

1.

Juan Manuel Aldape Muñoz

Violent Democracies: Performance Practices of Death and Brutality as a claim to justice in Mexico and the United States

"In the presence of constant violence, death, and disappearances carried out by police forces and politicians, citizens in democratic societies have limited avenues for democratic participation to demand justice. The gap between just participation and the unfulfilled needs of communities seeking justice adopt non-legislative actions. Performance practice is one such expression of these demands. I evaluate these demands from recent demonstrations that gravitate around the particular themes of enacting death and violence.

As case points I examine the recent social demonstrations in Berkeley and Oakland, CA, against police brutality in a spate of murders against black lives in the USA and a corrupt political system in Mexico. My analysis centers on the act of "die-ins" and executions as calls to defund militarized police forces in the United States and as witnessing disappearances in Mexico. Across the week-long demonstrations, in which I participate as performer/participant observer, we perform die-ins at traffic intersections as disobedient acts in support of justice for unarmed black men killed by police. In support of the forty-three students that were made to disappear by local authorities in Iguala, Mexico, we use forty-three protestors to stand in execution position for the duration of the protest.

Across both performances for different causes, this paper examines the embodied manner in which performances of death and violence serve as a political practice articulating claims to rights in violent democracies."

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2.

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Vegetal Democracy and performance as research

In recent years many attempts at moving beyond an anthropocentric perspective have been made. One example is the notion vegetal democracy, a principle that concerns all species without exception, developed by Michael Marder (2013). According to him an inherent divisibility and participation are paramount in the life of plants; a vegetal being must "remain an integral part of the milieu wherein it grows" and its relation to the elements is not domineering but receptive. (Marder 2013, 69.) For him "the vegetal democracy of sharing and participation is an onto-political effect of plant-soul" which must "eschew the metaphysical binaries of self and other, life and death, interiority and exteriority". Moreover, "every consideration of a post-foundational, post-metaphysical ethics and politics worthy of its name must admit the contributions of vegetal life to ... the non-essentialized mode of 'living with'".

(Marder 2013, 53.) What this vegetal democracy might mean in practice, however, Marder does not explain.

How could the idea of vegetal democracy help us develop the methodologies of performance as research? Divisibility and participation make sense in many types of performances, whether in terms of a collaborating ensemble working collectively with their audience, trying to avoid the traditional hierarchies of theatre production, or a small assemblage of camera, body and landscape, as in my example performances. Remembering and articulating the material-discursive practices involved (Barad 2007) and the relationship to the natureculture (Haraway 2003), the milieu, the “when and where” something takes place, would probably take us a long way towards a more inclusive understanding of performance as research.

3.

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Beyond Capture

Chantal Mouffe (1992) argues for a ‘radical and plural’ idea of democracy in which the principles of equality and justice are extended ‘to the widest set of social relations’ (14). It is not clear to me what she understands the exact parameters of ‘social relations’ to be, but if we were to accept the view of Bruno Latour (2005), we would need to expand the social to include ‘as full-blown actors entities that were explicitly *excluded* from collective existence by more than one hundred years of social explanation’ (69, emphasis in original); ‘entities which are in no way recognizable as being social in the ordinary manner’. In other words the social involves the ‘momentary association’ of human and other-than-human actors ‘into new shapes’, new forms of assembly (65) that Latour suggests be called ‘not a society but a *collective*’ (14, emphasis in original).

A.N. Whitehead seems to echo this sentiment when he writes that ‘we find ourselves in a buzzing world, amid a democracy of fellow creatures’ (1978: 50). In this paper I wish to explore whether a research output/process (in our case a performance-as-research output/process) might be an actant in its own right; might be understood to be a ‘fellow creature’ within an expanded conception of democracy. And if so, is it possible to move beyond an anthropocentric paradigm in which human actants always determine the terms of engagement or perspective? Can we move beyond ideas of capture, of hunters and prey and all the power relations this implies, to another kind of relation? And is this what Baz Kershaw means when he argues that ‘*the foundational principles* of practice-as-research work to a democratically deconstructive and decentring agenda’ (2009: 15, emphasis in original)?

4.

