

Dance as a Criticism to Representation: Merce Cunningham and the Philosophy of Difference

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Resumo | The body, the raw material on which dance art is modeled, has always been alienated from a considerable part of the history of Western philosophy, mainly from the Platonic tradition of representation. The history of dance in the West closely followed this movement, mostly using the body as a tool, not as an end in itself. Deleuze's philosophical production was almost entirely dedicated to an attack on representation, and, as we will analyze here, this movement is also noticeable in Merce Cunningham's artistic production.

KEYWORDS: Contemporary Dance. Cunnin- gham. Deleuze.

A dança como crítica à representação: Merce Cunningham e a filosofia da diferença

Resumo | O corpo, matéria-prima sobre a qual a arte da dança se modela, sempre fora alienado de parte considerável da história da filosofia ocidental, principalmente da tradição platônica de representação. A história da dança no ocidente acompanhou de perto tal movimento, por vezes utilizando o corpo como ferramenta, ao invés de fim. A produção filosófica de Deleuze se dedicou quase que inteiramente em um ataque à representação, e, como aqui analisaremos, também é perceptível esse movimento na produção artística de Merce Cunningham.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE:: Dança contemporânea. Cunningham. Deleuze.

La danza como crítica a la representación: Merce Cunningham y la filosofía de la diferencia

Resumen | El cuerpo, materia-prima sobre el cual el arte de la danza se modela, siempre fuera alienado de parte considerable de la historia de la filosofía occidental, principalmente de la tradición platónica de la representación. La historia de la danza occidental acompañó de cerca tal movimiento, a veces utilizando el cuerpo como herramienta, en lugar de como un fin. La producción filosófica de Deleuze se dedicó casi enteramente a atacar la representación, y como aquí analizaremos, también es perceptible ese movimiento en la producción artística de Merce Cunningham.

KEYWORDS: Danza contemporánea. Cunningham. Deleuze.

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The present article aims to analyze the work of Merce Cunningham¹ under the prism of a criticism of the orientation of representation present in the productions of classical and modern Western dance. This enterprise is based on the vision of disorganization, multiplicity and impermanence that the choreographer had on dance, and I use here, in juxtaposition, the model of criticism to the thought as representation that is offered to us in several stages of Gilles Deleuze's work, as well as some of his concepts articulated from this criticism, such as those of Body without Organs², Rhizome³ and Event⁴. There is no intention here to point out affiliations between Cunningham and Deleuze, but rather parallels between Deleuze's critique of the history of philosophy and Cunningham's critique of Western dance history, since the latter was largely influenced by the multiple Western conceptions about nature and essence⁵.

Deleuze articulates in his thesis *Difference and Repetition*, from 1968, and later in his other writings, criticisms to the conception that understands thought as a form of representation. The philosopher points out flaws in this thought that has a Platonic origin, which permeates through its development a large part of the ancient Western tradition, in which, through a binary logic of the "One that becomes two", the meaning of all things is submitted to a hierarchy of the One, and its logic is directly incorporated in the objects. Such hierarchy is still alive through the Modernity: even though things can have the appearance of multiplicity they are submitted to a unitary subjectivity transcendent to the objects. In other words: the reality of things lies in an Idea, enclosed in its essence, and never actually understood in its realization, since it would only be accomplished in the world by means of representations, similarities, images, that is, shadows relatively palpable and similar to that Unattainable Idea. Through his criticisms, Deleuze proposes a place of effective creation in the philosophical exercise, and not a place where the thought always tends to conform to the image, or as, says Robert Machado in *Deleuze and Philosophy*, commenting on the core of the Deleuzian critics, a place of "thought without images":

¹ Merce Cunningham, American dancer and choreographer of the twentieth century, has in his training base the techniques of classical western dance, tap dance and modern American dance. He started his own dance company after working with Martha Graham for years, and disagreeing with the representational and expressionist aspect of modern dance. Influenced by his contact with John Cage, who at the time was already experimenting with the Open Form process in his compositions, Cunningham began testing new means of composition in dance. (LESSCHAEVE, 2014, 36). For a better understanding of the proposal of this project, I indicate here some footage of the choreographer's works available in the following links] Variations V de 1965: (<https://dancecapsules.mercecunningham.org/player.cfm?capid=46119&assetid=5965&storeitemid=9354&assetnamenoop=Variations+V+%281966+Arne+Arnbom+film%29+>) e Walkaround Time, de 1973: (<https://dancecapsules.mercecunningham.org/player.cfm?capid=46121&assetid=6116&storeitemid=9651&assetnamenoop=Walkaround+Time+%281973+Atlas+film%29+>)

² I use here the concept of Body without Organs mainly in the form in which it is outlined in the works "The anti-oedipus: capitalism and schizophrenia" (DELEUZE, GUATTARI, 1983) and "A thousand plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia" (DELEUZE, GUATTARI, 1987).

