

On Surviv(e)al and Re(ex)sista/ence: the persistence of life in *The Sissy's Progress*

Alessandra Montagner

Universidade de São Paulo
 São Paulo, SP, Brasil
 alessandramontagner@gmail.com
 orcid.org/0000-0001-9195-2899

Abstract | The essay approaches the notions of existence, resistance and survival via the analysis of the performance *The Sissy's Progress*, by Nando Messias. So, it asks: What only the performative does to foment, which cannot occur in other segments of culture? In order to contemplate this matter, this article points to the intertwinement of performance creation and the (re)invention of the self. The writings of Judith Butler, Peter Pál Pelbart e Renato Ferracini, amongst others, are implemented in the investigation of the potential imbrications of existence-resistance-survival in the performative act..

KEYWORDS: Abject body.
 Performance art. Nando Messias

Sobre/Viver e Re(ex)sistir: a persistência da vida em *The Sissy's Progress*

Resumo | O ensaio aborda as noções de existência, resistência e sobrevivência a partir da performance *The Sissy's Progress*, de Nando Messias. Para tanto, pergunta: O que apenas o evento performativo fomenta, que não encontra vazão em outras partes da cultura? Ao contemplar essa questão, busca evidenciar o entrelaçamento entre criação em performance e (re)invenção de si. Escritos de Judith Butler, Peter Pál Pelbart e Renato Ferracini, entre outros, são implementados na exploração das potenciais imbricações entre existência-resistência-sobrevivência no ato performativo.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE:
 Corpo abjeto. Arte da performance.
 Nando Messias.

Sobre/vivir y Re(ex)sistir: la persistencia de la vida em *The Sissy's Progress*

Resumen | El ensayo aborda las nociones de existencia, resistencia y supervivencia en el performance *The Sissy's Progress*, de Nando Messias. Para hacerlo, pregunta: Qué solo el evento performativo fomenta, ¿que no encuentra lugar en otras partes de la cultura? Al contemplar esta cuestión, busca resaltar el entrelazamiento entre creación en performance y la (re)invención de uno mismo. Escritos de Judith Butler, Peter Pál Pelbart y Renato Ferracini, entre otros, son implementados en la exploración de posibles imbricaciones entre existencia-resistencia-supervivencia en el acto performativo.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Cuerpo abyecto. Arte del performance. Nando Messias.

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I

July 2005. On my way back from the Sadler's Wells theatre in London. A balmy summer night. I decide to walk for part of the journey. It is the week after the bombings of July the 7th. The atmosphere is tense. People seem to be on the edge. I am all glammed up. Veiled hat, skirt over my trousers, high- heeled shoes. My eyelashes lashed with lashings of mascara, delineated by a thick flick of eyeliner. The lipstick is red. [...] My marked queerness seems to bring about both pleasure and pain. Simultaneously liberating and debilitating. My body elicits both positive and negative attention. Opposites coexist. [...] I turn into my street. Nearly home. Eight young men are loitering on a corner. It starts. 'Make way to the gay', they shout, just as they block my route. Then the punches, the kicks and a shove to the ground. Some spitting. Afterwards, the bruising was bad, my knee injured, the doctor cheerful. I wanted to throw my clutch bag in the bin. The fear was great. It took me weeks to be able to go out again. The streets of London have not looked the same since (MESSIAS, 2016, pp. 280-281)

This is the story of Nando Messias¹ about a homophobic attack they suffered. Messias is a Brazilian performer, based in the United Kingdom, who left Brazil because of homophobia – to also find it in a supposedly safer context. *The Sissy's Progress* constitutes the answer of² the performer to that attack; an answer that took almost a decade to happen, as the performance began to be articulated only in 2014. *The Sissy's Progress* composes a trilogy developed by Messias about the figure of the sissy – the faggot, the gay. Born under the designation of the masculine, Messias constitutes their gender performance through the exercise of effeminacy (MESSIAS, 2016); therefore, they find in the notion of sissy an identity enhancer that encourages their practice in performance. After maturing the attack for many years, the performer understood that if they stripped their body of any artifice, clothing or accessory, it was precisely their effeminate gait – the sway of their hips, the rhythm and accent of their stride – which showed their condition (sissy) and that, on that day in July 2005, they so upset the men who beat them. But who, after all, is condemned by the way they walk?