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Towards Democracy: Ethico-Political Horizon as Chora in PaR

States that make claim to democracy employ deeply undemocratic processes to secure hegemonic control over a people and their resources leading often to violent conflict and fractured identity and subjecthoods. The crux of the problem however appears to be the enshrining of democracy as ‘static’ and the inability to work with process that require

reciprocal sensitivities towards the yet to be named. My paper premised on the inability of legal and constitutional discourse to address the identity conflicts emerging from newly emerging subjectivities, considers the potential of Performance as Research to do so. I consider the dialogue between myself and the other across the divide of conflicting political subject locations that PaR explorations. Malati et al (2009) speak of the their postnational emerging from an 'ethico-political horizon that can no longer take the emancipatory potential of the nation state as a political community of citizen' for granted. The loss of a united citizenship across conflicted subject locations is one that struggles with the new to find a new language and modality to hold the experiences emerging from nascent and fraught subjectivity. My paper explores the political potential of PaR with a tactile responsiveness that becomes the Irigarayan chora to the intersubjective encounter that will help in the journey towards a new ethico political horizon. I explore this through the experiences of two PaR projects: one that led to the making of a performance film in a militarised zone and the other a workshop called 'Spacing Together' that attempts to seek solidarity across difference.

5.

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PAR Methodologies for emergent democratic politics in the work of Duskin Drum

Practice as Research (PAR) is not necessarily going to contribute to democratic change. However, there are ways in which practice, and research, and PAR, can be learned and materialised to generate insight into ecologies of democracy rather than (neo)liberal representative democracy.

If practice is thought of as training in the process of making form, and research as the process of making a form that is performed with a rhetorical stance that embodies emergent change, then PAR currently has potential to do politics ecologically and to inform politics with ways of thinking about and implementing ecological democratic structures.

An ecological practice of performativity can work alongside rather than in response to a political system so that reasons for going on living that are usually disempowered or ignored or simply unrecognized – alterior ways of knowing and valuing – can emerge from that alongside into political discourse. But if these ecological practices are to have a wider impact on the diverse groups that make up society they have to be performed in public. It is the engaged rhetorical stance of the research component of PAR that finds a form that can bring alongside practice into ecological public performance. This alongside PAR suggests a potential methodology for alterior practices of emergent politics to impact on the way democracy is practised.

This paper will explore the potentials and drawbacks in ecological democracy by looking at PAR in the work of the performance artist Duskin Drum which has both tested representative performance and experimented with ecological performance.

6.

Emma Meehan

Ethics of Care in Revisiting The Archives of Dublin Contemporary Dance Theatre

This paper explores a practice-based research project to revisit and develop sections from 'Lunar Parables' (1983) choreographed by Sara and Jerry Pearson with Dublin Contemporary Dance Theatre (DCDT). Thirty years after the production, I have been working in the studio with the original dancers and company members to revisit sections of this work, to remember

its content and context. We also have been reflecting on how past choreographic approaches inform current practices and how the material can also inspire new perspectives, ideas and dance material. This has raised personal difficulties around revisiting their archives, and I draw on Eddy's (2015, abstract) question of 'what is the legacy to be remembered, and in what form, by whom?' An ethics of care and responsibility has also emerged within my own role in relation to the legacy of DCDT, aligned with how Roms (2012, 48) 'reconceive[s] of the archives as a collaborative effort of caring for an artist's legacy.' In responding to Kershaw's (2009, 15) argument for practice-as-research to have a 'democratically deconstructive and decentering agenda', I explore the process of working collaboratively with the dancers and choreographer in this project and the methods we employ in examining the work. There are issues around my role in instigating the project, the funding available and how it is allocated, who is included and excluded in revisiting the work, and finally questions around who is framing, writing about and accessing the materials such as video footage which emerges from behind the closed doors of the rehearsal room.

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7.

Walmeri Ribeiro

Sensitive Territories: Performative research and humanitarian actions

This proposal presents the actions in the Project Breeze: sensitive territories, contributing for the discuss about democracy and social actions in the public sphere. BREEZE is a project of research and artistic creation inserted in the field of art, politics, science and nature. Methodologically founded on the Performance practice as research, we propose that political, poetical, aesthetical and cognitive issues may emerge from immersive experiences as a field of creative possibilities, of construction of critical thinking, contributing to the methodologies of research in Arts and to new mechanisms and creation devices.