³ I analyze in this article the concept of Rhizome mainly in the form in which it is delineated in the Thousand plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1987).

⁴ I use here the concept of Event mainly in the way it is outlined in the work "What is Philosophy?" (DELEUZE, 1994).

⁵ I point out that a few associations between the work and the mode of composition of Merce Cunningham and Deleuzian philosophy have already been produced guided by other approaches, most notably the Cunningham's Series (GIL, 2004) and Paradoxical Body (GIL, 2006) articles from José Gil and The Aesthetics of Movement: Variations V on Gilles Deleuze and Merce Cunningham (DAMKJÆR, 2005), by Camilla Damkjaer.

"The idea of creating another space for philosophical thought, which already appears in the monographic works, is noticeable more clearly in the problematic works which, centered on the questions of difference, meaning, desire, multiplicity, extend the resonances to scientific, literary and artistic knowledge, always with the aim of opposing 'the traditional image that philosophy has designed, built in thought to subject it and prevent its functioning', an 'untimely' exercise of thought, or opposing the image of thought a thought without image." (MACHADO, 1990, p.13)

Deleuze's work tends to operate a "subversion of the world of representation" (DELEUZE, 1990, 263), dismissing it from the logic Idea and similarity, denying the hierarchy of thought that sets out in search of a truth and that seeks to follow it to its root. The philosopher causes fissures in this *modus operandi* of thought in the moment he brings the positive power that has the simulacrum of negation of the "Essence-Appearance" logic (DELEUZE, 1990, p.262), establishing the world of a thought without image, and the creation of a "non-hierarchized work, a condensation of coexistences, a simultaneity of events" (DELEUZE, 1990, p.262). It is similarly possible to point out in the creations of Merce Cunningham a subversion of the logic with which the Western dance operated until then. Influenced by the productive discussions that took place at Peggy Guggenheim's house and gallery, by the ideas that John Cage was experimenting at the time, namely, the open form method, and by his own studies with Mrs. Barrett and the years in Black Mountain College, Merce moves away from the representation permeated by the dramatic expressionism of modern dance, as well as the image pierced by the romanticism of classical ballet, at the moment he decides that his dance will have nothing to represent. Bodies and movements will no longer be images or instruments of an idea, but rather, dance will now be composed precisely from the body and movement. What was once mere instrument acquires consistency, protagonism and creative power. Due to such attitude and innovation in the compositional mode of his creations, Cunningham comes to be called, by the Italian art historian Germano Celant, an "iconoclast of choreographic figurations":

"In this sense Cunningham can be considered an iconoclast of choreographic figurations, since he can lay claim to a pure idea of dance, where every representation becomes inadequate. [...]. With Cunningham, dance has the claim of being other than music, other than art, of representing a separate substance that can voyage independently from sound or visual image. The affirmation of a gesture or a movement that materializes in its originality lies in this search for identity and difference. It is neither artificial nor passive construction, but a prototype of a real existence, which one can encounter with other languages, which can accompany them, but in mutual respect and on parallel paths." (CELANT, 2000, p. 23)

Here, in this juxtaposition of concepts, we understand three fundamental aspects in Cunningham's creative process for the operation of this criticism from the formation of another dance: (i) through a process of deterritorialization of the

Western dance of its essence and closed significance which has a totalizing intention and of a subjective unity transcendent to the work and imposed to it by a dominant subject; (ii) a process of disorganization and application of difference not only in the unity of movements and bodies, but in all elements present in the work, including music and visual art; (iii) and the consequent multiplicity of senses that can emerge by the moment, resulting in an open work, pierced by events that are dispossessed of closed and pre-defined or permanent senses and meanings. When Cunningham dismisses the dance from a representational place through the procedures we shall see below, the body and the movement become free and gain reality, from the moment that both are no longer used or understood as appearances of an essence, of another reality, but considered themselves as realities, and as open possibilities of productions of intensities through its multiple energies.

I

Em *In Space, Time and Dance*, written in 1952, seven years after leaving the modern dance company of Martha Graham, Cunningham criticizes the hitherto valid modes in the choreographic compositions of the Western dance:

About the formal methods of choreography--some due to the conviction that a communication of one order or another is necessary; others to the feeling that mind follows heart, that is, form follows content; some due to the feeling that the musical form is the most logical to follow [...]. What the dancer does is the most realistic of all possible things, and to pretend that a man standing on a hill could be doing everything except just standing is simply divorce - divorce from life, from the sun coming up and going down, from cloud in front of the sun, from the rain that comes from the clouds and sends you into the drugstore for a cup of coffee, from each thing that succeeds each thing. Dancing is a visible action of life." (CUNNINGHAM, 1952)

