

Becoming-anus: Countersexual Affections of Anonymity by Felipe Ribeiro

The room is dark, and the lights dimmed low. A forged twilight, one of those moments of confusion when you don't really distinguish what you see, from what you don't. The audience seats are covered in yellow tape. Both the dimmed low lighting and the seating arrangement lead away the protocolar position of watching at a distance. We walk into the performance "De Repente Fica Tudo Preto de Gente", Suddenly is all blackened out with people¹, by Brazilian artist Marcelo Evelin/Demolition Inc., and we don't know where to stand. On stage, there lies an arena, we enter that space by passing under iron bars which close a square perimeter standing four feet high above the ground. The bars hold fluorescent tubes, the only source of light in that piece.

The lights are dimmed low and they will remain so. Five performers elegantly move as one group, hand in hand. Rhythmic footsteps affect my grounding, their sound vibrates in my pelvis, and in between beats and drags, they raise awareness that the floor also plays a part in the performance.

I'm immersed in that sound, which together with the strong and ineffective request of sight clearness in that dark space turns me inside out. I somehow amplify the context I'm inserted to. We, the audience, are dispersed within the arena. Our conversation fade

¹ The performance has been officially translated as Suddenly everywhere is black with people, but i preferred to make it as literal as possible as the blackening seemed to me very important in that performance.

into silence as we grow attentive to the five blackened bodies which alternately embrace one another in swirls that conduct the whole group to circulate around the arena. This flow, though, obeys the very footsteps rhythm it creates. It's music of its own dance; it's dance of its own music.

The bodies are blackened and their blackness may charge us more than themselves with vulnerability. The matter of their blackness is a moisturized mud made out of charcoal blended in olive oil with which each performer had his/her entire body, and therefore his/her physiognomical identity, covered up. Gilles Deleuze had already mentioned in regards to Francis Bacon that sometimes to make a head appear one must undo the face. (2003:20) If in Bacon's figures rubbing the paint turned as a procedure for the undoing, on the actual performers it happened by a deliberate black plastering of whole naked bodies which are not longer straightly definable by their descendancy - which nation wise makes the crew a mix of two Dutch performers, two Japanese, and three Brazilians - one of which afro descendent. My reading is on identification being covered as a need to pose another set of problems to the dancers. It's no longer a question of furnishing them with a common ground but in turning them a common matter, a mud that disidentifies in order to make the body seen. This proposition could keenly render thoughts in regards to a tautology of the body, except that the bodies are coated by a black membrane, under low light, and my feeling dislocated make me often doubt my visioning and twofold my attention. My assertive is, hence, rather epistemological. Looking at that blackened mass in a darkened space I read it as a research on anonymity, and therefore as anonymity *coming after* two

touchstones within humanities in past decades: the turns of identity and that of subjectivity. In a rapid genealogy it seems to me that identity stood up as a powerful possibility to bring difference to the discussion table, until it became clear enough it furnished myriads of categories as much as arrested lives within matrixial coherences of gaze, affiliation or descendancy. Amidst that paradox, matters of identity were shattered complexified by studies of singularities which relied on subjects ability of behaving in flows and by unfixed desires. In this sense, collectiveness as a matter of community was, thus, reframed as that of multitude.

I watch the blackened bodies behaving mostly amassed together and wonder what state they are performing within multitude. What collectivity is so generalizing in its muddy viscous format in spite of each own's singularity? What collective behavior I see on that stage when they hold together as one at the same time creating and obeying the rhythm they move upon? I see them as one, but one is a sheer *indefinite* one more than really any kind of unity. What vibration is this, that they-as-one resonate within my own affections of self?

No doubt there is inscribed a speech act towards anonymity as a means of the collective. I'm, nevertheless, interested in the affective drive it builds. I'm interested in the body states they endeavor and wallow me in. Thence, anonymity is cast as a state, a moment that propels into consistent experiences of going non-individualized. The charcoal-made mud on the skin seems quite an artifice for this. First, as it poses a teleological question: Does it envelop bodies or does it become a body? or even more

so, does it become a body or, as a matter of fact, does it endeavor the body into becoming? I'll keenly work through the latter option, as it engages the body into ever soliciting of states. That mud is an artifice of anonymity, not of impersonation. It makes no one to go undercover, the mud is not strictly a surface, it is the mud. Therefore, I'll rather assume that the anonymity at stake in the performance is one that precedes no discovery, but instead one that renders a state on its own. Anonymity cast as a state that makes discovery a pointless procedure, ineffective indeed, given that it would misfires the affective drive towards the need of giving names to what is unnamed, for it is not naming what is at the core of the piece: it is affection. The mud is an artifice that turns the group into a mass. The mass is the mud, [it] is the matter of facts.

