

Autor: Bianca Scliar Mancini

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Resumo

Este trabalho pretende investigar como afetos são responsáveis pela criação e espacialização de uma cidade em cena. Sob o ponto de vista deleuziano de afeto e tendo como referência o espetáculo de Pina Bausch inspirado na cidade de Istambul, este artigo propõe o corpo em movimento como essência na constituição da cidade. A análise da obra desta coreógrafa propõe que Bausch não age no âmbito da representação ou da reconstituição das cidades visitadas, mas sim na composição e invenção destes locais.

A idéia de que a re-invenção política do corpo necessariamente passa pela re-criação especial é explorada a partir dos conceitos de deterritorialização, incorporação e atualização (*deterritorialization, embodiment e actualization*).

A análise dos procedimentos de criação de Bausch sugere como afetos são transformados em sequências coreográficas que intermedian a simbiose entre corpo e espaço, indivíduo, corpo coletivo e a cidade.

Dancing city affects

The work of Pina Bausch on Istanbul

By *Bianca Scliar Mancini*

What is a city? The tendency to respond to this question primarily in terms of a space that is occupied and shared (geography and architecture) has been effaced throughout the past century by theories that add to the understanding of the concept of a city the notion of bodies in movement as one of the primarily layers (Mumford; de Certeau; Sennet). Since modernism, many artists and art collectives have been exploring the city as their predominant working material. When we talk about dance and the city, though we are tempted to be trapped in one of the two major practices: one that uses the outdoor spaces as stages to an action (arguably called *site-specific* actions) and other that is inspired by outdoors events, that are then transported to the stage, as a representation of a site. Pina Bausch's series of works on cities could be easily categorized among the last one, except for a small detail, which I am particularly interested in: she does not represent a visited city, working with a collection of affects that invent a site that can only exist through the performer's body.

This article does not wish to become a critique to Bausch's work, neither of her pieces on particular cities. Instead it rather borrow from *Nefés* (her piece dedicated to Istanbul) the ideas of affect as being created through movement and of how the performing body (on stage or in every-day life) may configure a city, refusing to merely be defined by its shapes (urban physical structures).

According to Walter Benjamin, architecture serves as a fabric to stimulate subjectivity allowing spatialized images to be experienced: it is "ambient and atmospheric"¹. Here, architecture is still seen as the frame for what a body could possibly do (or perform) in the shared space. The important conceptual shift in urban theory from the beginning of the twentieth century was to place the moving body as more than a merely user or actor on the urban stage but as an intrinsic part as a city constitution. The idea that a city becomes through bodies in motion is not easy to be digested and with the background of theories of embodiment (Varela) is still being developed in contemporary theory by architects and writers such as Arakawa, Madalaine Gins and Bernard Cache, who in with various nuances

¹ BORDEN, Ian et. all, 2002:397.

defend the environment and the body as two inseparable entities. The city doesn't host a body; it **is** the walker and its memories, the collector and its objects, the concepts that are not yet materialized; a collection of diverse space and time events happening within the shared environment. The question is, what is then shared?

On the idea of the production of spaces Henry Lefebvre argued that space is not a physical constrain but historically produced by how people embed it with meaning through daily activities. For him there is the preexisting space, the natural physical phenomena, but also the absolute space, the historical space, the abstract space and the space yet to come, all in a certain way interconnected and overlapped. The late one is part of a (utopian) project, a space of differences, where all potentialities of the body and of human relations could exist. The creation of space would include, in accordance to Lefebvre's project, dreams, relations, the invented and imagined². In *The production of space* Lefebvre talks about the importance of physicality patterns to create and disrupt space³, a notion further developed by the work of Michael de Certeau. This author emphasizes how moving bodies in their everyday practices redefine the space of the city. The notion of the body and architecture are deeply connected and in this regard one can see the body as being our first architectural prison (Ingraham 82), as it is the first layer that determines what we can perceive, defining conditions of capturing the world and the other.

What I'd like to argue here though is that a city happens within experience before perception, a city first exists through affects and it is in this scope that Bausch is inventing. Affect, as explained by Brian Massumi is where the virtual and the actual meet. It is the potential and the actualization of the encounter between a body and the space, being "*virtual synesthetic perspectives anchored in (functionally limited by) the actually existing, particular things that embody them.*" (Massumi 35)

To think a city in terms of affect is to think presence, and the shaping of corporeal encounters. When in *Nefés* the city is being presented it is not through reproduction of perceptions (which would mean to remember an static body and an static environment) but through how the bodies move, and meet, and change each other and place. To think a city in terms of affect is to allow all other cities to which a body have been to overlap and deterritorialize presence. A body that is actualized in Istanbul becomes Istanbul.

² Ibid.399.