What would be exactly these "formal methods of choreography" criticized by Cunningham? Among the most diverse methods utilized by the Western dance post-Renaissance, I will stress here the two most important of them that ended up shaping the way of composing dance in the West. The first determines dance as from a harmonic and formal nature, of a rational essence. In the (up to the present) known as the "first treatises of Western dance" produced in fifteenth-century Italy, dance is described as a bodily manifestation of the harmony of music, and consequently of the cosmos. (DOMENICO; SMITH, A.W., 1995); (GUGLIELMO, SPARTI, B.,; SULLIVAN, M., 1995). This Italian dance was appropriated by the French courts in later centuries, undergoing a technical improvement, going from the court ballet (16th-17th centuries) to the action ballet (18th century). In this last configuration, prior to the advent of classical

⁶At the end of a summer course given by Graham at Mills College, where Merce was studying in the summer school, the dancer and choreographer called him to join her company, which he joined until 1945. (LESSCHAEVE, 2014, pp. 36-37).

ballet, dance was still mostly regarded as a representation of the nature of the "resonance of the bodies", which in turn were understood according to a conception of rationalistic orientation that should be followed in compositions and performances of music and dance at the period. (MONTEIRO; NOVERRE, 2006, p.109).

On the other hand, the second most important method that shaped Western dance has its roots in the development of classical ballet, in the 19th Century. The presence of a rational shape still persists in the bodies, however is noticeable the beginning of a subjective element guiding the narrative. The signifying unity that divided and translated itself upon the dancing bodies is now sharing space with a subjective unity that also exists in the composition. The concept of nature in dance went through gradual mutations towards a romantic nature, no longer having its fundamentals upon the "resonance of the bodies". The eighteenth-century ballet of action, originated from the change of court concerts to the city, served a new audience and a new elite who no longer identified themselves with the ancient court rituals. Ballet was now growing and developing in response to the demands of another audience, in a context where the concept of nature was gradually distancing itself from that rationalist one. The dance absorbed the criticism of French opera in the episode of the *Querelle des Bouffons*, reshaping its drama to then express, in the foreground, human feelings and emotions. The dance concerts succeeded in striking a balance between the Marvelous and the Verisimilitude, supported by an imitation of nature that thrilled and awakened the passions in the audience, marveled with the virtuosity of technique in the bodies of the dancers, and simultaneously pitied, identified with the dramas represented by the dancers during the dancing narrative. The improvement of these factors then conditioned the birth of the romantic ballet. (MONTEIRO, NOVERRE, 2006, p.103) (GARAUDY, 1980, p.30-38).

The American Modern Dance, which was the one from that Cunningham got most of his influences, mainly in his Graham years, had its break through due to a major development and primacy of the subjective unity to the detriment of the rational aspect of the form and the narrative. The subjectivity of the author is now seen in every part of her/his work. Isadora Duncan, one of its pioneers, understood that dance and the movements were directly subordinated to human emotions and feelings. but with much more emphasis than in classical dance, and, in order to achieve this goal, stripped the dance of her costumes, and her technical virtuosity, freeing her body to express human nature, which she understood as being endowed with a religiosity, which was nothing more than an "expression of life". (LAMOTHE, 2006, p.107-109). Martha Graham, other pioneers of the American Modern Dance and a teacher to Merce Cunningham, improved the Expressionist conception of the nature of dance in her creations, but unlike Duncan, she did not regard human nature as endowed with religiosity, but in a sense more laic and tragic (LAMOTHE, 2006, p.151-153) and (GARAUDY, 1980, p.89, 95).

Such formal methods criticized by Cunningham understood, each in its

own way, dance and its movements as expressions of a unitarian nature, whether that nature was comprehended as the harmony from the musical bodies and, consequently, of the cosmos, or was that nature perceived as the human feelings and emotions. In both cases, it could be said that dance was then understood in a hierarchical relationship of verisimilitude of this idea of nature, being realized only as a reference to an unitarian and rational essence – existing formally in the oeuvre -, or to a subjective and unitarian essence - transcendent to the oeuvre - , and thus had to express and visibly embody in their bodies and movements that nature, that idea, and delimiting the meaning of dance outside itself, which relegated to it a place only representational, devoid of any reality.

For Cunningham, the representational factor of the dance could only be disarticulated from the moment the work was composed, no longer using the bodies and movements to paint in them another truth, an external meaning or sense, starting from the idea of essence and nature that they would have to represent. On the contrary, in his 1955 text, *The Impermanent Art*, Cunningham argues that the choreographer had to depart from one's own body and from one's own movements to compose dance (CUNNINGHAM, 1952), no longer using them as means of verisimilitude to an essential idea, whatever it may be, but now, creating a composition that has as principles its own body and movement.

