initial
12 impulse into an aesthetic format that bears (hardly) no resemblance to its 'ugly
13 feelings'.¹² Yet, this disposal and hurried aid to disappearance only serves to return the
14 impression of a shameful outside. This extroversion finds grounding in the emotional
15 atmosphere of a space where individuals are made to enter the imaginative and physical
16 architecture of a tight kind of society—performance. As Sedgwick suggests:
17 'transformational shame [...] is performance. I mean theatrical performance.
18 Performance interlines shame as more than just its result or a way of warding it off,
19 though importantly it is those things. Shame is the affect that mantles the threshold
20 between introversion and extroversion, between absorption and theatricality, between
21 performance and—performativity' (38).
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34 **3. Hiding in Plain Sight**

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38 The set of Rainer's theatrical performance and performative refigurations
39 transpire as a form of dis-identification¹³ that extends outward to include the other's
40 purview and judgment, if only to deflect it. Addressing the audience of her
41 performance-lecture, the artist's rhetoric performs yet another elusive turn: 'If now
42 project my audience angst onto you, you might feel justified in judging my reluctance
43 as a performer to meet your gaze as nothing more than an effort to overcome
44 embarrassment or self-consciousness at being looked at' (2010, 52). Seemingly, the
45 artist acknowledges her inability, at this time and in retrospect, to shed the shame
46 saturating the scene of performance. However, her (self)affirmations take an even more
47 remarkable turn when she backs her moves with the help of philosopher John Dewey:
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56 In attempting to disconnect movement from emotion by contesting
57 previous notions of "direct nervous discharge", Dewey cites "sensations
58 of awkwardness, of bashfulness, of being ridiculous (as when one starts
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3 an appropriate movement, but is made conscious of it in itself apart from
4 its end)". [...] This last quote might be used to describe my earliest efforts
5 of forty-five years ago, when working on *Trio A* I might have transformed
6 a specific emotion into an aesthetic ploy. However, the reality was that
7 whatever residues of "inauthenticity" and "bashfulness" remained in my
8 psyche were subsumed by what I perceived as the challenges of dance
9 history to create movement conscious of itself "apart from its end." (Ibid.)
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16 Or its effects, I would add. In my view, here the author toils with her (re)vision of her
17 early work as a way of remaining unabashed by her feelings through a process that
18 overwrites the desire to overcome the very affective activity that set her dance in motion
19 in the first place. The turning off and sending away of this unseemly affectivity,
20 according to Rainer, ghosts any residual trace of it into an aesthetic format that
21 paradoxically becomes its foreground under the artistic demands of an uninflected style.
22 The result is that this potentially paralysing affect becomes aesthetically productive of a
23 new ontologisation of the work by moving beneath and to the side of and through its
24 'ordinary'¹⁴ figuration. Learnt in the ways of keeping the scandal of the self from
25 showing, Rainer helps us ever so (un)willingly to sense the distance, and hence relation,
26 between substance and form in a very 'ambitious' work of art. The lowered gaze
27 becomes the front matter of a very elaborated ploy of movements that seek to block,
28 circumvent, shield and, above all, hide the passion away from sight.
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39 For all the 'Love, contention, yearning, abuse, power' (49) that flooded the
40 modern (and some postmodern) stage she finds a new mode of expression whose
41 protoform is the despoiled view of an effacement. This formal (dis)figuration is
42 relationally displayed as a spatialised subjectivity that 'demonstrates a kind of alert
43 detachment from audience and fellow performers alike, a selfless, rather than
44 narcissistic, absorption' (51). The artist urges on: 'It can be said that the performing self
45 of *Trio A* takes care of its self and its expression by a mode of expression that recuses
46 the self (49, my emphasis). More than a literal performance of shame, *Trio A* absorbs
47 this performative affect *par excellence* in its folds through an embodied articulation that
48 nonetheless speaks to the ways shame, as an affect, erupts not just in the space between
49 one version of self and an-other, but also in the space where one wants more acutely to
50 give up, break up or elude the 'self' one has, and replace it with 'a provisional or
51 ambiguous self that is at once produced, erased, and confounded' (ibid).
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3 Rainer's regressive mode of engagement—the refusal to meet eye-to-eye (I-to-I)
4 with others—is embodied in a performative turn (away) that yields a knowledge not at
5 all equivalent to the sense of shame with which it started. This new embodied
6 epistemology, all the same, defers into a sequel of *formal dispositions* that no longer
7 induce shame but that become something other, in the artist's words: 'they constitute
8 part of a continuum of choreographic possibilities, a gamut of affects that, as in the
9 democratic organization of components in *Trio A*, foregrounds the performer
10 performing, the self receding, and the passion hiding, in plain sight' (54). Rainer's
11 shame narrative hinges on a *deep desire* to free oneself and others from shame. But if
12 this affect cannot easily be done away with, it can offer a more productive turning point:
13 not how to do without feelings, but rather how to do—perform—things *with* them, and
14 others.

