The Spectator's Re-appearance in *MAP ME* (2003): Moving Beyond Interpersonal and Technological Immersion

Christel Stalpaert

What happens when the historical format of optical illusion or *trompe l'oeil* is transformed into a high-tech tool of new media? This contribution explores the illusionary and immersive[1] effect of the high-tech *trompe-l'oeil* on the spectator within the theatrical constellation of the dance performance *MAP ME* (2003), created by Charlotte Vanden Eynde and Kurt Vandendriessche. *MAP ME* blurs the physical and psychological distance between the observer – in this case the spectator of a dance performance – and the image space. However, this happens in a very revelatory manner, pointing at the conditions of our state of immersion in the rapid advancement of technology. In a very sophisticated way, the performance makes the spectator acutely aware of the mechanisms of optical illusion and hence of the potential annihilation of the subject in new media environments – the so-called disappearance of the spectator's body into technology. Likewise, *MAP ME* brings thought-provoking ethical issues to the fore with regard to the superficial way that we tend to map 'the Other' in our contemporary technological and digital times. I consider this essentialist reduction – or annihilation – of the manifold 'Other' in stereotypical and preconceived ideas a form of 'interpersonal immersion', after the philosophical concept introduced by the French poststructuralist philosopher and psychoanalyst Luce Irigaray. *MAP ME* is therefore provocative so far as the ethical relationship between performers, images, and spectators is concerned.

Contemporary ! ''# $ %& ()# &*(+and Critical Reflection

Once we have entered the theatre building and have taken our seats in the auditorium, the lights go out and we are ready to watch *MAP ME*, a dance performance by Bloedgroep, the Flemish dance company of Charlotte Vanden Eynde and Kurt Vandendriessche. We perceive the naked bodies of the performers onstage, captured in a square beam of light. The rest of the stage remains shrouded in darkness. Only after a considerable time span do we realize that the bodies we perceive are actually video images of the naked bodies of the performers, projected onto a screen on the stage. Charlotte Vanden Eynde filmed her own body and put the images on stage in order for them to enter into a dialogue with the materiality of her living body, performing live on stage.

The performance starts off with an artificial body that resembles reality, and with the spectator unaware of that fact, as in a sophisticated version of *trompe l'oeil*. Technology has expanded on the classical format of the *trompe l'oeil* by activating new illusionary and immersive potential. First, there is this issue of the time it takes before we realize that we are actually looking at a video image, rather than the body of a live performer, made of flesh and bones. Second, we could say that the degree of illusion is upgraded due to the highly realistic images, the space-time continuum and the impression of movement in video art, as opposed to static, one-dimensional images in painting. Third, whereas the deception in *trompe l'oeil* is recognizable "in seconds, or even in fractions of seconds" (Grau 15-16), the video representation appears faithful to real impressions for a considerable period of time. The deception lasts as long as the configuration of the video format lasts. Only then does the spectator realize that the represented body is a virtual body. During the optical illusion we are for some time "geared to unconscious deception", as Oliver Grau would put it (16).

For the duration of the *trompe l'oeil*, the spectator's gaze is controlled and directed towards the highlighted area, so one might argue that in this optical illusion, just as is the case in the historical format of the *trompe l'oeil*, the viewpoint remains static or dynamically linear. The represented space is not dependent on the direction of the observer's gaze. We can refer to Grau's distinction between the artificial world of the *trompe l'oeil* and the panorama, with its 360° space of illusion filling the observer's entire field of vision. Still, because of the conventional blackness that surrounds the spectator in the theatrical constellation, the real space of the theatre is expanded with an illusionary space without the spectator being aware of it. Just like in the panorama, there is no possibility for the spectator "to compare

extraneous objects with the scene, which might relativize the impression made by the picture" (Grau 31).

