

What Kind of Bodies Will Come Together in *Passage 468*?

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to investigate the question, whether the performance of *Passage 468* (2019), as interpreted through the theory of agential realism by Karen Barad and the concept of sensory field by Petri Tervo, could suggest a revised conception of the open body. First, the objective of the text is to review the literature concerning the conceptions of the open body by Bakhtin as part of the carnival culture, and the closed body by Elias as a result of the civilising process. Additionally, I make some remarks about how the open body is considered in theatre history. Secondly, I investigate the analysis of the performance by describing my experience as a spectator of being part of certain sensory fields that were opened up in *Passage 468*. I argue that the sensory field is akin to staggering away from the safety of identity which determines the way in which we perceive and categorize the different aspects of a performance as separate entities. Finally, I suggest that by translating the sensory field experience into written form as a part of performance analysis, it is possible to understand how different bodies are entangled in the phenomena of the body. As I propose, in this way it is possible to once again conceive of the body and approach it as open and collective.

KEYWORDS

open body, closed body, agential realism, sensory field, intra-action

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Introduction

In this paper, I discuss the phenomena of the body in the performance of *Passage 468* (2019)¹ that took place in an abandoned oil silo in Helsinki and focused on the ongoing environmental crisis and loss of biodiversity. These so-called “posthuman performances”, which focus on the environmental and climate crisis that we are facing, often highlight how the crises are linked to the Western understanding of the individual and the human body. Thus, they also point out a crisis of individuality and humanity. According to Julian Pepperell, the term posthuman refers, among other things, to the fact that our traditional view of what constitutes a human being is now undergoing a profound transformation. We can no longer think about being human in the same way as we used to.²

My research problem concerns how in a performance, such as *Passage 468*, the human body can be experienced, perceived, and theorized in an unconventional way, as open and connected to the environment. The subject is based on the assumption that our habitual way of understanding human beings and the boundaries of the human body is shaped by the civilising process and the conception of the closed body. The closed body has clear and sharp boundaries that separates it from the environment. However, the term “posthuman” also refers to the general convergence of biology and technology, to the point where they are becoming increasingly indistinguishable.³ Here, a human body can be seen as a matter of interconnectedness with the environment’s materiality, including technology. Also, the performance *Passage 468* seems to suggest that the human is an experiential part of various material processes that are already in progress when the viewer enters the oil silo. So, it seems that the performance itself suggests a more open concept of the body. Additionally, in order for researchers to approach the performance and to be able to experience and perceive their body’s relation to the environment differently from the way they habitually do, the conception of a more open body is needed. Here, my main research question is “could the performance of *Passage 468* (and my analysis about it) update the conception of the body as open to its environment in a twenty-first century context?” Additionally, I ask, “what kind of bodies are coming together in performance?”

So, it is important to find theoretical and analytical tools that allow me to approach the phenomena of the body as open. In order to approach my research questions, I first present the notion of the open body with porous boundaries, which has become known in particular through Mikhail Bakhti’s writings on the popular culture of medieval squares and the grotesque concept

1 Choreography and performance: Veli Lehtovaara, Sound design: Jani Hietanen, Costume design: Piia Rinne, Light design: Anton Verho, Premiere: 15 August 2019 at Runokuu festival, Oil silo 468, Kruunuvuorenranta, Helsinki.

2 Pepperell 2003, iv.

3 Pepperell 2003, iv.

of the body. The counterpart of the open body is the notion of the closed body. Here, I present the main principles of the civilising process and the conception of the closed body by Norbert Elias. Here, I also pay attention to how the process of internalisation of discipline has affected the way we perceive the human body in relation to its environment. At the end of the theoretical overview, I make some descriptive remarks regarding how the open body is considered and valued in the writings of theatre scholars. Before I go on to analyse the phenomena of the body in the performance, I will present my methodology. *Passage 468* seems to be more about highlighting material processes than theatrical representations. This means that basing one's analysis of the phenomena of the body on a reading of the meanings of such representations is irrelevant. This has implications for how the body of the researcher writing about their experience is meaningfully approached in the performance when part of the processes. To this end, I present some of the principles of Karen Barad's theory of agential realism. The notions of ontological and epistemological inseparability, intra-actions, and the entanglement of things are the key perspectives that I apply to my analysis. I combine the concept of the sensory field, originally developed by Petri Tervo, with Barad's theory to allow me to connect my body's affective involvement to the changes in the environment of the performance, as well as to analyse and describe the interconnectedness of bodies in the phenomena.