“If a dancer dances-which is not the same as having theories about dancing or wishing to dance or trying to dance or remembering in his body someone else's dance-but if the dancer dances, everything is there. The meaning is there, if that's what you want. [...]. In painting, now, we are beginning to see the painting, and not the painter nor the painted. We are beginning to see how a painted space is. In music, we are beginning to hear free of our well-tempered ears. In dance, it is the simple fact of a jump being a jump, and the further fact of what shape the jump takes. This attention given the jump eliminates the necessity to feel that the meaning of dancing lies in everything but the dancing, and further eliminates cause-and-effect worry as to what movement should follow what movement, frees one's feelings about continuity, and makes it clear that each act of life can be its own history: past, present and future, and can be so regarded, [...]” (CUNNINGHAM, 1955)

From the moment that there is the purpose of removing any essence from the dance, to discard it from its previous representational role, other postulates of the work end up falling apart too, that is, those which also came together for that purpose, namely, those who did the work converge to a unity, since before it departed from a concept of nature or essence that was also a unity. Both the musical element and the visual element present in a classical or modern Western dance concert were composed in accordance with the purpose of the dance that would develop there, forming a unity in the work, composed of parts that tended to a totalizing harmonization⁷.

⁷Given the conception of subordination of movements to music that was prevalent in classical dance and still permeated the modern production of dance. (MONTEIRO; NOVERRE, 2006, p.85-86) (GARAUDY, 1980, p.69, 101)

Como, então, poderia Merce Cunningham destituir em sua produção de uma nova obra o lugar da lógica binária, de significação direta ou transcendente, que a tradição da dança ocidental hierarquizada trazia consigo? Como poderia fragmentar, desmembrar essa unidade presente tanto nas sequências de movimentos quanto nos outros elementos que permeiam a obra? E como poderia produzir uma obra que se realizasse em composição e resultado de modo tal que não intercambiase das antigas noções de unidade e essência na dança para apenas instaurar uma outra nova, mas antes, que resultasse em uma obra destituída, de fato, de qualquer sentido essente?

II

How could Merce Cunningham remove, in his process, the place of essence and nature which the tradition of the hierarchical Western dance brought with it? How could he fragment, dismember this unity that was present both in the sequences of movements and in the other elements that permeate the work? And how could he produce a oeuvre that was performed in composition and result in such a way that he wouldn't just switch from the old notions of essence in dance to only establish a new one, but rather produce a work devoid of any essential meaning? processo:

"The second event was when I began to use chance operations in choreography, in the fifties. [...]. I have utilized a number of different chance operations, but in principle it involves working out a large number of dance phrases, each separately, then applying chance to discover the continuity – what phrase follows what phrase, how time-wise and rhythmically the particular movement operates, how many and which dancers might be involved with it, and where it is in the space and how divided. It led, and continues to lead, to new discoveries as to how to get from one movement to the next, presenting almost constantly situations in which the imagination is challenged. I continue to utilize chance operations in my work, finding with each dance new ways of experiencing it." (CUNNINGHAM, 1994)

Through this new method, Cunningham, when in the process of composing, operated a dismemberment, a disorganization, a total virtual disarticulation in the body and in the members of the body to be choreographed⁸, disorganization that would later be updated, embodied in the bodies of the dancers. Such dismemberment occurred through chance procedures⁹, in which the choreographer tossed a given movement, a given gesture for each part of the body, without predetermined sequence nor continuity. In his paper, "*Merce Cunningham and the Politics of Perception*", Roger Copeland discusses this dismemberment, disarticulation and disorganization that Cunningham operates in the body to then compose the movements and sequences:

⁸ Simoni Forti, in her "Handbook in Motion", defines Cunningham as a "master of adult, isolated articulation" (CELANT, 2000, p.161).

⁹ Photographer James Klosty, who closely followed the years of partnership between Merce Cunningham and John Cage, also comments on the creative process of the choreographer: "How one does make a dance by chance? Cunningham began by throwing coins to assemble his materials. His procedures require hours of arduous manual labor drawing up charts- charts to determine the number of dancers, charts for their spacing, charts for sequences, charts for movements for certain parts of the body, charts for whatever element of a work he wishes to submit to chance procedures." (KLOSTY, 1986, p.13)

"Not only is everybody a 'soloist' in Cunningham's choreography, every section of every body can become a soloist as well; for Cunningham often sets the head, arms, torso and legs moving in opposition to one another. As early as 1953, Cunningham had choreographed a piece (Untitled Solo) in which the movement for each of several subdivisions of the body was determined separately and by chance." (CELANT, 2000, p.161).

From the choices of movements, body parts that would take the shape of these movements, number of times that they would be repeated, how many dancers would be involved, how to divide space, the juxtaposition of one given sequence next to the other, and how movements would be executed, everything was chosen intentionally through chance.

It is revealed in this process of dismemberment, disorganization of the body in dance, operated by Cunningham's Theory of Chance, one of the fundamental attacks on the notion of dance as representation. In the construction of its structure, in the process of composition of the sequences of movements, any essence or notion of nature is removed from dance, notions of unity and totality of the body are equally removed, since its starting point is already a dismembered body, no longer united, and not continuous. Such a process can be juxtaposed to the process carried out by the "*Body without Organs*", a concept formulated and developed by Deleuze and Guattari in the *Thousand Plateaus*¹⁰. It is necessary to keep in mind that the "Body without Organs" does not necessarily refer to a human body, but to a concept in which the word "body" is understood as a set of elements structured in a hierarchical way, forming a unit - being this unit a human body, a book, a chain of ideas, etc. Usually, the constitutive elements of such body are disposed according to a hierarchy, creating an organized unity. When Deleuze and Guattari add the adjective "without organs" to the noun "body", a practice, a power is formed. Its purpose is to be a power that aims precisely to disorganize any hierarchical structure of elements, any organized structure present in the bodies, formed of organs whose functions intertwine, permeated by a mutual dependence and governed by a hierarchy.

