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# **Transversal dances across time and space: feminist strategies for a critical heritage studies**

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## **Introduction**

This chapter draws upon a three-year collaborative research project through which we have sought to explore and articulate a specifically *feminist* approach to dance and the city (as an emergent and corporeal archive) within the context of critical heritage studies. Looking particularly at the non-institutional ('free') dance group Rubicon and the traces of the material, yet ephemeral, engagement they had with the city of Gothenburg during the 1980s, our research has enabled us to test the limits of interdisciplinary feminist theories of space, memory and intersectional agency within this particular case study. In so doing, we have developed a multi-modal, multi-disciplinary methodology that articulates a profoundly ethical approach to heritage studies through feminist engagements with embodiment (Grosz 1994), nomadism (Braidotti 1994) and materialisation (Barad 2007).

In what follows, we will introduce briefly the case study at the centre of our project, the Rubicon choreographers and dancers and their work in public spaces in Gothenburg during the 1980s, and then elaborate our critical, feminist approach to researching this particular

historical instance of ‘intangible heritage’. In our explorations of Rubicon, we have adopted and developed a dialogic, corporeal and multi-disciplinary method to facilitate an active engagement with heritage studies that is both *responsible* for its approach to the past and *responsive* to the ever-changing meanings that are configured in the present through the critical articulation of the concept of ‘heritage’. The method that emerges at the dynamic intersection between heritage studies and feminism is, we argue, both contingent and strategic and, as such, suggests directions for future explorations of gender and heritage that reach far beyond our initial case study.

### **Rubicon in its Political Context**

Inaugurated in 1978, Rubicon was founded by the three female choreographers and dancers: Eva Ingemarsson, Gun Lund, and Gunilla Witt.<sup>1</sup> At this time and in this particular context, it was not commonplace to work as an independent choreographer and, arguably, founding Rubicon was a powerful feminist political strategy, centred on women joining forces in collaborative structures. While Rubicon spent its first years touring in the region performing for children, the choreographers also created their own works, and eventually formed their own companies. Rubicon ceased to exist in 1998, but to the dance community in Gothenburg, its venues and participants are still important.

Significantly, Rubicon was the first non-institutional dance group outside the Swedish capital to receive government subsidy from the Swedish Arts Council. This not only indicates that Rubicon was esteemed for its high artistic quality, it also places the group firmly within the 1974 national cultural policies in Sweden which consolidated the strong democratizing

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<sup>1</sup> Initially the group had a fourth member, Gunnel Johansson, but she left after seven years, that is when Rubicon stopped creating work for children only and started to perform outdoors in the city.

tendencies of the 1960s. Looking back, the 1974 policies were – at least to some extent – successful in decentralizing culture by means of building regional structures and support for non-institutional artists. (SOU 2009: 16).

Examining the types of non-institutional dance that received public support in Sweden from 1974 until the 1990s, Lena Hammergren maps a one-sided focus on raising the status of dance as an art form through the promotion of contemporary post-modern dance believed to possess universal qualities, while excluding folklore, and other dance cultures. Thus, innovation and creativity overruled tradition and continuity in the field of non-institutional dance (Hammergren 2011: 176-82). Rubicon was, in many ways, a typical exponent of postmodern dance, but the productive aspects of the group's work, as well as lasting impact, were distinctly local, democratic and in direct contrast to any universalising tendency. Indeed, as we will argue, the legacy of Rubicon can be considered as a particular form of *feminist critical heritage*, not to be safeguarded and preserved, but to be activated and learned from.

It was in the early 1980s, after experiencing a dance theatre performance by Pina Bausch, that the Rubicon choreographers became intrigued by the idea of exploring the foundations of dance and decided to start from what they regarded as its very basis: walking. The dancers began by walking together in a studio, and did so for almost a year, adding more and more everyday movements into a new, shared vocabulary. This story of the creative foundations of Rubicon functions as a 'master narrative', told already during the 1980s, and repeated today by the choreographers, as well as by scholars – and by us, here in this text. Yet walking, or more particularly, women composing new systems of walking and dancing in the city of Gothenburg, moving within and viscerally occupying public space with art, is arguably the

most enduring legacy of Rubicon and where their practice is most clearly articulating a feminist critical heritage studies.

