

Anka Herbut

**A Few Queer Choreographies and a Horizon Imbued
with Potentiality**

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The assumption that bodies and their interrelations are socially generated, and at the same time that they themselves create the public realm, makes it possible to treat dance and choreography as partners to queer activism, which perceives the body as a crucible for creating social change. Queerness was born out of motion, action and protest, demanding a history that would challenge identity and existing sexuality theories. Choreography and dance, in turn, provide tools useful for public physical action to become an impulse for social change: in dance, queerness can change the trajectories and means of producing movement and meaning, institutional practices, and the way relations are nurtured.

Queerness is a compound and unstable phenomenon. It is the sum of myriad experiences, outlooks, and aesthetics. The understanding of the category is conditioned by who is speaking and the cultural and socio-political context they find themselves in. Any predefined, singular perspective would negate this instability. For this reason, I prefer to focus on what queerness does to and in specific choreographers, as well as on what kinds of challenges it presents, rather than on searching for distilled, catch-all concepts. Therefore, I can't say I really love the song 'Born This Way', released by Lady Gaga in 2011 and swiftly hailed as the unofficial anthem of the LGBTQ+ community ('No matter gay, straight, or bi | Lesbian, transgendered life | I'm on the right track baby'), because, particularly when it comes to choreography, I am interested in queerness being treated as a form of conscious political engagement and not as an existing status quo. I'd rather ponder the connections queer choreography has with crisis situations and with active defiance, and how this can give rise to potentially new means of self-organization and alternative forms of social bonds.

In the last decade, queerness moved away from criticizing normative, stable identities, and sexual models, and started to deal with how to queerify time and space, institutions, neoliberalism, and civil rights.¹ José Esteban Muñoz unfurls a utopian queer futurism project (*Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*), Judith (Jack) Halberstam writes on queer defeat (*The Queer Art of Failure*) and on queer places and times (*In a Queer Time & Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*), and Lauren Berlant deals with optimism (*Cruel Optimism*). A decade earlier, stating

¹ See David L. Eng, Judith (Jack) Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz, *What's Queer about Queer Studies Now?*, *Social Text*, 84–85 (2005), p. 23.

that queerness ought to take a first-person form of speech, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argued for the need to place it in a specific body and in specific time-space circumstances.² Today, queerness is associated with any expression of non-normativity – the kind that emerges on the level of gender and sexuality but also on the level of politics, history, memory, ecology, or even community-building strategies.³

So, in this context, how to think about queer choreography? About the relationship between the choreographer and the performer? About production methods? Must one be queer to make queer choreography? How do we queerify movement itself? What shapes the relationship between physicality and the potential inherent in queer choreography? And that of queer aesthetics and activism? And who has the right to decide on what is to be included in the realm of the queer, and what is to be left out? If queerness should be a first-person declaration, as Sedgwick argues it ought to be, does it make sense as an attempt at self-definition? And, in light of all this, what does my writing about queerness mean?

Language, politics, emotion

The tongue is a muscle

According to José Esteban Muñoz, when culture crosses time-space boundaries it invites the future, wherein lies its potential. Such is Ania Nowak's *Języki przyszłości* [*Future Tongues*] (2018),⁴ in which queerness arises as a figure mobilizing change and functioning in a future time as speculation or utopian vision. The choreographer draws out new, unstable identities that negate the network of binary, heteronormative models and impose alternative forms of communication that are not mediated by words and semantics.

The performance begins with a text translated by Google Translate projected onto the wall. We watch as original meanings become skewed and reveal the frailty of the message. Demystifying words at the very outset, Nowak queerifies language and initiates group corporeal communication – she choreographs bodies, glances, and affectations. First this happens in a closed constellation of five performers (joining Nowak are Oskar Malinowski, Ola Osowicz, Rafał Pierzyński, and Jaśmina Polak) in which one glance activates another, to a point where the spectator is caught peeping. Over time, contact comes in the form of not only glances but bodily orientation in space

2 'A hypothesis worth making explicit: that there are important senses which "queer" can signify only *when attached to the first person*. One possible corollary: that what it takes—all it takes—to make the description 'queer' a true one is the impulsion *to use it in the first person*.' Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 8.