³ Ibid.404.

The human subject, the body, confers a city with a peculiar character. It “perceives”, experiences and appropriates the space (the encounter between the self and the city is a concrete encounter between two bodies). The human subject draws in the surface of the city another layer, of speed, through its routes, occupation, taking positions. It adds on the material surface an ephemeral element, but still acting on the physical, and architectural realm, operating as a “reversible line on a map” (de Certeau 97). The city, on the other hand becomes a subject, with an unstable identity that is re-created by the encounter, by the invention of a unique and ephemeral point of view that transforms space (93). As described by Ian Borden: “*The interaction of real and metaphoric space is a site of collision of city and self: representations of the self and representations of the city touch momentarily, providing potential starting points for tactical work.*”⁴

For more than a decade Pina Bausch has been exploring affects between the body and the city in a series of works she's created in various countries around the world. After developing *Nur Du*, inspired by her visits to the American West, and in partnership with local cultural Institutions the TanzTheater Wuppertal had residencies in Hong Kong where they've created *Der Fenster Putzer*, in Brazil, *Água*, in Lisbon, *Masurca Fogo*. Rome, Palermo, Budapest, which culminated with the creation of *Nefés* (meaning Breath in Turkish), premiered in 2003 and co-produced by the International Istanbul theatre Festival and this city's Foundation for Culture and Arts.

As it was presented at the National Arts Center, in Ottawa in November of 2007⁵ in this piece Bausch is working on how a city can be reconfigured through movement. She does not illustrate a city that **is**, but invents a city, one that can only be discovered with the overlapping of the dancer's memories, the juxtaposition of every single person's affects. The problem with affects is that they are difficult to be recreated on stage, as they then become perception and language. How is she performing a configuration of affects in her choreography?

There are many elements in the performance that give clues to which strategies she is using in this practice, of performing affects with a city. First of all, in Bausch's dance-theater there is supremacy of movement and gesture over the text. The bodies meet before language and when language is in the scene it recomposes movement into a meaning that

⁴ Borden et all, 2002:403.

⁵ This specificity must be emphasized, since this choreographer often realizes major changes in her works throughout the tours.

was not yet being enacted: text is affectively used in differentiation to gesture. Bausch declares not to be interested in how people move as much as in what moves them. It is essential to understand this concept particularly in regards to her city works. To create in relation to how people move would be to fall into the concept that understands urbanism as preponderant towards the definition of body movement's. Bausch, though is investigating what moves a body and how can a body move conceptually what a city is.

The audience sees a cartography of presence and not of symbolic fields of spatiality. This is the main difference of representing a city and establishing corporeal affects with it. Presence is what makes space constantly become and constantly re-shape itself according to the tendency and intentionality of the bodies in it. Fields of spatiality separate space and bodies as two autonomous architectures that border but don't juxtapose each other. She carries the movement of those towns and approaches affect as the body actualizing a *site*.

Nefés is not *site-specific* (Kwon 3) as it weaves references to a site but once she plays with every dancer's particularities of bodies, of presences and of points of view of that city, she demolishes the very notion of site as a static body. The work is less inspired by the architectural constraints than by each individual relation that was developed during the period of the company's residency on the site. A city changes as it lands in each body.

Istanbul is not the subject of the piece but how people move within that particular setting and culture. In *Nefés* the dancers are sharing their affects, the corporeal possibilities that were actualized when *being there* once took place in Istanbul. On stage they recreate the possible relations established with other bodies, with one's own memories and remembrances of other sites that were activated by being there. This is how Istanbul is presented as a practice of space, a city that one could only encounter through the performing body. *Nefés* is not inspired by any city; rather it is a collection of affects between bodies and a space.

In the performance's very first scene it becomes clear how Bausch will not be representing a city, neither exploring particular emotions raised on a site. As a woman drinks the water from a vase of flowers, she pictures an internal landscape and no geographical portrait is shared. Although there are sequences that could be seen as descriptions of the location, such as in the direct reference to the Hamam, the Turkish bath, even in these cases the piece focus on a peculiar aspect: the bath as social center that provides a collective experience of the body.

The shared space is the place where difference is experienced within predefined patterns of behaviors. When one of the dancer presents himself speaking loudly "*this is me in the Hamam*" in the front part of the stage the audience is confronted with a body reproducing a determined postured, assumed in a specific location. Soon other dancers gain the stage and as they loose themselves between gestures that point out to other bodies while still repeating the "*this is me...*" indication all bodies become the same. All other can become oneself in reflection. *Any-body* is his body. All who share that space are *me*. Half of the dancers on stage lie on the floor while their pairs stand by them and use a traditional cheesecloth, that is wet with soap and blown it with breath to latter use the hands in order to deflated the fabric, while the bubbles drip on the floor cover the lying body. What one exhales covers the physical presence of the other.