Conceptions of the Open and Closed Body

In order to approach my research question of updating the concept of the open body in a twenty-first century context, I need to establish some understanding of how the open body has been previously theorized. The theory of the closed body, in turn, paves the way to understand how the manner of distancing oneself from the world and viewing things as separate and closed entities are linked to the conception of the closed body.

In what follows, I take a closer look at the conceptions mainly through the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin and Norbert Elias. In both Bakhtin's and Elias' theories, the human body is conceived in relation to the emergence of the early modern era and the process of individualization that accompanies it. Norbert Elias, as a theorist of modernization, explains individualization from the perspective of the progress and development of modern society. For Bakhtin, as a critic of modernity, individualization appears as a narrative of a lost collective space. The tension is between the conception of the non-individualized body that is open to its environment, and the conception of the closed individual body that is capable of regulating external influences and internal impulses.

The Open Body by Bakhtin

Mikhail Bakhtin, a Russian literary scholar and the most prominent theorist of the open body concept, links openness to the social setting of late medieval folk festivals, the market square. The concept of the open body is inseparable from the familiar, informal, open, and indecent life of the marketplace and the coming together of carnival culture. The marketplace of the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance was a whole world in itself, where all performances - from noisy bickering to organized carnival plays - had common and collective ground. According to Bakhtin, the whole of medieval popular theatre culture only had the concept of the open body.⁴

For Bakhtin, the notion of a body open to its environment is formed through the texts of Renaissance writers, in particular François Rabelais. The material-bodily dimension of life dominates the concept of the open body. Through its orifices, bodily protrusions, and secretions, among other things, it is linked to its environment, to the continuous cycle of life and death. Disease, madness and disorder are presented as part of a consequence of excess and pleasures and are often intrinsically linked to the material-bodily underbelly. The body is also associated with a carnivalesque upending of the world; devaluation, dirt, excreta, death, and rebirth.

In Bakhtin's image of the open body, the cosmic, the social, and the corporeal are inseparably one. The body is unfinished, sprouting, and unenclosed.⁵ According to Bakhtin, grotesque imagery is associated with constant change, including the free play of plant, animal,

4 Bahtin 2002, 27.

5 Bahtin 2002.

and human subjects, where they become one another as if they were giving birth to one another.⁶ The grotesque body is malleable and unstoppable, constantly under construction and in a state of creation.⁷ It is always in process, it is always becoming, it is a mobile and hybrid creature, disproportionate, exorbitant, outgrowing all limits, decentred, and off-balance, as Peter Stallybras and Allon White write.⁸

If we ask how for Bakhtin matter marks the human body as open, it would seem that physiological and anatomical bodily functions - such as eating, vomiting, and emptying one's bowels, for example, when linked to the cycle of nature and constant change, make matter an active participant in the becoming of the world. The human body does not appear as a separate, distinct entity from the rest of the world, but is in a constant state of rebirth, in process. The boundaries of the human body are vague. Bakhtin's conception of the open body cuts off both the Cartesian conception of the individual and its rationality, and the conception of the body in the classical as well as the naturalistic aesthetic canon.

The Closed Body by Elias

Norbert Elias offers a theory of the body's closure. In *The Civilizing Process* (1939/1997), Elias describes the transition from an authoritarian model of action to an autonomous model of self-regulation. In his work, Elias sought to show how the New Age process of transformation⁹ reconstructed the personality and the economy of the psyche, resulting in the emergence of a new habitus; homo clausus. Elias examined the change in habitus in the light of empirical evidence, including behavioural and educational manuals, by comparing medieval and modern guides.

According to Elias, the civilised manners that we internalize from childhood have developed slowly and gradually in Europe over the centuries. The process of civilization led the aristocracy at first, and later the bourgeoisie and other social classes, to observe and consider their behaviour, habits, bodily sensations, aggressive impulses, and bodily orifices as objects to be regulated and controlled. The closed body developed within the process of civilization as a result of the consolidation and internalization of affective control and the protection of the body from external influences. Homo clausus, a closed body, is characterized "by 'an attitude of being alone with an inner, true self and with a pure "I" and an outward costume'".¹⁰ The process of civilization requires the individual to constantly self-reflect, which in turn produces an inner world of experience rather than immediate affective behaviour. With inner awareness comes the development of a psychological attitude and discourse through which one can understand one's own and others' "inner" feelings, those which are usually hidden behind a mask of politeness. Bodily experience becomes more private and emotional, finding channels of expression in the human characters portrayed in bourgeois literature, drama, and theatre.