3 Eng, Halberstam, and Muñoz.

4 Ania Nowak's activity concerns the field of choreography in the broadest sense. She produces solo and collective projects exploring the tensions inherent in language and the subtleties and permutations of the body. Nowak researches love as a strategy for generating knowledge (<http://technologiesoflove.tumblr.com>), as part of which she studies affective economies and the unstable structures of care, as well as attempting to redefine sensuality. She studied choreography at HZT in Berlin, where she now lives and works.

and tenderly initiated touch between bodies. Cultural gender and sexual identity are transparent here. The performers are clad in identical underwear and open-chested robes. They all wear red, bazaar-variety flip-flops on their feet. They have dark unibrows, and their mouths are painted with red lipstick overflowing the contours of the lips (a perverse ‘gender fuck’,⁵ rendering it impossible to determine gender on the basis of clothing). They communicate nonverbally, shying away from language, the Polish variety of which always betrays gender and limits the possibilities of identification strictly to categories of male and female. In Nowak’s play, the tongue is a muscle that engenders direct physical contact. A foreign tongue is the tongue of a stranger, to be learnt organoleptically: through kisses, sounds passed from mouth to mouth, nibbles, tastes, spitting, gurgles, murmurs, rasps, and anything else that comes to mind.

In the play’s finale, the performers, up to then confined to a platform covered with a rug displaying the words ‘Mother Tongues and Father Throats’, now move around it freely, mouthing single words, gesticulating and accentuating them as if on a political soapbox or in a street demonstration. The rug, made by the collective Slavs and Tatars, is inspired by the absence of the guttural *kh* sound in Western languages, an absence that divides East and West, speaking to the arbitrariness and politicism of cultural divisions and the violence thereof. After all, though the word *halgorithm* does not exist, it could easily fit into our cultural expanse. The same goes for *harsenal*. In this manner the performers begin to include particular words in language families they originally don’t belong in. The same happens to sequences of words choreographed by Nowak: *animal sociale homo*, *horror honor horror*, *henna gehenna past*, *opus magnum lelum polelum*, or *teatr teatrum linoleum*. With dramaturge Mateusz Szymanówka, the choreographer intercepts words, transforming and regrouping them to test the ways their originally assigned sense can shift. They dismantle the cultural, national, and sexual identities artificially attached to language and speech. Here, sexuality is an empathic and vital force. Likewise choreography, which becomes one and the same with tenderness and empathy – equally on the level of the produced material and the production process.

Imagine that...

In another of Nowak’s works, *Bez tytułu 3 [Ohne Title 3]* (2018), what is being queerified is theology, the notion of the Holy Trinity, and the normative system of oppositions. Here, Nowak deploys images, symbolic gestures, and signs, softening their contours, negotiating their meanings, and reassembling them into new formations. She begins her performance in drag makeup, a wig of long blond hair, and a robust pale beard. By relying on drag as a model for the performativity of gender, Nowak reveals in a very legible manner how gender and social roles are fabricated. On the visual level, early on she introduced the figure of God the Father morphing into a mother via a lip-synced rendition of PJ Harvey’s ‘I Think I’m a Mother’. Another transformation occurs

⁵ A form of activism aiming to abolish gender differences and undermine rigid gender-based stereotypes and roles.

with the arrival of another performer (Jason Patterson/Max Göran), who cuddles up to Nowak's body to create an image of the Pietà. The choreographer/performer rocks him like a baby and places a hand on his buttocks. The sense of the instinctively recognizable gestures and poses of motherhood soon begins to slip away. The subsequent image of the child suckling at the mother's breast gradually takes on erotic overtones. Via slight alterations to their movements, rhythm, or form, gestures associated with nurturing a child become ones of sexual play and pleasure.

