

Inclined bodies that imagine

Ixiar Rozas Elizalde

Mondragon University / irozas@mondragon.edu

Translated by Kristin Addish and George Hutton

Abstract

This text links the trajectory of American choreographer Steve Paxton with specific aspects of the thinking of Adriana Cavarero and Donna Haraway. For decades, Paxton has researched the human body through the experience of walking, the study of gravity and the creation of organic compost. Based on the concept of inclination developed by Adriana Cavarero, as a relational model in which the self inclines, becomes destabilised and relates from a state of vulnerability, I will argue that this awareness allows us to re-experience our relationship with the body and, therefore, with the world. To incline, to feel gravity and to imagine, opens different perceptions. They make up a sensibility from which, as in the creation of organic compost and its microorganisms and microspecies, it is possible to affect a wider structure. Haraway states that we are all compost, which leads us to position ourselves closer to the earth and to think of ourselves as human beings, *humus* beings: spaces in which others can grow.

keywords

inclination; gravity; improvisation; compost; imagination.

The earth is bigger than you. You might as well coordinate with it.

Nancy Stark Smith

An inclined body is an open body.

It was a 12th of March. Many stories begin like this, trying to mark a date, to immobilise it, as a way of setting out a before and an after. Depending on the country and the place, the starting date of this story will vary. Earlier or later. It will change according to the context, each person, each experience, each body. A before and an after caused by a viral ordeal that tore through our bodies, many of which died, for the first time in the history of humanity. For the first time, due to the speed of the spread of the virus

and its ability to be transmitted almost in real time in a totally interconnected world.

That day, the 12th of March, a great feeling of unreality and vulnerability took over all of our bodies. An unreality that turned out to be more real than ever before.¹ What was happening was happening to us all, and, furthermore, almost simultaneously. With small variations, but within the same timeframe, that is, the first third of March 2020. This surge in our vulnerability left us out in the open, yet, paradoxically, shut away in our own homes. There was still a huge distance between the place where our lives are decided and our lives themselves (Alba Rico, 2017), an insurmountable distance, and it affected the organisation of our lives as never before. And we were immediately struck by suspicion: was there any relation between the viral emergency and the dire ecological situation? We had lurched from a state of climate alarm to a health alarm barely understanding it at all.²

That afternoon, we began not to touch each other, not hug each other, not to kiss each other, and to keep our distance. The distance as determined by the authorities, following worldwide health advice. That afternoon, in Bilbao, amid the uncertainty and our creeping fears, choreographer Ion Munduate performed *Goldberg Versions* as part of the exhibition *Steve Paxton: Drafting Interior Techniques*.³ After the presentation, the performer, the performance, the audience and the exhibition itself inclined upon the invisible thread of the ephemeral.

Open, inclined bodies.

This is one of the images.

And the other one, inclined bodies that imagine.

This text intertwines the work of American choreographer and improviser Steve Paxton with the thinking of Adriana Cavarero and Donna Haraway, to try to think about the relationships between the dancing body, inclination and gravity, the elaboration of organic compost and the imagination. For decades, Paxton has been devoted to researching the human body through his artistic practice and his everyday life. Both on his own and in collaboration with others, he has explored the action of walking, and he has worked up his Contact Improvisation technique (CI, from now on) alongside his study of gravity. And all the while, he has also dedicated himself to making organic compost at Mad Brook Farm, an artists' commune in north of Vermont, USA, where he has lived since the 1970s.

Based on the concept of inclination, as developed by Adriana Cavarero in her critique of rectitude and verticality as a relational model—in which the self inclines, becomes destabilised and relates from a state of vulnerability—I shall argue that an awareness of the effect of physical gravity, inclining before it, in our case through the movement of dance, allows us to re-experience our relationship with the body. It opens up different perceptions, sensations and affects; it interrupts the frenetic straight line of visual activity and its squandering of energy.

Dance, understood as the study and observation of the micro-movements that take place in our body—which Paxton developed in his own particular way, as I will explain later—forms a sensitivity from which, just like the elaboration of organic compost (or com-post, following Haraway) and its microorganisms, it is possible to take on—embrace— affect⁴ and imagine a greater structure. In *Staying with the Trouble*, Donna Haraway claims that we are all compost. This means that in us, within us—and not just after us—there is the possibility for other beings and species to grow. In other words, my body, my ideas and my affects are spaces where others can grow, develop, interact.



1. Inclination

An inclined body rethinks its posture.

An inclined body is a body that embraces.