Furthermore, the medium of the video format is not readily recognizable; the frame is not apparent to the spectator. Nothing seems to interrupt or interfere with the optical illusion and its effect. The blackness of the auditorium and the stage seamlessly embraces the video background. This renders the illusionary space theatrically 'real'. The naked bodies of the performers have been filmed against a greyish background, so that they match the black box unit of the theatre perfectly well. The light of the video screen can easily be interpreted as an indirect light effect, as is often the case in theatre; a square beam of light, coming from a spotlight, highlighting the performer's body. The 'light effect' makes the video image of the body of the performer appear as the source of the real, that is, as the live presence of the performer in the theatre space. Within the theatre space, there is only one level of reality space that fills the observer's entire field of vision, or so it seems. In fact, it offers a completely alternative reality of the body, perfectly integrated in the real time and space of live art, without the spectator being aware of it.

However, complete fusion with the image medium – one of the basic strategies of immersion – is deliberately denied in *MAP ME*. In this high-tech version of the *trompe l'oeil*, the spectator cannot actively interfere in the virtual world. The observer is left outside the virtual world created by the video format; the high-tech version of *trompe l'oeil* thus remains "unsuitable for communicating virtual realities in a way that overwhelms the senses" (14). We still have "the traditional, box-shaped horizontal stage, seen from one direction only and with a clearly delineated area for the audience's attention" (Grau 144). For that reason, *MAP ME* does not entail full immersion.

Dealing with specific ethical principles connected with the rapid advancement of technology, many scholars and philosophers critique the notion of immersion in a new media environment. Overwhelming the senses in an immersive constellation would entail the annihilation of the subject, the so-called disappearance of man's body into technology because of a lack of reflective distance. "Is man losing his body to technology?" wonders Grau. Hartmut Boehme also argued against an aesthetic where reflective distance is absent. He stresses "the subject-constitutive, epistemological quality of distance" when he observes that "all happiness is immersion in flesh and cancels the history of the subject. All consciousness from the flesh to which nature subjects us" (Boehme in Grau 203).

MAP ME installs a reflective distance in a moment of illusion and immersion. In pointing at the manipulative power of the optical illusion and by unfolding its full

psychological effect, the dance performance makes us conscious of the flesh, of the materiality of the live performer's body against the flatness of the pixelated video image. The spectator does not experience a smooth perception of the *Illusionsbühne* ('stage of illusion'). It is rather a restless gaze that haunts the spectator in his 'comfortable' theatre seat. Moving back and forth, inside and outside the illusion, the spectator realizes – through this game of optical illusion – that in video images, "materiality – if one wishes to call it that – is limited to the individual pixel" (Grau 207). In other words, *MAP ME* makes extensive use of the mechanisms and techniques of the *trompe l'oeil*, but at the same time it allows the spectator to re-appear from pure illusionism and mere immersion.

Body Images, Body Experiences and Identities

The unfolding strategies of *MAP ME* call upon notions of subjectivity and identity in a new media environment. The title of the performance is in that context revealing. 'To map' actually means 'to plan', 'to make a flat representation', to 'outline'. A map is therefore a reductive representation of all or part of the earth's surface, showing countries, bodies of water, etc. Based on the characteristics of the earth's surface, the earth is represented on paper, on a two-dimensional, flat medium. Much in the same way, *MAP ME* can be interpreted as an invitation to the spectator to map the performer's body by what he sees and perceives. It is an invitation to the spectator to draw the contours of the 'self' with regard to the 'Other'. Vanden Eynde put it this way: "*MAP ME* is a self-portrait in which I encounter myself and in which I invite the spectator to encounter my 'self'. […] *MAP ME* is an invitation to the spectator to draw a map, to map 'me', but also and especially to map him/herself" (Vanden Eynde, March 2003).

As I will observe, however, *MAP ME* actually tries to overcome the reductive mechanism of mapping the 'self' versus the 'other'. In order to further unfold the critical strategies of the performance, I will outline how the French philosopher and psychoanalyst Luce Irigaray dismantles the restrictive practice of 'mapping' the 'self' versus 'other' on the basis of (mirroring) images.