Looking at Rubicon's way of walking from a dance perspective, it is important to remember that all three of the choreographers had classical ballet as their basic training form and the walking sessions became a way creating another foundation for their work. As expressed by Lund (2013), walking like Rubicon was a most difficult and demanding task to undertake. Not only did such walking instigate change, it manifestly and persistently implemented it in the individual dancers' bodies and in the collective body politic. In this sense it can be argued that Rubicon's walking through dance can itself be considered as a contribution to a dynamic, *critical* and responsive form of heritage.

The walking, in combination with the fact that Rubicon did not have any stage or venue of their own, led to the idea of performing outdoors, in the city, in the public sphere. In turn this has several important resonances, one of them being with the 1968 political context and the idea that the streets were the 'natural place to be' (Persson 2013). Although Rubicon asked the authorities for permission when performing in the city, their appearance in urban space retained an anarchistic flavour that reached beyond the frame of 1970s cultural policy.

According to Ingemarsson (2013), the opening of dance to an audience that could not be counted easily, was completely alien to the bureaucratic structure of the funding bodies, who built their model on statistics that determined the number of paying audience members in venues with clear borders. By contrast, the choreographers of Rubicon met at cafés to discuss and make drawings of choreographic patterns and ideas. They also worked *in situ*, at the

places selected for performances, making themselves visible in public space. Additional dancers would come in later in the process, as funding for rehearsal time was minimal.

Rubicon's 1986 performance on the stairs of the city art museum at Götaplatsen, a pivotal cultural space within Gothenburg to this day, provides a useful example of the way in which their city interventions made the socio-economic, cultural and sexual politics of the urban space evident through ephemeral as well as hyper-material dance actions. (Jackson 2010: 240-60). A documentary video made at the time demonstrates how the dancers in yellow moved – and did not move – on the stairs, as noises from the city and its inhabitants became entangled with the insistently hammering music for the performance. The event crystallises a number of general principles within Rubicon's work and their legacy: (1) their choreography is developed in resonance with urban space, its history and architecture, pathways and people, (2) formal aspects (for example shape, line, colour, rhythm, space, scale and composition) are intrinsic to the choreography as it forms large-scale moving images merging with the lived and messy city spaces, (3) material, corporeal and sensual interaction with the environment (as, for example, in sliding down the stairs) are equally integral to the composition, (4) the shifting of perspectives is a powerful component of the work, and (5) though the audience members could move freely, the choreographers had ideal spaces for them in mind when creating the pieces.

Zooming in on a particular sequence of the performance – the dancers crawling down the stairs – we see the principles in operation. The dancers form two groups (three in each) and these move as patterns of yellow colour in the larger space. Traversing the horizontal direction of the stairs, the bodies fill in the vertical and hierarchical dimension, while at the

same time subverting it, as they glide down the stairs, head first, hands in white gloves. This movement is powerful in the way it activates and challenges the large neo-classical vaults in the museum façade, as well as the complex nexus of ideologies evoked by this architecture and its history.

During the performance on the Götaplatsen, the dancers were, for the first time clad in the yellow rainwear that would become their signature mark for several years, making them visible beyond gender notions. Notably, yellow rainwear was also used by the workers maintaining the city's public spaces. Thus, a metonymic relation is established between the dancers and the larger groups of workers. Of course, there is a pragmatic dimension to this, as dancing outdoors in a city where it often rains requires appropriate costuming – tights and tutus would not suffice – but the yellow dress also emphasised a political layer: dancers were important, professional 'kulturarbetare' (cultural workers), potentially sharing their art with a large-scale audience. The term 'kulturarbetare' was deployed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, but during the 1960s and '70s it specifically equated cultural workers with 'förvärvsarbetare' (labourers) (SOU 2003: 21).