According to Elias, the image of the individual as an entirely free, independent being, a "closed personality" who is inwardly quite self-sufficient and separate from all other people and their environment, has a long tradition of European societal development behind it. Furthermore, he notes, "The conception of the individual as homo clausus, a little world in himself who ultimately exists quite inconsequentially of the great world outside, determines the image of human beings in general."¹¹

He compares homo clausus to the epistemological, Cartesian subject of classical philosophy, Leibnitz's windowless monads and Kantian subject of knowledge.¹² The body, divided into the internal and external, is combined with the notion of a knowing subject who places himself in the world and to whom the world inside and outside the body is offered as an object. According to Elias, the individual gains knowledge "outside" himself in a completely autonomous way

6 Bahtin 2002, 31.

7 Bahtin 2002, 281.

8 Stallybras & White 1986, 9.

9 Elias linked this to the consolidation of the state and central power and the emergence of the state's monopoly on violence.

10 Elias 1936/1994, 470.

11 Elias 1936/1994, 470, 472.

12 Elias 1936/1994, 475.

and knows autonomously what all the objects are that they perceive and classify.¹³ As Ian Burkitt notes, the world thus becomes represented in a pictorial fashion, an objectifying act which inspires people to master it.¹⁴ This view also emphasises the self-segregation of the human body and the boundary between the human body and the materiality of the world.¹⁵

Affect, especially the internalized control thereof, plays a significant role in shaping the perception of the closed body. The materiality of the body is present in Elias's theory in that the observance of habits and the internalization of control are understood to modify the skeletal muscles and function of the body.¹⁶ So, civilising history has shaped a certain kind of habitus for the inhabitant of the modern world, a bodily way of orienting oneself in the world. This means, for example, the ways of perceiving the world from a distance and classifying things as separate and enclosed entities.

Since my article deals with the possibility of updating the conception of the open body in contemporary performance and its analysis, I will make some brief remarks on how the Bakhtinian open body has emerged in theatre history and how the boundaries of the body are conceived.

The Open Body in Theatre - Some Remarks

Bakhtin links the transformation and suppression of the medieval grotesque body to the dominance of the classical canon up to the eighteenth century. The grotesque body lost its connection with the popular culture of the market squares and was transformed into literature.¹⁷ The emergence of the literary author contributed to the suppression of the open, grotesque body, as Peter Stallybras and Allon White have pointed out.

According to them, in literature and drama from the Renaissance onwards, the author transformed the market's life into a literary text, aestheticized it, and placed themselves above the crowd. The author made themselves into a specific kind of transcendental cognitive ego by the act of partition and distancing observation.¹⁸ Stallybras and White argue that the separation of the two cultural spheres – the fair and the theatre (or drama) – was a specific, self-conscious labour for the elite.¹⁹ Its graver consequence was a closure of identity which, in attempting to block out somatic and social heterodoxy, was fated to rediscover it again in itself as an inner revulsion.²⁰

For Bakhtin, the figures of the jester, the fool, and the clown (Harlequin) represented the most characteristic figures of the carnivalesque dimension. When the characters moved to a drama theatre stage, they became controversial.

Michael Bristol, by focusing on English Renaissance drama literature, emphasizes that the clown was not simply a character in a play, but traverses the boundary between a represented world and the "here and now world" that he shares with the audience. According to Bristol, the clown's presence within the theatre and their intrusion or capture by a dramatic narrative, actively discourage projects of unity and closure.²¹ To him, clowning creates openings both in the literary text and in the social structure that a text purports to reflect.

Also, Robert Weimann, who has explored the ways in which Renaissance theatre demonstrates its engagement with early modern popular culture, has written that the clown is not a (literal) role but a show of self-resemblance, part of the historical contingency of the madman's world, unbound by representation.²² The clown seems to have fluid, unfixed, protean, interchangeable identity, and the figure is difficult to capture in representation. Both Bristol and Weimann describe the clown's action on the early modern stage as congruent with

13 Elias 1936/1994, 470.

14 Burkitt 1999, 55.

15 It should be noted that Elias himself did not accept the concept of man as homo clausus but pointed out the interdependence of human beings.