Irigaray considered Lacan's mirror stage as paradigmatic for this restrictive practice.[2] Following Lacan's mirror stage, the 'mapping' of an embodied 'I' happens on the basis of an imago or phantasmatic anatomy. An 'imago' creates a relationship between the virtual mirror image and the reality it duplicates, that is the human being's own body. The imago that is constitutive of the embodied 'I' is inspired by Freud's concept of the *Ideal Ich* and *Gestalt*: "the total form of his body, by which

the subject anticipates the maturation of his power in a mirage, is given to him only as a gestalt, that is, in an exteriority" (Lacan 76). Irigaray disapproves of Lacan's concept of the 'imago' because it is in fact constitutive of a disembodied 'I', a relationship with one's own body where corporeal materiality has disappeared. Following Irigaray, subjectivity in a Lacanian sense is for that matter an empty symbolic form that gets an imaginary content by means of a formal imprint or a mental impression from which all materiality has been erased. "The image unifies, but it also separates. […] The *Gestalt* of the image, like the discreteness of the signifier, institutes discontinuity. They have the same *splitting function*. Thus the specular image, like, and as, the signifier, is a carrier of death" (Irigaray 2002: 15).

Lacan also observed that there is a kind of loss of meaning as far as the imago or phantasmatic anatomy is concerned. He described the phantasmatic anatomy as a static contour and exteriority:

> An exteriority in which, to be sure, this form is more constitutive than constituted, but in which, above all, it appears to him as the contour of his stature that freezes it and in a symmetry that reverses it, in opposition to the turbulent movements with which the subject feels he animates it […] this gestalt […] symbolizes the *I*'s mental permanence, at the same time as it prefigures its alienating destination. (Lacan 2006: 76)

As the symbolic order is separated from the 'real' order and the 'anatomical', the alienating destination is the only way to go by. Language creates a distance between the word and the 'real' thing. Imagoes create a distance between the 'anatomical reality' and the 'I', between the 'real' and the 'phantasmatic anatomy' or 'identity'. "The word", Lacan says, "is […] a presence made of absence […] Thus the symbol first manifests itself as the killing of the thing […] for the being of language is the nonbeing of objects" (Lacan 2006: 228, 262, 524). Much in the same way, the imago is a killing of the corporeal materiality in the subjectification process of an individual. "We see separate out from the real a symbolic determination" (Lacan 2006: 38).

Irigaray questions this track of alienating destination. She wonders whether the Lacanian perspective does not draw human beings "out of themselves and leaves them without energy, perceptions, affects, gestures" (Irigaray 1993b: 20). She speaks in terms of a forced cultural amnesia as far as corporeal materiality is concerned, in terms of "the forgotten body" (Irigaray 1993b: 198). This cultural amnesia does not mean that the potential of the body and of corporeality has disappeared. In her famous creative-mimetic style, she expands Lacan's thinking and

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suggests that Lacan's lament on the loss of meaning can and should be interpreted as a recognition of the abundance of meaning that never stops harassing the symbolic order. In taking Lacan's mirror as an image of representation, Irigaray interprets corporeality and materiality not as lost meanings, but as an abundance of meaning in undulatory motion. She is convinced that corporeal materiality is constitutive in the subjectification process of a human being and that it cannot be merely isolated from identification processes and mechanisms of meaning.

Irigaray explores a positive role for vision and mirrors, one that finds itself among other faculties and senses that are considered as equal in value, one that does not exclude bodily experiences. Irigaray admits that mirror images and imagoes – their phantasmatic variant – are an important aspect in the development of an 'embodied I', but they should not be considered as co-ordinating or all-embracing:

> The mirror should support, not undermine my incarnation. All too often it sends back superficial, flat images […] the mirror freezes our becoming […]. The mirror blocks our energies, freezes us in our tracks, clips our wings. A body breathes, feels, tastes, sees, hears, touches, is touched. These bodily attributes have almost disappeared. (Irigaray 1993b: 65-66, 198)