I try to understand the homophobia I experienced. Time for reflection. Why does the way I move make me stand out? What is it about my movement, my presence – my body, I suppose – that inspires such contempt from a gang of young men? I understood: I am unable to walk like a man. I can not! There is power in that. I can embody my inability to perform masculinity correctly. I get agency. Failure to abide by the rules is my heritage. My body understands Butler: you can't go to your closet in the morning and choose

¹ See: <http://www.nandomessias.com/>.

² Messias currently uses the personal pronoun they, which in the English language is used by non-binary people (who do not identify as either a woman or a man). Its equivalent in Portuguese is the neologism *ile*. Furthermore, the letters 'o' and 'a' are usually replaced by the letter 'e' whenever they operate under some gender designation. Thus, given the gender identification of Messias, it is necessary to use aspects of non-binary language in this text, when I refer directly to *ile*. It should be noted that this does not occur in the translation of excerpts from Messias' account of the attack he suffered, because at the time of publication of that reference and performer he was still designated an effeminate man.

what you're going to wear for the day. If I can't be a man by choice, if I can't make myself invisible to others in public, I can (yes) exaggerate the gesture. (MESSIAS, 2016, p. 284)

Therefore, in the articulation of their performative response to the attack suffered, Messias understands that their reply to this experience of violence could not reside in the modification of their way of walking, but precisely in their exaltation. As a result, *The Sissy's Progress* was created as a performance that is situated between dance-theater and performance-walking. The walk was designed to occupy the streets of East London (where Messias resides), including the original site of the attack, as a moving memorial to all people who have suffered or suffer violence of the same order. In this retracing of the steps previously taken towards a traumatic event, the revisiting of the experience takes place, led by its re-elaboration, and the preservation of a memory that one does not want to be forgotten. The re-elaboration of what was experienced in this performance is driven by the intensification of the elements and attributes that, based on the performer's reflection, triggered the attack. In order to materialize the exaltation of their effeminate walk, Messias traces relationships with the language of the drag queen, which exacerbates the performance of femininity by implementing hyperbole as a performative mode. Furthermore, Messias recognizes the "act of walking" as "a core identity marker and one that offers subversive potential" (2016, p. 280), , since it denotes individualities and social constructions that, when denied, displaced or challenged, can qualify subjects as deviants - especially with regard to gender performances. However, when exercising their path through failure – by failing in the task of walking as 'a man', as they put it above – Messias proposes it as a liberating exercise that makes possible the foundation of their body, precisely, by the embodiment of their own gender, made by their own means (MESSIAS, 2016): it provides an escape from the norm, with the inevitable consequences that accompany it, for the authentic experience of the self. In this way, the walk as a performative (Idem) – an utterance that institutes action, when uttered in its proper context, is also proposed as a generative act of a new reality. Thus, *The Sissy's Progress* seems to establish itself as an act of affirmation and re-elaboration of existence, and of the history that composes it, by the effeminate walk celebrated in exaltation; performed as an agency³.

In *The Sissy's Progress* the performative event, motivated by the traumatic experience, is also consolidated in a gesture of resistance. In this way, the performance asserts itself not only as a response to the violence suffered, but especially as an exercise in refounding one's own existence. By rescuing one's own history and reclaiming one's own body in the public space, this performance provides a way of surviving the attempted annihilation imposed by the Other. Therefore, it constitutes an intervention in the world that reconfigures Messias in the social field. And it does so through a feedback movement between performance and subject:

³ Agency is a concept that refers to the ability of an agent to intervene in the world. In other words, agency refers to the manifestation and constitution of the action exercised by the subject in the modulation of its context, based on its motivations, mental states and events. This is a concept that crosses different disciplines; it is present from Philosophy to Psychology, Cognitive Sciences, Social Sciences and Anthropology. See: SCHLOSSER, Markus, Agency. ZALTA, Edward N. (ed., The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Winter, 2019 Edition). Available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/agency/>. Accessed on November 18, 2021.

subject that creates the performance from itself, from its circumstances and questions, to be recreated by what it created.