16 Elias 1936/1994, 478.

17 Bahtin 1995, 32-7.

18 Stallybras & White 1986, 117.

19 Stallybras & White 1986, 112.

20 Stallybras & White 1986, 113.

21 Bristol 1985/1989, 155.

22 Weimann 2000, 101.

grotesque imagery.

In turn, according to Erika Fischer-Lichte, the representations of the civilized individuals' others, like fools and madmen on the Baroque stage, were negative examples of a weak identity with a lack of self-control.²³

In the seventeenth century, both Molière and Goldoni wrote the characters of Commedia dell'Arte into literal form and, depending on your point of view, either reformed and preserved the theatrical form for posterity or destroyed it. The characters of Commedia became individuals more in a civilized, bourgeois sense and their masks and vulgar gestures were erased. However, the vulgar humour of the Commedia dell'Arte which drew on the protrusions, orifices, secretions, and copulation of the body, still continued for example in the fair parades of Paris²⁴. However, at the end of the eighteenth century, the Parisien fairs were closed and the entertainers moved into the large, commercial entertainment area of the Boulevard du Temple.²⁵ This meant the end of the heterogeneous crowd, replaced by the conception of a mass audience. Stigmatized as vulgar practice of a superstitious and crude populace, the carnivalesque was prettified, incorporated into a commercial or civic display or simply regarded as a purely negative phenomenon.

In theatre history, there are different examples of prettifying or repressing the grotesque body. The popular but vulgar, comic yet violent marketplace puppet theatre - *Punch and Judy* - was tamed and turned into children's theatre by the middle of the nineteenth century. Hanswurst - the German equivalent of the Harlequin figure - was banished from the German stage in the early eighteenth century. As Karen Jürs-Munkby noted, Hanswurst is not a "natural individual", he is opposed to the "civilized" bourgeois values and the laws of reason and, above all, he is a representative of an osmotic body and an osmotic stage. As such, he threatens the spectator with dangerous physical energies that do not allow for an aesthetic distance and therefore for the constitution of the subject in the mirror of the stage.²⁶

As Hillman has summarized, the development of the body conceived as open was gradually being displaced by a more closed ideal of the body, more bounded, more deeply separated from its surroundings and from other people.²⁷

My main observations on the brief overview of the open body relate to the following points concerning the body's boundaries. 1) The grotesque body is inseparable from the body of the crowd and fair culture. The marketplace, as it were, created a kind of field for the collective, grotesque body to occur/take place. 2) As osmotic, permeable, affective and affecting, the open body does not allow for aesthetic and critical distance. 3) Also, it is difficult, if not impossible, to capture as an individual representation. 4) The open body does not have an intact, permanent identity, but a fluid, unfix, protean identity.

I need such concepts to account for the body as a field of heterogeneous substances with permeable boundaries rather than as an individual human body in order to update the conception of the open body for the twenty-first century.

Methodology

I examine the human body as phenomena in the context of *Passage 468*²⁸ and investigate how the conception of the open body in relation to its environment would be possible by following Barad's agential realism approach and applying Petri Tervo's concept of the sensory field²⁹.

Traditionally, the semiotic and phenomenological analysis of performance seeks to understand the wholeness by exploring the relationship between the details and the whole artwork. Such a hermeneutic model suggests that the performance is a closed entity, an intentional artwork created by the artistic authorships. This kind of model does not leave space

23 Fischer-Lichte 2006, 31.

24 Isherwood 1981, 29.

25 Carlson 2003, 22.

26 Jürs-Munkby 2007, 133.

27 Hillman 2005, 173.

28 As research material I have used my own notes and a video recording that I received from Veli Lehtovaara and an interview I conducted with Veli Lehtovaara (Teatteri- ja Tanssi&Sirkus magazine 1/2020).

29 Tervo & Silde 2014; Tervo & Silde 2016.

for agents that are or might be beyond the artistic intention in performance. This prevents us from approaching the performance as an open event - or phenomenon. Often, things that are outside the control of the performance might become significant for the audience. These are rarely taken into account when deciphering the meaning of a performance, and therefore ignored.

