

Institutions, Politics, Performance Conference - Athens, Green Park, 24-28th September

movement: dancers Angeliki Dalangeli, Eva Papadopoulos

traceurs (Parkour) Kim Chowdhury, Nikolay Ivonov

text: Monika Jaeckel

keywords: transversing barriers / shifting boundaries

general instruction: jump, transvers, bounce, touch, turn

ahhhhhh ... My voice, coming from an inside, becomes an exteriority within this site.

Shifting Boundaries: Exteriority within phenomena - Performing in site - inside

*Theories are performative of the phenomena they seek to understand*¹ is how R. Coleman references K. Barad's *Agential Realism*². It seems thus to provide a good method to bring 'performative practice and institutional performativity' into the relation they rather seem to have. Phenomena in Barad's theory translate into differential patterns of mattering that are constitutive of reality³, as such theory appears understood as a practice in itself, and has been taken as source for this layered experiment. By playing with and challenging on different levels the set-up frame of instantiations, this presentation addresses boundaries as porous and as such shifting across the fields. In taking *transversality*⁴ as a movement, its "micropolitical" nature appears in the sense of Félix Guattari *as a means to search for the new—not by critiquing the old, but by radically questioning (or smoothening out) all the barriers that supported its logic*⁵.

The questioning of 'older logical' barriers is also tackled in the presented format through the relation that each relevant situation establishes from responses to conference calls. If this

¹ Coleman, Rebecca. "Inventive Feminist Theory: Representation, Materiality and Intensive Time" in *Woman: a cultural review*, Vol.25, No.1, 2014, p.27

² Barad, Karen. *Meeting the Univers Halfway*, Duke University Press, 2007 – Based on her insights into quantum physics and Bohr's philosophy.

³ *Ibid.*: p.140

⁴ Dolphin, Rick & van der Tuin, Iris. "Introduction: A "New Tradition" in Thought" in *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies*, 2012, p.89,

⁵ *Ibid.* p.100

experimental setting is invited, it might unintentionally bring physical movement into an academic environment at much less performance orientated events than this one. But the surprise effect is not one-directional, it also means for this presentation to stay open and alert to the circumstances of the location and the incorporated knowledge of the participants - Angeliki Dalangeli, Eva Papadopoulos, Kim Chowdhury, Nikolay Ivonov - and the audience.

Exteriority within - Performing in site - inside

The performance and its text understand movement (including that by which thought is pushed forward) as the basic intra-active force that influences how meaning comes together. The notion *exteriority-within-phenomena*, as brought up by K. Barad, can be generalized as distrust into the possibility of a comprehensive outside view. It conveys an understanding of agency, not as a separate entity, but as emerging from an ongoing intra-active engagement with the surrounding matter and thus the coming to matter and meaning. Even at this position and this very moment⁶ - meaning evolves through enacting agential separability in any intra-action as a *cutting together-apart*,⁷ which again appears different from any taken position. (from yours, yours and yours ...)

Amanda Machin suggests through her reading of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology: *Meaning isn't given in the world nor is it the privilege of a rational mind; rather, meaning arises in shifting inter-corporeality and is not always transparent to conscious thought*⁸. She elucidates that 'the rational', which is central to the political subjectivity of conventional accounts is interpreted as a conscious mind that through thinking would enable us to view ourselves as separate *from the world and thus allow to interpret it rationally*⁹.

⁶ Derrida, Jaques. "At This Very Moment In This Work Here I Am," trans. Ruben Berezdivin in *Re-reading Levinas*, 1991

⁷ Barad, Karen. "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter", in *Signs*, Vol. 28, No. 3, 2004, p.815

⁸ Machin, Amanda, "Mouffe, Merleau-Ponty and Others: The View from Somewhere?", in *Parallax*, Vol.20, No.2, 2014, p.76

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.74

Machin counters this representational viewpoint with Merleau-Ponty's insight of intersecting experiences that merge aspects of *subjectivity and intersubjectivity*. Rationality, she suggests, does not exist as *a transcendental objectivity, but in a way of blending intersubjective body perspectives*¹⁰.

Equating the 'rational' with detached thought movement removes it from the environment, that includes human embodiment, which in its thought and affects always is influenced through its situation. Consequently for Donna Haraway, rational knowledge is not pretending to disengage and claim itself of being free of interpretation. What she defines as *the metaphor for the ground of the rational, is a splitting of senses, a confusion of voice and sight, rather than clear and distinct ideas*¹¹. Concluding that the *'full' and total position is the search for the fetishized perfect subject of oppositional history*¹² Haraway suggests to seek instead for the *connections and unexpected openings that situated knowledges make possible. To be somewhere in particular, she argues, is the only way to find a larger vision*¹³.