The dance movements engaged spectators in haptic and kinaesthetic ways, giving rise to manifold personal associations and critical judgements. In a kinaesthetic response to space, mind and body, thoughts and affects, are entangled and conjoined. Such an articulation of public space is in marked contrast to a mythic, masculine ideal of the public sphere as a place reserved for disembodied or 'objective' rationality. At play also were cultural imaginaries enlivened by the exchange between the dancers' actions, the spectators' experiences and the environment. On the symbolic level (or ordering structure) Rubicon enacted the conflict

between the ideology of the cultural policies and the dancers' activist agenda on the stairs of the prestigious art museum, in which they did not have a place. Without being deliberately hostile towards the art institution, Rubicon's engagement with the museum exterior can be interpreted as institutional critique – which bodies were inside the museum and which were kept at bay? How does urban architecture and the 'cultural capital' of fine art serve to constrain access to the public sphere? How do these nomads, walking, dancing and taking the space of the cultural plaza in their bright yellow rainwear call these imaginary limits into question and how might we reactivate their legacy in our present through an embodied and critical heritage studies practice?

Rubicon's formal endeavours were not only traversed and affected by the political discourse of their time, the group's dance figurations fed into them, with the specific aim of establishing a qualified as well as generously open community and a venue for non-institutional dance in the local context. As Rubicon repeatedly reappeared as nomads in yellow rainwear (and sometimes in other costumes) in various city spaces, they created an imaginary web of artistic presence – who knew when or where they would appear next time? Importantly, the notion of the nomad has not been forced upon Rubicon by us, but rather, was used in their information materials, resonating at the time with interviews, introductions and in particular a translation into Swedish of a theoretical text by Gilles Deleuze. This text, in Swedish called 'Nomadtänkande' ['Nomadic thinking'] originally written in 1973 was published in the Swedish journal *Res Publica* 5-6, in 1986. Moreover, *Capitalisme et Schizophrénie 2. Mille Plateaux* by Deleuze and Felix Guattari, published in French in 1980 would of course also be read within the Swedish cultural establishment, as would the first translation into English of *A Thousand Plateaus* from 1987.

Embarking upon the process of accessing Rubicon's legacy as more than an elegant coincidence within a nomadic narrative, we sought to work with, indeed to *walk with*, their performance legacy as an important form of critical heritage. Deploying the practice-led, artistic research method of *walking* as an exploratory strategy that might bring our enquiry closer to the physical and material intervention of Rubicon, we determined not to *recreate* the work of Rubicon, but to *reactivate* the dynamics of their gendered, ethico-political spatial practices so to create a vibrant dialogue with the past and reanimate the 'archive' with/in the city and the bodies of the dancers, spectators and researchers who worked together at the core of this project.

Subsequent explorations developed the experiential data of the 'walkshops' further by creating dialogues with the choreographers and dancers themselves (who have remained important and generous participants in this project) as well as scholars from a number of cognate fields ranging from the arts, social sciences and humanities. The dialogic approaches that have developed also extend to the sparse archival records that exist around Rubicon's interventions which have been supplemented by still and moving-image documentary and memory-work from participants in the project. Through these varied and experimental processes, our emphasis has been on *resonance* and *reactivation*, ways to enable the feminist ethics and the legacy of the dancers of the city to continue to have an impact in the present rather than become a relic of the past. A more critical look at some of these strategies is instructive at this point.

### **Artistic Re-activation of Rubicon's Legacy**



Rubicon's performances in the city were determined by a more or less pragmatic decision; without a permanent stage, the group performed in the city centre of Gothenburg as the *City Dancers*. Since they did not see themselves as homeless they called themselves 'nomads of the city'. The way they performed in the city underlined the concept of 'nomadism' in a new context developed through the mobile 'schizophrenic' forces of capitalism (Deleuze and Guattari 1980). Thus Rubicon encountered the friction between the traditional nomadic body with its rhythmic walk in circles in a seasonal repetition and the modern body in a city organised for efficient walking forward in straight lines seemingly free from the rhythm of nature. Moreover, Rubicon identified, moved within, projected, and challenged these very lines (lines created and recreated by architecture, infrastructure, and moving people) in and through their choreographic interventions.