The *Sissy's Progress* is a development of a *paper-performance* – presented by Messias in the year 2011 – called *Walking Failure*. In this essay, I discuss its first version, still with a high procedural content, presented at Toynbee Hall (East London) in 2014, as it is in this version that Messias retraces the place of their violation. The performance consisted of three acts. The first took place inside the Toynbee Hall and sought in the presentation of Messias' nudity a way of materializing the vulnerability of their body and a means of explaining the paradoxes that compose it – its intersections between femininity and masculinity (Idem). The second act, in turn, took place in the surroundings of the performance space of the first act and consisted of a parade through the streets of that area of the city: a parade that had Messias – wearing a pink dress, with a full skirt and without straps, shoes in high heels, and decorated with balloons that seemed to make them fly – as a front commission, followed by a marching band and the audience. The third act, on the other hand, presented an evocation of the violence on the scene, when the musicians then threw a bucket of water on Messias. Therefore, the different moments of the performance articulated the different layers that composed the episode of violence experienced by the performer in 2005 they presented the paradoxical and fragile constitutions of their dissident body, revisited the site of violence while claiming the streets for themselves – without ceasing to constitute, once again, the constant threat that their body represents and suffers in public space. However, in the performance, Messias paraded protected by the carnival they created for themselves; for the celebration of their own fragility. Thus, *The Sissy's Progress* intertwines memory and performance through the use of the performer's personal history as a creative material, constituting a movement of poetic-subjective repercussions that suggests the performative act as a strategy of reinvention of the self by encouraging gestures of persistence of life in the face of the threat of annihilation.

II

Since I came into contact with the work of Nando Messias, in special the reflection evoked by the different layers and strategies that make up *The Sissy's Progress* has led me to question the performative act as a territory of production, promotion and creation of strategies of existence and of resistance and even ways of survival. Juxtaposing this reflection to the current Brazilian context, it was possible to perceive that, especially, the notion of resistance has gained great relevance in the country in recent years. This seems to manifest itself through the struggle of individuals and groups, the articulation of protests, and the strategies implemented by social movements in the face of the set of facts and movements that culminated in the election of Jair Bolsonaro to the presidency of the Republic (PINHEIRO-MACHADO, 2019). Resisting, as anthropologist Rosana Pinheiro-Machado (Idem) puts it, has become an exercise with creative dimensions that articulates the hope for a new and better tomorrow, potentially free from the real and symbolic threats of Bolsonarism. Therefore, especially for certain groups of people, whose dissidences and ways of life escape the conservative ideal – which values the maintenance of traditional and excluding structures –, resisting is the only possible way to guarantee their existence. In this way, I suggest that the notions of existence, resistance and,

equally, that of survival are inseparable and interdependent, as they coexist and mutually merge. Surviving does not occur apart from strategies of resistance, which in turn guarantees existence and persistence through life, despite all the challenges that some modes of existence impose – as is the case of Messias. Therefore, from this context and turning to my interest in the field of performance, I ask: How can the performative act constitute itself as a resistance strategy, which guarantees survival, to foster existence? What does the performative event foster that finds no flow rate in other parts of the culture?

I stand up again. I put more powder on. It covers the bruises. I apply more mascara. I retouch the lipstick. War paint. I'm ready now. What I don't yet know is how I will come to use this experience. It will material for my performance. The creative force of performance is transforming. I trust in its promise. (MESSIAS, 2016, p. 286)

Art is often referred to as a terrain of resistance given its historical relationship histórica with protest and, more recently, with notions of activism (TAYLOR, 2013). The art of performance, in turn, constitutes an especially fertile field for the materialization of this dimension through provocative strategies, both for its resistance to definition and for its methods. However, would performance also be a field of fostering strategies of existence? Or even, would it be possible to approach it as a way of configuring survival?

The approach to performance art, adopted here, resides in the intertwining between art and life, existence and creation: self-creation through performative strategies. The debate on the approximation and intertwining between art and life has been the domain of performance since its foundation as a field. Performance art resists the possibility of definition and has the potential to manifest itself in different ways, through different biases and lenses (CARLSON, 2004). Thus, the performance can often leak to layers that entwine it with the processes of life, and can also be constituted by subjective strategies and, consequently, autobiographical – where the creative materials emerge from the issues of the performing subject. By intertwining with life and with the condition of its agents, performance presents itself as “art beyond art” because it equates itself to the processes of life (HEATHFIELD, 2009, p. 56, our translation)⁴. Concerning the field of study that I propose in this essay, the questions of existence, resistance and survival explored through performative strategies weave the lives of their performers, their conditions and personal situations, with what they produce. Also, I suggest, these questions point to the very potential of the performative act to develop and potentiate subjective conditions and to institute new (temporary) realities through its mechanisms.