But how do we live these bodies? Irigaray's concept of phantasmatic morphology expands Lacan's concept of phantasmatic anatomy. It encompasses both body images and corporeal sensations or experiences that are constitutive of embodied entities. Corporeality then concerns not only body-images or imagoes, but also body-experiences. In this context, Irigaray avoids the term body image. She prefers the notion of the flesh (*la chair*) to refer to the living materiality of the body (Irigaray 1993a: 127).[3]

Perceiving the dance performance *MAP ME*, one could say at a first glance that the invitation to the spectator to 'map' the performer's body is an invitation to join the game of representation, taking the code of language and imagoes as the rules of the game. The letters M.A.P. M.E. on the dancers' T-shirts refer to a linguistic hegemony and an authoritative status of language and the symbolic order. Besides, isn't a map of a country necessarily provided with a legend, with the names of the countries, the rivers, and other words, so that the meaning of the drawings in the map can be communicated in an unambiguous way?

However, *MAP ME* does more than just translate characteristics of the surface into two-dimensional representations or into language. *MAP ME* moves beyond

the anatomical surface of the body, deeper than skin-deep. A first challenge herein is to encounter corporeality beyond the surface of language (the linguistic 'I') and the mirror image (the embodied 'I'). A map might be a geographical representation, but it might as well be a geological map, rendering visible what is beneath the earth's surface.

By confronting the flat, two-dimensional body image with the three-dimensional, live presence of the performer's body, *MAP ME* disturbs the 'mapping' gaze of the spectator, constitutive of fixed identities and preconceived notions. But there is more. Later in the performance, the video images also disturb our distant gaze towards the performer's body. Extreme close-ups show the most intimate parts of the human body, discovering the *inter* between 'outside' and 'inside', scouting midway between the inanimate and the body. We perceive various 'detachable' parts of the body, such as urine, sweat, nails, saliva… We perceive pimples that have been scratched, body folds, extreme close-ups of the genitals… This "shameless hymn of praise of the body", as one critic called it (Peeters), is more than mere obscenity. The mucous (*le muqueux*) – "that most intimate interior of the flesh" (Irigaray 1993a: 142) – evades the mastery of the gaze because it challenges the inside/outside frontiers as it is an inside and outside at the same time. Saliva is inside one's mouth, but at the same time that saliva is one inch in space outside one's mouth.

> Neither the touch of the outside of the skin of my fingers nor the perception of the inside of these same fingers, but another threshold of the passage from outside to inside, from inside to outside, between inside and outside. (Irigaray 1993a: 142)

The extreme close-ups install a paradox in oppositional thinking; the images bring us to the edge of our cognitive faculty of understanding and recognition. They invite us to think creatively and to encounter the diverse polymorphic structure of the body as "energetic, non-representative" (Lyotard 21).

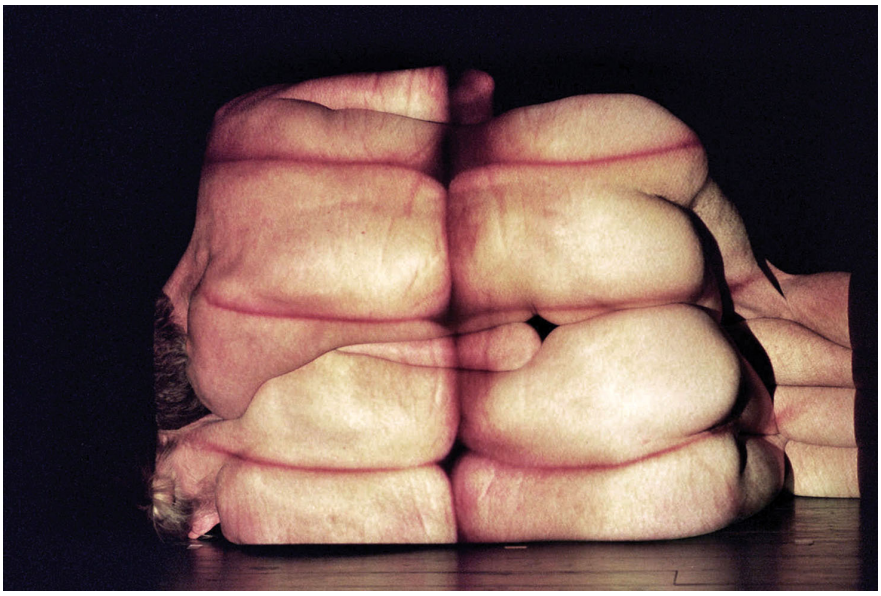
Mixed Realities and Interpersonal Immersion