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24 This affective and participatory intelligence may indeed stimulate and formalise
25 what Cathy Sloan terms a 'space of potentiality' that is 'future-orientated and concerned
26 with creative encounter and experimentation that embraces life as an ongoing process'
27 (2018, 586). This spacious geometry is vital for practices that hinge on trauma, risk and
28 vulnerability in its capacity to expand our understanding of how 'theatremaking might
29 operate as an affective performance ecology that is receptive to [...] contingent
30 relations' (584) but also to spatio-temporal and aesth-ethic inclinations. The
31 phenomenon of shame and its double—embarrassment—makes ripe the conditions of
32 this augmentedness. In her work on the domestic politics of shame, Helen Nicholson
33 points to 'how the theatrical representation of shame can act as a catalyst for personal
34 and social change' (2009, 561) in the way its arrangements drive people, places and
35 things in proximate relations. Shameful feelings turn—physical faces and iconic
36 dispositions—towards change. As Nicholson notes, shame does not simply return, and
37 is returned with, shame. Rather, shame turns exposure into disclosure (575), shame
38 begets love and desire (579-80), shame becomes compassion (578).

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50 This productive turns are invoked by Rainer in her lecture as her shame's
51 ulterior motives spill out into the open: 'Far from ignoring or evading the subjectivity
52 and scrutiny of you, the audience, I maintain that by choosing to avert my gaze, I am
53 refusing to enter into a complicit relationship that might produce in you unpleasant
54 feelings of coercion or manipulation' (52). Rainer believes in her performance of self-
55 construction and thus becomes more concerned by the possibility that her spectator
56 might feel the pang of deception and exposure that she herself experienced.
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3 Sympathetically—or compassionately—she wishes to let off the spectator for whom she
4 feels, beside her (split) selves. Thus, the paradoxical nature of shame resurges with its
5 splitting edge of individuation, identification with, and care for the other.
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8 Embarrassment is a particularly private feeling but must be simultaneously
9 understood as a function of a public force field. Shame flares up in the space where the
10 latent belonging of the subject to itself turns toward the other. This ambivalent feature is
11 what Sedgwick defines the ‘double movement shame makes: toward painful
12 individuation, toward uncontrollable relationality’ (2002, 37). The artist’s desire to
13 shelter herself from others is also a response to an attention and accommodation of the
14 other side. Hence, the intersubjective space of *Trio A* is not charged by an individual
15 and independent drive but changed a longing for compassion displaced in the symbolic
16 primary stage of social relations. This work might be perceived retrospectively as the
17 result of an ethic compulsion that does not provoke the merging and absorption
18 encouraged by empathy (literally feeling *for* others), but rather the recognition of the
19 subject in relation to others, in detached and compassionate forms of coexistence. Here
20 is where the field of relations is theatrically in the middle of the political sphere of
21 affects.
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34 4. Beside Ourselves