In *Inclinazioni. Critica della rettitudine*, Adriana Cavarero explores inclination as a relational model in opposition to masculine verticality, in order to rethink a subjectivity marked by vulnerability and difference. The Italian feminist thinker invites us to think about the relation in itself as original and constitutive, as an essential aspect of what is human, a relation that, in addition to connecting free and autonomous individuals, forms a continuous intertwining of multiple and unique dependence (Cavarero, 2013). Her research into the concept of inclination begins with an image by Leonardo da Vinci, “Sant’Anna, Madonna col bambino”, and builds on a

quotation by Hannah Arendt to delve deeper into the issue of maternity: "Every inclination turns outward, it leans out of the self in the direction of whatever may affect me from the outside world." According to Cavarero, this quotation from Arendt implies an obvious postural geometry, since in the centre of the painting there is a self, the Madonna, who, inclined toward her son, inverts the verticality of the rectilinear, masculine axis. The inclination of this self throws verticality off balance; it becomes oblique, it makes verticality lean outside. For this reason, inclination can be a dangerous and destabilising deviation. This very maternal inclination provides an opening to explore a subjectivity that follows an altruistic and relational model. This is where inclination becomes a point of departure for rethinking the ontology of vulnerability. "Precisely the inclination of the mother over the child lends itself to being used strategically to make inclination a good point of departure for rethinking the ontology of vulnerability, and its constituent relationality, in terms of a postural geometry."⁵

A leaning body begins to let its weight fall.

A leaning body touches gravity.

It is worth considering the final two dictionary definitions for the word inclination, to think about it alongside gravity: (5) the inclination of a magnetic needle; (6) the angle that varies according to location, that the magnetised needle forms with the horizontal plane. Both definitions introduce into this text an imaginary of needles, magnets, angles and horizontal physical planes that elicit a certain speculation. In an exercise of variable angles and speculative fiction that is necessary in order to be able to initiate experimentation —not only artistic, but also social— with and from inclined subjects, magnetic and magnetised words, oblique and inclined angles, let us imagine that they activate different perceptions and send different orders to our brains. Variable angles and forces that lead us to think about gravity together with Steve Paxton: "Gravity is a force, a natural force. As such, it is the deep background of the stories we focus on, which in turn describe our relation to it" (Paxton, 2018, p. 5).

What happens when a body changes its posture and inclines, becoming aware of gravity? When do we improvise? When a body improvises, are different perceptive channels opened up? What relation exists between the internal observation of an inclining body, the microscopic activity in the creation of compost, and the practice of politics and the imagination? Basing our examination on the above concept of the inclination of a subject who expels the self outwards, and on Paxton's sixty years of research into the human body, in this article we shall address these questions from another

perspective, to link them with compost-making and Donna Haraway's compost-humanistic thinking.



2. Gravity

The body is movement. And pure decomposition.

For decades, American dancer and thinker Steve Paxton has developed new ways of moving, and of relating with and thinking about movement. Conceiving dance as a laboratory for exploring the human body, he dedicated himself to unveiling what was ancient in our human experience. This led him to look at everyday actions like walking, standing, touching, the fundamental gestures that shape what it means to be part of the species, human or otherwise, that populate the Earth. And how to move from that starting point (Bigé, 2019).

Paxton's research, carried out systematically, both alone and in groups, began in the 1960s with what he calls "walking movements". Among other moments that make up our everyday lives, he dedicated himself to observing how we walk, stand, sit, wait, eat, love, dress, undress. In the 1970s, his quest focused on what happens if we leap, touch each other and fall together with other bodies, in an exploration of the experience of gravity. He then also began what a few years later would be called "contact improvisation" (CI), which I explain below. The music of J. S. Bach, and Glenn Gould's versions of it, accompanied him throughout the 1980s, while in the 1990s he focused more on the tiny sensations that run down the back and the whole body —what Paxton called Small Dance. From this more recent research emerged Material for the Spine, essential for many dancers today. Part of this journey has endured and has been practiced for long enough now for some of these investigations to be considered techniques, and they are still being taught —and shared— around the world.

Of all of Paxton's career, here we will focus on his research into gravity and contact improvisation as a political and transformative somatic practice. I will return to what he called walking movements in the next section, when

we discuss the creation of compost as a subversive, multiple and transformative practice.