In *MAP ME*, another unfolding strategy is at work in the use of "mixed realities", where "images of the natural world are merged with artificial images" so that it is "often impossible to distinguish between the original and simulacrum" (Grau 7).

The naked performing bodies of Charlotte Vanden Eynde and Kurt Vandendriessche – live on stage – form a canvas of flesh on which video images are

projected, such as filmed images of parts of their bodies, or other materials such as sand. In this way, a multi-layered image is created in which the materiality of the individual pixel cannot easily be distinguished from the 'real' flesh of the body. We see, for example, two hands gently caressing the back of a performer. The act is put in the spotlight, in a square beam of light. Suddenly, this act of tenderness inclines towards aggression. Nails scratch on the back of the performer's body and finally disfigure the body. After a while we realise that we have – again – been misled by a clever constellation of mixed reality. The performer's body was real, live on stage, but the hands were part of a video film and they were actually caressing, scratching and making figures in a layer of sand. By projecting the video images onto the back of the performer's body, it was as if these hands were part of the 'real', theatrical world, caressing the back, even though they were not. On other occasions, red lips melt with the image of an eye. The male sex melts with the female pubic region. It is obvious that *MAP ME* does not only unfold body images and body experiences to construct a clear-cut identity of an 'embodied I'. The performance dismantles the mechanism of constructing the image of an 'other' on the basis of an image that we have of our 'self'.

In *Anti-Oedipus* Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari observe that traditional psychoanalysis is still fixed on a representative relation, that it is still following the Cartesian law of correspondence (25). They replace Lacan's concept of the image-without-body with their notion of "the body without an image" (*le corps sans image*) or a body without organs (*corps sans organes*; 9). In *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze developed his argument for thinking without mirror images, for moving beyond representational thinking. A corresponding or representational thinking is based on the founding principles of identity, opposition, analogy and resemblance (174). The mirroring attitude in outlining our 'self' while 'mapping' the 'other' is at work when we look for superficial characteristics of the 'other', such as form, anatomical sex, function, or kind. We annex the 'other', capture him/her within language, captivate him/her within preconceived notions and identities, genders and races, within representation, as a touchstone for our own so-called 'clear-cut' but reductive, frozen identity. Deleuze pleas in favour of a creative thinking that no longer works with the logic of common sense to recognize the 'other', but to encounter in wonder. In *MAP ME* the 'other' cannot be conceived of as opposed to our 'self'. This oppositional model becomes unthinkable because the founding principles of representation – identity, oppositions, analogy and resemblance – are disrupted. "Spectating then no longer works with common sense to recognize otherness on the basis of easily recognizable external features such as race, gender or



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age, but to meet or encounter according to an *accord discordant* or discordant harmony, according to an agreement to differ and disagree, to postpone interpretation and hence judgment" (Stalpaert 2012: 388-389).

The revaluation of corporality in *MAP ME* is therefore not only linked to the disengagement from fixed, rigid identities, ideal body images and values limiting the nature of being in which the 'I' is imprisoned. It is also an argument for the development of thinking as a new kind of relationality. The ontological instability of this creative thinking actually facilitates the imagining of a co-creative relationship. This co-creative relationship is experienced, in the words of Bracha L. Ettinger, as the "co-emerging I and Non-I prior to the I versus other" (cited in Thiele 2012:69).