The charcoal-made mud forges subjects into indiscernibility. Anonymity as an affective state does not nullify identity neither subjectivity, it just doesn't foster them, and instead makes them tremble as illuminating concepts. The plastering of black allows for inventions of others forms of existence, which instead of shedding light to hidden identities, makes recognition temporarily overshadowed.

The space we are in is just the perfect context for this. At first, dimmed low and interfered by our own dislocations, the lights at some point flash in a set of alternations that fast change the perspectives of my sight. Meanwhile, a repetitive sound of mechanic bass frequency cycles, enhances my experience and reverbs in my thorax. In that space, anonymity shimmers in between discerns and indiscernibilities. That shimmering is the acknowledgement of the group as mass. There moves a matter that

builds itself common; a common heterogeneous matter, which builds itself common through accumulation, dirt and impurity more than by reduction. I find this a turning point. I am often lead to think commonality happen through reduction, and here lies an speculation of another scope. That mass instead of reducing differences to a commonality, makes difference to exceed towards indifferentiation. In the mud, all that is wallowed adds to its heterogeneity, the wide scope of which turns all into one blackened mass. The mud does not conceal heterogeneity, it is made of it. In the performance, as time framed as it is, it becomes the engagement of anonymity as an affective state reached within multitude. It is also cognition, more than recognition, which is fostered as the body is primarily taken as a matter which forces its own forms. The tactility perpetrated by the mud helps the procrastination of our vision. Anonymity emerges as an affective state allowing other speculations to upsurge.

Suddenly is all blackened with people makes the performers go on stage to activate anonymity. This state emerges during the performance, and perpetuates therefrom in indirections we can't precisely account for. Although, I'm sure, the drives of that anonymity affects us as audience, just as it infolds on them as performers, as well. Amidst discerns and indiscernibilities shimmering in my mind throughout the piece, I exceed the empiric moment of the happening and I am carried by imaginary questionings of that performance within the context of their everyday lives. That performance and the need of preparation for it, their body proximity in the long lasting mutual plastering on each other's body, their touching of each other's intimate parts, their later washing off of the mud, the group acts of covering and uncovering, the

temporary living with that viscosity and their perceiving of skin, their ritualistic repetition through a run, through festivals, through spare presentations, their bodies in extreme proximities, at first embracing one another, but then amassing on one another, breathing on each other's neck, accompanying each other's diaphragma, hearing each other's exhale, their falling together on the ground, their crawling over one another, their unclasping of hands. They endure this drive of affection, which, although in unassured ways, resonates upon their lives.

De Repente fica tudo preto de gente - Suddenly is all blackened out with people. A strange title that embodies propelling incoherence of acts. There's no prior justification given to whatever is happening. It just simply suddenly happens. As structured as the performance is, the quality of movements furthers our perceptions of randomness and risk rather than suffice actions as chained dramaturgy. Therefore, the title of the performance also conveys our very experience of spectatorship. Suddenly is all blackened out with people; Suddenly *us* all blackened out with people, as we are subjected to being coal stamped. Not only we are engaged to that moving-muddy-mass, but our spectatorship is often engulfed in self-referentiality. The title might refer to the beginning of the performance as much as to its very ending - encompassing us all becoming blackened with them, people. At every happenstance, we are caught in the indecisiveness about their proximity to us either as a threat or as an invite. Whatever circumstantial choice we make, there is no safe position, the traces of charcoal-oil make the dark floor in that darkroom slippery, the performers sweat moisturize further the oily

film on their skin, making us, thence, constantly aware of the risks and positions we take.

The ambiguity of the guideline is the ambiguity of our relation to that mass, one that raises attention to the bodily depths with which we respond to the stimulus in the performance. That arena is a haptic frame. — — A space in which vision and tactility function under insubordination to one another and that may readdress spectator as an improper term. The tactile qualities this writing alludes to, through descriptions of textures, contact with the floor, the perceiving of space, memories of materialities, works as a sign that there is something else furnishing my vision with. In fact, as Deleuze puts it, that is the tactile which furnishes vision making the eye haptic. (2003:154) That is an ability of the eyes to touch and through which imaginaries do not suffice into acquiring visual wholes. But not only the eye is haptic. There is indeed touch which also insubordinates to figure. The movements of amassing may bring circumstantial moulds, but the mass itself performs a sort of disfiguration as human bodies become a blackened-mass in a never ending sculptural process. The performers are imbued in their assembling, disassembling and reassembling on each other's bodies, in transductions of indefinitions. Sometimes I engage my whole body in attempts of viewing them, but at other times my dislocation happens through reactions that exceed sight.