As terrestrial beings, we are bound to the Earth (Bigé, 2019). Our outward form, our movements, and our rhythms all depend on gravity. In this sense we are no different from rocks, trees, mountains or plants. If we fling it into the air, the human body falls back down, it follows the same laws as any organism, tracing a parabolic trajectory. How, then, does this relation with the Earth affect our movements? What type of subjectivity emerges from the study of gravity? What can we learn from ourselves, from the ways in which we move when interacting with the Earth? We have five senses but, curiously, there is no sense of gravity in our bodies. "Oddly missing in our pantheons, which in antiquity included sun gods, harvest goddesses, storm gods, and other deities of the natural events, there is apparently no God of Gravity" (Paxton, 2018, p. 8). There are only systems of perception in our body that allow, at the same time, different parts of our body to enter into dialogue (Gibson, 1962).

In the CI technique, instead of standing upright and vertical against the Earth, against gravity, establishing our subjectivity in opposition to the Earth, we learn to recognise that our movements are nothing but inflections of pre-existing forces that are already moving —before we begin to move (Bigé, 2019). I let my imagination and my affects construct a world such that it is not I who must move: the only thing I need is to let myself move. This sensitivity to the affects and the imagination can be worked on, if we ignore the usual conception of dance —and other artistic practices— in which the focal point of training is, instead, muscles and technique. When bodies move in this way, their weight is distributed between those bodies and gravity: "Solo dancing does not exist: the dancer dances with the floor: add another dancer, you will have a quartet: each dancer with each other, and each with their own floor" (Paxton, 1977). I take on your weight and you take on my weight, in a continuous exchange. I take on your gravity, you take on mine. We incline before gravity, picking up Cavarero's thinking, and there is no opposition between one and the other, but rather a third territory, a third place emerges. In contact improvisation, the encounter between two dancers constitutes a shared nomadic territory (Bigé, 2019).

Along with CI and Material for the Spine, Steve Paxton developed what is known as Small Dance, as noted above. A tiny dance listens to those almost imperceptible movements that take place in the body from a state of stillness. This minimal dance is almost a technique to study the way in which the Earth draws us in, via the force of gravity. With these investigations, the choreographer is conceiving and practicing an attentive dance, tuned to the elements that make up each tiny movement. A dance

mode that seeks to break the experience of each one, and thus be able to leave room for improvisation, so that the other, the unexpected, is let in.

When writing about the unexpected, in terms of a body in motion or a body and the movements it triggers, it is important to distinguish between the agent-body - in which the body is egocentric and instrumental, the same as my potential for action —and the territory-body— in which the body is shaped of perceptions and affects (Bigé, 2019). The latter would correspond to what Merleau-Ponty calls “the flesh of the body”: the ability of the body to extend itself in space, by means of perception. In this sense, the techniques developed by Paxton are artistic practices with great political potential. Practices in which we get the chance to leave our weight behind, leave the ground behind, to incline ourselves and come down from the pedestal of our vertical identity. It is political because bodies that touch each other and embrace each other are inclining. It is political because the nature of politics is and should be to place life and a sense of human freedom at the centre of its activity (Garcés, 2017). With inclined, shared gravity.

Dance understood in this way, as an inner technique, as an awareness of the weight of the body and gravity, which allows us to conceive the exterior and the environment as part of a whole. The environment as a necessary travel companion, as part of us, not as something we have to tame or control. A way of conceiving the world that Small Dance shares with other dance modes.⁶

Dance understood in this way is similar to composting, because both processes study and analyse what we are composed of.



3. Compost

Everything is composting.

In autumn 2007, I was lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time. It was pure synchrony. Steve Paxton was going to be at L’animal a

l'esquena for a residency, to teach a workshop and perform *Night Stand* (2006) with Lisa Nelson. We decided to record the third episode of *Humano caracol* (2008) making compost.⁷

It started with animals. In a house in which at one time there lived more animals than people. In the cracks, the gaps, the holes, the logs and the microscopic layers of hundred-year-old olive trees. A country house from the Middle Ages. "When you're inside your body you don't see your age. So the age you are right now is the age you're still going to feel when the outside has changed," explains Paxton at the beginning of the documentary, while he starts cutting weeds with Pep Ramis and María Muñoz.