Irigaray's creative-mimetic reading of Levinas also explores the potentiality of new modes of relationality. In *Totality and Infinity* (1961), Levinas criticizes two relations between human beings and their bodies: that is the autistic or solitary love on the one hand, and the ecstatic or immersive love on the other. Irigaray incorporates her theory of the embodied 'I' and explores the possibility of a third relation, that of the intersubjective relation, moving beyond solitude on the one hand and immersion on the other. After having a closer look at these three philosophical concepts referring to possible ways of living together, I will connect them with several choreographic modalities of the *pas de deux* in *MAP ME*. In my view, the choreographic modality of the *pas de deux* is a particular tool in negotiating opportunities for encountering the 'other'. As dance scholar Andrew Hewitt has pointed out in *Social Choreography*, choreography is a modality through which bodies are moved, positioned and configured in a certain way in a certain space and/or architecture, and in that way it reflects a way of thinking about social order.

The autistic or solitary love does not open up towards the 'other'. In the autistic or solitary love, the 'other' is paralyzed by the ideal image. The beloved one, for example, is necessarily an object, not a subject within a relation. Irigaray observes: "Spelled out in images and photographs, a face loses the mobility of its expressions, the perpetual unfolding and becoming of the living being. Gazing at the beloved, the lover reduces her to less than nothing if this gaze is seduced by an image, if her nudity [is] not perceived as endlessly pulsating" (Irigaray 1993a: 192).

Ecstatic love, on the other hand, is characterised by a loss of the 'self', an annihilation of the subject in relation towards the other (Irigaray 1990: 911-920 and 1993a: 185-217). In the immersive context, one loses oneself in the depths of the beloved one, dwelling within the other as in an abyss, as unfathomable depth. This is the romantic vision of love, with the union or fusion of two bodies as the ideal

state of belonging. "Both of them are lost, each in the other, on the wrong side, or the other side, of transcendence" (Irigaray 1993a: 194). It is the experience of the "vertigo of 'getting in over their heads', of immersion in that which does not yet have an individualized form" (Irigaray 1993a: 189). In this act of annihilation the subject does not exist either. Irigaray calls it "the destruction of submitting to sameness. […] Sameness […] occupies my flesh, demarcates and subdivides my place, lays siege to and sets up camp on my horizon – making it uninhabitable for me and inaccessible to the lover" (Irigaray 1993a: 191).

The third option for the intersubjective relation that Irigaray unfolds in her *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* "demands, even begs for a return. A supplication that calls wordlessly to reappear beyond immersion" (Irigaray 1993a: 206). Irigaray links this encounter in wonder with "the touch of the caress" (1993a: 155). This gesture does not entail an act of annihilation, as it respects the borders of the body. Touching places "a limit on the reabsorption of the other in the same" (Irigaray 1993a: 187).

> These palms with which he approaches without going through me, give me back the borders of my body and call me to the remembrance of the most profound intimacy. As he caresses me, he bids me neither to disappear nor to forget […]. Searching for what has not yet come into being for himself, he invites me to become what I have not yet become. (Irigaray 1993a: 187)

The intersubjective touch of the caress moves beyond the surface of the (ideal) image. It does not seek to dominate nor to consummate. It is the approach to the other's flesh in a here and now that matters, for this approach "weds without consum(mat)ing, which perfects while abiding by the outlines of the other" (Irigaray 1993a: 186). The caress is a touching and being touched by the other at the same time, making it impossible to make a distinction between master and servant, between active and passive, between object and subject. Irigaray alludes to Merleau-Ponty's "image" of the sea and the strand to point at the possible co-existence of "immersion and emergence" (1993a: 128).[4] The touch of the caress is "prior to and following any positioning of the subject, this touch binds and unbinds two others in a flesh that is still and always untouched by mastery […] any possession of the world or of the other is suspended" (Irigaray 1993a: 186). As Irigaray put it in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* "In that place […] touch perceives itself but transcends the gaze. And the issue of nakedness. […] It remains palpable flesh on this side of and beyond the visible" (Irigaray 1993a: 192).