Joining the God/Mother hybrid at one point is the figure of Karl Marx, who, as a statue in Chemnitz, gives a speech via video projection. In Ania Nowak's voice, Marx asks: 'Do you not worry too much? Did you sleep well? Have you consumed anything lately (other than e-mails or hangnails)?' Initially signalling concern, the questions eventually begin to sound like instruments of control and to connote technologies for managing people's efficiency. Later on, Nowak constructs verbal threesomes in which the placement of a word between two others changes its interpretation: one person quickly and rhythmically reels off terms from the fields of socio-political studies, art, and economics, and the other chooses an arrangement that seems most obvious to them: terminological specifics vs. intuition and feeling. This verbal game is backed by a refrain of 'working, busy, broke, sexy', accentuating the increasingly fluid line between reason and hunch, fact and fiction, work and leisure, and communism and capitalism. Much like in *Future Tongues* and some of her other works, in *Ohne Title 3* Nowak employs the handy practice of choreographed language, of navigating and transforming the meanings of words and phrases that have been permanently appropriated. Because of this, titles tend to be of particular importance in her case. In *Offering What We Don't Have to Those Who Don't Want It* (2016), three female performers read love letters in different ways and in varying formations, in doing so navigating the viewer's emotional engagement, and in a three-way motion sequence based on tender touching and narration unfolding around the repeating cue of 'imagine that...', time and space are disjointed into performing bodies and projections of intimate situations. Meanwhile, in the play *Don't Go For Second Best, Baby* (2016), alluding to the song 'Express Yourself' by Madonna and the pop star's controversial Blond Ambition tour, the artist worked with 'backup dancing', giving the floor to dancers typically used as complimentary pieces and, by extension, to all marginalized individuals.

Relationships, intimacy, clubbing **Stranger intimacy**

The American scholar Nayan Shah uses the term 'stranger intimacy' to describe close and intimate relations between people not linked by familial or institutional bonds. This is an area where space and desires are queerly negotiated.⁶ In the work of Alex Baczyński-Jenkins, the territory of togetherness and friendship is understood as a political act playing a significant role in terms of both the material being produced

⁶ See Nayan Shah, *Stranger Intimacy: Contesting Race, Sexuality and the Law in the North American West* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2012).

and the formation of close ties with other cast and crew members.⁷ In an interview with *Mousse* magazine, the choreographer asserts, '[W]ho you want to work with is who you want to share your life with. My works often become both an occasion and a means for relations to develop. The politics of friendship, desire, love, and community are as embedded within the choreographies themselves as they are in the processes that bring them into being.'⁸ For some time, the choreographer has been working with Krzysztof Bagiński, Ola Knyszalska, Ania Miczko (the three of whom are part of the KEM collective with him), Agata Grabowska, Filip Rutkowski, Billy Morgan, Ewa Dziarnowska, and Rafał Pierzyński. Last year, as part of his residency at Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw, he and fellow KEM members opened the Dragana Bar, envisioned as a safe space for queer togetherness and dancing.

All on the same roll

Is it possible to create societal and relationship paradigms by practising queer forms of togetherness? What role in the queerification of the world does improvised social dancing play, the kind that expresses the dancer's experiences, identity and sense of community? If the function of dancing for fun is more than just to release tension, if it's to express that tension and express its release, then what does this mean for using social dance as material in choreography?

One of Alex Baczyński-Jenkins's latest pieces, *Untitled Dances*, shown in March 2019 at Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Art in Warsaw, deals with collectivity, desire, and queer corporality through clubbing culture and the Polish counterculture of the 1980s. Made in collaboration with Agata Grabowska, Małga Kubiak, Billy Morgan, Dawid Stan, and Strike, the choreography is driven by circulation of affect and the sharing of pleasure in dance. Prevailing here is a certain kinesthetic empathy⁹ rooted in the incorporation of the movements of others into one's own repertoire via borrowing and adaptation, with the individual's kinesphere constantly in dynamic conversation with the kinesphere of the group. It begins with whirling around your own axis – a technique that puts the mind into a trancelike or transcendent state. The whirling motif is repeated in different variations, as are some other elements, as the entire structure is based on borrowing movement phrases so that the material can freely circulate between the bodies. Through repetition and synchronized execution of formally constructed sequences, the whole thing can sometimes

