

Between Intervention and Utopia: Dance Politics

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SOCIALIST ENSEMBLES

Myriad are the intersections that locate dance in the realm of the political. The conceptions of who can move for what, the conventions by which people gather, the spaces made available, the training and preparation, notions of embodiment – all bear upon dance, and constitute the field of forces and constraints through which it is borne into being. Yet dance also makes its own politics, crafts its own pathways and agency in the world, moves us toward what we imagine to be possible and desirable. Dance tangibly if momentarily materializes bodies assembled on their own behalf, a social ensemble made by its own means towards its immediate ends. It gathers its public then disperses them suddenly, leaving a sensible residue of what has been and what can only be desired, namely the will to create more. An offering of what we can have together now, a promise manifest immediately of what we might be, dance sets in motion is and ought, it moves into the world pressing our surround to be otherwise, while it figures a taste of what world we might have if it were left to our own creative designs. Against the facile dismissal of political aspirations as forever insufficient to what they face, dance offers a surfeit of possibility, it makes legible the very means by which action is joined, measures taken, steps carried through. An ensemble that manufactures a social body that releases its own excess, that orients practical accomplishment toward itself, this expansive sense of the social that exists in and for itself, grounds a socialism that issues from the loins and beads of sweat made in movement together.

While dance is no one thing as much as it is all around, it is hardly sufficient to the world it would seek to render onto our public stages. Rather than in-

sist that all stay in line, keep in step, for politics, it must be insisted, dance is good to think with. To the expectation that a solitary performance make all the difference, can be the change it wants to see in the world, admittedly dance and protest share a certain predicament (cf. Foster 2003). Both organize ephemerality, stage disappearance, leave a sense of lack (if only more had been done to get people to come, if only some more, a few, a few hundred, the event would have made its mark). All the work of planning, rehearsing, propagandizing, arranging the space, coordinating the moment, meeting and meeting again, vanishes within moments of its consummation in the live act of inhabiting the appointed space. When the curtain closes, the march is done, the crowd disperses – where do all those people go? What do they bring with them of that fragile collectivity? How is the prowess of possibility traced when the ensemble in its unique condition of ensemble has been undone? What might give that glorious critical presence a longer run? The organizers, presenters, performers all know that their fate lies near, that the show cannot go on forever, that there will be a return. Surely the experience will have delivered its change, which now morphs into the fractured bodies and quotidian pathways still bristling with the achievement of the newly departed performance, but unsure of how to recognize its durable impression. A critique, a news notice passes judgment. It was good or bad, successful or not. But these cards of evaluation are stacked against the deck of this lone event.

Perhaps in both performance and protest, the lack lies not in what was put on display, but in how to notice the ways that an assemblage invited to take a different course, to move otherwise, now lives on. The movement for change and the changeful movement are most commonly viewed through the lens of arrest, the critical act of judgment fixes what it looks at, creates a theater for theory by stripping out the very motion that would take the event beyond itself. This regard of critical evaluation is tempted to freeze motion and fix the present, unmoor the ongoing movement that makes history from its animating ideas, in short to provoke a crisis of seeing that it ascribes to the thing it sees. To this sense that what we create is forever insufficient to what needs doing – a disposition that joins activism and art-making that compels further creativity but also dismisses the efficacy of what has been made – we need a corrective. To think, to see, to sense from within dance, is to take motion not stasis as our posture of evaluation.

To privilege dance analytically, as a critical method, invites thought from within its own conditions of movement, from the means through which bodies are assembled and not by the terms through which their impact is brought to an end. To find ourselves in dance is to locate our repertoires of engagement as already in motion. And these self-making bodies move variously, interdependently, multiply. Even in unison, difference is legible. Choreography discloses mul-

tiplicity under an artistic signature. What seems to issue from one body rests upon the coordinated and interdependent effort of so many and occasions a self-expansive sociality. Dance is an ensemble of ensembles, an accomplishment of its own surplus that bequeaths a fateful remainder, an unabsorbable promise to all in attendance.