Karen Barad (2003) presents the principles of agential realism in her article "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter". In line with an epistemological framework derived from Nils Bohr's quantum physics, agential realism rejects the metaphysics of "relata", i.e. words and things, subject and object, observer and observed, which it calls the "thingification of relations". Barad thus rejects the idea of representation as a by-product of Cartesianism and the division of the world into subject and object, knower and known, words and things. Instead, for Barad, ontology and epistemology are inseparable. For Barad, via agential realism, it is possible to acknowledge nature, the body, and materiality in the fullness of their becoming. "Thingification - the turning of relations into "things", "entities", "relata" - infects much of the way we understand the world and our relationship to it."³⁰

The primary ontological units are not "things" with inherent boundaries and properties but phenomena, which Barad describes as "dynamic topological reconfigurings/entanglements/relationalities/(re)articulations".³¹ Phenomena are the ontological inseparability of agentially intra-acting "components", relata without primordial relations.³² The boundaries and properties of the components of phenomena are defined and make sense only through the process of ongoing intra-activity. Phenomena are produced as particulars by apparatuses which can be research tools and settings but also material-discursive practices through which boundaries between entities are produced. These can also be understood here as theories of art and cultural studies and their concepts, drawings, and photographs which produce phenomena by performing cuts or boundary-making, such as exclusion and inclusion, between entities. In my view, this means that concepts and things do not have boundaries, properties, and meanings before intra-acting with each other. This also applies to the body. Therefore, my research questions have taken the form of, "could *Passage 468* update the notion of the body as open to its environment in a twenty-first-century context"? "What kinds of bodies will come together in the phenomena of the body?"

I use the sensory field as a performance analysis tool to bring together the material body's sense of environmental change and the view of the entanglement of things through agential realism. By describing the sensory field experience, it is possible to approach the body as phenomena, in which agents of different kinds are intertwined. It also could be said that the description of the sensory field experience sets the boundaries to a phenomena.

The sensory field is a site of encounter between the body and the world/performance, which belongs neither to the performance nor to the body. It is a kind of awakening to a change of environment, where the conditions of the body of the experiencer also change.

This view is common to many theories of affect. In affective experience, the state of the body is transformed into another and the change is in relation to something that is affected. For example, Erin Hurley defines affect "as an uncontrollable, skin-level registration of change to our environment"³³. According to Hurley, affect transcends the self by occurring against one's will, is transindividual and species-specific, and is communicated as an emotional expression. Affect cannot be consciously controlled either.³⁴ The concept of affect has been important in art and cultural studies in dealing with embodiment where the world takes shape outside reflexive thinking and subject-object divisions, often in the realm of the pre-individual.

Tervo's concept differs from many other affect theories in that the relationship between the sensory field and the experiencer is understood as mimetic. The sensory field does not refer to a "general" sensory field in my performance analysis, i.e. to the continuous flow of sensory stimuli in the environment, but it refers to awakening as interruption. The change in the

30 Barad 2003, 812.

31 Barad 2003, 818.

32 Barad 2003, 815.

33 Hurley 2010, 13.

34 Hurley 2010, 13, 18.

perceptual image of the environment generates the interruption.

According to the neurologist Antonio Damasio, human beings generate internal responses from encounters with their environment, which are expressed as a polyphony of sensory, mental, and memory images. For Damasio, images are not copies of the external form of the object of perception but rather an image of the interaction between the object of perception and our body (sensory, mental, and memory images), i.e. an event.³⁵ According to Damasio, the human body thus carries with it a lived life and always some kind of a bodily schema. When the sensory field opens up, it means that an image of the event is created. This disconnects the body from the body schema, the habitual way of perceiving the boundaries of body and environment. In my view, it is a question of becoming strange to oneself and thus refers to an avant-garde experience.

In the following description of my sensory field experience, I seek to bring together the theory, the material human bodies of the performance, and different kinds of non-human bodies. Most of these bodies are usually beyond our perception, but through the description of my body's awakening, they will become part of my experience and translated into language.

Passage 468 Description

Passage 468 took place in a former oil tank on the seafront, opposite the Helsinki city skyline. At the time of the performance, towards the end of summer 2019, the area was undergoing a profound transformation as the site of the former oil port was cleared and redeveloped as a new residential area. The old steel oil tank, partly rusted, is circular in shape and about sixty metres in diameter. The silo is entered through a high, wide, doorless opening which, when viewed from the inside, looks out over the sandy beach, the sea, and the city centre buildings that loom on the opposite shore. There is also another opening of the same size in the tank, overlooking the trees and the cleared earth bank. A van is parked in front of this opening.