Being somewhere and transversing further:

Transcendentalizing gestures, that prioritize mind over matter or culture over nature, follow humanist and dialecticist thought and neglect the relation any negation already entails¹⁴ van der Tuin and Dolphin argue from a *new materialist* viewpoint. They reference Lynn Hankinson Nelson's conclusion that dichotomies are marked as *unreal* and oppositions as *non-exhaustive*¹⁵ by the fact that one pole of a dichotomy or binary is always already implied in the other. Transversing these barriers of humanist thought's dependency on dualism R. Braidotti goes beyond this binary-induced oppositional undoing in her 'carnal materialism'¹⁶ and emphasizes the co-constitution of 'embodied subjectivity'.

¹⁰ Machin, Amanda., "Mouffe, Merleau-Ponty and Others: The View from Somewhere?", in *Parallax*, Vol.20, No.2, 2014, p.74, 76

¹¹ Haraway, Donna. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective" in *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 14, No.3, 1988, p.590

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 586

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 590

¹⁴ Dolphin, Rick & van der Tuin, Iris. "The Transversality of New Materialism" in *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies*, 2012, p. 98

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.97 (emphasis original)

¹⁶ Braidotti, Rosi. *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006, p.182

Coming through Deleuze she defines the body as an embodied memory that [n]either a sacralized inner sanctum, nor a pure socially shaped entity, [...] is a folding-in of external influences and a simultaneous unfolding outwards of affects¹⁷. K. Barad's *Agential Realism* follows a similar route that includes the body's mattering as matter, as matter's responsibility. A fact that becomes simplified and undone in representational interpretations through a profound mistrust that is 'holding [matter] off at a distance, [...] as passive, immutable and mute'¹⁸. Although it is an obvious practice, according to A. Machin, that participants of the political terrain are expected to leave behind their corporeality¹⁹. Yet it is not a subject that pre-exists its situated standpoint, but a subjectivity that is called into being as an expression of socio-political difference²⁰ as its relational configurations just emerge in the process of being somewhere.

Following the implicit interdisciplinary transversality of *New Materialism* Iris van der Tuin and Rick Dolphin push this point further by conceptualizing matter as immanent. As a qualitative shifting of a dual opposition²¹ subject and object, the individual, the social, and the symbolic are seen as co-constituted in relation instead of being mediated through it. Their mutual relationality of mattering becomes apparent in the *agential cut* of an *exteriority-within*. The *cut's* viewpoint of *exteriority* as moment of an opening and separation emerges from intra-action. The reality this *agential cut* provides is always intra-actively conceived within the iterative concept of further *exteriority-within-phenomena*²² and consequently can neither offer an absolute outside view, nor a persistent scene.

¹⁷ Dolphin, Rick & van der Tuin, Iris. "The Transversality of New Materialism" in *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies*, 2012, p.96

¹⁸ Coleman, Rebecca. "Inventive Feminist Theory: Representation, Materiality and Intensive Time" in *Woman: a cultural review*, Vol.25, No.1, 2014, p.35, Barad, Karen. *Meeting the Unvers Halfway*, Duke University Press, p.133

¹⁹ Machin, Amanda. "Mouffe, Merleau-Ponty and Others: The View from Somewhere?", in *Parallax*, Vol.20, No.2, 2014, p.73

²⁰ Hinton, Peta. "Situated Knowledges and New Materialism(s): rethinking a Politics of Location" in *Woman: a cultural review*, Vol.25, No.1, 2014, p.108

²¹ Dolphin, Rick & van der Tuin, Iris. "The Transversality of New Materialism" in *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies*, 2012, p.106-107

²² Barad, Karen. *Meeting the Unvers Halfway*, Duke University Press, p.140: The notion of agential separability is of fundamental importance, for in the absence of a classical ontological condition of exteriority between observer and observed, it provides an alternative ontological condition for the possibility of objectivity.

Acknowledging that materiality and culture are both active and work on each other not only ‘re-turns’ *the idea of a unidirectional causal relationship between discourse and materiality*²³, but defines the process of identity as deeply intertwined with the world’s becoming. Once understood as such iterative progressing representational concepts can no longer be seen as to produce fixed instantiations²⁴ that can be singled out in their meaning once and for all.