The composition process at the *Tanztheater* is based in the tendencies of attraction between the dancers and the city resulting in a collection of practices of perception. As a result, one of the most common critiques to her work is a supposed lack of commitment with the cities, such as in Joan Acocella's text, published in the New Yorker Magazine: "*In fact, she rarely took the target city very seriously. You would never have known that 'Palermo, Palermo' was about Palermo, or that the other pieces were about the other places, if the title or the musical choices—sometimes just the advertising—hadn't tipped you off*"⁶.

What interests Bausch mainly are not pre-conceived identities of a town but the *recollection-images* (Bergson) of site and how they are being actualized by presence. Deleuze defines:

"...Recollection-images already intervene in automatic recognition; they insert themselves between stimulation and response, and contribute to the better adjustment to the motor mechanism by reinforcing it with a psychological causality. But, in this sense, they only intervene accidentally and in a secondary way in automatic recognition, whilst they are essential to attentive recognition: this latter comes about through them." (Deleuze 1989)

Bausch re-defines the visited places and envelops the audience with a town they've never been, and could never have been because it never existed before the performance; she provokes the re-birth of memory through body movement.

⁶In: http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2006/12/25/061225crda_dancing

The city offered to the audience is not a space. What is set is a *sense of place*, an “*external world mediated through human subjective experience*” (Lippard 1997). While to represent a city would imply to consider a pre-existing body and a pre-existing world, or a phenomenological understanding of the encounter between self and space (Merleau-Ponty) in Bausch’s piece both body and subject are nomadic entities.

As she switches from building scenes compiled at the visited sites to collecting corporeal states the composition process is revealed: The dancers become more than *body-witnesses* turning into a *lived body* (Deleuze and Bacon 2003) of Istanbul. History, architecture, legends and quotidian rhythms, private memories, emotions and acquired physical vocabularies merge as affectively a city is transported to the stage.

What Nefés presents are singularities of corporeal territories, which construct the city through recognition. Affects do not result from perception, as they precede it. Both then unfold into recollection-images, which are finally turned into the choreography. Elizabeth Grosz defines affects not as an effect of consciousness but as “*torsions of the body itself*” (31). The city’s identity is plied in Bausch’s touring works and it folds new bodies within the dancers.

Music and sound play an important role in this process of deterritorialization in which Bausch is engaged. With a soundtrack that is dissociated from the supposedly portrayed city, she combines Piazzola with Amon Tobin, Tom Waits with traditional and contemporary Turkish music. While watching scenes where dancers sing in their mother tongues the audience is presented to the *lived bodies* that encountered Istanbul. The performers weave the possible events between the site and the audience; their presence is the bridge for transference and dislocation, thus creating a virtual city, the one that results between the audience and a distant site.

A strong topological reference is made to Istanbul in Nefés: the presence of the water in the setting design. Contrasting the abundance of objects and stage setting in other of her pieces this one counts with water as the unique central force (bringing a rare focus to this element that is a constant presence in Bausch’s iconography). Alluding to the Bosphorus Canal, which divides Istanbul between Asia and the European continent, as well as to the fact that Istanbul is a quasi island, set designer Peter Pabst builds on stage an island, but of water.

A complex and invisible engineering system floods the central part of the raw stage. Slowly the puddle gains realm and all the events start to take place around it. Remaining

untouched for the first half of its appearance; the fluid delimits the performance in a ring around it. The water island will drain and drench throughout the spectacle; it will be used as a mirror in the construction of interesting dualities and oppositions during the choreography, multiplying the bodies on stage. It will become essential in the lighting that transforms the events within day and night atmospheres, it will be fed by spittle, be a source for a man to humiliate his partner, and also the fountain of pleasure and play. At the performance's apotheosis a voluptuous and abundant waterfall will soak the dancer continuously emphasizing the vigorous speed and drama in one male solo.

Even if some may prefer to see the water an aesthetic prop in the work, it is unavoidable to consider the statement contained in the fact that, no matter how violently or softly and with which intention is the water discharged throughout the performance, this lake never overflows; it occupies and cedes in time variations.

It is not rare that the subtleties of the political comments in the scene are not grasped and the audience responds with laughs. Bausch is not the feminist from 20 years ago and although this issue is present in *Nefés* here she portraits relations using the duality of gender in order to conceive the differences on perceiving space. Bausch denies to be seen as a feminist artist explaining that she performs gender as being culturally inscribed in specific spatiality, differing from the feminist theories that separate gender from other socially constructed identities. As Grosz alerts, there are at least two types of bodies perceiving space and therefore two types of spaces: "*A whole history of theorists of the body (...) have not acknowledge the sexual specificity of the body or the sexual specificity of knowledge*" (40)

As much as the roles of male and female dancers are clearly distinct in this piece, the choreographer does not make a statement about oppression, control or dominance, as in some of her earlier works. The positions of domination are constantly changing, there is rarely an oppressor to be won and women are given control of their own bodies, even when suspended by the male dancers, they move with an independent physicality.