Organic compost is made with weeds, brambles, hay. And a bit of soil. For María, Pep and Steve, making compost is a regular practice. Steve has lived at Mad Brook Farm, a commune of artists in northern Vermont (USA), since 1970. In his daily life he goes between the garden, manual labour and the studio. María and Pep are in Celrà (Girona, Catalonia), among the olive trees, their family, animals and the dance studio. On this occasion, the creation of the compost and the relevant movements that our three subjects make during the recording lead Paxton to continue his reflection upon the human body, in dialogue with the others. It still surprises him that dancers think the body is only for moving on stage, and that movements must be executed precisely. How is feeling related to imagining and creating, asks Pep Ramis. By means of sensations:

In the studio, I work to find new sensations. It's like the eyes, you look at one thing, your brain is doing the same thing, it's focusing, it's saying, ah, this is a piece of plastic, you know. So that means that there's a kind of limitation because of the brain focusing, because of concentration. Everything else that's happening all over the body, it's peripheral. Trying to wake up the consciousness to different elements, that's what I'm trying to do. (Paxton in Rozas, 2008)

The conversation moves onto the horizon, its straight and oblique lines. The gaze and its extension to the whole body, sensations and perceptions related to the senses. Working on the sensations of the body with an awareness of its weight, gravity, and opening up other channels of the senses. "It takes a while to get used to the idea that you're not always in the same relationship to the horizon," explains the American choreographer. "How to get out of the vision a little bit. How to find ways that the other senses work," he wonders. "One of those is the aikido focus because while you're rolling, your eyes can be used, most people shut them [...]. And yet, you can have the eyes open and you can [...] see the world shifting. I think it is just a matter of letting the eyes see the sphere. [...] The brain can't feel anything, it's dependent on the senses [...]. All you have to do is get the message through to the brain and to the motor part", he explains.

Consciousness is very slow. The question is how to bring consciousness to every detail and its complexity. Going slowly is always a great teaching tool.

How can you have any idea about form if you're not aware of your body, or if you are conscious of only one level of your consciousness and you think that you're always the same person. "Why is it that we feel the same? So in a way, there's this mask we have, like it's an internal mask [that makes us think we're always the same] [...] in fact, [we're] changing all the time. (Paxton in Rozas, 2008)

The choreographer emphasises that dancing is action, that is, everything the body does when it is not trying to express. And, yet, it is difficult to talk and make compost at the same time. While we talk, we think. The same thing does not happen in a body that is activating movement, in a territory-body.

Everything is composting, in a way, it has to do with cycles. [...] I guess it's something about a way to use the brain in which you [...] change the focus into a kind of circular form [and] the brain is able to comprehend something like that. I'm very aware that the eyes use light, and light is straight lines. And the brain uses the information from the vision, [...] the eyes are a model for a lot of consciousness. So that we can do something that has nothing to do with light. That we can think in a circle or understand undulations. That we can get out of the direct and into the oblique and into the recurring, and into the cyclic, interests me a lot. So compost is all about that. You know how cats, they'll be in the middle of a fight and then all of a sudden they'll stop and lick themselves? A displacement activity, it's called. What you do when you need a break. (Paxton in Rozas, 2008)

Paxton explains that he makes compost as a displacement activity. He thinks he has become cynical and pessimistic, whereas before he was optimistic. "Then I got pessimistic and then I started composting. And I think it's a displacement activity from pessimism." (Paxton, 2008)

You make earth, you make topsoil. Composting is best with small elements. It's something simple and direct for the Earth. It's only a tiny part, microscopic, only a garden, but the more you do it, the more it grows and it becomes necessary.

I don't know exactly how that relates to the material for the spine, and the possibility of changing the movement and checking out all the elements of it. But there is something there, that all these elements go to make something larger. And adjusting the elements makes it possible to gain control of the overall structure and its changes. (Paxton in Rozas, 2008)

Dance and compost have in common the observation of the tiny, the microscopic. Dance turns towards the body, studying it carefully. Compost

perceives the decomposition of its particles, at the slow pace of a snail, taking its time, eating and making soil. Not surprisingly, the words compost and composition share the same Latin root, *compositus*, which means to compose, to put together. Compost turns waste into soil, putting it together in the *humus*. And in a process of creation, composition consists of joining elements, putting things together and relating them.

From the microscopic elements of compost to a wider structure. Sometimes just one word is enough to change a constellation. Even more, action: regardless of their specific content, words exist and always generate relations. The particles of the *humus*, the particles of the body in motion or in stillness, the particles of a composition, com-position, always generate relations. "An inherent tendency to force open all limitations and cut across all boundaries" (Arendt, 1998, p. 190).

The conviction that, from a microparticular structure like compost, one can take on a greater structure. As Donna Haraway states, "I generally say that I am not posthuman, but compost."⁸ We are *humus*, not homo, not anthropos. We are compost, not posthumans (Haraway, 2016). We are all compost; within us, other beings and species can grow. My body, my ideas and my affects are spaces where others can grow, develop, interact.