Our 'walking', within the context of the collaborative research project, was also a more or less pragmatic decision; our task was not to reconstruct the choreography of Rubicon (that would be a different project, if equally valuable), but to create a space where scholars from several academic disciplines and practitioners from several artistic fields could engage bodily with the core concerns of Rubicon's project as it sought to articulate, through basic movement and gesture ('walking'), a resonant relationship with the spaces of the city. Many of the participants had not seen Rubicon's choreography before and had little knowledge of the work of the group, but, through the workshop, participants were able to enter a sphere where the powers and potentialities of communal critical activation of city space became accessible at a profoundly experiential level. Monica Sand, artist and artistic researcher, introduced walking as a way of creating a corporeal and sensitive relation to the history of the *City Dancers*, returning participants to the places where Rubicon had performed. We walked, we worked together, we came to understand both the difficulties the exhilaration of making a physical,

gestural and collective intervention in the public sphere. We could not have gleaned the same insights through reading about Rubicon or in looking at the few small images or short snippets of film footage of their work in the archive. (Meskimmon et al. 2014)

This was a different form of engagement and dialogue, arguably a feminist critical engagement, with the legacy of one specific instance of women's (the Rubicon choreographers) ephemeral-hyper-material urban activism. However, the strategy itself was premised upon a more extensive theoretical lineage concerning the ethical implications of embodied research and situated knowledge; in particular what Kelly Oliver has so eloquently described as the relationship between 'response-ability' and 'responsibility':

There is a direct connection between the response-ability of subjectivity and ethical and political responsibility...The responsibility inherent in subjectivity has the double sense of the condition of possibility of response, response-ability, on the one hand, and the ethical obligation to respond and to enable response-ability from others born out of that founding possibility, on the other (Oliver, 2001: 15).

Within the context of our project, these ethical and aesthetic interactions have centred on the concepts of resonance and materialization as embodied and critical methodological tools bringing practice-led artistic research into close connection with feminist cultural geography, urban studies and the politics of the public sphere. Turning to that now helps to further unfold our argument for a multi-modal, multi-disciplinary feminist critical heritage studies.

## **Walking between Matter and Metaphors - the Ethics and Aesthetics of Resonance**

Our collaborative research project offered an inspiring invitation for artists and researchers to ‘walk in the steps of Rubicon’ with the focus on their project the *City Dancers* (1986-89). The project posed number of ethical questions throughout and we made particular decisions in relation to how we should conduct our critical explorations of the ‘intangible’ heritage left in the wake of the dancers of the city. Ethics and aesthetics meet where bodies are organised in space and time, in society and in research, and in this case, between the past and the present, art and politics, matter and language. Three questions emerged with pressing regularity:

First: What does it mean and in what sense do we walk in the steps of the dance performance group Rubicon?

Second: By what means are we able to respond to the challenges of public space today beyond the ‘neo-liberal’ individual and commercialized paradigm?

Third: If claiming the relation ‘bodies-cities’ as a living archive, how can we produce research that will continue to maintain the vitality and vibrancy of the original inscription of the city by its dancers so that it continues to make meaning in the present?

In short, these questions could be posed in terms of *response-ability* (the ability to respond to space and time in the proprioceptive, corporeal and vocal sense) and *responsibility*, here, towards history, in public space and through research (Meskimmon 2014). In the etymology of ‘responsibility’, relation is at the core (Sand 2014): without a relation to others you lose

your ability to respond to the challenges of the space and of society. To express it in corporeal/vocal terms, if no body is able to respond, nobody becomes response-able/responsible.

The expression to ‘walk in the steps of’ can be understood as either a spatial-corporeal reality or a linguistic metaphor. In reality it is easy to walk in the steps of others on a snowy field, in sand or on a rainy street. The metaphor, meaning to follow the life path or imitate the example of either an historical or invented person, in life, profession, or character, does not necessarily take the follower out on foot. In our project, the metaphor of walking is turned into reality in several ways; in the walking process itself, in mapping out and re-activating the places Rubicon once used as citizens in a society dedicated to the power of consumption. This strategy confronts us with the first ethical issues; does this walking process make sense to the history of the City Dancers? How and in what sense are we responsible for this history?