Such practice would be driven by a desire's field of immanence. However, it would not be a desire resultant from a lack, but a positive one, of production and destratification. Thus, it is formed a plane of consistency constituted not by extensions but by intensities, energies (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 2000). The "Body without Organs" can be understood as the body made and populated by intensities, it is a potential, a limit, it is the body that contains in itself all possible bodies. Hence its adjective of "without organs", is a power made not of extension, but of intensities, that makes possible, through the application of its notion, a process of disorganization of bodies endowed with extension, whatever it is. Deleuze and Guattari compare it to an egg:

¹¹ The notion of "Body without Organs" was extracted by Deleuze and Guattari from Antonin Artaud's radio broadcast "To Have Done with the Judgement of God" (1947) (DELEUZE, 2002, p. 47)

"That is why we treat the BwO [Body without Organs] as the full egg before the extension of the organism and the organization of the organs, before the formation of the strata; as the intense egg defined by axes and vectors, gradients and thresholds, by dynamic tendencies involving energy transformation and kinematic movements involving group displacement, by migrations: all independent of accessory forms because the organs appear and function here only as pure intensities (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1987, p.153).

The power of the "Body without Organs" makes it possible to disorganize, to withdraw hierarchies and to establish other modes of organization than those prior to the application of its process. However, this is not a definitive process. The practice is continuously oscillating, once there are always new stratas after each disorganization, what makes the "Body without Organs" to be always alternating between the surface that stratifies it and the plane of consistency that releases it. The "Body without Organs" is used by Deleuze and Guattari as an attack to the notion of unity and hierarchical organization of the thought as representation, whether this unity is of a signification or of a subjectivity one and, as seen, this practice carries all of the possible body structures with it as a consequence of the destructions of sedimented structures and organizations.

Just as Deleuze and Guattari, we could say that Cunningham synthesizes and creates a similar practice to the "Body without Organs" as he applies his Chance Theory through his desire to explore and to experiment the infinite possibilities of movements intensities on a plane of consistency, where they could emerge and pass through the bodies from the desubjectification and designification of movements and body. During this disorganization, the whole body and its shapes, as well as all the subjectivity of its movements, find themselves torn - nay, shattered - they are no longer parts nor extensions, given that the unity that subsisted to them is now extracted from the multiplicity. There is no more "the one" to go back to, nor original unit to represent. There are only intensities, pure energies. The bodies and movements that once were substantial attributes to be disorganized, destratified and quartered, are now transmuted into dances-bodies, movements-bodies, i.e., into energy or intensity productions, completely devoided from subjects and significances.

Thus, the choreographer ended up gradually constituting, after the Chance operations and after experimenting its effects, an oeuvre where he goes on defining and sedimenting the results on his dancers' bodies and on his own. As it is distinctive in the "Body without Organs" practice the continuous oscillation between stratification and destratification, we can also see a similar oscillation in Cunningham's work in his Chance process, where such practice is always unbalancing between the moment of the Chance procedure and the choreographic experiments. This unbalanced moment would always occur on a plane of consistency, and the solidification of the movements here obtained on the dancers' bodies would convert this plane into a surface subject to

stratification. Nevertheless, precisely for the oeuvre's open character, designified and desubjectified, this stratification does not carry with it the same weight and hierarchy that subsists in the other aforesaid composition modes of the Western dance, once these stratas do not come neither from transcendent or essential unities, but from the results acquired precisely from the destruction process of such unities. Therefore, the oeuvre, although its stratas, remains open, it is felt by its outside, there is no inside, no interiority, there are no parts, neither sequency nor continuity.

It is vital to stress here that the process of "Body without Organs", according to Deleuze and Guattari, should never be applied completely, under penalty of destruction of the very possibility of its applicability, that is, in this scenario it would either lead to a total destruction of the body, thus canceling the possibility of producing new structures, or such an attempt would only make the existing organizations even more settled, making any attempt at disarticulation impossible – the cancerous "Body without Organs", whose stratas acquire a fascist character and become proliferating. It should be applied gradually, disorganizing structures and settlements progressively, thus keeping always open the possibility of a new restructuring. Just as, therefore, the "Body without Organs" never reaches a total effectuation, that is, it is a limit itself, a potential, remaining always open, similarly, the Theory of Chance was not only used to compose a work, but also to recompose it. Merce changed sequences, dancers and even movements from one performance to another (CELANT, 2000). Given that his compositions were orchestrated upon the unity's splintering, the movements and sequences choices were also juxtaposed by Chance, resulting in an immanence field always disposed to engender a disorganization, a destratification of the sedimented structures, and so introducing another plane of consistency. Such new plane is not inhabited by the stratas placed in a particular way in the oeuvre, but by intensities. Thus, Cunningham dismembers and disorganizes his works to prevent his dance from returning to the verisimilitude precepts. Therefore, the choreographer makes the performances of the same work and same name unique to each presentation, becoming, this way, impermanent.