7 Alex Baczyński-Jenkins works in choreography and performance art. He majored in Dance, Context, Choreography at Universität der Künste in Berlin and Aural and Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London. He was the winner of the 2018 Frieze Artist Award. In his work, he concentrates on the mediation and politics of affect, subjects of desire, and new forms of personification. He is a member of KEM, a space for choreography and performance art. He lives and works in Warsaw and London.

8 Alex Baczyński-Jenkins, 'A Queer Politics of Entanglement: Alex Baczyński-Jenkins', interview by Eliel Jones, *Mousse*, 68 (2019), <http://moussomagazine.it/alex-baczynski-jenkins-eliel-jones-2019/> [accessed 10 September 2019].

9 Lynne Anne Blom and L. Tarin Chaplin, *The Moment of Movement: Dance Improvisation* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988), p. 23.

acquire a ritualistic character. Yet, sprinkled into the rigid forms are also ordinary, intuitive motions with their own qualities and poetics, arising from the capabilities and peculiarities of the performing bodies. The performers have varying degrees of skill – there is a disabled body, there are young and old bodies, bodies with different levels of stamina. The framework for *Untitled Dances* is unencumbered by any overriding objective or any limitations on togetherness; it is simply a ‘hangout’ (the concept was already at play in Baczyński-Jenkins’s performance *XXXX*, which dealt with social dance, discipline, and virtuosity, and negotiated physical condition and consciousness altered by psychoactive substances). Thus, the act of moving together may be treated as a queer strategy of defiance – after all, the dancefloor brings a welcome reprieve from life in sexist and heteronormative circumstances. A very interesting turn was to piece together the performance’s backing music from the punk songs of Brygada Kryzys. This does not depend on any connotations with techno and rave culture, a territory already quite broadly exploited in choreography, but it does accentuate the freedom element of the movements and establishes the queer dancefloor as a countercultural setting (as does the decision to invite underground legend Małga Kubiak to work on the project), a setting that guarantees a safe context for personal expression.

Performing closeness by nurturing closeness

While Baczyński-Jenkins operates on a macro scale as he works through the process behind social dance in *Untitled Dances*, in his earlier work *Nim zakwitnie tysiąc róż (z Warszawą w tle)* [*Until a Thousand Roses Bloom (with Warsaw in the Background)*] he took a micro approach to desire, to closeness, to the physical and emotional aspects of touch that allow intimacy to flourish. Presented over two floors of the Foksal Gallery Foundation, the durational choreographic exhibition focussed on the rituals of sexual encounters. Downstairs, performed in an empty room, were slices of first encounters, anticipation, longing, distance, and attempts at first kisses. This was interspersed with elements of clubbing footwork, slowed down to produce sensual movements of the hips, stomach, and arms. The upstairs was, in turn, a garden of pleasure inspired by the gallery’s name, alluding to London’s Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens, a known cruising spot. But Baczyński-Jenkins treats cruising not so much in terms of the fulfilment of male desires but as a context for erotic fantasy and queer fiction at large. Here, the fundamental element in the cultivation of contact is the act of watching and being watched – an act compounded by the presence of the spectators. The performers (Ewa Dziarnowska, Joseph Funnell, Agata Grabowska, Billy Morgan, Rafał Pierzyński, Filip Rutkowski, and Katarzyna Szugajew) pursue contact, touch each other, grasp each other’s hands and legs, play with each other’s hair, undress themselves and each other, embrace. They change with the material and the setting, repeating and looping the individual sequences. They come together to form a collective socio-political body (a part of which is also the audience) through which non-normative identities merge in a show of resistance.