If tactility and vision each take part in my experiencing of the performance, the haptic is nonetheless not enough a quality in this venture. The affective drive that this

performance yields effects not only vision and touch, but happens also still before the touching or in the exceeding of my vision. It starts in that very moment of indecisiveness when I don't know what to expect nor how to react. This lack of knowledge wires my body with an anticipation that heats me from inside out; it emerges from my viscera, and, as Massumi puts it, it levels my experience also to an interoceptive one.

As a participant, I accompany their movements as well as I anticipate them. At a moment, their amassing works through filling in each other cavities. We see them mostly from their backs, the light tubes heights around to the middle of their bodies, making their upper body darker. I watch them in their finding ways to fit within each other's heads cavities, as well as pressing each other from behind, or from the sides, on the armpits, or front-to-front. Through this most collapsed proximity they restore to undiscriminated, translational, sped up movements across the arena. Thence, we follow through quick reactions and, amidst fearful anxiety and fun, move as much. The beauty of our reaction is the realization there is no outside of that movement. Unless we leave the arena and disjoin, we are all viscerally connected. This ability to make the audience circulate as well, and on our own way, dispersedly, away, together with them, in front of them is a great and very difficult part of that dramaturgy. It's a threat and an invite. The performance runs the risks of requesting that type of connection from the audience as a collective which features the skills and readiness to play. My suggestion is that it not simply affects my viscera, but it appeals to my also weaving through it. This is part of the richness of my enrollment in the performance as audience member. I am taken into participation through sound vibrating in my inner cavities, by leading touch skills to the

eye, by actions, reactions and anticipations of actions, in an array of activations of senses that sometimes happen simultaneously, and at other times happens in alternate subtlety, not to mention asynchronicity.

I watch us, the audience as being dispersedly moved by the mass and therefore moving with it. The play of distance and proximity unfolds through vastly different layers. I experiment empiricism and analytical views at the same time, I follow from immersion to detachment, I hollow into imaginaries and time extensions. I work in a double engagement: that of my being there, that of picturing my being there. I become an entanglement of presence and philosophy.

As audience, I'm constantly sharing experiences from others and making some of my own. Anticipation becomes a joint of the two: at the same time my inner and everyone's experience; or if we follow Massumi's description of anticipation, it is the "visceral sensibility [that] immediately registers excitations gathered by (...)the five senses even before they are fully processed by the brain." (2002:60) Anticipation operates in a leap, in that fraction of time when we still do not deem it as empirical. It operates in "an immediacy that precedes the exteroceptive sense perception. It anticipates the translation of the sight or sound or touch perception into something recognizable." (ibid.) What an interesting affective drive that which is at the same time innerly depth and collectively common, that which effects as it precedes the senses perception. How radical and subtle it this operation Massumi names "the body without an image." (ibid.)

There's a whole lot of darkness in that experience. Darkness in the space, blackened darkness, darkness of dis-identities, darkness of anonymity, darkness prior to image making, darkness of the inner body. Darkness that certainly contrasts to the enlighten mode of spectatorship conducted by clear vision. Visibility trembles with the shimmering between discerns and indiscernibilities, turns into touch and is refrained from supremacy, as spectatorship turns also into a request of visceral anticipation. What does such a shift perform both in my perception and in the senses therein? I assume it operates change in the realm of which Jacques Derrida has called Photologics; the logics of light, "the western founder metaphor of metaphysics," (1978:23) in which clarity enlightens the structure of our thinking. The metaphors indeed unfold and expressions abound: such as clarity of thought, brilliance of ideas, or discoveries of knowledge, which turns it into processes of uncovering, of just shedding light into a thought to make it known, etc. Light leads whatever public dissemination, whereas darkness is attributed to "expressions of self-concealment to engage into self-revelation." (ibid.) Under the Photologics, Darkness is perceived then as pertaining to isolation, to the individual, to what regards to the self. Suddenly is all blackened out with people performs darkening, however, collectively. Besides, not as a way of concealment but as one of anonymity, not as revealing its interiority, but viscerally affecting it.