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36 Despite being densely woven, the phenomenological fabric of intersubjectivity between
37 the performer and her spectators is laid bare. What transpires in the deep gaps (cuts?) is
38 that the circuit of shame highlights relational structures and, ultimately, the possibility
39 of regarding the experience of others *beside* the individual self. In the introductory
40 remarks to *Touching Feeling*, Sedgwick advances the concept of the ‘beside.’ ‘*Beside*’,
41 she writes ‘permits a spacious agnosticism about several of the linear logics that
42 enforce dualistic thinking: noncontradiction or the law of the excluded middle, cause
43 versus effect, subject versus object’ (2002, 8, original emphasis). Beside (not beneath,
44 behind, or beyond) is a spatial determinant that eschews the flat line of opposition and
45 duality. Taking a ‘distinct step to the side’ of any constitutive project of subjectivity,
46 invokes a logic that suggests multiple (Deleuzian) relations, wherein any ‘number of
47 elements’ may lie and operate ‘alongside one another.’
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56 To be beside oneself means to become disoriented in relation to the familiarity
57 of one’s own position, to recognise oneself as an-other so that one is given over to
58 one’s ethical enmeshment with others becoming an ecstatic subject of recognition. The
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3 notion of intersubjectivity emphasises the intellectual and emotional significance of
4 being able to simultaneously occupy a subject position—to feel one’s own presence and
5 to see from a particular perspective (a feeling)—while at the same time being able to
6 stand beside oneself in a third place where the world becomes visible and representable
7 from multiple perspectives, including one’s own, and from which one can understand
8 one’s own position as one ‘along’ many. This view can powerfully counterweight the
9 commonly held notion of *Trio A* as a formalist exercise in narcissistic self-absorption
10 with what James Thompson invokes as an ‘aesthetics of care’ that values ‘certain
11 dispositions to the other’ (2015, 434). A longer quote from Rainer may be useful to
12 illustrate this ethos:
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21 my *Trio A*’ers [...] go about their respective business much like neighbors
22 on my middle-class Los Angeles street who acknowledge each other as one
23 backs out of his driveway and the other is just arriving home. When one
24 performer has executed the dance once and retires to the sidelines to assess
25 the total field in order to find space in which to repeat it, it’s as if she is
26 asking herself, ‘Where do I park my car now? Not in front of my neighbor’s
27 driveway.’ As spectators, we are witnessing autonomous lives that do not
28 preclude the possibility of cooperation and mutual aid. (2010, 51)
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36 Rainer here introduces the explicit weight of a politics of inter-human relations
37 resulting from ‘an ‘engrossment’ [...] or ‘attentiveness that can translate to a
38 sensitivity’ for the other in the relationship (Thompson 2015, 435). The relational
39 aesthetics of *Trio A* indeed ‘turn the beholder into the neighbour,’ as predicated by
40 Nicolas Bourriaud (in Thompson 2015, 436), and yet this collateral sensibility
41 transforms the formal aspects of mutual indifference—the downcast view—into a
42 practiced relation of ‘affective solidarity and mutual regard’ (430). In this ‘situation’,
43 however, subjects do not share intimate attachments, not even the ‘emerging
44 connections between individuals coalescing in this process,’ or ‘the astonishing sense
45 of connection’ envisaged by Thompson (438). Rather, the performative structures of
46 the work here have a shape, a feel, an affect that informs a more detached, yet not
47 indifferent, aesthetics of co-active self-realisation in the pursuit of a more diffused
48 sense of mutual attentiveness. Where the paths of individual cross in ordinary, everyday
49 encounters, the sight of the other offers an opportunity to note what is normally seen—
50 at first glance perhaps—as the individual (self). The act of not-seeing in *Trio A*, I
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3 suggest, does not assure the secure position of the subject within its own surrounding
4 space, rather, it affirms the separate, non-merging forms of inter-activity with (all) the
5 others who populate the environment. This model detaches itself from the analysis of
6 performance as the shared space of personal passions concerning the fusion of ME and
7 YOU—the performer and the audience, or vice versa—in the open market of individual
8 exchange and contract. This distancing relationship instead plunges directly into an
9 intersubjective state of impersonal contact where human faces create a spatial field of
10 affectivity in which the regarding is modelled by the regard to disregard the (individual
11 and unitary) self.

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19 In short, this authored and historical work of art models the form of a
20 dispassionate relation of distant proximity.¹⁵ This disjunctive quality, I suggest, signals
21 the making of political substance involved in ways of becoming-beside others in *forms*
22 that make mutuality (without assimilation) an ordinary feature of social life. Within this
23 practiced framework of distributed agency, the affective diagrams of embarrassment,
24 frustration and passion drawn by Rainer's performative reiterations of her early dance,
25 alongside their practical re-enactment, can then be understood as an aesth-ethics of
26 relations that connects states of being to social interactions. Towards the end of her
27 presentation Rainer declares:
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35 I have nothing to 'say' to you, so there's no reason for me to look at you in
36 this particular instance. You lookin' at me? My imaginary contract politely
37 requests that you let me go about my business and I'll let you go about
38 yours. I shall pretend you're not looking at me, so then I won't have to look
39 at you. And you in turn are free to watch me work without feeling you have
40 to. From this perspective I can say, without rancor, that such an
41 arrangement is not necessarily about you. It is about a life on the stage, or
42 lives of performers. *You* just happen to be there. (2010, 52)