Haraway simultaneously works with her concept of speculative fiction —a ubiquitous figure in her work, which she calls SF, to encompass her speculative, science fiction, and feminist fiction— and her understanding of compost, composting, con-humus. Both concepts refer to theories of mud, of muddling, in the multi-species land of the Chthulucene, which does not close on itself, does not complete itself, but has ubiquitous contact zones that constantly extend. The same thing happens with the territory-body, with compost elaboration, its *humus*, its worms, its decompositions in a snail's rhythm.

Specifically, unlike either the Anthropocene or the Capitalocene, the Chthulucene is made up of ongoing multispecies stories and practices of becoming-with in times that remain at stake, in precarious times, in which the world is not finished and the sky has not fallen —yet. We are at stake to each other. Unlike the dominant dramas of Anthropocene and Capitalocene discourse, human beings are not the only important actors in the Chthulucene, with all other beings able simply to react. The order is reknitted: human beings are with and of the earth, and the biotic and abiotic powers of this earth are the main story. (Haraway, 2016, p. 55)

Therefore, one could speak of compost-humanism, as an antidote to certain ramifications of the technoscientific post-humanism that dreams of surpassing the human, of transcending the human's psychological and biological limitations to reach both eternity and life on other planets. In

other words, dreams of a life separated from the Earth, separated from other lives and their risks —as has happened with the danger of contagion that has confined us in our homes amid the pandemic. As an antidote to surpassing the human, Haraway claims to recover the forgotten meaning of the word human, i.e. "those of the earth, those who belong to the ground (as opposed to those who belong to the heavens. (...) Being Human, really means *to be humus, to be an earthling, to be from the Earth*. This is what a compost-humanist philosophy strives to remind us of".⁹

I am an open body. I am a particle. I am vibration. On Earth. With its gravity. And without realising, I intuit that from my smallness I can take on a greater structure, in a union of particles and vibrations. And other beings.



4. Version

A body inclines and plays. And sweats. With others.

On the 12th March, 2020, choreographer Ion Munduate performed his work *Goldberg Versions*, which is based on movement and improvisation.¹⁰ The piece opens with the projection of a video of Glenn Gould's performance of the *Goldberg Variations*. At some points we hear him humming the chords. We see Gould and hear him on the monitor placed at one end of the lino floor. On the side, we see Munduate sitting on a chair, leaning on a table with a computer on it. We hear a recording in which he hums the notes of the score that the pianist is playing. When the song is over, the choreographer projects a musical staff, hand-drawn live, over Gould's face in the video. With this action, he transforms the picture and inscribes it into musical annotation. His movement becomes a physical inscription. From this moment, he begins a physical game with gravity and with the space of the lino floor, in an improvisation which, that day, moved through Gould's first fifteen variations.

The Basque choreographer's piece is a version of the variations that Steve Paxton performed in 1985 and 1992, and is thus a reinterpretation of that work, a redistribution of tempos and spaces. In the original piece, Paxton

proposed new ways of moving and other possibilities for physical awareness. Through movement and action, he wanted the spectator to see the dance as an independent, autonomous identity. Thus, the value of the piece does not lie in the past, but in the present, in the quality of the interaction between dance and dancer, and in the extent to which they expand the possibilities for experience and knowledge, to bring us together. And in that place, a sort of deconstruction of the performer-audience relation occurs (Burt, 2019). We see Munduate performing his own translation of Paxton, who in turn had made a new version of Gould — taking it to the body. Gould, in turn, had made a new version of Bach, in a long chain of embodiments and reinterpretations that we received that day from one body, Ion's body, who has had to reinvent himself somehow.¹¹

With his sweat, the choreographer inclines before improvisation. He inclines before Gould. Before Paxton. Before the audience. Turning the self outward. With all the gravity and weight of the ground in his movement. What was this tiny body in motion telling us that 12th of March, in the face of the great disaster that was beginning to unfold? A period of global alarm that locked down millions of people, all around the world. That minimal body, with all the images that it generated in us, simply told us this: a body exists while it moves, and a body can do no more than this: exist, make composition, com-position, generate relations. Be and do, in the widest sense, i.e. create through its poetics and praxis.