MOBILIZATION

In conventional politics, to characterize something as a dance is to see it as evasive, afield of authenticity, swirling around its object, somehow caught out of time unable to affect the progress it seeks. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, this figurative invocation of dance suggests, “to lead, rarely give (a person) a dance; fig. to lead (him) in a wearying, perplexing, or disappointing course; to cause him to undergo exertion or worry with no adequate result” (cf. OED.com). A casual scan across the digital horizon would yield such phrases as “The Reconciliation Dance” (on politics and crime); “Wild Finance: Where Money and Politics Dance” (on the financial bailout); “The Dance of the Apologists” (on the persistence of racism in response to Obama’s election) (cf. Google.com, December 2, 2009). Dance, in these examples, is a prelude to real decisions taken, more, it is a distraction side-stepping what really needs to get done if only a more muscular encounter could plant antagonists firmly before one another. The political stage is already set, its props familiar, the characteristics, motives, and methods of its *dramatis personae* already known. The actors take their places, ready to make history once the music stops and the distracting dance comes to an end.

Despite this script for heroic narrative, the agency therein, is thoroughly diminished. Actions unfold in a time and space that have been preordained, the parameters of difference, the staging of conflict, the drama of decision already determined by conditions fixed in advance. For dance to exert its politics, it must be demetaphorized, reliteralized, its body must be entered and effects felt as conditions of perception. Lived from within, dance is not locked in time and space, not an apostle at the Cartesian altar, but an apostate of containment. Dance allows its achievements to appear to precede it, its compelling capacity to inhabit time and space, to make of these its art, rests upon its own artifice, its internal devices for generating the very environment in which it takes place.

The shift in perspective from movement to mobilization names this salient distinction. It forces our attention on how space and time are accomplished, on how agency (the forces that bear a critical idea) and history (the material embo-

diment of possibility) are intertwined. By this reckoning within the terms of dance, choreography and performance constitute precisely this fragile dialectic between political becoming and being, a desire for difference and a capacity for realization. Choreographic agency proceeds from training and conception to rehearsal and staging to enunciate the occasion by which we gather ourselves, while performance is a moment of realization whereby the immediate public, the unstable audience (cf. Blau 1990) constitutes the reception through which further mediation, efficacy and impact will transpire.

The double temporality by which the dance moves towards its performative ends and the public is assembled out of its own diffuse corporality marks this fleeting co-production of a tangible space and time. This ongoing mobilization, is made legible in performance but also seemingly brought to an end by it, the critical presence thereby assembled passes from history as a constitutive to its own historical trace of the event past. That the dance unleashes its physicality as a practical capacity to assemble, also speaks to the movements elsewhere, the mediations, or social-corporal media through which a danced idea percolates through the world. The dance of politics is not a prelude to its becoming reality, but rather, a realization of its operations, its play of script and inscription, the images that form on its bodily materializations. Yet the conventional language for politics is all about stop and go, failure and success, loss and gain. Steps are recorded without the movement that would allow us to see what made it possible for these measures to be taken, what other forces still move in our midst, what multiplicities were unleashed when the ultimate decree was rendered. Without mobilization, politics is only crisis, an arrest of its own conditions of possibility without hope of how these might be superceded. The omnipotent theoretical gaze fixes what it regards, deprives its object of the motion internal to thought, brings what it sees into crisis. Mobilization is the perspective of that which is already in motion, that whose turning point invariably turns into something else, which provides its means to continue past arrested conditions. Thinking through dance, keeps its object in sight as it continues to move with what animates reflection, the incessant assembly and dissolution of what and how we move. To address how movement may sidestep its compulsions, affect its own counterpoints, drive itself into unacknowledged registers, even surpass its own initiatives and impulses, dance delivers amplitude of understanding.

SOCIAL KINESTHETIC

Dance is an art that is not one. Neither singular in where it comes from nor fixed in where its goes, it can be found anywhere, at any time. Too often regulated by definition, boundaries policed by formal preference, it is more generatively understood and put to work through its operations, methods and effects. It is no less possible to imagine a language of dance's critical techniques than to catalog its esthetic registers and to classify preferences for what gets to be called (and who is allowed to hail) that moveable feast devoured as dance. A few gestures toward that critical analytic grammar can be offered, but certainly dance will not be exhausted through such exercises. Dance is at once a vast and immeasurable inventory of concepts and practices. But it is also a promissory note by which we can give value to movement in our midst. Such a gambit requires a constant shuttling between abstract and concrete, elaborate flights and sticky encumbrances. Dance will be invoked and inscribed in exercising and discharging this double duty.