I step out of the boat taxi with the other arrivals onto the sandy beach, from where, at their own pace and in different formations, people move into the silo. When I enter the silo, there is an event going on. In front of the curved walls of the circular tank, every three metres or so, there are overhead projectors with plastic sheets resting on their glass covers. The electric current, the movement of electrons, runs through electrical wires and cables which are visible and partly taped to the concrete floor. Fixed benches are set around curved steel walls, benches are lined with empty cardboard cups, thermos flasks, and blankets. On the concrete floor are a stove and firewood, white mattresses, an electric guitar amplifier, guitar case, spinning wheel, chair, and some wool. The air vibrates. One person strums the strings of an electric guitar, another spins a wool rug between them, a third lies on the floor and shakes their body before moving on to the next place, dancing jerkily among the people. The projector fans hum. Those who have entered stand in groups, wander around the space, some sit or lie down on mattresses, some stand by the projectors, some sit on benches, people change places, talk to each other, and move around the space.

At a certain point in time, I find myself standing in front of the overhead projectors. The movement of the photons projects images onto the wall through a lens and an inclined projection mirror. The quanta of light strike the rod cell of the protein in the vitreous humour and, through a series of electrochemical processes, travel along the optic nerve towards the perceived experience.³⁶ I identify the characters in the images as endangered species, such as a wolf or a sea eagle. Philosophical texts by Antti Salminen and Tere Vadén are also projected on the wall, critically examining the use of fossil fuels and the society and coexistence built on it. These material-discursive representations projected on the wall open up meanings for the perception of the present.³⁷ I perceive how the electric wires are prominently displayed in the tank. Through the technology it uses, such as amplified sound and lights, the performance is connected in various ways to the energy sources that generate electricity. The performance thus highlights energy processes and our dependence on them. It juxtaposes and interleaves both the kinaesthetic energy of human bodies coming together and the computational energy of the

35 Damasio 2000, 287-90.

36 Enqvist 2005.

37 Salminen 2015, 9.

movement of objects and human bodies in relation to different sources of power. The fireplace in the space burns wood for a while, the car parked in front of the doorway runs on petrol, the numerous objects in the performance are visibly powered by electricity, the long dance mat rolled out and rolled away is partly made from a few drops of oil. The functions and sensations of human bodies are also connected to energy. Touch, pressure, and sound are mechanical energy, smells and tastes are chemical energy, light is electromagnetic energy, and temperature changes are thermal energy.

Analysis; Sensory Fields and the Open Body – Two Examples

However, when entering a performance, the spectator has a certain identity, a habitus, shaped by their individual and civilising history, which direct the way they perceive and categorise things.

Nevertheless, the matter of the human body is not a mere passive basis onto which the social inscribes itself. As Barad writes, “it is difficult to imagine how psychic and socio-historical forces alone could account for the production of matter.”³⁸ So, it is not only question of how the materiality of the body - such as anatomy, physiology, and skeletal muscles – tend to conform to norms, habits, internalized control, means of perception and categorization, but also how the materiality of the body involuntarily counters social ways of shaping the body. This is where affect and the sensory field as an interruption of the discursively constructed body schema, habitus, or identity come into play as defamiliarization.

Example no 1

A steel silo heated by the sun’s energy, a mixture of iron and carbon, has caused all kinds of sound signals in the space to be delayed and to echo in the hearing organs of many as a common noise.

I absent-mindedly walked near the guitarist, on the outskirts of a vaguely assembled crowd. A human body is playing an electric guitar, the instrument’s body resting, as usual, on the player’s stomach, supported by a strap around the shoulder. The fingers of both hands work the strings of the guitar. The amplifier, connected to the electric current, converts the signal from the guitar strings, folded by the fingers, into a sound that moves through the air, in the medium, as a longitudinal, mechanical wave motion that hits the auditory nerve of human ears. A piercing, shrill sound penetrates the bodies. An electrically amplified, piercing sound resonates and vibrates in the internal organs, adrenaline secretion increases, and heart rates accelerate. A body registers; “something is happening”. The materiality of the body becomes meaningful. Not necessarily as linguistically recognizable feelings, but as a kind of bodily attunement, vigilance. The diffusion concentration is interrupted. The body becomes similar to a sensory field. The electrically amplified piercing, metallic sound of guitar strings, its movement through the air and through the bodies, the physiological changes, and the emergence of a certain kind of figuration as the body becomes attuned, are indicative of the sensory field experienced in the performance.

