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Revolt of the body in stillness

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Brianne!
Let's coil, quiver, and scratch toward this unbearable revolution of the body

ABSTRACT

The project choreographs revolt as performed in Butoh willful stillness. Stillness is a political intervention, which in its slow and sustained study reveals the functioning of in/visible economies of violence. Indeed, Butoh aesthetic of stillness, demands self-reflexivity that troubles voyeuristic passivity to create space for ethically facing the other in moments of violent cultural annihilations and suffering. Beyond underscoring the role of performance art in confronting the apathy of observing and consuming violence, the essay exemplifies Butoh as a choreographic method that performs the discomfort of seeing, thus, cuts across academic and aesthetic critiques of witnessing.

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> Better to do nothing than to engage in localized acts the ultimate function of which is to make the system run more smoothly. The threat today is not passivity, but pseudo-activity, the urge to "be active," to "participate," to mask the nothingness of what goes on. The most radical thing is to do nothing. (Žižek, *Violence* 217)

Camera-mediated knowledge of agony, great cruelties, and ruins of distant wars has the kind of authority over the depictions of violence that gives life and meaning to the suffering of others that the privileged, the free, and the safe often prefer to ignore. For Antony Penrose, this practice of documenting the distant suffering requires the presence of surrealist eye (14). Placed within surrealist visual aesthetic photographs of war oscillate between life and death; its convulsive beauty arrested by the transgressive power of the image, in all its distorted wonder, violent, marvelous, repulsive, and terrifying. For André Breton, this image is alluring in its obscure and uncontrollable violence. For Georges Bataille, photographic knowledge of the atrocious is both intolerable and pleasurable in the most excruciating depictions of pain (206). Provoking fascination and disgust, repulsion and attraction, the photography that bears witness to the atrocious and the catastrophic stands as a historic document and a photographic enterprise that records, defines, and normalizes consumptions of violence and jarring war horrors.

Consuming images of atrocity as reflected in the depictions of Russian invasion of Ukraine, Ukrainian (and Syrian, Afghanistan, and Sudanese) refugee crises, mass murders of refugees at sea, Uvalde school shooting, Buffalo mass shooting, the killing

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of George Floyd, the white supremacist and heteronormative violence here at home, the racialized impact of Covid-19 deaths, the brutalities of child detention cages on our borders, to name a recent few, often heighten the objectification and dehumanization of the other. "Photographs objectify: they turn an event or a person into something that can be possessed" (Sontag 73). Photographic record of violence is a valuable visual enterprise that documents atrocities, yet risks further alienating the subject in their suffering, thus disavowing us of any spontaneous ethical response. With this risk of objectification in mind, the essay confronts symbolic and political violence located in voyeuristic spectatorship of suffering. While Susan Sontag has argued that war photography paralyzes and ethically overwhelms us, the essay considers if we can, nevertheless, rely on the aesthetic of the image, and specifically, the aesthetic of Butoh performance to incite ethical responsiveness in the face of violence? How does choreographic method of stillness in Butoh frame our ethical obligations to reveal functions of invisible economies of violence[1]? Must we be overwhelmed to some degree in order to have an ethical obligation toward the other and a motive for action?

To further focus the analysis, the essay spotlights LEIMAY's *Becoming Series*[2] and argues for choreographic method of stillness as political aesthetic that rehearses and creates sites for critical engagement of violence. The aesthetic form of Butoh is a patient, durational, performance that extends space for ethically facing the other. In what follows, Butoh is revealed as a choreographic form that embodies intensity of awareness in its performance of stillness; it highlights entanglement of voice, politics of in/visibility, ethics, and ideology. Most importantly, the analysis charges Butoh stillness as revolt; a critical stance and a political commitment stubbornly persistent in its engagement of violence (See Appendix).