Past and present share a moment in dance, as reconstructions display as much about movement that once was as it does about steps that have never left us. Dance gathers what is temporally durable and ephemeral, the deep knowledge of how bodies are mutually enabling and how pregnant each moment can be. The body is a movable archeology, it layers the long duree of bipedalism, the composite of what is mediated from elsewhere and what presses flesh-to-flesh, the hammered rhythms of urban density and global migrations, the restless appropriations, the ceaseless citations, the unauthored innovations. Dancing articulates this time of times, it crafts a passageway for difference to converge – albeit fragily, momentarily. While dance traverses a multiple temporality, its spatial arrays are no less complex. Moving together anywhere encumbers a debt to others elsewhere. Performance is but one currency of repayment. Theft is but one instance of damage, but permission to give what has already been taken typically proves elusive. Dance bears all the traces of where people have been forced to move and where they have forced movement, of how the body has been shackled and what might constitute its emancipation, of ways around its detractors and novel applications of its cooperation.

If dance's specificity is a reflexive mobilization, an assemblage of how we move together to disclose where we might get to, a material inscription of the time and space that assembles social bodies making their world, its idioms, methods, occasions, and effects cannot be readily regulated by aesthetic fiat. Restricted to the genealogy of the western proscenium, the concert stage, dance is as a consequence considered a minor art form. But as a minority discourse, a condensation of the unspoken and unthought repertory of embodied practice,

dance is a crucial analytic method that makes legible a larger sweep of how we move together. Of course in the expanded field of cultural and corporal practice, there is plenty of dance to go around, and few steps need to be taken to run into it. While dance can be affiliated with its global manifestations and articulated with popular and professional body techniques like sport, its principles of operation and affinity, its means of appropriation and innovation, suggest a broader corporal mapping of society as ongoing movement. Yet before there is movement, enunciation or inscription, there needs to be some shared sensibility, some array of physical pressures and agglutinations that orient and dispose what may get produced as bodily practice and what might get concatenated in dance practices. This predicate of movement, this disposition to assemble, adhere, pass through, align and locomote, the physical grounds and motional loam of a particular social and historical conjuncture, can be called a social kinesthetic.

Hence, it is not enough to say that the lineaments of embodied practice have a history, it is also important to ascertain the ways in which they make history. As such, social kinesthetics emerge and recede in relation to other societal formations, constitutions of population, aggregations of collective capacity and wealth. The combined histories of capitalist development and underdevelopment, the colonial trick of civilizational subjugation, the imperial displacements of periphery to metropole, the great sorting of population by race, the gendered differentiation of space into public and private, the normalization of libidinal economies into straight and queer, the rendering of nature into a salvageable and manageable environment, the parsing of belief into reason and faith, the cleavage of knowledge by metrics of expertise – compel the world to be wrought in terms of a global body, a mighty and unrealized corporal humanity. Efficiency, rationalization, integration, individuation, universalism, progress, freedom, enlightenment, modernization are the watchwords of this grand social kinesthetic.

But just as these forces are marshaled to make the body, a body, the human body cohere at the center of its universe, consummating the value of the upright, the balanced, the gyroscopic momentum freeing and gravity defying energies of transcendence as a centering kinesthetic calling all to get in line, much more was slipping out and away, reorienting itself and redirecting its flows. The vivid and manifold movements of decolonization would voice themselves in a thousand chants that collide and collude in an irrepressible polyrhythm. The contest between the forces that center and decenter bodies in movement is no less resolved than that between colonization and decolonization as such. The efforts to liberate nations from the stronghold of their colonial formation, which led in the 1950s to the declaration of a third world, one out of alignment with the polarizing grip of Cold War geo-politics are still being played out in what is now more commonly

referred to as the global south (cf. Ahmad 1992). And just as the networked movements of the 1960s would render political whole realms of endeavor once consigned to the unactionable grounds of unconscious desire, the private, the spaces of reproduction, consumption and domesticity, new technologies of enclosure, control, data-mining and intellectual property, commodification of affect and traffic in bodily material would devise all manner of capture media.

In the friction between social kinesthetics, in the myriad combinations of movement, bodily practices emerge that craft disparate principles of congregation, alignment, affiliation, routes of passage and historical locomotion. While the decolonization of the mind yields vast archives of writing, voicing, critique, that of the body produces manifold repertoires of motional expression, bodily stylistics, physical resonance (cf. Wa Thiongo 1986). More than a struggle of control and refusal, of domination and resistance, of appropriation and escape, the politics and practices that issue from a given social kinesthetic make tangible the resources of mobilization, the aesthetics of difference, the mediations of social ensembles, the deepening techniques of mutuality that forge their ways in the world. Hence decolonization breaches that seal that had governed movement verticality, much dance emerges in the break and in turn, the physicalization of movement breaks open what is taken to be dancing. Certainly, one instance of this break is referred to as the postmodern, a valorization of the pedestrian over the exalted, of ensemble composition and improvisation over a possessive choreographic authority, of a participative community over a proscenium-divided audience, of a spatial diffusion of where dance might occur against a hierarchy of specialized theatrical venues.