"How to *sense, see, and express* the real forces that move and make us move between life and death, in the state of perpetual war that neoliberal capitalism has firmly instituted as the ethos of our society of control[?]" (Lepecki, 2017, p. 159). Indeed, throughout the work, the hope is that, thanks to activating the imagination, we will see/witness/hear/touch what lies at the centre of life, life itself, which from that day on entered into a war against a virus. As we would see days later, it was not a war, but a disaster.¹²

In these fabrics that are woven, in versions, in rewriting, in relearning, in the vibrations and tiny movements of our humus- and compost-bodies, together we were rewriting the present. On that 12th of March, this present was also our near future, and what would take us by surprise in the following days.



5. Imagination

An open body moves at ground level.

And from there it rises with others. What elevates us are our desires. Physical, human and political gestures, more or less invisible, are highly adept at inverting. They have the potential to take the dynamics of elevations, real or imagined, and make them sensitive (Didi-Huberman, 2020).

The imagination moves at ground level.

The imagination works if there is a kind of abandonment of the body. Not a body that flees from itself, as Alba Rico explains (2017). Instead, bodies that abandon themselves to the possible mutual contagion of the untamed power of the imagination.

The imagination moves at ground level so that it can pass from body to body. I understand imagination as the human ability to think about what does not exist and to link things, bodies, experiences, utopias. In other words: the ability to think about something that is not perceived in the present. I will not venture into how philosophies of the mind and cognitive sciences understand the imagination. Rather, I will follow genealogy and the pathways opened up by philosophical and poetic thought. I add poetic because it seems to me that the principles that emanate from a poetic praxis can guide thought and action towards imagination about the future.

At a time in which we may tend to think that affective capitalism (Massumi, 2002; Sedgwick, 2003) has also captured the power of the imagination, I would like to suggest that this is not the case. I propose that, in reality, it has replaced the imagination with "controlled creativity". As we know, the neoliberal demand, the demand of companies and educational centres, is "let's be creative". Neoliberal creativity is predatory, controlling - it serves capital. Nevertheless, an imagination that questions things, that analyses, is different from the creativity that operates within a controlled life (Lepecki,

2017). Insomuch that it is a dimension of freedom, of love, of art and resistance, the imagination that analyses, the one that speculates in its fictions and impels us to keep thinking about the problem (Haraway, 2016), should be defended and cultivated as a powerful political tool that shakes up this profitable creativity.

So that the imagination that moves at ground level can pass from body to body, it is best that these bodies open up and interconnect. One way to open up bodies, as we have seen, is to focus our observation and consciousness where it tends to disappear, in those tiny and almost imperceptible movements of our body. Another way to open up the body might be to eroticise everyday life. What do I mean by this? Bifo spoke about the need to eroticise daily life,¹³ as did Paul B. Preciado in *An Apartment on Uranus*: “They’ll tell you that it is impossible. But we, you, we are already there. We wake up during the day as if the whole day were night. We learn from those who are not allowed to teach. We occupy the whole city [...]” (Preciado, 2019, p. 208). In another passage, Preciado states that libidinal transformation, the modification of desire, is just as important as epistemological transformation —referring to the transformation of his body, at a crossroads. “We must learn to desire sexual freedom” (p. 308).

There is no doubt that we are sexual beings (Esteban, 2019). However, I would say that the eroticisation of daily life happens because of the opening-up of the body in a much broader sense, not only the sexual. Thinking, activating different perceptive channels, moving by allowing gravity to distribute itself among bodies, inclining, making organic compost and imagining are all ways of opening up bodies.¹⁴ These open bodies challenge the usual order of the perceptions and their uses of energy. That self turning outward, inclined, becomes vulnerable and leans on other bodies to keep its balance. It gives itself up to the gravity of others. Bodies become spaces so that others can grow, develop, and relate.

In the process of the eroticisation of our lives, then, it is essential to listen to other bodies and activate a poetic —critical, erotic— imagination. There are many concepts that assimilate around the word *imagination*, but together they form a constellation that we should continue sensing, thinking about and questioning. Just as we should continue sensing, thinking about and questioning the intertwining of pasts and futures through imaginative operations and actions in the present. Integrating, into politics, those speculative movements that imagine through their bodies. “Integrating poetics and politics to create new forms for ordinary life” (Fernández Polanco, 2019, p. 206). The reality of the imagined needs to be affirmed, in order to experience the imagination in context, i.e. to experience it as something that has a past, a present and a future.

Dance and the observation of the minute movements of our interior refine the senses and the listening of other bodies. If we inhabit the body as a territory, and not as much as an individual instrument or expression, as noted above, there is a certain interconnectedness and intercorporality. This has to do with focusing our consciousness where it tends to disappear, an observation which, in the case of Steve Paxton, is the result of his entire career.