According to Barad, human bodily contours are not only formed through psychic or social processes, but the atoms that make up the biological body become significant too. In physics, the electromagnetic interaction field is a prerequisite for the human body to sense a sound or smell, or to touch or see any kind of information. In it, the photon acts as a mediating particle for the interaction. A photon is a pure concentration of energy, originally from the sun. This interactive/intra-active force is therefore understood in physics to act between all electrically charged particles. The human body is also electrically charged. Thus, the sound wave or photon can also be understood as an agent that induces changes in the production of the corporeal and thus re-shapes the boundary that defines the human basis.³⁹ There are also other agents in the phenomena of the body. The guitar, the player, and their skill and body techniques, the amplifier, cables etc.

38 Barad 2003, 810.

39 Barad 2007.

Example no 2

Wandering inside the silo, a gentle breeze blows on my back from the open entrance. I sit on the benches in front of the walls, and chat with my partner. A certain distraction and lack of concentration, but not indifference. Again, I wander, stopping in a loosely grouped crowd, among which the dancer softly moves. The wind or air current blowing from outside the silo again sweeps up my feet and the bottom of my summer coat. The gentleness of the current makes the body and movements lighter. The pleasure of being close to the wind that gets its energy from the sun. My gaze sweeps across the open entrance and reaches the ethereal horizon between sea and sky. The unpredictable movement of the wind, its sudden touch becomes a creature of the performance, a sensory field of its own. My body, as a participant in that sensory field, becomes attuned to other bodies. The sensory field opened up by the wind becomes part of the intentionally built sensory field of the performance; the dancer's movement is (like) an image of the lightness, softness, and gentle unpredictability sensed by the spectator.

Sensory field means an awakening to changes in the environment. It could be a sudden shock to the senses, but may also be a more subtle sensory image that changes the conditions of the body. The sensory field is not necessarily the intentional output of the artist, but the assemblage of many different elements. According to Tervo, a sensory field occurs when an event is emerging through the senses and a figure emerges from the background noise. This awakens or startles the sensory field's participant, whose properties are never permanent.⁴⁰ If a sensory field means an awakening to change, it means that the conditions of the body change.

A Sensory Field as Defamiliarization

Awakening to change here means becoming strange to oneself. It means staggering away from the safety of identity. This underlines the fact that the properties of the human body that construct individuality, such as socially acquired dispositions, body schema, social habitus, affect control, and identity, are not permanent. The human body is not a static entity. The Russian avant-gardist Viktor Sklovsky presented the idea of defamiliarization or estrangement which, for him, meant, among other things, the creation of an aesthetic perception that supersedes the automatic, habitual means of perception. Defamiliarization as the process of technique or device alters one's perception of objects and phenomena in a new, radically fresh, way.⁴¹ In my view, awakening to the sensory field as becoming strange to oneself and perceiving the phenomena of the body in a new way, continues in this sense the legacy of the avant-garde transformative experience.

The concept of the closed body has produced a series of effects on identity, such as an engendered, hetero-normative subject or masculine possessive authorship, as Tervo reminds us.⁴² In my view, they also are modes of orientation toward the world. Here, the participation of the sensory field at first enables me to affectively stagger away from the safety of identity and habitual modes of perception, categorisation, and distance taking. Secondly, it affords the body the mimetic likeness between different bodies, like the gentle breeze.

The pre-individual sensory field as a detachment from a predetermined and fixed identity has some similarities with Donna Haraway's myth of the cyborg that is about transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities. Rather than signalling a separation between humans and other living beings, cyborgs, a cross between machine/technology and organism, signal a disturbing and pleasurable, tight coupling. However, the spectator as a cyborg participant of the pre-individual sensory field does not "return home". In Haraway's words, the cyborg does not return to innocence and wholeness. According to her, such emancipating stories imagine the drama of life to be individuation, separation, the birth of the self, the tragedy of autonomy.⁴³ In my view, they are precisely the features and values of the closed body, inscribed into the logic of permanent identity and dualistic assumptions about the body. Haraway's cyborg metaphor offers a way to think about identity and the body that is not bound in these identity effects of the closed body. In my view, there are some similarities with

40 Tervo & Silde 2014, 35-6.

41 Bartling 2015, 1-3.

42 Tervo 2017.

43 Haraway 1985/2016.

the clown's fluid figure that pierced holes in the closed body of the early modern period. Also, the cyborg as metaphor can serve to break rigid identities.