No doubt, the break or periodization scheme is easy to overstate, as those artists clustered as modern where the contemporaries of those designated as postmodern, and the larger narrative of succession through formal innovation so fundamental to the ethos of modernism was carried forward. Yet if we widen our critical optic beyond esthetic evaluation and stylistic innovation, the genealogies that lead from Judson Church to contact improvisation, to the urban dance scenes of San Francisco, Seattle, Minneapolis, Boston, New York, as well as Montreal, Paris, Berlin, Havana, Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Tokyo, a different principle of association will hove into view – one already hinted at when the fable of an originary location for an avant-garde is subject to greater scrutiny (cf. Burt 2006). At issue here are not some ultimate bragging rights as to where it all began, but a re-valuation of how movement moves, of diasporic dispersions of style, of a certain corporal globalization.

The decentered social kinesthetic sets many practices into global circulation, and by so doing spreads a different means by which mobilization takes place.

Capoeira, for example, which shares with contact improvisation the re-orientation of upward alignment, spends a century under construction in Brazil before becoming part of an international attention to traveling movement practices (cf. Browning 1995; Lewis 1992). Break-dance too elaborates upon the released hips of black popular dance, incorporates call-and-response forms grounded in practices such as the ring-shout, and inverts the cosmology of up and down, front and back (cf. Gottschild 2003; Baner 1979; Stuckey 1987). Boarding culture, from its appropriation of a centuries-old Hawaiian practice in the desuburbanized beachfront of Los Angeles, and translation from surfing ocean waves to skating the edges of empty swimming pools, to shattering the pristine moguls of ski slopes, is branded as extreme (sport) even as it continues its street routes (cf. Borden 2001).

While these practices span diverse geographies and populations, and evoke disparate performance protocols and ensemble ethos, they also share dimensions of lateral affiliation, an expansive valorization of quotidian spaces, a commitment to flying low when high flying mobility has visited such ruin, and perhaps above all, an engagement with the production of risk as a promise of self-appreciation and unexpected gain (cf. Feher 2009). Surely these practices share the ambiguous legacy of appropriation and commercialization, of sponsors and celebrity, but it is safe to say that none are exhausted by these conventions of market culture. While individual risks may be captured as exemplary, the expanded capacities for what bodies do together, for what ground they break, for the desires they unleash, the debts they place in circulation, and the demands they place upon one another in a sustainable sociality, all point to a more ambitious realization of this potential for moving otherwise. The social kinesthetic is the loam from which emerges this ceaseless stream of possibility.

RISK

An inventory of the movement capacities unleashed by the decentered social kinesthetic of decolonization lends itself to a veritable visceral exuberance. By the 1980s, dance typed as experimental, to say nothing of sport labeled extreme, would be celebrated for its embrace and elaboration of risk (cf. McNamee 2007). There is certainly dance that courts danger, that demands sustained exertion, relishes speed, and subjects bodies to an edgy precarity, foregrounding risk also pursued the arts of surprise, violation of expectation, trespass of norm that might more readily place established cultural norms in danger of being disturbed. Risk in this regard, fueled dance's gift economy. By enjoining participants to rely so

highly upon one another for making and sustaining art, the cultural discount of free labor (cf. Ross 2000) crafted an intimacy of social engagement that made the immediacy of an idealized community an offering for what could be conceived as society. But this affirmative conception of risk, the generous grasp of what could be ventured to make the most of creative excesses, quickly met its evil twin.