To move beyond an interpersonal immersion is then to encounter the other "with respect for what surrounds him – that subtle, palpable space that envelops each of us like a necessary border, an irradiation of our presence that overflows the limits of the body". It is "tact that informs the sense of touch […]. Creation of love that does not abandon respect for the ethical" (Irigaray 1993a: 207).

Charlotte Vanden Eynde and Kurt Vandendriessche – who are also partners in real life – put these different relationships between bodies to the test in their choreographic encounters. They give several kinds of *pas-de-deux* a try and hence inaugurate a way of thinking about encountering the other through choreographic modalities.

The unbearable condition of interpersonal immersion, or the romantic fusion of the bodies becomes clear in the performance when the performers tape their heads together. This act is introduced by two 'subtitles', i.e. *Join me* and *Join me again*. In this act, both performers try to form one moving bodily sculpture. Loud and rhythmic music is heard, but the dancers cannot move elegantly. Their movements remind us of a fight, rather than a refined dance performance. The spectator is moved by their struggle with each other and with the law of gravitation. This is no intersubjective *pas-de-deux*. This choreography puts the limits and the artificiality of interpersonal symbiosis and immersion to the test.

At another moment in the performance, both performers attach a piece of wire to each other and gently dance their dance of encounter. At first sight, this *pas de deux* is very gentle and moving, "like children do in a game, weaving a cobweb of wire between their hands" (Peeters). As opposed to the *grand pas de deux* in classical romantic ballet, for example, it is impossible to indicate who is the master and who is the servant, who is active and who is passive. The dance seems untouched by mastery, but we also realize that this balance, this harmony can easily be disturbed. One of the dancers only has to pull very hard and the balance is lost, a painful experience for whoever's attached to the wire. In this dance of encounter, one is continuously on his guard; it would not be wise to open up too much towards the 'other', because of the risk of falling into the passive, object-position of being pulled at its strings. The gentle dance of encounter is not an easy *pas de deux* to perform, and can turn into an act of aggression. This was already clear enough in the mixed-reality-image of the hands caressing and then scratching a back so violently that the body is disfigured.

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The Placental Economy

But there is more. Throughout the performance, the female dancer explicitly refers to the fact that she is pregnant. Following Irigaray, the relation between mother and child during intrauterine life is in fact intersubjectively organised. It is not – as traditional psychoanalysis imagines – a state of symbiosis or fusion. Irigaray again differs from Lacan in this matter. The placenta is considered as a mixed formation, half-maternal, half-foetal. Together with Hélène Rouch, Irigaray delivers biological proof to dismantle the symbiotic relation between mother and child *in utero* that Lacan considers paradigmatic for his psychoanalytical theories (Irigaray 1993: 37-44; Rouch 71-79). Rouch considers the placenta as "a tissue, formed by the embryo, which, while being closely imbricated with the uterine mucosa remains separate from it […] it behaves like an organ that is practically independent of it", playing an intermediary role between mother and child (Rouch in Irigaray 1993: 38-39). This intermediary role is intersubjective in kind and differs from the parasitical relation Lacan describes.[5] Rouch explains the difference with a parasitical relation or a mechanism of aggression by describing what happens when problems occur with transplants, problems of immunity, and cancer.

Just as is the case with transplants, the embryo is partly 'foreign' to the mother's organism, for "half of its antigens are paternal in origin" (Rouch in Irigaray 1993: 40). The way the mother's organism reacts to this half 'foreign' element differs from the situation with transplanted organs, where the receiving organism activates immune mechanisms aimed at rejecting the foreign elements. Despite the careful selection procedures – in the sense of choosing a donor who is genetically as close as possible to the receiver – and despite the use of immune-depressors to diminish activity leading to the rejection of the organ but which at the same time renders the receiver extremely vulnerable to other infections, organ transplants are not always successful.