*Culture and materiality ‘have reciprocal agentic effects upon one another*²⁵, states Coleman indicating that also institutions of any kind have to be seen as instances of emergence rather than as fixed positions. Even if created deliberately and intentionally, their functional pattern goes beyond the conscious intentions of the involved²⁶ human and non-human actors.

Institutions are themselves material-discursively produced²⁷ structures of social practices.

Their barriers are exactly these structures that emerge from their boundary making practices and *materialize in intra-action with* other apparatuses. As such threaded through contingent structural relations of power institutional structures permeate the production of bodies and in that the constitution of *agential reality, as the reality within we intra-act and have our being*²⁸.

Our habitual bodily interaction in the world forms exactly that background of our perception²⁹ - that reproduces norms and differences shaping the intersubjectivity of the community³⁰. As such institutional frameworks perform equally on us and the environment, as they viceversa relate to our performance in and through them in drawing their (material-discursive) boundaries. That means [t]he *political subject [..] is repeatedly inscribed as the very means by which the world seeks to understand itself in its [sexed, raced, etc] difference*³¹.

²³ Coleman, Rebecca. "Inventive Feminist Theory: Representation, Materiality and Intensive Time" in *Woman: a cultural review*, Vol.25, No.1, 2014, p.38

²⁴ Coleman, Rebecca. "Inventive Feminist Theory: Representation, Materiality and Intensive Time" in *Woman: a cultural review*, Vol. 25, No.1, 2014

²⁵ Ibid., p.39

²⁶ Wikipedia: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institution> , accessed: 10.11.2015

²⁷ Barad, Karen. "Re(con)figuring Space, Time and Matter" in Dekoven, Marianne. *Feminist Locations: Global and Local, Theory and Practice*, Rutgers Uni.Press, 2001, p.80

²⁸ Ibid.: p.P.87

²⁹ Machin, Amanda., "Mouffe, Merleau-Ponty and Others: The View from Somewhere?", in *Parallax*, Vol.20, No.2, 2014, p.78

³⁰ Ibid., p.78

³¹ Hinton, Peta. "Situated Knowledges and New Materialism(s): rethinking a Politics of Location" in *Woman: a cultural review*, Vol.25, No.1, 2014, p.110

Understanding that subjectivity is dispersed and interwoven marks bodies as objects of knowledge - as boundary objects that participate in the creation of meaning. 'The body is never merely a passive transmitter of messages but plays an active role in the generation of perceptual meaning'.³² Diana Coole's sentence resonates in Haraway's insight that *boundaries shift from within*³³. Boundaries in themselves are porous and only contain provisionally. The drawing of them furthermore becomes risky through the implied act of vision which entails always the question of the power to see³⁴. Even if remote devices implicate differently, it is never a view from nowhere or an infinite vision. The seen is always translated from certain positions. To invalidate the impossible claim of absolute vision demands bringing together the partial and shared views that are produced and resonate³⁵ in situated knowledges³⁶.

While Peta Hinton points to Haraway's reminder that even such particular capacities as to see from the peripheries and the depths still entail a production of a perspective that at once is a non-innocent participation in what vision helps to produce³⁷, only including these aspects leads to an objectivity gained *through a joining of the partial perspectives of situatedness*³⁸.

As institutional frameworks often are built on unison structures breaking their 'logical barriers' open – also in our understanding of them - towards an extended intra-active approach is what creates a sharedness as part of the 'exclusive-ness' of our ideas and views. In consequence institutional structures need to be addressed as responsible and accountable in their material-discursive boundary making practices³⁹ that define *specific (re)configurings of*

³² Machin, Amanda. "Mouffe, Merleau-Ponty and Others: The View from Somewhere?", in *Parallax*, Vol.20, No.2, 2014, p.77, Coole, Diana. "Rethinking Agency: A Phenomenological Approach to Embodiment and Agentic Capacities", *Political Studies*, 53 (2005), p.128

³³ Haraway, Donna. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective" in *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 14, No.3, 1988, p.595

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.585

³⁵ *Ibid.*: p.588 -> Barad's respons-ibility: Barad, Karen. "On Touching – The Inhuman That Therefore I Am", in *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, p. 217; "Quantum Entanglements and Hauntological Relations of Inheritance", in *Derrida Today* 3.2, 2010, p. 265: Responsibility is not a calculation to be performed. It is a relation always already integral to the world's ongoing intra-active becoming and not-becoming. It is an iterative (re)opening up to, an enabling of responsiveness. Not through the realisation of some existing possibility, but through the iterative reworking of im/possibility, an ongoing rupturing, a cross-cutting of topological reconfiguring of the space of responsi-bility.