The dance world was under assault by a series of forces that also fell under the rubric of risk. Certainly there was acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), which made its epidemiological debut identified as Gay Related Complex by the government body for public health, the Centers For Disease Control (cf. Altman 1986). That risky dance was in many ways queer to normal habits of movement, that it distressed notions of monogamous non-touching intimacy, that it rendered movement itself promiscuous, unbounded, voracious, seemed a condition destined to draw dance into the victimology by which the Human Immuno-deficiency Virus (HIV) was initially called to account. The anxiety that some category of subject carries baleful qualities that can quickly infect others with the purported failure of being is known as a moral panic (cf. Hall et al. 1978). The notion of a racially encoded crime wave is modeled on one such instance of contagion. Queer sexuality certainly qualifies as well. Art that produces a state of risk not readily reabsorbed into standard metrics of worth would also stand for an unbearable risk. No doubt such reasoning was in evidence when four of eighty-thousand grants conferred by the National Endowment for the Arts in the United States were deemed indecent to some imagined community's standards of propriety (cf. Yudice 2003). And yet to stop the spread of such bad risk, the Endowment itself would need to be defunded. At stake, of course, were not huge sums – or even monies commensurate with the expansive impact of the arts in question, let alone sufficient to either arrest or enable an arts economy. Rather, the excessive attention given to public funding of the arts stood in for the question of what the social body itself might be entitled to as a condition of its further development.

Within this constellation, dance met its own public controversy in the form of the accusation of victim art that critic Arlene Croce directed at choreographer Bill T. Jones. The manifest claim was that a work entitled *Still/Here*, placed dying bodies onstage and transgressed the line between life and artistic representation, and justified a criticism based on a refusal of the critic to actually view the piece. Underneath lay an accusation that Jones had deigned to speak back to the critic from his privileged place onstage. By so doing, he usurped her role, making criticism itself a victim of dance's newfound powers of representation (cf. Croce 1994; Martin 1996). This displacement of expertise, the loss of the spe-

cialist's authority, already anticipated in dance's own decolonizing pedestrian turn, was now directed at the object over which it once claimed mastery. Clearly, dance was not alone in this predicament of seeing its very expansion or democratization, its expanded access and energized publics, now turning back on its ability to govern its own practices, reception, and valuation. In this, dance shared a circumstance with the larger condition known as the postmodern (cf. Lyotard 1984). But what was then viewed as an undermining of the sweeping narrative by which all peoples would be given a history, now in the context of what came to be called the culture wars, looks more like a skepticism toward the authority of specialized knowledge, the very *petit recit* whose decentring triumph the postmodern was said to celebrate.

Dance – at least as referenced here – stood at the crossroads of a much larger conjuncture. Its exploration of risk looked as though it might have been drowned in the din of something called the risk society (cf. Beck 1992). Its expanded valorization of movement seemed to suffer the same menacing disorientation as the more general mistrust of expertise. Its commitment to the experimental, the speculative, the detour from security, came face to face with a generalized logic of accountability, hyper-productivity driven investment, and loss of a social compact dedicated to securing the domestic population (cf. Klein 1997; Power 1997; Harvey 2005). This is not to say that the traps known as neoliberalism, neoconservatism, globalization, privatization, deregulation, re-engineering, shock therapy, and the like were lying in wait to take up dance's every move. Rather, it is to remember that what we take as a ruling notion has its roots elsewhere and lives with the likes of which it cannot abide and that suggest what else is already available.

Yet by dismantling what once had been a material commitment to security on the basis of citizenship was now shifting from a public good to a presumably private initiative. A basic cleavage became legible, a sorting of population between those who could bear risk, who can manage it for their own pecuniary and existential gain, and those who failed to meet the demands of these various metrics, those who passed into this failed state would be termed the at risk. The line between the risk capable and the at-risk could be crossed at any time, as the recent subprime meltdown in the United States made abundantly clear. Removing the means of security from a population treats them as an enemy within, one best dealt with through the framework of war. A series of such domestic wars ensued, signaled by a study commissioned in 1983 by then President Ronald Reagan to eliminate the department of education and pave the way for private and religious primary and secondary schooling where public education with its reliance on progressive tax revenues, once stood. The report, *A Nation At Risk* analogized

low tests scores of students when compared to those in other countries as a threat to national security tantamount to a condition of war (National Commission on Excellence in Education). A war metaphor was also central to the *No Child Left Behind Legislation* implemented two decades later under George W. Bush, which treated kids as casualties who would be rescued by raising their test scores. This war on education, was joined by a war on crime, drugs, welfare, culture and the arts, each designed to evacuate local autonomy in the name of nationally enforced remedial measures. The notion that some small portion of the population might detonate a failure for the rest also became the basis for the preemptive logic of the war on terror (cf. Martin 2007).

