

## BODY AND CINEMA- TOGRAPHY

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Editors

The 21st century began with a renewed interest in the linguist exchanges between two, in principle mutually exclusive, media: the performing or live body arts and the arts of the mediated image. The human being's concern with corporeal identity, with the physical limits of his/her humanity and the interaction between the psychic and the physical, as well as the naturalization of dissociated perceptions and experiences may explain in part the attention paid to these exchanges. Also, obviously, the advances in the digitalization of culture, and not only of culture but also of experience, and with it the transference of codes, which only a few years ago belonged to the realm of the specialized specialized cinematographic language, to everyday life and to the writing of reality and history.

Dance, a culturally hegemonic medium among the arts of the living body, and film, a culturally hegemonic medium among the arts of the mediated image, have entered into dialogue with even greater force than they had in the 1920's (impelled by the experimentalism of the historical *avant-garde*) or in the 1960's (impelled by the tendency towards openness and the permeability that affected the arts and social behaviors shortly before the first arrival of video). And they have done so, among other things, because both media, born in past centuries, have found in this dialogue a route for redefinition and accommodation to new cultural contexts.

Why at this moment are so many choreographers producing artistic pieces in cine-

matographic format? Should they be called "movies" or "choreographies"? And why are so many filmmakers determined to endow their gaze with corporality precisely at a moment when they have succeeded in freeing themselves from the physical bonds of celluloid, chemistry and the heavy machinery of filming? At what point do the filmmaker who moves and the choreographer who puts in motion meet? In the image? In the movement? In the body? No, rather, in the writing.

Ever since dance was codified in the 18th century as ballet, writing was considered something separate from it. The libretto or the score could be written and even the movement could be noted afterwards, but at no time was it thought that dance could be writing in itself. Hence, its subordination to both musical and verbal expression. For many years, dance was a medium of putting the writing of the word and music into images by means of the body. Only when dance started to be conceived in itself as writing, only when the body in movement was granted the potentiality of discourse was it possible to speak not of a medium but of an autonomous art which would reach its maturity between the 1930's and the 60's, that is to say, in the same decades that film, born so much later, would also reach its own maturity.

Like dance, in its infancy film too was a medium of putting into pictures the discourses of others: those of theater, the novel, cabaret, medicine or anthropology. Only when it was accepted that the technical media of film were not an obstacle in the translation of other stories, but rather constituted a very effective medium to write reality directly, did film attain the category of autonomous artistic discourse. The proposals offered by Duncan, Wygman and Graham are parallel to those of Eisenstein, Vertov and Epstein they laid the groundwork

for the construction of a grammar. But it was only the generation after the Second World War that dared to speak clearly of dance and film as writings of reality. Epstein's prophetic conception of film as a "thought machine" was succeeded by the formulations of Bresson and Pasolini, who conceived of cinema as a translation of the "visible language" of bodies and the world and as the "written tongue of reality as language". The radical autonomy Bresson posits would correspond to that Cunningham posits when he reclaims dance as an organization of a non-representative movement (a movement that, while as performance tends towards abstraction, concretely it allows for the dancer's encounter with the everyday). And Pasolini's idea of cinema as the first translation of the natural language of the real would find correspondence in the attempts by postmodern dance to situate movement as close as possible to the pre-existing languages of space and corporality.

The conception of dance and film as writings also implied their conception as means of thought, thought media. From that moment on, dance and film have not been limited to translating the discourse of others to bodily or chemical images, but rather produce thought by means of the body in motion or by means of the images of bodies' movement. Since the 1960s, the writings of the image have culturally displaced the writings of the word. The advance of the writings of the body has not been quite as fast. However, the opening of a field for non-verbal writings has favored their encounter once and again.