³⁶ *Ibid.*: p.582 / Adorno, Theodor, *Minima Moralia*, Frankfurt am Main, 1970. „Das Ganze ist das Unwahre“ p. 55, D.Diedrichsen in the interview with B.M.Scherer about the Anthropocene project / Interview / The Whole Earth : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=utF6DGfBsfM> (accessed: 10.9.2015)

³⁷ Hinton, Peta. "Situated Knowledges and New Materialism(s): rethinking a Politics of Location" in *Woman: a cultural review*, Vol.25, No.1, 2014, p.111

³⁸ Haraway, Donna. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective" in *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 14, No.3, 1988, p. 582

³⁹ Barad, Karen. "Re(con)figuring Space, Time and Matter" in Dekoven, Marianne. *Feminist Locations: Global and Local, Theory and Practice*, Rutgers Uni.Press, 2001, p. 99

*the world*⁴⁰. Important is not only what they constitute, but at the same time what is excluded and thus leaving undefined space for performative intervention and opts for new possibilities.

Partial views – sharedness – as new modes of organisation

A shift in formation that allows for *new modes of organization* has to take into account that one's point is always threaded and diffracted through the dynamics of spacetime manifolds⁴¹, which include different views and experiences, history and location, and human and non-human others – in past, present and future. These dynamics persistently create and shift boundaries as outside markers from an *exteriority-within*. As meaning making agential cuts they are always part of a certain constellation of iterative phenomena. The impossibility on an absolute 'outside' view that K. Barad defines as an *exteriority-within-phenomena* – is reflected in the diffracted objectivity which the partial views of situated knowledges provide.

Unforeseen perspectives and unfamiliar connotations emerge from *an ongoing rupturing, a cross-cutting of topological reconfigurations*⁴² – from *shifting boundaries in intra-action* that produce *unanticipated insights—'points of view' which 'can never be known in advance'..*⁴³ As Haraway states – *[s]ituated knowledges are about communities not about isolated individuals. [...] the joining of partial views and halting voices into a collective subject position that promises a vision of the means of ongoing finite embodiment, of living within limits and contradictions - of views from somewhere*⁴⁴, in which each has its own participating reality.

Intra-action (cutting-together-apart) is differential mattering through those *cuts that we help enact not because we do the choosing (neither do we escape responsibility because 'we' are 'chosen' by them), but because we are an agential part of the material becoming*⁴⁵... Being response/ible how matter comes to meaning (and viceversa) points out that it is no longer the

⁴⁰ Barad, Karen. *Meeting the Univers Halfway*, Duke University Press, p.237

⁴¹ Barad, Karen. *Meeting the Univers Halfway*, Duke University Press, (p.181)

⁴² Barad, "Quantum Entanglements and Hauntological Relations of Inheritance", in *Derrida Today* 3.2, 2010, p.265

⁴³ Hinton, Peta. "Situated Knowledges and New Materialism(s): rethinking a Politics of Location" in *Woman: a cultural review*, Vol.25, No.1, 2014, p.112

⁴⁴ Haraway, Donna. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective" in *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 14, No.3, 1988, p. 590

⁴⁵ Barad, Karen. *Meeting the Univers Halfway*, Duke University Press, p.178

accumulation *of further knowledge in accordance with a naïve notion of a knowledge society,* that is needed, but a reassessment through *sensuous-aesthetic practice, which sharpens our powers of judgment [..]*⁴⁶.

In reminding your senses through kinesthetic empathy⁴⁷ of *bodies that afford a chance to feel themselves moving through space*⁴⁸ by traversing barriers and shifting boundaries as an acting between (re)configurings of our intra-active mattering/being this lecture wants to transport the experience of crossing over established 'logics' and connect bodies as a field of knowing.

⁴⁶ Scherer, Bernd M. "A Report. An Introduction" in *The Anthropocene Project. A Report* booklet, October 2014, p.4/5

⁴⁷ Brandstetter, Gabriele; Egert, Gerko; Zubarik, Sabine. *Touching and Being Touched*, de Gruyter, 2013, p.7

⁴⁸ Paterson, Mark „ On 'Inner Touch' and the Moving Body" in *Touching and Being Touched*, de Gruyter, 2013, p.129 citing Carrie Noland