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50 The artist is concerned with the viability of social contact that does not assimilate the
51 agency of 'moving' bodies. Her aesthetics of denial expresses a desire to re-turn to the
52 ones *attending* the event, their own position of *assisting* the other whilst being with/in
53 the self, from the side lines of uncoerced experience. These prescribed orientations
54 reveal an 'extra alertness to the multisided interactions among people "beside" each
55 other in a room' (Sedgwick 2002, 9). This disposition can set up a 'contract of mutual
56 regard' (Norman Geras in Thompson 2015, 436) that favours non-hierarchical, non-
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3 violent and non-indifferent collaborative relations.

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5 As a spatialised relationship between neighbour and neighbour, body and body,
6 *Trio A* captures the interplay of affective forces which allow individuals greater
7 freedom of movement. Rainer's intellectual and material inclinations, I argue, provide a
8 way out of individual binds and orientations, instead allowing subjects to be
9 *relationally* distinct and unmerged, yet operative and attentive to the many others,
10 beside the self. Borrowing from Judith Butler's (queer) ethics of ecstatic relationality
11 (2004),¹⁶ the way in which the body figures in the negation of straight lines of sameness
12 serves precisely 'to underscore the value of being beside oneself, of being a porous
13 boundary, given over to others, finding oneself in a trajectory of desire in which one is
14 taken out of oneself, and resituated irreversibly in a field of others in which one is not
15 the presumptive center' (25).

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17 Within the shaping and spacing of *Trio A*, identification is superseded by a
18 model of caring for the different positions of engagement afforded within the affective
19 structures of the work itself. To be sure, the artist/performer here envisaged a system of
20 abstraction, taken as movement per se; an isolable piece of uninflected and methodical
21 'outside'. The form of the work reflects the exteriority of an affective turn—shame—
22 that perhaps does not possess in itself any intersubjective dimension, but only an
23 autonomic potential for motion, a bundle of affects that realise themselves depending
24 on the nature of the circumstances. Understood in this way, however, its structure is
25 located in an externality that does not belong to any intimate field of the self and cannot
26 be assimilated into a solely human sphere. Its own forms of being—via continuous and
27 multiple reiterations—exist as its own mode of becoming-beside-others; as an organic
28 field in a context of cooperating bodies of the same kin. Through these processes
29 intersubjectivity is an effect of that 'outside' in which humans, feelings and fields
30 reside, beside themselves.

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32 This system of autonomic participation within a distributed spatiality calls for
33 what Butler terms a 'liveable' world, a 'more capacious and, finally, less violent world,
34 not knowing in advance what precise form our humanness does and will take [...] we
35 must be open to its permutation in the name of nonviolence' (35). *Beside* the economy
36 of unitary subjects tied up with the ensuing social and moral obligations, and *beside* the
37 multiple historical and cultural transactions around these movements and exchanges,
38 the *given* sentiment of *Trio A*, dare I say, is the desire to assist differential positions of
39 mutual attention that refuse appropriation and assimilation and only ask to be cared
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for—witnessed.

5. Passions Out of the Closet!

An immanent mode of participation and a material politic of affect appear in what seemed to be an occluded narrative. The barely perceptible tremor that motivated *Trio A*, its own permeating structure of feelings, turns insides out and becomes transformed into a desirable social formation. Rainer's fantasies of identifications, decades on, unleash PASSION! on the turntable of history to tell a different story from the one we already know, one that strives to restructure the *felt* in collateral forms of art and life. The aesthetics of care and attentiveness here are distributed across the composed forms of the event implicitly impressed with the affective registers of performance.