As a point of departure the study theorizes abstract and analytical movement in Butoh, highlighting its complex and wide aesthetic as a form of witnessing. In this spirit of critique the essay proceeds to articulate political and ideological issues that amplify ethical tensions marked in the choreographic method of Butoh. What should one do when faced with images of violence? Do we have the right to look at other people's pain? If we did not inflict the suffering, are we still in some other sense responsible to it? To advance these questions and make the argument plain, the analysis choreographs stillness in Sara Ahmed's concept of willfulness as an ethical obligation and an invitation to witness. Through the example of LEIMAY's *Becoming Series* stillness is theorized as revolt. It is a performative act – a radical form of action confronting the viewer as a body with agency. Finally, the conclusion of the study takes issue with, and warns against, ideological interpellations structuring the existing theories of ethics and witnessing in our field.

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> Butoh is a dead body risking its life by planting its feet firmly on the ground. (Hijikata, qtd. in Ohno 219)

Butoh dance/choreography arose within Japanese society as a response to the World War II atomic bombings. Its founders Tatsumi Hijikata and Kazuo Ohno were in search of a form of expression that went beyond the dance mirroring Western style and performance culture. Of course, Hijikata and Ohno were reacting to a mixture of gloom and confusion caused by the bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the post war, and the industrialization of the Japanese traditional culture. Although Hijikata's dance

experiments were documented as early as 1948, his joint performance with Ohno in "Kinjiki" ("Forbidden Colors," c. 1959) begins Butoh chronology. The work of these Japanese Butoh masters was primarily motivated by a complete rejection of, and the break from the entire socio-cultural climate of post-war Japan and the cultural aesthetics of that time. In response, Ohno and Hijikata, abandoned the restraint embedded in traditional forms such as kabuki and bugaku, in favor of extreme images of deformity and insanity. For example, the early dance experiments of Hijikata rejected the pre-existing, representational dance concepts of modern Japanese dance culture that were heavily influenced by German modern dance (i.e. choreography portraying a mother sending a son off to war, or a dance narrating a bride being passed from one family to the other). Dissatisfied with this kind of representational dance, Hijikata started to experiment with different forms of bodily articulations that sought to choreograph shock, randomness, and unconscious, as well as violence, disease, pain, and madness as recurring themes. This experiment in dance consisted of slathering white plaster on his body, which constrained Hijikata's movements in new and compelling ways. In time, like-minded dancers and performers began to use plaster and white body paint to mark themselves different from the conventions of Japanese representational dance and mainstream society. This element, in turn, became a signature part of Butoh dance (Baird and Candelario 9). While the literature reflecting on the movement's early stages discusses Butoh as "terror dance," or "dance experience," this kind of Butoh aesthetic Hijikata and Ohno have described as "Ankoku buto," which translates into "dance of darknes," a physically enacted nostalgia intensely present in the materiality of the body, yet ultimately performed as estrangement from that body.

Although, Butoh emerged as a reaction to increasingly industrialized and westernized Japanese cultural life, Peter Eckersall and William Marotti trace the development of Butoh from a site of critical social and cultural construction, to a space progressively more focused on representing Japanese identity. Interestingly, around the same time, New York and San Francisco scene began experiments with "chance" choreography and "found movement" as were the dance methods featured in the work of dance-choreographer Ann Halprin. Surely, the look of much of Butoh performed in America was "lyrical," emphasizing attenuated gestures and physical virtuosity. Soon Butoh method journeyed to American audiences – into American theaters, dance studios, and television programming. One of the best-known groups of Butoh performers in this country, Sankai Juku, were featured on PBS as "hanging events," in which the performers (four or five men, naked except for loin-cloths, shaved heads, and covered in white body makeup) were suspended head down by ropes from roofs of various structures (Hamera 55).

Just as striking and grotesque, and representative of the style of Butoh seen in this country, is the work of Eiko and Koma, whose choreography and movements unfold "with aching deliberation over an almost uncomfortably long period of time;" Their form was described as an aesthetic that dehumanized the dancers, reducing their bodies to "synecdoches – headless torsos, severed limbs, as beautiful in their strangeness as they are troubling" (Hamera 57). While Eiko and Koma and the members of Sankai Juku ensamble are Japanese, the same grotesque, decelerated aesthetic is apparent in the choreography of American dancers-choreographers who drew (often heavily) from Butoh visual style and vocabulary. Vangeline, Ximena Garnica[3] and Shige Moriya in

New York, Oguri (native of Japan, based in Los Angeles) and Roxanne Steinberg also in Los Angeles, Melinda Ring and Sara Zalek in Chicago, are just a few such artists.