The notion of existence refers to the “condition or state of something that exists”; to life and the way of living; it also implies duration, the period of time for which something or someone exists; belonging and attribution in the world; presence (*Aulete Digital Dictionary*). The discussion on this concept in the field of Philosophy is vast and complex and evokes interrelationships with notions such as identity and essence; since who you are is constituted by the way in which you exist. Thus, existence touches the notions of performative construction and the subject seen

⁴ “Art beyond art = life.”

through a bias of essence. Furthermore, it should be noted that existence is not a stable or permanent notion and that, in the context of this essay, it is seen through the lens of impermanence, constant self-generation and the dynamics of life; the process with which the performative act engages. The plurality of modes of existence in a single existence, as David Lapoujage (2017) puts it based on the work of Étienne Souriau, is made possible by the plurality of its various forms, the different ways of existing. Therefore, existence is established through a vibrant and moving relationship with the world that constantly demands gestures and strategies to re/affirm itself, and through this persistence it ends up reinventing itself. In other words, it recreates itself in the flow of life through restrictions, but also through the powers and circumstances that give it life.

But what attests to the existence of something or someone? Your visibility, your reach? Who has the right to exist and how can they do so? According to David Lapoujade (2017, p. 24): “We do not exist by ourselves; we only really exist because we make something else exist. Every existence needs *enhancers* [original emphasis] to augment its reality.” Based on this assumption, what we create creates us, as it imprints us on the world. Therefore, work and author – performer and performance – intertwine in their poetic dimensions, in their creative and, equally, performative devices.

Peter Pál Pelbart (2014), in *The art of establishing modes of existence that “do not exist”*, points to the circumstances of different modes of existence: some validated by current social systems, others marginal or dissident, or even non-existent for visibility regimes. There are many unseen, unaddressed, unrecognized existences. There are so many others that confront or disturb for their audacity, for their tone, for their dissent. There are many silent bodies. There are also those who do not keep silent and who resist to make their right to exercise their way of life, or even to invent it, print their right. They transgress to exist. Therefore, if there are different modes of existence, as Peter Pál Pelbart puts it, there are also different ways of performing them and/or constituting them through different strategies that make desire and creation coexist in the foundation of a work and, especially, of itself – of the performance that performs the subject insofar as it constitutes them in the world. Thus, in the performative event, existence seems to be able to recreate itself, to establish itself as a new dimension founded by tactics that aim to guarantee its continuity. In this movement, desire intertwines with existence and what we understand by (our) subjectivity(ies), permeating the performativity of its construction(s). Desire demands perform/active behaviors⁵ for its materialization – always precarious, like a performance. This can, however, be managed by the performative act as an act that conceives and makes possible the creation of new/other possible worlds, which do not find a flow rate in other domains of life– as the case of *The Sissy’s Progress* shows. Worlds that are provisional in themselves: time-spaces of densification of intensities, of experienced affects, and corporeities conceived by the intertwining of the performative event – as I propose in this essay.

⁵ The separation used in the word perform/active seeks to explain the approach to performativity as a process of constitution of the self: a movement composed of poetic-subjective inventions and an active conduct, of action exercised in the world. See: CARLSON, Marvin. *Performance: a critical introduction*. New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2004.

The concept of resistance, in turn, implies both action and result; ability to withstand adversity; quality of what resists; opposing force to something that moves, or even opposition to movement; self-defense that seeks to nullify the effects of an annihilating action; political resistance (*Aulete Digital Dictionary*). Resistance manifests itself and is established together with the dynamics of power, as stated by Michel Foucault (1988); it does not pose as its refusal, but constitutes its other face. According to Foucault, we are entangled in power, because we compose its constitutive elements. Therefore, resistance is established in the plural, in the different and moving micro and macro-political strategies that are implemented concomitantly with the plots of power. In the context of this essay, the resistance of dissident bodies resides in the agency of groups and individuals who, on account of their particular circumstances, are deprived of their right to exist or their means to exist. Thus, the act of resistance is sometimes imprinted through manifestations of dissent and disobedience: by not being subjugated to the rules and structures that maintain powerful systems of social and subjective regulation.