This situation may seem to be at odds with Thompson's articulation of an aesthetics of care as 'not located in the assumed pre-ordained power of the art work itself' (2015, 439) and realised 'in more enduring, crafted encounters between people' (437). But where the applied or community-based performance scholar must cling to an account of the bodies affected by affects, my approach here, desires to step to the side of 'human interdependencies' (436), whilst not fully losing their affects and bodies, to take care of the specificity of affects in their capacities to 'speak back to, challenge, undermine—or perhaps radically revise' (Brinkema 2014, xvi) the particularity of the relational fields—performances—they inhere and participate in.

An aesthetics of care that takes care of affects, in this case, would regard both affectivity—as an organic and folding energetic principle—and its practiced forms—as *felt* by moved and moving bodies; as composed within the specific structures (of feelings) of any performance, with its located, contingent and ongoing vicissitudes. In this sense, we can return to Thompson earlier determinations that 'Performance affects are [...] the sensory responses to both social and artistic processes, but here it is more often how the deliberate attention to affect within *forms* of cultural expression can position people in relation to their wider social and sensory context that is important' (2009, 8, my emphasis).

Within a pragmatic, yet speculative analysis, *Trio A* re-emerges from its local and historical recursions as the vantage point of *affects*; as a rich site for thinking—feeling the imbrications of performance as a praxis—an applied technique or technology of relations with its own actions, movements, disturbances. This sensibility reforms the possibilities to readdress and reframe its experiential, affective, and trans-

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3 *form*-active force, or less ambitiously—the active force that cuts across its applied
4 forms. From a *self*-removed position, the affective contours of its formations become
5 indeed difficult to grasp from a point of view fixated on subjective models. Instead, the
6 surface logic of individual maker(s) is supplanted by an underbelly of implicit
7 markers—affects—that re-emerge, via close reading, within a more capacious aesth-
8 etics of attention that resemble Erin Manning’s invocations: ‘One way I think about
9 the care for the event in the event is in terms of what I call the dance of attention. Not
10 human attention, but *field attention*—the event’s attention to its own development, its
11 own concrecence’ (2016, 42, original emphasis).

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The materiality of form itself, despite creators’ and critics’ aspired intentions
and contentions, is not as hollow as is perhaps thought. Veritably, ‘feelings are facts’¹⁷
that move, shape and redefine the form of their particular structures. Looking back at
the spectacle of Rainer’s formalism, I want to shout: COM-PASSION! is the aesthetic
effect of *Trio A!!!* This feeling can be realised on the spot of one’s and others’ affective
spatiality, in the social temporality of encroachment, thickness, spatiality—at once and
from a certain remove—that bespeaks not the absence of shame but rather its
pleasurably recirculated after-flow. Specks of bashfulness re-emerge, transformed,
through simultaneously disruptive and connective formal movements charged with
past/present/future performatives, ruptures and pleasures. Then this dance acts not as a
manifesto of negation but as a memorandum of the consciously misplaced affectivity of
Minimalism—the quintessential ‘art of facts’ that here returns *form to affects*.

Rainer’s reanimation of her old strategic moves into new media, new somatic
material and new semantic environments, becomes an affective aesthetic project that
may offer its own resistance to surface-level attention. It does so by refusing to give
and return the same—feeling of shame—by offering something different in tu(r)ning
away—compassion. This formal disposition cultivates the affective political *care* of a
“besideness,” and through that *besideness* operates a refusal of the unitary logics of
individuality and assimilation. Indeed, the form of feelings in *Trio A* says NO, then
sidesteps the compositional ‘effects’, the imposition of historical labels, and even on
the last leg of its multiple journeys, it keeps things moving—alive. Hence, the close
reading here serves to refocus the shape of the event in view of an ordinary affectivity
whose particular structures of expression, mimesis, pain and pleasure makes the very
relationality of performance, dance, theatre—art—possible, once more with feeling.