Derrida explicits the links of that metaphysics of light to anthropomorphism. As he says: "it's preformationism brought to the aesthetics" (ibid.). Preformationism, the assumption

that “the totality of hereditary characteristics is enveloped in the germ, and is already in action in reduced dimensions that nevertheless respect the forms and proportions of the future adult.” (ibid.) The little man is already contained in the sperm, which just as the logos, just as the message, must be disseminated, and reproduce itself indefinitely. Preformation finds its way in aesthetics, in the logos spermatikos (ibid.), in how we deal with reason and lights, text and image, in how we grade discoveries higher than fictions, in how we work architecture, the theater and its high up grids of light, included. To lower the lights both in height and in dimming them low, as well as to prevent the seats while turning the arena into a shared space of performers and audience embodies dissonance from that metaphysics. If “the history of philosophy is a history of light”, what is the epistemology that Suddenly is all blackened out with people strengthen?

What does it happen when theater imbibes the darkroom, the abjected gay meeting point? Not only for the room is dark but also as it makes our viscera an affective connection of the collective, and engage us in anonymity as an affective drive. Affection: that which does not disseminate, does not function by reproduction, and which, in this case, queerly flirts with visceral pleasures, the transmissions of which happen in leaps, in the gaps prior to brain’s interpreting of the senses. The leap that makes affection of one’s own just as collective. Affection of anonymity, in that it matters less due to its origins than to its living through.

On the Photological perspective the darkroom is a disfunction, an abjection. It is far from operating through reproductive patterns, and is often taken by contagiousness,

entangling threatens and invites together. Recognition ceases on behalf of pleasure, and pleasures imbibe its cognitive strand from which other speech acts may rise. There's no clear knowledge being portrayed nor sent out as a message, but invented through and in a manner that Paul Preciado has called *Placer-Saber* (pleasure-knowledge). (2002:27) A binomial I wish, was never to be split.

Pleasure-knowledge is at the core of Preciado's Countersexual Manifesto. The anus is inscribed therein as the center-organ of pleasure, as the organ which re-inscribes sex, as counter-productive, non-reproducible act. While sexualized, the anus combines abjection to pleasure, and it does away with functionality, that which subordinates an act to its production. It rather inscribes itself in acts of pleasure. Thought on the realm of collectiveness this pleasure turns to be sheer political. In the sense of the polis, of making the anus and its intensities public as a collective matter. Preciado cites Deleuze and Guattari saying that the anus was the first organ to be privatized (apud 2002:28). It must, therefore, be de-privatized, it must be made public. And here lies the epistemological twist of the question: on one side the anus must have its public realm restored, as on the other and mainly, it is of great interest how does public is re-signified by the anus.

To place the anus as the center organ of pleasure is rather a passionate hyperbole. Of course, pleasure is not exclusive to it, neither are the conceptions of reproduction and their pleasing disfunction, for that matter many technologies of the body, machines, prothesis and dildos do enlist. So, rather than once again universalize behaviors

reduced to the systems of one organ, it is interesting to attain to the qualities that penetrate it and the intensities that irradiate through, just to keep affections enmeshing.

Through these qualities and intensities I propose a collective experience of the Becoming-anus. Inside out as it is, the anus is one organ, which is half viscera. It must not be the new representation of pleasure in the body as, as a viscera, it exactly matters for the leap that makes “the body without an image”. Therefore, I perceive the Becoming-anus in what it suscites of delegitimization of figures. As it’s the case of the Father-figure. Through the becoming-anus, the queer movement is that of epistemologically turn the father on his back, recreate himself as an erogenous phantasy through his back hole, the concealed erogenous zone, which is in the pulsing and threatening cavity at the base of the phallus. The anus, Schreber’s solar phantasy, which holds darkness. But not only turning the judge, his psychoanalyst, and the father, on their backs, but also turning the back to the father, as the anus does not abolish, but misfires gender. Becoming-anus in its qualities of indefiniton, impurity, threat, delegitimization, residual, hyperbolic, innocent, disidentitarian, anonymous, unanimous, figural, tactile, visceral, magic, penetrable, active, genital, dark.

Disfunction of organs are usually taken as pathology and rarely reckoned as art. The performing arts has quite a few pieces where viscerality takes important part of the event. Suddenly is all blackened out with people kins in this way.

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