By proposing itself in this research field, BREEZE aims to dialogue with the Arts issues in the Anthropocene area, investigating new methodologies and practices about the relations of art with and for the nature and discuss the social actions in the public sphere. As Chantal Mouffe (2007) says, the "public space" is not a place of consensus, but rather a battle camp where different hegemonic projects confront each other (...) The public spaces are always plural. We can also say they are complex territories, as proposed by Richard Sennett. Or rather, sensitive territories permeated by subjectivities and sensorialities.

Composed of a transdisciplinary research network which involves artists from different areas such as audiovisual, body arts, art and technology, visual arts and music, technologists, geographers, urbanists and residents of the studied regions, the project proposes a collaborative practice of investigations and creation. In this moment Breeze is Realizing in the coast of Ceará|Brazil.

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8.

Johnmichael Rossi

Reading and Writing Postdramatic Plays: Digital and Democratic Practices

Kershaw suggests that “the foundational principles of practice-as-research work to a democratically deconstructive and decentering agenda” (Kershaw 15). Citing participatory art as more “egalitarian and democratic,” Bishop states: “Collaborative creativity is... understood both to emerge from, and to produce, a more positive and non-hierarchical social model” (Bishop 12).

This paper will engage three inquiries initiated by the PaR Working Group:

- What is the relationship between PaR and democratic values?
- What power relations are in operation in PaR projects?
- How do digital technologies impact on the distribution of PaR projects and what are the issues of participation, inclusion and rights involved in the circulation of materials online?

To interrogate the relationship between democracy and PaR, I will analyse my playwriting practice, which involves writing a play with a network of ‘collabowriters.’ Drawing from Barthes’ notion of writerly, I define ‘collabowriterly’ as a process that blurs the lines between author and reader, involving a collaborative network to create through various modes of writing. Located at a website, Rumi High takes the form of a ‘hyper(play)text,’ which is written using hypermedia. While this interactive form appears to give readers enhanced choice, digital technology, it can be argued, also enables writers to increase their control over the reading process. Rumi High appropriates preexisting texts, weaving and linking various media and contextual layers. In popular culture, the ‘Mashup,’ “neither entirely the product of [the artist’s] own creativity, nor distributed online with the original copyright holder’s permission,” further complicates notions of authorship (Kinsey 304). While literary and theatrical works are not included in Kinsey’s definition of the ‘Mashup’ I will use Rumi High as a model to consider plays as ‘Mashup-able.’ I will analyse the process of writing Rumi High by mapping the collaborative network and discussing the modes of writing employed, to consider how democratic principles both enable and complicate contemporary playwriting practices.

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9.

Myer Taub

The Social Life of Waste/Art: Recycling exchange as a transversal mode of translating research from the relationship between waste and artistic practice.

In 2014, the author, a theatre-maker, along with two anthropologists began to work across disciplines embarking on “The Social Life of Waste/Art” (SLOW): a multidisciplinary project of artists, researchers and waste-workers across four cities in the Southern African region – Harare, Maputo, Pretoria and Johannesburg. The aim to explore and exhibit Waste-Arts (i.e. multi-disciplinary art works based in waste and recycling) is to understand how these practices maybe pathways out of poverty. The theoretical approach of the project draws on Appadurai’s ‘social life of things’ (1986) by understanding the value of things through a trajectory of exchange. Exchange points to social collectivism, bartering ideas, remaking and recycling as possibilities of translating the interdisciplinary links of the project as part of a performance as research enquiry. Appadurai argues: ‘It is only through the analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret human transactions and calculations that enliven things’ (1986:5). What are things of value emerging from waste into this re-embodiment of social and art practice? How, in reflecting on exchange, is there integration of social and art practice along with their resultant ‘paradoxes’ (Kershaw, 2007) made apparent? This paper attempts to consider how exchanges extend the metaphor of waste in an attempt to think ‘transversally’ (Kershaw 2007:259; Guatarri 1989:135). In thinking transversally, ideas reconnect dimensionally. Exchange performs as a methodology that integrates practice through transversal modes of research translation.