Resistance can, however, suggest inertia when opposing movement. Even if engaged in the act of protecting (oneself) or asserting (oneself), the action of resisting can lead to stagnation and annihilation. It is because of this issue that Renato Ferracini et al (2014, p. 224), in *An experience of territorial cartography of the body-in-art*, propose the notion of resistance through the bias of re-existence: the conception of “new territories actively recreated for new life-generating powers. Resistance [...] as a big YES to life.”⁶ Therefore, the re-existence would come to be constituted and made viable by the creation of strategies that ensure the reinvention of existence through mechanisms that refound it. This corroborates the argument of Davis Moreira Alvim (2009, p. 9) in a comparative study of the notion of resistance in the works of Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze. “Creation is the most intense energy of resistances, because it is in the act of creation that its strength resides [...]”. When creating, the subject prints its continuity (subjective, physical, etc.), made possible by the gestures of life that materialize it in the world. The performative act can be one of these gestures: as a form of creation that fosters new existential (and relational) fields that guarantee the continuity of the self inherent to the notions of resistance and re-existence. *The Sissy's Progress* enunciates this potentiating force and, according to Messias, transforming creation into performance. And in this endeavor of re-existing through the assemblages of performance, the question of survival manifests itself as a pulse of life operated by the creative act.

Survival, in turn, evokes the notions of persistence and continuation through adversity, impediments or challenges: resilience. Therefore, it also suggests – like existence and resistance – a duration imprinted in time and space. However, in its most commonly used attribution, survival is generally relegated as something less than existing, as a struggle for the mere maintenance of the basic dimensions of life. Surviving would imply, from the perspective of common sense, the ordinary battle to maintain the organism's functions and ensure what is necessary for the minimum functioning of the life-sustaining dynamics. It is equally possible to suggest that surviv(e)al also means living beyond: beyond restrictions and

⁶ Original emphasis.

constrictions, of facts. Surviv(e)al: to live above what has passed, to elevate oneself, to overcome what has been lived – as in the case of Nando Messias' performance-response.

The relationship between art and survival suggests possible motivations for creation and ways in which the creative act can articulate life-maintenance and desire drives, which maintain their/our combustion. In the field of performative production, the proximity, often imprinted, between the personal and subjective conditions of the performers and the performative strategies they create attests to the act of creation in performance as a means of founding possibilities for the elaboration and constitution of existential dynamics. Thus, the performative act can be used as a survival mechanism: subjective, social, ethical and poetic. Where survival fostered by artistic creation would be intertwined with (re-)existence by the processes of creation – once again, which create the work as they create the subject.

III

Life constantly and repeatedly demands maintenance and enhancement strategies. Among the groups of people in our societies, those on the fringes of validated definitions are most vulnerable; as well as those who contest positions and limitations attributed to them. Gender and/or sexuality dissidents (among others), such as Messias, fit into this gap of indefiniteness that problematizes the boundaries of their existence in the face of established and socially and culturally validated standards. Therefore, it seems to me that it is especially with regard to dissident bodies that a discussion of existence-resistance-survival notions can progress. For this, and to better elaborate the issue of dissent, the notion of the abject body, proposed by Judith Butler, is especially important. For Butler, abject bodies are constituted as such because they do not fit into intelligibility codes. They do not fit into the standards validated by the culture because they inhabit uninhabitable or unimaginable areas and, therefore, are devoid of the status of subjects. They depend on local and specific systems, on their cultures, which repel and/or exclude them. Therefore, these bodies need to delineate their own subjectivation, founded and created by their own exclusion, repudiation and social abjection (BUTLER, 1993, p. 3). In this sense, the body is a social construction that permeates and becomes effective in the affective field, where affections are incorporated and also proposed as a territory of social vibration. Butler puts:

The limit of who I am is the limit of the body, but the limit of the body never fully belongs to me. Survival depends less on the limit established for the being than on the sociability that constitutes the body. Even if the body – considered social by both its surface and depth – is the condition of survival, it is also that which, under certain conditions, puts our lives and ability to survive at risk. (BUTLER, 2009, p. 54)