III

With this new orientation of composing through chance, of preventing a unifying and totalizing essence in the work, it became necessary that the artists who produced the other elements, such as music and visual-spatial art, also use the open form, and composed these elements independently of each other. Without prior knowledge of the production of the other elements, it was not uncommon for each element of the work, namely dance, music, and visual art, to become aware of the "final" form of the other elements only in the day of the performance (CUNNINGHAM in CELANT, 2000). Starting from this assumption, here again we observe the creation of a oeuvre from a plane of consistency where multiple intensities transit, lineated from another attack to the subjective or significant unity. Therefore, not only the plane of consistency formed by the

bodies-dance or bodies-movements energies disrupt the others dance methods formal and subjective organization. There are also others planes of consistency working in the oeuvre's constitution, bringing others intensities, other energies, musical energies and visual-spatial energies. Thus, the musical and visual-spatial elements that, in others dance methods, are usually used to refer to a unitarian essence, here they are fragmented, disarticulated through the process, once the desired result was that the work presented not a unification or dissolution of one element into the other, but several different intensities in relation.

It gets clearer how Cunningham believed that the relationships between the elements in the work would occur when the choreographer talks about the relation of dance to music in his compositions. For him, it was essentially a "non-relationship" (CAGE-CUNNINGHAM, 1991), if such a relationship departed from a definition of necessary subordination or interdependence among them, as it is the case in other dance productions. Given that there is no more a confluence of the elements to the representation and signification, each element brings to the work its multiple realities and intensities, entering in relation with the others elements' intensities – not in a convergent way, but stating their differences. Just as the movements did not have an external reference, that is, they did not depart from an essence to be expressed, the music didn't have one either. Therefore, there were two different compositions that happened to take place at the same time and space, different non-signified multiples that coexisted:

"This non-reference of the movement is extended into a relationship with music. It is essentially a non-relationship. The dance is not performed to the music. For the dances that we presente, the music is composed and performed as a separate identity of itself. It happens to take place at the same time as the dance. The two co-exist, as sight and sound do in our daily lives. And with that, the dance is not dependente upon the music [...], because it would strike me as daily life without sound. I accept sound as one of the sensory areas along with sight, the visual sense." (CELANT, 2000, p. 42)

This "non-relationship" is also noticeable in Cunningham's mention of the visual element, when he reports in an interview with journalist Jacqueline Lesschaeve an incident he had with Robert Rauschenberg:

"While I was creating *Minutiae*, I asked Bob if he could do something visual for the performance. I did not ask for anything in specific. I told him it could be something which we could pass through. He created a beautiful object that was suspended in pipes, but I said: "It is marvelous, but we cannot use this because we rarely perform in room with bamboos". He was not angry, he only said that he would do something else. I came back some days later and he had created another object, that later on was exhibited. A terrific object! Full of colors and comic strips. You could pass through it, go under it or get around it. He created it using material he found out on the street. I loved it because *it was impossible to know what was that* [...] It happened in 1954" (LESSCHAEVE, 2014, p. 54-55)

There was not in the result of the work, when these three main elements approached at the moment of the performance, a harmonizing tendency of convergence, or subordination between them. On the contrary, the difference between the elements was emphasized in their production and in the performances, always deviating from any unifying and essentialized orientation. Henceforth, with no hierarchy or unity in the work, it is possible to think this composing process as a reinforcement to the attack on the unified, subjectified and signified structures of Western dance, as in the concept of *Rhizome*¹¹ outlined by Deleuze and Guattari as a critique on the representational and hierarchical thinking.

The philosopher and the anthropologist defend the notion of thought as a Rhizome, whose name comes from botany and literally means the root model that a grass has, as opposed to the notion of binary thought whose development is similar to the Taproot and to the Fibrous root. On the one hand, the tap root has a central radicle from which several vertical branching roots come out, but, at the end, all of them refer hierarchically to that radicle, to the initial common point. Such a mode of structure is used to illustrate the functioning of thought whose signification's unity is apprehended and translated directly into the object. On the other hand, the Fibrous root appears to be aborted, and even seems to have a multiple aspect, but its unity still subsists, and it is from the same unity that all of that multiplicity come. The latter is used to draw the functioning of thought whose unity is not present directly in the object, but is transcendent to it, the unity exists within the subject that determines, defines and produces the object. The binarism subsists in both cases: i) the thought as representation, where there is an initial and central idea, an essence that never gains reality, and only appears in the world through its subordinated images - its representations - in the case of the Taproot and ii) the idea that intends to be multiple and that even has a multiplicity unfolded in the reality, mas that still is subdued and determined by the transcendent unity - the subject's unity - in the case of the Fibrous root.