What connects Baczyński-Jenkins’s *Until a Thousand Roses Bloom* with Ania Nowak’s *Future Tongues* is an ambiguous, flickering relationship

between the performers' presence, representation, and the production of associations. In both works, the relationship between the performers themselves is also deepened by the intimate nature of the material played out in front of the audience. Or conversely, through the deepening closeness between the performers, the material being performed becomes increasingly intimate.

Space, time, colour

Blue is darkness made visible¹⁰

According to Judith (Jack) Halberstam, 'Queer subcultures produce alternative temporalities by allowing their participants to believe that their futures can be imagined according to logics that lie outside of the conventional forward-moving narratives of birth, marriage, reproduction, and death.'¹¹ In his solo show *Blue (ribbon dance)*, which premiered at Warsaw's POMADA festival in 2017, Przemek Kamiński¹² treats the body, time, and space as sites where ideas are born, thereby chipping away at their boundaries. The work was inspired by Derek Jarman's *Blue*, one of the most radical pictures to come out of New Queer Cinema and the film industry at large, steeped predominantly in the colour blue. The retrovirus attacking Jarman's body gradually deprived him of his eyesight, and the last colour to go was blue. The director embraced art as a way of coping with his illness and coming to terms with his impending death. The film became an epitaph not only for the director but also for his many friends killed by AIDS. Blue has many connotations: it means sadness, a 'blue movie' is a pornographic film, and 'blue language' is profanity (Jarman wrote about this in *Chroma*). Blue evokes experiences connected with love being politicized: with non-normative desire, exclusion and illness, loss and grief. This melancholy thread is also very present in Kamiński's output. In his work, the colour blue is put into motion with the help of associations, contexts, and experiences borrowed from other artists. *Blue (ribbon dance)* thus becomes an archive of collective queer experience and a physical manifestation of shared cultural knowledge. The choreographer designs movement and physical and emotional states reflecting 'blueness', decorating the colour with linguistic, visual, poetic, and cinematic references.

Kamiński begins his solo with the words 'It's very nice to be here. Actually, it's very nice to be anywhere at all,' from the very outset negating the distinction between physical and virtual presence and setting the stage for imaginary times and spaces. Interestingly, the material at the heart of *Blue (ribbon dance)* arose to some degree through the animation of imagined pictures and the introduction

¹⁰ Derek Jarman, *Chroma: A Book of Colour* (London: Vintage, 2010), p. 114.

¹¹ Judith (Jack) Halberstam, *In a Queer Time & Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), p. 2.

¹² Przemek Kamiński is a performer and choreographer working mainly in Berlin and Warsaw. He is a graduate of HZT Inter-University Centre for Dance Berlin, majoring in Dance, Context, Choreography. He works in performance art and visual art. He is interested in choreography as a broad practice permeating many formats and media. He studies the poetics of the body in motion, its sensuality and sensitivity, queer intimacy, pleasure, and desire.

of a parallel material reality. Thus, choreographic references are made to the wolf appearing on the tarot card for the Moon, and to the card for Death and the activation of the blue throat chakra. The entire space begins to flood with blue light, in which the body goes into motion in energetic amplitudes of ascent and descent. The vigorous hyperactivity of the performer's arms and legs, resembling classical poses with sharp geometric contours in an uneven broken rhythm, clashes with a body falling heavily to the ground, supported by the hands, elbows, and knees.

Arising in the textual layer alongside the words of Jarman are excerpts from *Bluets* by Maggie Nelson (the author of the cult book *Argonauts*), which conjure a vision of sexuality where queer sex is capable of liberating heteronormative sex from its constraints by a transplantation of homosexual models and a rejection of gender norms in favour of fluid gender roles ('it was around that time that I first had this thought: we fuck well because he is a passive top and I am an active bottom').¹³ In the show's closing sequence, Kamiński performs a dance with a ribbon (based on a routine by Frédéric Gies), a practice culturally connoted with women. The movements are thus queerified, avoiding easy categorization and landing in between what is male and female. Whereas typically it is the body that produces the dance, here the dance creates the body, projecting its non-normative image, wedging it between the binary categories and forbidding it to settle squarely in either.