Without aiming to present a ‘true story’, or to repeat, re-perform or re-present the choreographic work by Rubicon, we, as a research group, collectively approached the places once used by the group. While the urban art performances of Rubicon were ephemeral, the places where they took place remain (sometimes re-built and re-organised). Walking enables the present to resonate with the past through daily routines and social rituals, such that the archive of the city activates both on a corporeal/spatial and an individual/social level. By activating our corporeal engagement with/in the same places as Rubicon, we began a process of walking through the archive of the city. Rather than historical layers, we created another spatial and corporeal *infrastructure* within the urban schema: an infrastructural cartography of

places performed and inhabited by art, that are possible to *re-inhabit* and *re-activate* through our research method in the present.

In situ, a process of *resonance* takes place in the search to establish a communication with the specific place through movements, voices, and rhythms. Through this process the aim is to explore and re-activate artistic potential so that remembering becomes a rhythmic process between the past and the present urban organisation and social relations. By re-activating the living and lived archive of the city, with our bodies as research tools, and entering into a body-space remembering process, we create new body-space-memories and take responsibility for our materialisation of the spaces and histories we engage. In our ways of walking in the steps of Rubicon, the archival relationship between ‘bodies-cities’ is set in motion in a rhythmic encounter between feet and surface, the past and present, re-activating the imaginative potential (and cultural imaginary) of places: their materiality, dimensions, associations, memories, and fragments of stories.

In *A Philosophy of Walking*, Frederic Gros states that it is possible to escape identity, name and history by walking, yet refers only to male walkers through history (Gros, 2014). In public space, throughout history, the ability to become no body, a neutralized body, has been a freedom reserved for bodies not defined by sex, race, class, or age, e.g. the white middle class man. (Solnit, 2001: 232ff). If walking is defined by gender, Rubicon, as the City Dancers re-invented walking to build a new collective public identity in relation to both an intentional and unintentional audience. As performers they became visible as a new kind of ‘urban labour’ dressed in the bright yellow rainwear, similar to the common city labours at that time. As actors and subjects, prepared and dressed for hard physical work, the group occupied a

new stage for performance art protected from both the unreliable weather and the common objectification of women in the public arena.

Due to the extensive transformation of public space, public art performances that are not commercial have almost become impossible; seeing performers in yellow rainwear in the city today would be unlikely without the aid of commercial sponsorship. In the extreme commercialisation of cities world wide, *public* space has decreased and much art has been incorporated into the entertainment industry: public art performances have become another way of promoting 'the creative city'.

Rubicon, engaging both female and male dancers performed a visible and audible response to public space, an alternative to the common location of art within the commercial power of urban places, and suggested among other things more varied roles for women in public. One of the questions this posed for our research into the critical heritage of these ephemeral yet hyper-material actions, was in what sense we as citizens, artists, researchers and visitors were able to respond to the city now, dominated as it is by commercialization and private interests, in order to reactivate any sense of common ground? That brings us to a reconception of the idea of responsibility, moving away from a purely individualistic sensitivity toward an awareness of its transversal and collective effect. We are arguing that the capacity to respond is related not only to the individual, but to the entire organisation of space and the multidimensional communication between bodies in space and time.

Neutralization of public space is part of an aggressive design ideology that separates places from users and the individual from the society as a common concern. The aim is to protect, not the visitor, but the private consumption domain, by keeping out the local climate, weather

conditions or environmental sounds and get visitors to adapt to a commercial around-the-clock-rhythm instead of a rhythm based in the seasons and the time of the day (Kärrholm 2013: 73). Seamlessly, without any friction, disconnected from spatial, temporal and corporeal rhythmic dimensions, inhabitants find themselves ‘surfing’ through an attraction, a historical scenography, serving an image rather than the organisation of daily life. It is a serious threat to the human being that the design tool of neutralization forces inhabitants to adapt so that the real human body becomes an aesthetic problem – poor, aging, fragile, disturbing, ugly – an enemy of friction-less design.

In both research and life, visual metaphors create a language of spatial orientation, directed by vision, that seems to presume an immobile viewer with a *point of view*; *outlook*, *vision*, *overview*, *focus*, *general picture* and *reflection*. ‘Go through the material’, ‘take one step at a time’, as well as ‘walking in circles’ or ‘moving forward’ are metaphors performed every day. Our third research question raises the potential of our research as a powerful force to transform matter and direct knowledge – body, space and time – into more than mere abstractions, metaphors, words and afterthoughts. Metaphors can be more than abstractions; as linguistic and practical tools, we are able to live them and orient ourselves through them (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Sand 2012). They structure our way of acting, mediating seamlessly from real life to abstraction and back again. Refusing to accede to the abstraction of ‘space’ and ‘the body’ within the research project has had a significant impact on both the methods and the results of our research.