The Rhizome, in its turn, lacks a unifying original point from which everything else should, directly or indirectly, refer to. It is permeated by multiple non-sequential and non-hierarchical branches, united exclusively by non-converging, interdependent, vertically-spreading alliance points on the surface. This root model is transposed by Deleuze and Guattari to the kind of thought that is defended against representational and subjective thought. Such sort of thought never ends up structured into a model, it is rather a reversion process of those two other models, and it always proceed only through this process of reversion. It is finite, without any significances, defined by its exterior. It does not have neither an ending or beginning, it is always lying in the middle - it is intermedium -, constituted by a heterogeneous' regime of things, suffering

¹³ The concept appears first outlined in *Rhizome*, 1976 (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1976) and later incorporated in the *Thousand Plateaus* (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1987).

mutations at every moment that something connects or disconnects from it. It is a mode of thought without genesis, without the first essence to which all the rest must report its significant, with no dominant subjectivity that delineates and determines in a transcendent *modus operandi* all of its multiplicity, without homogeneity, but permeated by a multiple and interdependent heterogeneity, which is realized entirely in the world (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1987).

Similarly to the rhizomatic process, when Cunningham continuously composes and re-composes his oeuvres, he goes from a similar immanence field that desires and proceeds by annihilation of signification and subjectivation, transmuting all of the oeuvre's elements into intensities processes and dance-bodies, movements-bodies, musical and visual-spatial energies "(...) since about 1950 we've worked with structure as a process, like weather, which doesn't have a beginning or end" (CAGE in CELANT, 2000, p. 138). In Merce Cunningham's works there is no starting point, neither in common between the arts, nor individual in each art. There is no organizing center, genesis, essence, pre-established idea, hierarchy. Deleuze says that the Rhizome is an antigenealogy (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1987), which proceeds by variation, always demountable, connectable, modifiable, made of multiplicities, permeated by inputs and outputs, not hierarchical, not centered, without beginning or end, consisting not of "is", that is, not by unifications and dissolutions of one meaning into another, in search of a first essence, but by conjunctions, by differences without unifying and dissolutive tendencies, by "and ... and ... and ...":

"The rhizome is an antigenealogy. It is a short-term memory, or antimemory. The rhizome operates by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots. Unlike the graphic arts, drawing, or photography, unlike tracings, the rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight. It is tracings that must be put on the map, not the opposite. In contrast to centered (even polycentric) systems with hierarchical modes of communication and preestablished paths, the rhizome is an acentered, nonhierarchical, nonsignifying system without a General and without an organizing memory or central automaton, defined solely by a circulation of states.. (...) A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb "to be," but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, "and. . . and.. . and. . ." This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb "to be." (DELEUZE, 1987, p. 21)

The mode of thought as representation imposes the verb "to be," where each branch of its development tends to be diluted in the previous until everything is diluted in the first essence, or where the subjective factor finally defines the unifying signification behind its multiplicity, just as the Renaissance, Classical and Modern Western dance methods imposed, each in their own way, a unifying signification or a subjectivity to the visual-spatial, musical, movements

and bodies elements, and all of these elements eventually became diluted, in what, through them, was expressed and represented. Cunningham's work is woven by conjunctions. There are the bodies-movements intensities and musical intensities and visual-spatial intensities, and none of them is defined, enclosed, nor has a beginning or ending¹², neither brings with it one essence, and none is the other, neither is it diluted in the other, nor there is any intention of unification, subordination, or identification among the different intensities. They are relations, different intensities in relationships, making themselves, constituting and deconstructing, happening side by side.

IV

Virtualmente Virtually, the oeuvre carries with it its creative process, the destratifying process perpetrated on a plane of consistency and overflowed to the reality in a rhizomatic and multiple way, without any genesis. There is only the process. In the moments when this process overflows, and all of its intensities are present, building themselves through their middles, each one of them carrying its also multiple movements-bodies, musical and visual-spatial intensities, we can say that this process gains a different consistency. It is possible to juxtapose to this new consistency that emerges from the oeuvre's happenings the deleuzian "Event" (Événement), as this concept also appears from a desubjectified, non-signified and no longer essentialized mode of thinking philosophy and its concepts¹³. According to Deleuze, the Event can be understood as the virtual's reality - i.e., the reality of an event in a becoming state -, therefore, it is a virtual that has gained a consistency. "Event" is an intensities' production power, there is an eternal becoming within it. It is, at once, strata and destratification, it is always an intermedium, it is an eternal movement constituted of pure immanence that overflies the plane of consistency and itself.