The future was not for the waiting, but needed to be anticipated and acted upon in the present. As such, the affirmative management of risk, the realization of excessive gain through a speculative venture, shared a temporal sensibility with the negative condition of risk. The focus of economic policy shifted from maximizing growth to minimizing inflation, from planning for the future through public investments to controlling monetary flows through interest-rate adjustments. The presumption that lay behind the policy shift was that few would undertake financial risks if their gains would be eroded through inflation, and indeed the double-digit inflation of the seventies left stock market participation to but one in ten U.S. households. By the time of the Internet bubble in the late 1990s, more than half of households held some kind of financial portfolio (cf. Martin 2007). Unlike savings, or earlier logics of home ownership based on the adage, “buy-and-hold” liquidity, the ability to set money into motion became the order of the day (cf. Bryan/Rafferty 2006). The failure of the risk management models to maintain liquidity was the proximate cause of the financial meltdown that erupted in 2007. The shock and awe promised by the brilliant formulae quickly turned to disappointment and disbelief. Over and over again we heard incredulity toward the inability of financial knowledge to control its domain. “They were the smartest guys in the room. How could they have so completely misunderstood what they were doing?” (cf. McLean/Elkind 2003) If this faith in small numbers and a few brilliant minds turned out to be misplaced, if the obscure ideas rehearsed in small rooms proved incapable of delivering on their promise of risk, might there be some other quarter for risk making to which we might want to again direct our attentions. Perhaps the standard polarity of smart minds and dumb bodies would need to be reversed if risk would again seem to be a gambit worth undertaking.

UTOPIA AND INTERVENTION

The regime of risk just described was not simply an ideology, a mode of cognition, or a way of knowing – though surely it was all these things. The appeal of risk was to a new kind of being, one that eschewed security for self-appreciation, unexpected gain – above all risk would be subject to somatization, embodied, borne peripatetically. The vendors of risk management when asked how to ascertain whether an investment portfolio had an appropriate load for the individual in question would typically reply, “can you sleep at night”. Risk thus became a kind of dream, a delivery from the future to the present. But this rush of what was to come into the realm of what now is offers a very different time sense than the conventional formulation of modernist utopia as a space from elsewhere in a time still to come. The dreamscape that claimed a life of hard work and labor would lead to emancipation from work in the form of retirement and a better life to the generations to come was capital’s utopia that rested on an allochronic sense of time, one securely set-off from the present. If the protocols of risk reconfigure time, they also reconstitute spatial sensibilities. While the old forms of consumer credit and debt dating to the days of Henry Ford assuming life-long employment in a firm or occupation, a career, and a stable home where one could repair from the exhausting demands of the work-day, the drive to flexibility usurped continuous employment and the home joined other forms of consumer credit as a liquid asset to be bundled with other debts, such as mortgages and securities (cf. Allon 2008). Lost were the anchoring relations of work and home to location, community, neighborhood as a spatial heartland. Drawing together debts from disparate sources and far-flung locations, slicing these financial assets according to their risk attributes, rendering local experience a function of widely dispersed affiliations and associations, a vertiginous series of effects was in evidence in both the subprime meltdown and the war on terror. Intervention – the sense of being able to act anywhere without proximate cause – shifted from a realm of necessity to one of discretion, from a fixed space to a spatial fix.

At this point, the production of time and space, the embodiment of risk, the tangible offering of what can be and what is – all of which form such potent aspects of the present moment – find an immediate and coherent articulation in dance. Understandably, dance that is considered both experimental and speculative draws upon some of the very metrics of risk association with the expansion of rampant managerialism and burgeoning financial investment. The movement in question would share a social kinesthetic whose political effects it could not fully master. Dance work in these newly blossoming urban scenes would be flexible in ways that managerial humanism with its focus on quality circles, teams,

and other intimate ensembles would come to celebrate (cf. Gordon/Newfield 1996). The pick-up company could be taken as a kind of prototype for the self-managed, project-based, occasion-generated collaboration that was a celebrated feature of the new managerial approaches to conventional organizations (cf. de Monthoux 2004). But if dance would join other artistic profiles as the poster-children for a gentrifying, neo-liberal fantasy of economic renewal dubbed the creative class, dancers would also get caught, resist, and redirect the naïve bait-and-switch promises of these schemes. Here the formalism of risk management mirrors the esthetically-empty paeans of the creative class; to wit, gather artists in de-industrialized and blighted urban cores, add cafes, bars, theaters, mix and stir (cf. Pasquinelli 2008). The facile measures used to justify such programs definitively lacked a utopian aspect. Nor did they see in aggregations of artists' squats, collectives, self-organization and auto-production an intervention that might challenge the assimilation, appropriation and cooptation of artistic energies (cf. Sholette/Thompson 2004).