Participation in the sensory field and its description allow me to perceive and think of the body as intertwined and entangled with, not separate and closed off from, other bodies. According to Rosi Braidotti, we are relational beings, defined by the capacity to affect and be affected. Posthuman subjectivity starts with the acknowledgement that what defines us as an autonomous capacity is not rationality, but rather the autonomy of affect, actualized through relational bonds.⁴⁴

The Space for Bodies to Come Together

In the discourses of theatre studies, the coming together of theatre is usually conceived as a human-centred phenomenon and approached as a discursive and material structure specific to theatre, which produces human bodies as spectators and performers and divides the physical space into an auditorium and a stage, or a space where the aforementioned divisions are experienced.

In theatre and performance studies, coming together has also often been theorized by asking what the meaning or function is in the coming together of human bodies in performance. This question has been approached from differing perspectives, such as strengthening the social bond of the community, reflecting identity, and educating the audience as citizens.⁴⁵ By contrast, the connotations of coming together as an unorganised assembly or crowd have been addressed mostly in relation to vernacular and popular forms of performance.

In *Passage 468*, people wander around the silo in a scattered fashion. The performance is organised in a decentralized fashion within the space, as the subtle material-discursive processes that are presented and constantly transformed foster a certain distraction, a blurring of perception and restless movement. There is not a single or even a finite number of focal points of perception, but rather constantly transforming movement. In the performance, the dispersed movement of the coming together of human bodies recalls the openness of the market place as described by Bakhtin, where the shouts and different performances of the hawkers in the market constantly competed for the attention of the crowd. The performance thus positions the human bodies as a crowd, an undirected, heterogenous, and vague crowd, rather than as individual citizens of the theatre organized in the space. In the silo, the gathering of human bodies does not form unity or coherence and nor is it a separate entity from other bodies, from other matter.

The question of what kinds of bodies are coming together in performance does not only refer to human bodies. When there is no overall image in a space, there is a multiplicity of sensory fields in which all kinds of bodies become entangled with each other, such as , sound waves, light quanta, electrons in electrical wires, memory images, proteins in the fundus... These bodies are above all, agents.

Moreover, questions of agency are thus posed in a different way from the qualities of activity or passivity associated with the coming together of performers and spectators as described above. Agency, according to Barad, is not an attribute, but a constant, ongoing reconfiguring of the world.⁴⁶ The human body as an enclosed container bounded by skin, self-sufficient and independent of others, is called into question when interpreted through the sensory field and agential realism.

Discussion

As I write in the description, the sensory field only becomes experience when the sensation has already broken away from its living context and enters into a shared mode of discourse.

Tervo's sensory field combined with Barad's views on agential realism allows a means of describing and thinking about the open body. By this I mean that a body that is conventionally and habitually perceived as closed and separated from other bodies (things) can now be seen as intertwined and entangled. This is what the concept of the sensory field can offer for

44 Braidotti 2019, 21.

45 Schechner 2016, 89.

46 Barad 2003, 818.

performance analysis, especially for the analysis of so-called “posthuman performances”. My description nevertheless seeks to break away from the performance analysis tradition that describes and analyses the totality of the performance from the outside as a human-centred activity only. The description also seeks to break away from the traditional architecture of theatre in which performer, spectator, and author signify unequal positions within the same entity. It breaks away from the separability of inside and outside, as the experiencer/writer is entangled with the phenomena. By interpreting the performance in terms of the sensory field, combined with views of agential realism, I suggest that the phenomena of the body are not limited to relations between humans or between people and society but extends to human and non-human relations. The sensory field description alters the writer/experiencer’s relationship with bodies and suggests that no body or performance is closed. Instead, they are open to intertwine with other bodies, to sprout, to wither, to connect.

The sensory field, combined with views of agential realism, reveals the intra-activity of different bodies, none of which owns a sensory field. The body as phenomena, as suggested, are open and subject to change. The body is malleable and unstoppable. It is always in process, it is always becoming, it is a mobile and hybrid creature.

AUTHOR

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