Instead of a dual opposition between male and female characters the performance is built up from relational games. In the scene of the stolen kisses, or when holding pillows becomes the suspension of giving, when the figure of a mother is brought into a lover's relationship, when a man holds a girl as high as he can so that she can reach a hidden box of chocolates on the side of the stage; when a male dancer becomes a vain woman's angel protecting her back against her indifference of exposure after her dress tore up, and even

when eight woman caress one man at the same time, there is not an atmosphere of dispute or of male dominance, but in the contrary, a sensual joy and freedom between each individual and the group, a pleasure and care in performing the encounter that exceed a traditional gender discourse.

While working within the delicate line that makes the same scene be either comic and loose or violent and sad she avoids making moral statements without abandoning an ethic position of the individual and collective encounters that are being performed. This is precisely how she is able to reach the audience affectively and transform the experience of watching *Néfes* into an affective tonality towards a city. This is only possible because by proposing intensities of encounters she is dancing the unspeakable, moving the unrepresentable, a corporeal experience that precedes emotion: affects. As suggested by Massumi:

"Affect holds a key to rethink postmodern power after ideology. (...) Affect is the whole world: from the precise angle of its differential emergence. How the element of virtuality is constructed-weather past or future, inside or outside, transcendent or immanent, sublime or abject, atomized or continuous - is in a way a matter of indifference"(Massumi 2002).

In a nostalgia for a more traditional feminist discourse many are unable to understand the ethics brought up by performing the spatial and gender relations with a less discursive and conceptual approach and I call upon Guattari's to propose that in her poetics lies an openness, that denies to place woman in a victimized position, re-creating the gendered bodies as equal players in the space of the city. The political contained in Bausch's performative games resides in how the performance defines an aesthetic that defies to be closed by a symbolic discourse. She confuses the audience and invites us to participate in the definition of any role (not only gender, but identities in relation to that city). Guattari claims that "*contemporary social transformations happen on a large scale by a relatively progressive mutation of subjectivity (...) a partial subjectivity- pre-personal, polyphonic, collective and machinic.*" (Guattari 34). In this sense, by thinking *cities* Bausch is responding to feminist's calls that affirm that it is necessary to re-think space in order to re-think the body (Grosz).

In *Nefés* a re-invention of the body is created by a polyphony of conventional dualities that are overlapped in order to be dismantled. The abundance of oriental gestures and Bharata Natyam inspired solos, the emphasis on the hands and arms while we never

see the female's legs, covered with their night dresses, repetition and permanence, suspension, transference of an excerpt performed by a duo into the whole stage, by the multiplication of bodies, chains and cuts.

Movement is intensified also by images that are projected on stage in two parts of the performance. In one sequence the dancers are in a festive climate, images of the water are projected creating a balance and give an nonexistent depth to the performing area. The projection is emphasizing a rhythm, as one of the most important elements to establish affects with a city. As the dancers celebrate collectively the kinetic of the water surface moves the group forward and forward and forward. In another sequence where the moving pictures gain stage shows a projection of a street corner with intense and confusing traffic, emphasized by the juxtaposition of scales and dimensions, locates the dancers in between the cars while they loose their bodies without knowing in which direction to escape.

These examples show a traditional use of the video in the performance, as a setting design, a scenographic complement that localizes the dancing body in another setting, extending and situating the performing space, transformed into another location through virtual movement (a projected spatiality). It is though in a much less concrete projection that the cinematic finds its most interesting use in *Nefés*. A squared dark projection of a sequence of letters turns on the floor. All woman aligned move in the counter circle in a motioned penumbra. The angle of the lights, the movement turning of the projection turning against the direction of the aligned bodies provokes the most extraordinary effect of the piece: it switches the audience point of view and it makes us all move. It effectively reaches the kinetic of the city and space is brought to movement. With no need of any gesture movement happens through directivity, light and speed.

As the piece approaches the end the audience could be more or less acquainted with Istanbul but Bausch's main achievement is to be able to guide them between bodies and nonexistent spaces, changing how movement is thought before it takes place and how one moves as he watches.

To know a city relies on kinetics, it demands sliding, walking, running through and touching. In *Nefés*, Bausch is able to disrupt memory, to ask the audience to call upon familiarities and recognitions. Affect allows them to be here and there simultaneously and to intermediate all dualities presented. Each one of us in the audience becomes Istanbul.

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