Some filmmakers, like Maya Deren during the 1940's, conceived of film as dance, giving rise to proposals that were called "choreo-cinematic" in their day. With that term, "choreocinema", the divergent roots

of both kinds of writing, choreography and cinematography were united. For some choreographers during the 1970's, film represented the possibility of expanding the stage and freeing dance from its condition as a live presence before the viewer. In this sense, one must mention such artists as Yvonne Rainer, Trisha Brown, Wilm Vandekeybus, William Forsythe, Pina Bausch and Anne Teresa de Keeremaeker, to name a few. In film, and parallel to the interests of dance in opening a way for itself towards this medium, we find visual artists and directors that, from very diverse angles, suggest other views of the body: David Cronenberg, Michelangelo Antonioni, Vincent Gallo, John Cassavetes, Andy Warhol and Pierre Huyghe, among others. Are the same questions being raised in one medium as in the other?

Film, as an art of the mediated image, has succeeded in making the spectator identify completely with what he is watching and abandoning himself to the sensation of reality that the movie invites him to experience. Dance continues to look for formulas to involve the spectator individually and to make him abandon himself to the reality presented on stage, no longer as a sensation but rather as a fact in itself. Film has been assumed as a reflection of reality, but in turn, film also produces its own models of reality. For its part, dance proposes a live and immediate experience between the artist's and the spectator's bodies, an experience that activates the capacity of each to affect and be affected by the other body. For that reason, when performance turns to film, it does so not in order to create an illusion but rather to put into effect the mode of thought that both forms of writing generate. But what reading can we make of these encounters? Certainly, for long time film projection and later video on stage replaced the old

sets, in continuation, in most cases, of a classical treatment of the relationship between figure and background. Similarly, film has historically turned to dance with the single aim of beautifying certain violent scenes or of illustrating moments of pure entertainment. However, in recent years we have been witnessing a change of paradigm in the approach of some creators who, using video devices on stage, establish articulations between performance time and cinematic time, or rather, using the real time of action, reveal the omissions by which the film tale is constructed.

The recourse to closed circuit video, in which the image is recorded and simultaneously projected live before the spectator, is already a symptom of the change we are experiencing in regard to the construction and consumption of time, images and performing bodies. What happens when both times, that of the living body and that of the mediated body, unfold simultaneously before the viewer? What mental, imaginary or symbolic spaces are activated and how do they affect the body and its identity? Does the approach to film by performance establish new modes of communication? Does it reflect changes in the individual and social perception of the body? Are the live body and its mediated image no more than excuses to pose more profound questions about the fragmentation of identity, absence, the separation of body and mind, the passage of time, the desire for permanence, the production, of fictions, memory and death? In this issue of *Carion*, and from a variety of different approaches, we seek to participate in the reflection on those conceptual exchanges and on the growing tendency towards an encounter that generates grammars and bodies, bodies that paradoxically are still an enigma for today's society. We

ask ourselves how cinematographic montage, fragmentation and discontinuity have entered into dialogue with the construction of identities and narratives in dance in the last one hundred years. We also wonder about the implications of the fact that more and more visual artists are interested in corporeal practices, in the economy of means that working from the body as producer of an artistic reality implies. And we ask about the growing interest of an entire generation of artists committed to the construction of transitory, ephemeral, invisible situations in which the body is in itself the subject, the medium and the product. What place does dance, the discipline of the ephemeral, and other body practices occupy precisely today when we are living the moment of the greatest production of images?

In an age when both film and dance seem to have reached their greatest heights, artists are dedicating themselves to undoing the mechanisms from which both languages have generated their respective realities. In this sense, some proposals are based on cinematographic dis-mantling, un-editing in order to reconstruct temporal ellipses (fragments of the lives of the characters who have been omitted) or to imitate cinematographic effects such as slow motion, thus revealing the unreality of the filmic bodies. For that, they turn to the direct action of the physical body pertaining to dance and theater. From a critical positioning, to achieve effects created by film without using the tools of film has become a challenge and a goal for many artists. We would consider these actions symptoms of a moment of change in which the redefinition of the linguistic exchanges between dance and film reveals itself to be more urgent every day.