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54 1. For an exhaustive backward glance at this work, I suggest Rainer (2009).
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56 2. Rainer was a founding member of the wildly influential Judson Dance Theater, a collective of
57 artists that gathered around the dance compositions of musician Robert Dunn and a group
58 feeling of unity and community. The activity and legacy of this historical collective has
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- been analysed in depth by art theory at large but also by some of the choreographers and artists involved. Rainer herself is the most prolific documentarist of the life and practices surrounding the Judson Dance Theater. She has produced several autobiographies, lectures and self-reviews that have often been taken to ‘speak for’ that period in dance history.
3. Four or five minutes depending on ‘the performer’s physical inclination’ (Reiner 2009, 12).
 4. For a more detailed description see Wood (2007, 91-3).
 5. In 1978, five years after Rainer had stopped performing the dance, she performed it in Merce Cunningham’s studio for a 16mm film produced by dance historian Sally Banes.
 6. In *Performance Affects: Applied Theatre and the End of Effect*, Thompson problematises the exclusive focus on ‘effects’ within applied theatre calling for an ‘end of effect’ as ‘a statement of limitation’ that ‘has an ethical focus—it concentrates on how things are done—and a political focus—why things are done and what the problems with those aspirations may be’ (2009, 6). There is a play on words in my use here that connects ‘effects’ and their ‘ends’ to feelings at the point where their affective trances become constitutive of ethics and politics in ways that elude not only outside observers, but also authorial and creative aspirations, idealisms and intentions.
 7. In a longer analysis of this work, I have argued how Rainer’s compulsive re-telling of her artistic moves in many performance and performative ways, much like her recursive re-writing of her life and struggles in many public and published versions, release covert narratives of passions, desires, disguises, sensuality and private idealism that the aesthetics of her work do far less to acknowledge. Rainer’s compulsive reprisals of her own work, I argue, seem to be tracing a reparative intervention.
 8. The full title of Rainer’s essay was "Some Retrospective Notes on a Dance for 10 People and 12 Mattresses Called Parts of Some Sextets, Performed at the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut, and Judson Memorial Church, New York, in March, 1965," published in the *Tulane Drama Review* 10 (Winter 1965) as a retrospective review of the dance, later reprinted in Rainer’s 1974 publication *Work 1961-73*, which is the source referred to here. The so-called ‘NO Manifesto’ were in effect the notes added by Rainer as postscript.
 9. Rainer’s recessive mode of expression points more broadly, I feel, to a central anxiety of the Minimalist venture, which claimed to create uninflected shapes that meant *nothing*. The critic Michael Fried notoriously found its formalist aesthetics suspicious and alienating describing it as a ‘literalist’ work that ‘distances the beholder—not just physically but psychically’ (1968, 140) According to Fried, minimalist art threatened authentic aesthetic experience by refusing to ‘let the viewer alone—which is to say it refuses to stop

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confronting him, distancing him, isolating him' (ibid.). Ultimately, the problem with the object of minimal art, for Fried, is the 'affect' of literalness; it is what it feels like to stand in front of a Robert Morris or Tony Smith, Dan Flavin or Carl Andre—a numb solipsism. I would like to counter these ideas here with the sense that the matter with minimalist form is not the 'affect' of literalness but affect *in its* literalness.

10. Rainer is famous for the use of long quips as titles of her essays. My analysis here refers to the publication of the DVD recording of this lecture-performance published in the Canadian journal *PUBLIC 44: Experimental Media* (December 2012). However, the citations are taken from the published in 2010 in the *Theatre Journal*.
11. To garner a sense of Catterson's own unique relationship to *Trio A* and her forty-year experience of performing, teaching and devising the retrograde version of this dance see her 2009 article "I Promised Myself I Would Never Let It Leave My Body's Memory" in the *Dance Research Journal*.
12. On the aesthetic and political valence of ugly feelings see Sianne Ngai (2005).
13. This term finds traction in José Muñoz's definition of disidentification as a strategy of resistance and survival for minority subjects (1999). Perhaps it is worth mentioning that, in her later years, Rainer came out as lesbian. For the powerful role of shame in gay lives, gay politics, and gay culture, see *Gay Shame* edited by David M. Halperin & Valerie Traub (2009).
14. Kathleen Stewart (2007) brings attention to what happens when common feelings accrete—or burst. The author defines the ordinary as 'a drifting immersion that watches and waits for something to pop up' (95). The denizens are the instances, particulars, and singularities of feelings that strangely embody 'a collection of trajectories and circuits' (59) that animate the everyday, attracting and repelling and urging into being, always beside others.
15. Lacan dubs this situation of displaced relatedness as one of extimité (extimacy). See Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959–1960*, trans. Dennis Porter (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978).
16. See Judith Butler (2004). According to Butler's theory of identity defined through the experience of ecstasy, of being 'beside oneself,' individuation through same-sex sexuality places prime importance on the Levinasian ethic of existing for the other, or for the other-in-relationship.