The ability to feel and perceive has been affected by capital —and by the pandemic. The sensations of our skin, the eyes of our skin, the possibility of combining all the senses into a type of touch (Pallasmaa, 2006). Our ability to be affected changes. If our gravitational field, tended to by the senses, is altered, then the whole body is altered and, therefore, so are our affects. To take care of our ability to be affected is an aesthetic and political exercise. This is what we did that 12th of March, sitting at the edge of the lino floor. Sitting at the edge of what would begin to happen at that moment. Connected in the distance of our bodies. Feeling, even in times of confinement and prophylactic touch, that we touch with all the senses and with all the weight of our body, in the humus and compost that we are. Maybe a type of silence began there,¹⁵ a silence necessary to com-pose ourselves, to walk together.

Bibliography

- Alba Rico, S. (2017), *Ser o no ser un cuerpo*. Barcelona: Seix Barral.
- Arendt, H. (1998), *Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bigé, R., ed. (2019), *Drafting Interior Techniques*. Lisbon: Culturgest.
- Burt, R. (2019), "A Study in Solo. Steve Paxton's Goldberg Variations" in Bigé, R. (ed.), *Drafting Interior Techniques*. Lisbon: Culturgest.
- Cavarero, A. (2013), *Inclinazioni. Critica della rettitudine*. Milan: Raffaello Cortina Editore.
- Didi- Huberman, G. (2020) *Desear desobedecer*. Madrid: Abada Editores.
- Esteban, M. L. (2019), *Andrezaharraren manifestua*. Pamplona: Pamiela.
- Fernández Polanco, A. (2019), *Crítica visual del saber solitario*. Bilbao: Consonni.
- Garcés, M. (2017), *Nueva ilustración radical*. Barcelona: Anagrama.
- Gibson, J. J. (1962), "Observations on Active Touch" in *Psychological Review*, 69(6): pp. 477-491. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0046962>

Hang, B. and Muñoz, A., eds. (2019), *El tiempo es lo único que tenemos. Actualidad de las artes performativas*. Buenos Aires: Caja Negra.

Haraway, D. J. (2016), *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Lepecki, A. (2017), "The Politics of Speculative Imagination in Contemporary Choreography" in Kowal, R.J, Siegmund, G. and Martin, R. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 149-168.

Massumi, B. (2002), *Parables for the Virtual*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

Pallasmaa, J. (2006), *Los ojos de la piel*. Barcelona: Gustavo Gili.

Paxton, S. (1977), "Solo Dancing" in *Contact Quarterly*, 2(3): p. 24.

_ (2018), *Gravity*. Brussels: Contredanse.

Preciado, P. B. (2019), *Un apartamento en urano*. Barcelona: Anagrama. Also available in English as *An Apartment on Uranus*. Cambridge, Mass. and London: Semiotext(e), The MIT Press.

Pujol, Q. and Rozas, I., eds. (2015). *Ejercicios de ocupación. Afectos, vida y trabajo*. Barcelona: Mercat de las Flors.

Rozas, I. (2012), *Voice(s)capés. Experiencias y potencias de la voz, el lenguaje y la tactilidad en la escena actual de la danza*. Lejona: University of the Basque Country.

_ (2015), "Pulsión textual," in Pujol, Q. and Rozas, I. (eds.), *Ejercicios de ocupación. Afectos, vida y trabajo*. Barcelona: Mercat de las Flors.

_ (2020), *Ssssssssssilence*. London: Taylor & Francis.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2019.1717877>

Sedgwick, E. K. (2003), *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

Films

Rozas, Ixiar (2008), *Humano caracol (3)*. Steve Paxton, documentary. Fragment available at <https://www.hamacaonline.net/titles/humano-caracol-3-steve-paxton/>

Verdin, Walter (1992), *The Goldberg Variations by J. S. Bach played by Glenn Gould in 1982 and 1955 improvised by Steve Paxton*, as shown at the exhibition *Steve Paxton. Drafting Interior Techniques* (Azkuna Zentroa, Bilbao).

Notes

¹ "This feeling of unreality is due to the fact that for the first time something real is happening to us. That is, something is happening to all of us together and at the same time. Let us make the most of the opportunity." Santiago Alba Rico,

<https://twitter.com/santiagoobar/status/1238511934137393153?lang=es> [accessed 13th April 2020]

² "Both alarms will be with us for a long time [...]. Each year 9% of the mortality rate is due to environmental contamination [...] That should also set off a world health alarm, shouldn't it? Perhaps the alarm doesn't go off because in underdeveloped countries that rate is multiplied by 100." Unai Pascual, "Koronabirusa klima larrialdiarekin dantzán" ("Coronavirus dances with climate crisis").