In contrast to the neutralisation of space, resonance creates an active and critical response to the way we inhabit and act within public space that draws us out of the seemingly unmarked

position of a disembodied, individual consumer. Both bodies and spaces are resonating systems, set in motion by vibrations within and in relation to each other (Gershon 2013). Those vibrations create an instant awareness and sensibility, almost on cell-level, towards space and other bodies, a knowledge created in and through spatial embodiment and articulated in corporeal-materialist aesthetics. As an artistic research method, we deployed resonance in this project as an active response to, and a corporeal and sensorial dialogue with, public space. As the immaterial, continuous and elusive expressions of the rhythms of social content and meaning, based in movements, actions and voices, resonance is a response to and an art of resonating collectively with/in/through the city (Sand and Atienza 2012).

Drawing also on the insights of cultural geography and urban studies, *resonance* functions both as a descriptor for urban experience and as a practical tool for collective actions that remove neutrality. Engaging with the material reality in a collective engaged embodiment, the artists/researchers vibrate with the environment, between fiction and facts, feet and social rhythms, voice and spatial dimensions, matter and language. In this project we act and re-act together, using our bodies and voices as a collective, responding to the dynamic vibrations of the resonance of the past as it is materialised in the present. *Resonance* is to be understood as a frame and a figuration through which methods such as walking, re-actions, memory-work, archival research and critical writing for this project, are developed.

It is significant here that resonance must be employed and explored in a real space, by real bodies and actions. In daily life the environment with its smell, sound, tactility activates the senses, we feel and react to the presence of other persons, spatial organisation, social and corporeal rhythms. As researchers in this project we entered the complex process of being



both producers and observers within the same situation as other agents, others who are both actors and observers, similarly unable to fully control the outcome. Within this corporeal-materialist aesthetics, the immaterial and moving life is performed with hopes, expectations, associations, memories and projections of the becoming future. (Meskimmon 2016). By taking up the invitation to walk in the steps of Rubicon and resonate with their legacy, our project stages a response to the past and the present gentrification and neutralisation of public space by developing research methods that are dependent on the creative human body and its spatial and rhythmic needs and desires. Resonance and materialisation, as method and concept, offer practical tools for space-body experiments. Thus by ‘walking in the steps of Rubicon’, metaphors and abstractions can be brought back into real places, in a rhythmic resonance between language and matter, ethics and aesthetics.

### **Crossing the Rubicon: Towards a Feminist Critical Heritage Studies**

Since its inception, our project has been multi-valent; it is a project absolutely centred on exploring the political and artistic legacy of Rubicon as a significant, yet under-researched, group of performers/choreographers who brought ‘free’ dance to Gothenburg in the 1980s, but it is also a research project that asks critical questions concerning the construction of the arena of ‘heritage studies’ in relation to academic disciplines, contemporary art theories and practices and feminist interventions in the cultural sphere. There are tensions between these various strands within the project, but more often than not, they are productive – they generate new perspectives and possibilities both for work on Rubicon and within the frame of a *critical* heritage studies.

Given the focus of the research upon the work of Rubicon, the cultural legacy of women artists, ephemeral performance practices and the sexual politics of urban space, it is not surprising to find that we would be in dialogue with feminist research in the arts and social sciences. In relation to the field of heritage studies, the insights of authors such as Laurajane Smith are important to our project in that they stress the idea of heritage as a *cultural process* rather than an *object*. In many ways, the arguments Smith made following a period of work with Waanyi women in Australia, that heritage can be understood better as a form of experience forged through dialogue and activity (fishing, for example, in Smith's case study) is paralleled by our work with the legacy of the Rubicon city dancers described in this essay (Smith 2006: 45-48). Smith's insights into heritage, derived through an astute analysis of empirical data and a clear social science methodology, bear remarkable similarities to work undertaken by feminist activist artists during the 1980s and 1990s as part of what came to be called 'new genre public art'. Suzanne Lacy remains a key voice in this field and her statement from 1995 on the interrelationship between marginal subjects, public spaces, the arts and heritage are instructive here:

The construction of a history of new genre public art is not built on a typology of materials, spaces or artistic media, but rather on concepts of audience, relationships, communication, and political intention. It is my premise that the real heritage of the current moment in public art came from the discourses of largely marginalized artists. (Lacy, 1995: 28)

The focus here on the role of the audience, relationships, communication and politics in shaping the public sphere through the arts and heritage reiterates a commitment to thinking through the processes by which cultural meanings are produced in the here and now, by active agency in the present. This is a direct move away from a focus on the objects of heritage (or public art), as if these have any innate, essential or intrinsic value or meaning.

These insights are crucial to the present project and to our attempts to begin to articulate a methodology that can adequately underpin a *critical feminist heritage studies* that enables ephemeral, and sometimes marginalised, practices to come to the fore. We would argue that it is vital to the construction of our methodology both that we cross disciplinary boundaries (particularly between the arts, art practice and the social sciences), and that we find a means by which to think through processes rather than categories of objects. Taking the former point first, our project touches on established work in feminist art and performance history, theory and practice, feminist cultural geography and sociology (on sexuality and space), feminist philosophy (questions of embodiment and sexed subjectivity) and politics (especially women in the public sphere). Perhaps less expected routes within the project have come from the direction of feminist poetics, life-writing and art-writing, where the emphasis on finding textual modes that are dialogic, engaged and corporeal have been increasingly significant as the corollary to the affective and bodily engagements with space that we have enacted practically (through ‘walkshops’ and resonance). Likewise, in working more deeply with the issues of memory invoked by this project (the memories of the dancers themselves, participant-spectators in the 1980s and current users of the city’s spaces), we quickly found that a feminist method (‘memory-work’, pioneered first in Germany by social scientists exploring the acquisition of gendered identity and now more commonly undertaken by social scientists around the world) was crucial to the project, and that feminist methods of ‘participatory action research’ were inspiring as well as practically effective for us (Haug, 1992; Onyx and Small, 2001; O’Neill, 2013).

In thinking through processes, the theoretical trajectories of our project have strong links with corporeal feminist perspectives that undo masculine-normative epistemologies premised on

the binary logic of a sharp subject/object, mind/body split (*cf.* Grosz, 1994; Braidotti, 1994). They further incorporate a move away from *representation* where that term suggests that texts, images and objects (including, but not limited to, academic and theoretical writing, literature, performance and the visual and material arts) operate as a mute mirror of ‘reality’, rather than constitutive of any sense we might have of the ‘reality’ of ourselves, others and the world. In this way, our thinking and making take a lead from the feminist materialist critiques of ‘objective’ and/or ‘reflective’ knowledges (*cf.* Haraway, 1991; Braidotti, 2002; Barad, 2007) that have turned toward ‘materialization’ as a way to explore the mutable processes through which subjects, objects and meanings emerge in mutuality:

*[M]aterialization is an iteratively intra-active process whereby material-discursive bodies are sedimented out of the intra-action of multiple material-discursive apparatuses through which these phenomena (bodies) become intelligible. (Barad, 2001: 108, italics in original)*

The feminist theory that underpins our approach understands subjects to be embodied and situated within, rather than beyond, the world. In its anti-essentialism, it chimes with the more empirical claims of those strands of heritage studies that see heritage as a cultural process, but moves further in its acknowledgement of the contingency of meaning-in-making. Arguably, then, ours is not a *critical feminist* project because those are stable categories of meaning that we ‘reflect’ or ‘represent’ in our work, but because we are aware in using this epithet, that we cannot fix it fast, only materialize it in all its variant contingency. As Elizabeth Grosz argued so well in relation to the attempts to define feminist texts ‘once and for all’:

... no text can be classified once and for all as wholly feminist or wholly patriarchal: these appellations depend on its context, its place within that

context, how it is used, by whom and to what effect. These various contingencies dictate that at best a text is feminist or patriarchal only provisionally, only momentarily, only in some but not in all of its possible readings, and in some but not all of its possible effects (Grosz, 1995: 24).