The placenta, operating as a neutral mediator, will minimize maternal activity leading to rejection and will create a mechanism of tolerance between mother and embryo, a co-creative relation between 'self' and 'other'. This happens in such a way that the mother's immune system is not harmed. The placental economy will prevent the embryo, fed with the mother's body and which leaves its waste materials in the maternal body, from becoming parasitic or toxic; to become an element that "takes all and gives nothing" (Rouch in Irigaray 1993: 42). The placental economy henceforth entails a negotiation between the mother's self and the other that is the embryo. It is exemplary of the intersubjective relation – one not in a state

of fusion, but a state of recognition and respect of one another – "strangely organised and respectful of the life of both" (Irigaray 1993: 38). In this sense it differs from the cancerous tumour, which is not recognised as 'other' by the human body and against which no mechanism of defence is activated, so that the parasitic and disastrous development of the tumour can take place.

Towards the end of the performance, the two dancers draw a foetus on their bodies. It is as if they expand Irigaray's placental relation onto their bodies. The result is a remarkable *pas de trois*. Rather than representing the Oedipal structure – "the banal Oedipal code" (Deleuze 2004: 16), this *pas de trois* breaks "through the simplistic terms and functions of the Oedipal triangle" (Deleuze 2004: 15). This *pas de trois* echoes Artaud's observation: "I, Antonin Artaud, am my son, my father, my mother, and myself" (in Deleuze 2004: 16).

An Intersubjective , -. '/ &/ &0123''# *. ?

It is not because philosophers state that observing and thinking differently is possible that spectators will immediately start observing, thinking or acting in a different way. The intersubjective relation remains an alternative concept, not an acquired position. But it is also important to bear in mind that art and philosophy go hand in hand as far as the transformative power of their concepts is concerned. After all, they can both be a crowbar in causing upheaval to the representative paradigm: "The search for new means of philosophical expression was begun by Nietzsche and must be pursued today in relation to the renewal of certain other arts, such as the theatre and the cinema", says Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition* (xxi). For him, the potential for an encounter in wonder is inherently present in every one of us, in spite of the reductive systems of representation and recognition that ground the subject. Thus, it is a matter of opening thought to creative movements and rhythms outside these systems of representation and recognition.

Art can play with the philosophical concept of intersubjective encounters and in this way trigger a creative thinking that moves beyond immersion, not only in interpersonal, but also in technological encounters. That's exactly how *MAP ME* might be experienced by the spectators. On the one hand, the performer functions as a high-tech *trompe l'oeil* that captures the spectator in an optic illusion, in a way that overwhelms the senses. In this way, it plays tricks on the spectator and erases the clear boundaries between fiction and reality. On the other hand, however, *MAP ME* also moves beyond immersion by organizing a baroque trope of uncertainty or 'undecidedness'. The spectator re-appears in *MAP ME*, being involved in "a

constantly shifting relationship towards the artwork" (Coppens 93). On the one hand, the spectator is being geared to unconscious deception, being seduced by and being lost in the immersive potential of technology. At the same time, however, the spectator re-appears in a reflective position, enabling him/her to dismantle the immersive mechanism.[6] The spectator does not disappear in an interpersonal or technological immersive state. He/she retains a reflexive attitude in a paradoxical co-existence of immersion and emergence.

The intersubjective *pas de deux* – and later on the intersubjective *pas de trois* – being performed also invite the spectator to creative thinking as far as new modes of relationality are concerned. In engaging with the performance's intersubjectivity and in operationalizing a carnal gaze, the spectator is invited to expand his notion of mapping the 'self' and mapping the 'other', to move beyond the surface of the image, and to encounter the 'other', deeper than skin-deep, but without losing our 'self' in immersion, In that way, to borrow from the words of Randy Martin, dance movements are inherently connected to 'critical' moves towards relationality, involving thought-provoking ethical issues for the spectator.

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