<https://www.berria.eus/paperekoa/1876/019/001/2020-03-19/koronabirusa-klima-larrialdiarekin-dantzán.htm> [accessed 19th March 2020]

³ Exhibition curated by João Fiadeiro and Romain Bigé at Azkuna Zentroa (Bilbao), in collaboration with Culturgest (Lisbon).

⁴ I have specifically written about the affects in "Pulsión textual" (2015). With regards to the terms "affects", I follow Brian Massumi's explanation: they are small movements that are produced in our bodies, and that work like a gravitational field. To affect is to be affected.

⁵ Passage from a lecture given by Adriana Cavarero at the KaXilda book store (San Sebastian-Donostia, Spain) on 13th May 2015. The lecture is unpublished, and was given as part of the "Arrakalatuta" meeting and lecture series.

⁶ Passage from a lecture given by Romain Bigé in Azkuna Zentroa (Bilbao) on 9th July 2020 in the seminar "Studies of Interior Techniques" that I curated as part of the exhibition *Steve Paxton. Drafting Interior Techniques*.

⁷ A series of documentaries that I started with Dario Malventi in 2006, as part of Periferiak meetings (2002-2007). They are audiovisual portraits of contemporary creators, made with different *mise en situation*. The situation, in the case of Paxton, was the creation of compost at L'animal a l'esquena (Celrà, Girona) in November 2007. A great many thanks to María Muñoz and Pep Ramis, who ushered us into the friendship they had cultivated with Paxton for a long time. Thanks also to Lisa Nelson for her generous presence, and to Dionisio Cañas for providing us with the concept of "humano caracol" (snail human). Together, these two words spoke of human and animal living, of the commons, of leisurely walking and doing closer to the Earth. And, though unintended, these words also referred to the experience of the Zapatista snails that we had lived in 2005 on a trip to Mexico. All quotations in this section are from the documentary. The images included in the article are still frames from the documentary, and were shot by Paco Toledo and Xavier Pérez Díaz.

⁸ "I think that the word 'posthumanist' gets us into trouble. For one thing, it sounds too much like posthuman, as a certain type of optimistic technophilic thought uses it sometimes, maintaining that we can be post humans, rather than humans, and I don't believe that." From

<https://www.infobae.com/america/cultura/2019/10/03/donna-haraway-no-creo-que-tengamos-que-seguir-citando-a-los-mismos-varones-aburridos/> [accessed 19th March 2020].

⁹ Passage from a lecture given by Romain Bigé in Azkuna Zentroa (Bilbao) on 9th July 2020.

¹⁰ Ion Munduate's *Goldberg Versions* is the development of a work process based on the idea of "visiting" J. S. Bach's score, the movie of Glenn Gould's performance of the variations (1981), and Steve Paxton's original archive that he developed based on improvisations danced between 1985 and 1992 (and recorded by Walter Verdín).

¹¹ After the performance, Munduate explained that he had learned to improvise, a technique he had not worked on before. He collaborated with Ana Buitrago to develop the movement.

¹² "This is not a war, it's a catastrophe. Unlike in a war, there is no cause greater than the salvation of each and every human life. We will win only if there are no human victims. [...] We might win this time. But we will need to prepare for the next time and this shock that is reordering our priorities can be

crucial training." Santiago Alba Rico and Yayo Herrero, <https://ctxt.es/es/20200302/Firmas/31465/catastrofe-coronavirus-guerra-cuidados-ciudadanos-ejercito-alba-rico-yayo-herrero.htm> [accessed 20th April 2020]

¹³ Quim Pujol and I wrote about this in the introduction to *Ejercicios de ocupación*: "A collective mutiny is above all a physical, affective, erotic phenomenon..." (Pujol and Rozas, 2015, p. 18). "To eroticize daily life, to displace desire captured by capital, nation or war, and redistribute it through time and space, so it can penetrate everything and so it can penetrate us all" (Preciado, 2019, p. 208).

¹⁴ These ways of opening the body could be summarised in a single concept: Suely Rolnik's "vibratile body", which I have discussed in other writings (Rozas, 2012).

¹⁵ I refer to this in *Ssssssilence* (2020).