The abject body does not compose the social fabric because it was expelled from it for dissenting from the corporeal-subjective constitutions foreseen for it by its context. The abject body is a bordering body, outside clear social definitions, not validated by its existential modes and/or circumstances: it does not find a home in the center of the structures that exclude it because the margin is its territory. Thus,

from being on the margin – and its non-territorial territory – it needs to build its frontiers of action, negotiating layers of visibility and invisibility. Its physical, cultural and subjective existence demands the constant re/invention of resistance and survival strategies; as well as the places, times and circumstances in which it may exist. In this way, the performative act seems to be a viable strategy for promoting and building these other times, conjunctures and places. It forges the creation of a time-space for those who were expelled from official times and spaces: those who do not compose the propagated narratives. A time-space adjacent to life. Therefore, the performative event suggests the temporary formation of a utopia: of the viability of the ideal (*Aulete Digital Dictionary*), or, in its etymological sense, of what “has no place” or a non-existent place. For this to happen, it needs to create occasion and forge sites that make possible existences and modes of performance that merely find a flow rate in other domains of culture. Therefore, they need to re/create themselves through woven structures – times out of time, performances adjacent to life. In this sense, building the performative event would also be to scribble new points of orientation, motivated by the hope of other worlds and ways of living.

As far as *The Sissy’s Progress* is concerned, Messias was able to walk the streets of the area in which they were assaulted and revisit the exact location of their attack – exalting the dimensions of their effeminate walk and exaggerating it by its juxtaposition to the language of the drag – precisely because they were supported by the framework of their performance. Although homophobic insults occurred in each of the events performed (MESSIAS, 2016), their physical integrity was preserved by the small crowd – of spectators and performers – that they added to themselves. This “performative corality” (BULHÕES, 2018) was formed contingently and provisionally – by the spatio-temporal boundaries of the performative event – and composed of the necessary volume of bodies to ensure the proper protection for their performance. A platoon of people who had celebration as their strategy to fight annihilation and walking as their method: a platoon that fought for life as it made its own carnival.

I came out of *The Sissy’s Progress* transformed, stronger and surer that I was before it, carrying more knowledge of myself, of queer politics, of social violence and of art as activism. [...] The activism in my practice as research is evident in the experience of taking my body on to the street; an act I perform to reclaim both my body (my own) and the street (also my own). Through my practice, I become more determined to assert rights over my body, to fight for self-determination, self-expression and bodily integrity. [...] As I sashay along, my walk is exaggerated – ‘dramatically feminine’, as Butler might put it. She is with me. The fall is no longer a threat: it is broken, it is my material. In getting up again, I gain resilience and insight. Vulnerability is strength. Failure can be deeper than success. It leaves a mark. It is what we learn from most. I hold my head high, hand in hand with those who tread this road with me in other places and in other times.” (MESSIAS, 2016, p. 290)

By revisiting an experience of violence, using it as the theme and material of their performance, and going through the process of crossing the traumatic experience to creating in performance, Nando Messias constitutes *The Sissy’s*

Progress as a strategy of re-existence that ensures their survival while subject. The entire process of conception and realization of the performance allowed the performer to cross the dark tunnel in which the attack had left them. As a dissident body, made abject by the exclusions of culture, *Messias* was able to forge by and for themselves another time-space, in which their history and their distinctions were celebrated - also celebrating, as a consequence, the lives of so many other people who accompany them in existing on the margin. In this way, *Messias* offers us not only a case study for the entanglements between existence-resistance-survival and performative practices in the contemporary context; they go further: point to the potential of the performative act in the re/foundation of the self. Therefore, they intertwine art and life, margin and environment, through the struggle configured in performance/action: action performed as a means of building breathing spaces and enabling - once again, temporary and precarious, like the performative event - of occasions for which dissident modes of existence can be experienced with intensity. They scribble, in this way, another possible world, in which the freedom of walking is assured to as many bodies as theirs. Thus, *The Sissy's Progress* asserts itself not only as a response to the violence suffered, but also as an agency of existence itself; means of empowering oneself through performance, through the re/foundation of their own body. It constitutes, therefore, a struggle for survival, for the resistance that fosters re-existence - as explained above. After all, how to live without surviv(e)al? How to exist without the insistence of staying alive? How to survive without creating places that welcome our existences (dissidents or not)? From the abject body that lives in the precariousness of the risk that threatens its own life, its existence suppressed on the margins, due to the non-adaptation to the lines drawn by social respectability: how to exist if not surviving? How to proceed if not resisting? How to constitute (oneself) if not performing?

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