The philosopher argues that "thinking is giving chaos consistency" (DELEUZE, 1994, p. 156), that is, we can understand "Event" as everything that in the world affects us, that is, that comes into contact with us through affections, and that makes us formulate meanings about the world, allowing us to give some consistency to this all-pervading chaos. However, it can never be apprehended in its totality precisely for being a process that lacks totality. The scenario here is no longer a rationally organized world whose understanding would result from a logical and rational analysis of its essence. Rather, the world is now perceived *rhizomatically*, not rationally organized, not essentialized. Thus, the "Event", that is, this type of thought that gives us chaos consistency, does not actualize, does not become a state of affairs, it is real, but it is still outside the time of Science, "of the Cronos", it is situated, as Deleuze says, in the time of becoming, "of the Aion".

"The event is not the state of affairs. It is actualized in a state of affairs, in a body, in a lived, but it has a shadowy and secret part that is continually subtracted from or added to its actualization: in contrast with the state of affairs, it neither begins nor ends but has

¹³Camila Nabais explains in her "Philosophy, Art and Science: ways of thinking the Event" that the concept for Deleuze is what apprehends the "Event": "Absolute by the condensation that operates, by the place it occupies in the plan, by the conditions that mark the problem. 'The concept is defined by its consistency, endo-consistency and exo-consistency, but it has no reference: it is self-referential, it puts itself and, at the same time, it puts its object'. The concept is what apprehends the event, or the virtual as an event in the future. The concept says the event and not the essence or the thing itself. The concept of bird, to take up an example from "What is Philosophy", is not about its genre or species, but about the composition of its postures, its colors and its songs. The bird as an event." (NABAIS, 2009, p.4)

gained or kept the infinite movement to which it gives consistency. It is the virtual that is distinct from the actual, but a virtual that is no longer chaotic, that has become consistent or real on the plane of immanence that wrests it from the chaos-it is a virtual that is real without being actual, ideal without being abstract. The event might seem to be transcendent because it surveys the state of affairs, but it is pure immanence that gives it the capacity to survey itself by itself and on the plane." (DELEUZE, 1994, p. 156)

We could say that what results from Cunningham's oeuvres are several "Events", and no longer an enclosed, delimited and already actualized informative sense, once they were composed through a different process, whose genesis lies in the center of a critique to representation. The different intensities that inhabit his works are constituents of the chaos formed by the encounter of different energies in relation, and they ended up forming a sort of consistency when the oeuvre gains reality. The oeuvre is a happening process, and it is also permeated by "Events", by a multiplicity of intensities and becomings that are created, processed and, precisely for its open character, are always vanishing.

Precisely for refusing to determine, to significate and to subjectify his works, Cunningham had been widely criticized by those who advocated an essentialist, unitary dance for the use of his method, the Chance Theory (CUNNINGHAM, 1955). The accusations stated the possibility of a "mechanistic tendency" in this method, as if the procedure detached the individual from his life, to which the choreographer replied that there is no need to compose by artificially imposing relationships and meanings. These relationships, once the individual is inserted into the world, simply "cannot be avoided". As seen when we analyzed the "Body without Organs", it is impossible to de-stratify an entire body without leading to its annihilation. Hence the inevitable occurrence of the stratification and sedimentation, even in a multiple and open work that just has passed through a disorganization process, in spite of its Events.

From the moment the oeuvre becomes an encounter of impermanent chances, no longer constituted by essentialized elements, of enclosed and totalizing meanings, the work is now constituted of a positive multiplicity whose juxtaposed intensities form its happening, and it can be perceived by those who testify it through their affections. Therefore, the different signifying relations produced from the intensities perceived by the spectators, when they enter in contact with the work, become irrevocable by the simple fact of the oeuvre's insertion in reality in its happening:

"These ideas seem primarily concerned with something being exactly what it is in its time and place, and not in its having actual or symbolic reference to other things. A thing is just that thing. It is good that each thing be accorded this recognition and this love. Of course, the world being what it is-or the way we are coming to understand it now-we know that each thing is also every other thing, either actually or potentially. So we don't, it seems to me, have to worry ourselves about providing relationships and continuities and orders and structures - they cannot be avoided." (CUNNINGHAM, 1955)

As Cunningham's works are processes. Processes formed from powers, from desiring practices that result in positive productions of intensities through the reversion of others Western dance methods. Given that in his works there is

another structure that passes through the bodies and movements' composition, the choreographies become themselves deterritorializing potencies of the representational model when juxtaposed to the other Western models. It is no longer a work with a totalizing meaning, it is now permeated by events. It is no longer a unitary work, endowed with elements that converge on the same meaning, they are different intensities in relation, disorganized, happening in a rhizomatic way. It is no longer representational, nor mere appearance that refers to a subjective or rational essence, it is deterritorialized, is multiple in intensities and devoid of any hierarchy, it is exactly, and nothing more and nothing less, a visible act of life, endowed with reality and "impermanent as breathing." (CUNNINGHAM, 1955).

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