Proving complementary to *Blue (ribbon dance)* is another performance by Kamiński which explores the colour blue phenomenon and the fluidity of boundaries, while employing a similar vocabulary of movements: *Pharmakon (it radiates)*. In *Bluets*, Nelson explains that the Greek word *pharmakon* refers to a narcotic or drug without being exclusive to just one of the two categories, but both a poison and a medication. The piece's title alone imposes multiple meanings and challenges dichotomies that artificially classify reality. Also not without significance is the choice to soundtrack the piece with music by the queer icon Arca. In *Pharmakon*, the body becomes a site where notions are projected, an unstable, flickering screen. In fact, Kamiński performs the piece against a narrow blue screen cyclorama. Dressed in a blue costume with white sneakers, initially turned away from the audience, he himself is a screen on which images evoked by the choreography are projected. Images of the body are set into motion mainly by the surface of the back, by the bending of arms and shoulders, and by rhythmic syncopated steps, which the viewer's eyes follow with a slight delay, resulting in their registering as something like afterimages. Kamiński constantly negotiates the distance of his body to the wall of the cyclorama and its degree of immersion in the space: he makes use of the depth, in effect equalizing it with the front as he experiments with linearity and tempo. He works to accelerate and intensify the movement, only to slow it down or reverse it again. He produces impressions. In *Cruising Utopia*, Muñoz writes that we are not yet queer though we can feel queerness as a light on the horizon brimming with potential, because queerness is an ideal that can

¹³ Maggie Nelson, *Bluets* (Seattle: Wave Books, 2009), p. 12.

be distilled from the past and used to imagine the future.¹⁴ For Kamiński, the colour blue is precisely the tool to create such a potential.

Matter, desire, ecology

I give my body to the ocean now...

In the choreography of Karol Tymiński,¹⁵ queerness also relates to non-normative modes of life. In this context, a particularly interesting piece is *Ogrodnik* [*The Gardener*], thus far presented as a solo post-residence show as part of the programme *Sprzężenia zwrotne – nadawanie i przyjmowanie formy* [*Feedback: Assigning and Assuming Forms*] at Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Art in Warsaw. In February 2020, the Open Spaces festival in Berlin will host the premiere of the play *Water Sports* based on this material, in which Tymiński will be joined by Kasia Wolińska and Claire Vivianne Sobottke. In this project, Tymiński lays down the premises of queer ecology and inter-material eroticism. Inspired by the still – rare phenomenon of objectophilia, meaning a romantic and/or sexual relationship with inanimate objects, he queerifies the turbo-anthropocentric connection between humanity and the environment. In this, he works with condoms filled with liquids (water, milk, and synthetic blood, sometimes with plant matter inside) resembling translucent oblong stones, which when put in motion are deformed by any external stimulus. Creating a web of horizontal relations between living organisms, organic objects, and inorganic things, the choreographer attempts to sensitize us to non-human matter. He is the empathetic caretaker of a floating ecosystem of his own design, of which he is also a component (as are the spectators, who must cross the object – strewn stage as they take their places to view the performance). Within such an arrangement, the body of the choreographer/performer is placed on equal footing with the other bodies: initially assuming the same position in the space and for an extended period declining to take a vertical stance, he mingles with the objects, assessing their properties as an animal might. After a while, though, the situation grows more complicated. The choreographer tests their durability, plays with them, establishing a hierarchical relationship based on the subjugation of matter. He possesses them, not only in the capitalistic sense but also in the sexual sense. He enters into a sexual relationship with the latex jellyfish, one that is at times governed by violence: he carries them with his teeth, hangs them on himself, hits and shakes them, presses down on them or smashes them against himself, causing them to rupture. All of this seems to bring him sexual pleasure.