Surely, resolving dance's utopian energies and interventionist capacities into a single esthetic, a unitary organizational form, or a typical mode of dissemination would be equally problematic as the esthetic indifference common to much policy discussion in the arts. Symptomatic here is the rise of community-based arts as a funding rubric that would replace critical operations with promised delivery of social services in the name of authentic non-specialist ties (cf. Kwon 2002; Kester 2004). For dance, the move to community in this respect, whether popular-front inspired works of the 1930s, or the turn to the pedestrian associated with the postmodern, the professionalization of dance education and dance therapy, all represented multiple possibilities for affiliation that preceded the constitution of community-based work as a funding rubric that could soften the threatening aspects of work considered avant-garde. Croce's invocation of victim art slyly performs an esthetic essentialism for what she takes to be the literal transcription of real dying bodies into the protected sanctuary of artistic representation. Here, the irony of the criticism (lost to the critic) for this particular dance was that far from a spectacle of night-of-the-living-dead shuffling, *Still/Here* exhibited an excessive exuberance for dance in the face of death, an extensive inventory of dance styles, pyrotechnic abilities that precisely assembled a power to keep going when confronted with the threat to arrest movement and silence consideration of the work it should be permitted to do.

That dance has a capacity to stage such a close and productive encounter between what are often treated as discreet and incompatible temperaments, the vision of what could be and the move into what is, needs to be taken as testimony to how critical attentions could be effectively organized. In one way the break in

the visual arts between utopian and interventionist dispositions is redolent of the periodizing associations of the modern and postmodern as such (cf. Jameson 1984). Accordingly, the utopian belongs to an older avant-gardist metaphysic by which the artist, freed by their very marginality from society, offers a vision of the future that those ground by numbing normalizations cannot perceive. The interventionist sensibility would thereby provide a needed corrective, wherein artistic initiatives would issue from the pragmatic ground, take the long march through institutions as its canvas or medium, install, occupy, parody, reappropriate in order to demonstrate that direct action is possible and can, even if momentarily, disclose what the world can be (cf. Rossiter 2006). Notice that this last aspect, the coercive, corrective function's association with the tragic form is quickly turned comedic in a way that suggests something no less utopian, namely the cry that the world can be different and the confidence to state what this difference might entail. The art work does not substitute for the social service, but provides a spatial portrait and a temporal proxy, a momentary timeshift that seizes the imagined future.

Certainly there is exciting dance work that shares an interventionist sensibility. It is in-your-face, or in-the-streets, or extensively-online, or amidst-a-demonstration, or none-or-all of these things (cf. Gere 2004; Chatterjee 2004; Albright 1997). That is to say, dance is both caught up in a range of esthetic and political currents of which it cannot claim authorship, and a meshing ground where ensembles, mobilizations, kinesthetics, affiliations and associations can be composed and mixed. Dance does inscribe visions of how we can move together. It does array and concentrate forces and differences in manners both demonstrable and sustainable. It does report on what a very few can accomplish together, that can be passed on and enable passing, open passages. It can recalibrate time, detail its shifts, manufacture its assemblies. All of this is very tangible material of which life – as we know it and might want it – could be assembled. Dance moves into a space but also makes room out of what it inhabits, invites gatherings of publics and enhances their capacities to pay attention, give audition, conduct kinesthetic effects and affects elsewhere (cf. Savigliano 1995).

Surely the complexity and scale of what makes life and what ails it can seem incomprehensible, unmovable, impermeable. Yet attention is repeatedly paid to those small rooms where such generalized harm was meted out, the meetings where decisions were made to war, to expropriate, to enclose. Dance offers a different intimacy of attention, an alternative somatization of risk, a sustainability of difference, a mutuality of debt that can also be shared, leveraged, embraced. We are living an excess that breeds so much scarcity. There is time to turn to what registers an excess in small spaces, tiny movements, unexpectedly expan-

sive reliance that begins to assemble how else we might move together and how we might continue where these fleeting yet persistent performances leave off. Therein lays dance's promise beyond any singular incarnation, to amplify its means and methods toward a social that exceeds itself, a danced socialism from each accordingly toward all that find need in realizing what they want.

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