Like the question of ‘objectivity’ that is unravelled by feminist philosophies of science that acknowledge the intrinsic connections between the observer and the observed and the mutual emergence of the subject and object in and through the ‘agential cut’ (Barad, 2007: 178) of the flow of life in every critical act, we embrace feminist contingency. Contingency does not negate meaning, but makes it animate in every instantiation; the body-archive of the city comes alive in its critical activation in the present, not its dusty entombment in the filing systems of the past. Our constitution of a feminist method-in-process does not pit the insights of the social sciences *against* those of the creative arts, humanities or pure sciences, but rather entangles these knowledges in a dynamic exchange.

We have actively sought a method for *walking/dancing in the steps of the past* that permits contingencies – the shift of weight and balance from foot to foot as we correspond and resonate with that which has come before. We have moved toward a *multi-modal, multi-disciplinary* method that can respond to, and be responsible for, the various forms in which our enquiry takes place, from the textual, archival, visual, material, spatial and gestural to the performed and remembered. This is not a fixed method there are no absolute rules and steps that will once and for all define it, but there are key insights that our contingent strategy can provide for others working in what we would call a feminist critical heritage studies.

First, it is collaborative and dialogic, as well as sensorial and site-specific: it is a matter of speaking *with*, rather than *to* or *of* others. In this case ‘speaking with’ connects the contemporary disconnected bodies with the seemingly neutralized space of consumption and knowledge production. This collective process of resonance pertains even for the ‘lone researcher’; heritage is not ‘owned’ by any one person/interest, but is always already collective and formed by the interlocutions of many different agents. Second, a feminist critical heritage studies is embodied and embedded; there is no ‘outside’ to knowing. By inhabiting and re-activating the urban art archive, we make space both for other kinds of knowledges and spatial structures to emerge. Third, our method is an ethics in that meanings are articulated through affective response-ability that engenders critical responsibility. This departs from a ‘masculine, disembodied notion of the “public sphere” as a political space’ premised upon ‘objective’ rationality and instead insists on the concept of an “affective public sphere’, a space of emotional exchange’ (Perkovic, 2015: 20-21). And finally, in our method there is a commitment to the interconnections between space, time and matter(ing); the past is made in the here and now, through ceaseless agential acts, both human and non-human.

It is our contention that a *critical* heritage studies ranges broadly across questions of cultural value, legacy, participant engagement and of course, the power politics of knowledge production and that none of these questions can be addressed from a neutral position. We argue that *feminist* theories and methods which make explicit the embodied and situated perspectives of knower and known, the significance of our corporeal engagements with the material traces of the past and the complexities of sexual and other forms of difference in negotiating the terrain of ‘heritage’, are a key element of any form of *critical* heritage studies. We thus propose the parameters of a *feminist critical heritage studies* (however contingent

these may be), and suggest that these are important to future work in the arts, humanities and social sciences.

As a way of concluding we would note UNESCO's 2003 notion of 'intangible heritage', which includes a wide range of practices, traditions and artistic expressions such as dance (UNESCO, 2003). For UNESCO, it is important to define 'intangible heritage' so it can be 'safeguarded' (UNESCO, 2013). The approach to heritage that we are interested in exploring is not necessarily one that defines an object for safeguarding; rather, as we have sought to demonstrate, we are interested in activating forms of so called intangible heritage because of their critical and constructive potential in the present. Thus, Rubicon's work for public space can be considered an important, historically-specific example of 'dance as critical heritage' that transgresses artificial, and not particularly compelling, borders between intangible and tangible aspects of past events.

In developing approaches toward heritage that move beyond its preservation (in the past) and toward its activation (in the present), we are arguing that a collaborative, dialogic method of working is more powerful than methods premised upon disembodied, disengaged 'objectivity'. Our insights have their origins in decades of feminist work across the arts, social sciences and humanities and are pivotal to thinking about the significance of the past in the volatile circumstances of the present. What is happening in today's Europe, with cultural policies rapidly changing, and subsidies for non-institutional culture being reduced or completely cut off, makes it even the more relevant to explore and activate the dance heritage growing out of the Swedish 1974 cultural policies, in the present. And what we learn from that specific instance, we can develop toward further work in the future.

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