14 José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), p. 1.

15 Karol Tymiński is a choreographer and performer based in Berlin but also affiliated with the dance and choreography scene in Warsaw. He is a member of Centrum w Ruchu in Warsaw, a space for independent Warsaw choreographers. He is a graduate of the Performing Arts Research and Training Studios (P.A.R.T.S.) in Brussels and the Warsaw School of Ballet. In developing his choreography language, he avoids formal dictates. His choreographic explorations lead to in-depth observation of the body as a source of movement and its chief medium. In his work, he allows for the performer's work to be magnified to nearly the tissue level. The body, its structure and limitations, and the processes occurring in it, become his field for experimentation.

As the objects burst one after the other, the fluids mix on the floor and resemble a puddle of bodily secretions. Gradually, Tymiński's movements once again begin to mimic the movements of the objects: he slithers on the floor, contorting his body as if it defies precise control. In one of the final sequences, the performer smashes up several jellyfish/stones made of ice. The presence of a melting glacier onscreen further reinforces the point of the Anthropocene and its consequences. In light of this finale, the words 'I give my body to the ocean now' opening the performance, added by the choreographer to an excerpt from Virginia Woolf's letter written to her husband moments before she committed suicide, resonate as a warning of humanity's end, with the intermaterial sexuality on display in *The Gardener* becoming a proposal on how to reverse the destructive effects of our anthropocentric relationship with the world.

Subject, object

In one of his other works, titled *This is a musical* (2015), Tymiński treats his body as an instrument to generate samples of sound and motion. His body is at once the observing subject and the observed object, a situation in which the sensation of pleasure entails self-aggression and the experience of pain. The performer explores a body that is naked and full of desire, for which the equipment distorting and amplifying bodily sounds becomes something of a sex toy and pleasure conductor, as well as a speech transformer. In this piece, Tymiński does away with words, choosing instead to focus on direct experience, on expression and communication not mediated by any language code. In doing so, he evades normalization, whose vessel and tool is language. The video sequence closing the performance, which depicts an enactment of sexual intercourse with an implausible rainbow lover, conjures a vision of a different time-space dimension while also solidifying the image of the queer body as a territory of pleasure and resistance.

In the conclusion of *Cruising Utopia*, Muñoz talks about the song 'Take Ecstasy with Me' by The Magnetic Fields, which voices a yearning for a place whose borders are delineated by pleasure and progressiveness. The word 'ecstasy' here can be understood in a dualistic way; we find in it the promise of a better and more pleasurable alternative reality. In the performances and choreographic strategies discussed here, it is also possible to see a horizon imbued with potentiality; to imagine, and even taste, how things would be if violent, heteronormative structures were to disappear from view.

I have to laugh, it's so unreal
To lay and laugh under the northern lights
We've got a lot that others have to realize.¹⁶

This article is part of the Resistance Movements project carried out under the 2019 Grażyna Kulczyk research grant in the field of contemporary choreography.

In her research project, Anka Herbut studies the tools and strategies of resistance used by Polish choreographers in their work. She ponders

¹⁶ The Magnetic Fields, 'Take Ecstasy with Me', *Holiday* (Feels Good All Over, 1994).

what bodies do and what kinds of movement and production practices they employ to express defiance. Working on the assumption that choreography deciphers social tensions, analysing and processing them to project alternative scenarios, Herbut's project also focusses on phenomena in contemporary choreography and public space protest initiatives with choreographic elements making use of resistance as an artistic strategy.

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ABSTRACT

Anka Herbut

A Few Queer Choreographies and a Horizon Imbued with Potentiality

Working on the premise that the body is a territory for bringing about social change, the author ponders choreography as a tool in activism. To this end, she analyses the work of several Polish choreographers: Ania Nowak, Alex Baczyński-Jenkins, Przemek Kamiński, and Karol Tymiński. She cites a number of queer texts and theses highly relevant to cutting-edge queer theory, by Judith (Jack) Halberstam, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and, most notably, José Esteban Muñoz, whose concept of queerness as a vessel of potential and futurity forms the backbone of the article.

Keywords: queerness, choreography, dance, sexuality, community.