Much of the early history of Butoh has too often been defined through the discourse of orientalism. Edward Said described orientalism as an ideology of difference, a system for "dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (Said 3). The hallmark of orientalist thought is the opacity through which Butoh has been presented, read, audienced, and appropriated. Despite the complex multicultural, radical, and fluid aesthetic paradigm that makes Butoh form/bodies inevitably "strange" in their wonderfully unfamiliar difference, the reception of Butoh in the West has been largely impacted by the tropes of orientalism, where the dancers/choreographers found themselves negotiating their cultural and national differences through dance, working with and against being read as the other, no matter where they were. Couched in the dance reviews as the problem of unfamiliarity, where Butoh form was described as "alien" to American audiences in its avant-gardeness, was the orientalist assumption that one "cannot understand the performance because it, like the performers themselves, is so 'other'" (Candelario 61).

The dominant reductionist representations that essentialize Butoh as timeless, exotic, strange, and singular, continue to haunt the influential work of contemporary Butoh artists, both Japanese and American, their aesthetics, political commitments, and visual style. Certain characteristics of Butoh form, the mannerisms that Butoh artists express through dance, and the issues of translation – including both literal translations and cultural interpretations – are perpetually explicated as conditions of abjection (á la Kristeva): simultaneously the radical other and the constituent element of Butoh. Butoh is performed, audienced, and translated through the symbolic, literal, legal, and embodied abjections of the form/body/history, which nonetheless constitute an essential part of Butoh canon and choreography. For example, contemporary dance companies without direct links to the training or experimentation of Butoh performers continue to use the term "Butoh" to describe and promote their work. Chronicling German Butoh scene, Rosa van Hensbergen relays accounts of essentialist/orientalist assumptions expressed in German Butoh workshops and interviews (with Kazuo Ohno) where translators declined to translate what Ohno actually said, and instead spoke about what the translator thought Ohno must have meant. Similarly, in Italy, Ohno's way of speaking about his own structured improvisations contributed to the assumption that Butoh required no particular skills.[4] While Butoh has proliferated into manifold forms within which artists have taken different methods and aims, these mis/translations, reductionist representations, and erasures continue to influence and haunt Butoh practitioners and audiences today. Disentangling Butoh from such flattening meta-discourses that abject and dehistoricize requires ceaseless re/contextualizing of the movement and the body that trains, performs, experiments and improvises the form.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that choreographing something that is seen as "other" than themselves is an exceptional quality of Butoh aesthetic, which in its ambiguity and liminality negotiates the risks and spaces of cultural appropriation:

> Is not Orientalism a gaze that renders one as "other"? And is it not reasonable to imagine that, having been read in terms of difference from a Western movement model, butoh artists might appropriate and reappropriate shard of this reading into their performances,

> consciously or unconsciously, perhaps even to create the tension between adherence to and deconstruction of a traditional religio- aesthetic paradigm? And if this is true of butoh, is it not equally true of any cross-or multicultural work which elicits the gaze that renders "exotic" or "other." (Hamera 59)

Whose responsibility it is to redirect the misreading of the form? In the West, choreography that is grotesque, violent, striking, and random is read as an aesthetic reflecting the Western experimental performance zeitgeist, and *not* as the "revolutionary nature of butoh against its own cultural history and politics" (59). This is not to suggest that Butoh form is beyond representation or signification. Rather it is to amplify the importance of intervening in the prevailing misreading of Butoh aesthetic (its grotesque slowness, striking violence and randomness of the form) as singular, timeless – orientalist.[5]

Distinguished as a conceptually based postmodern dance, Butoh remains a site where stylistic diversity, reflexivity, and abstract and analytical framings prevail (Daly 64). With its passion for gestures rather than choreographed steps, Butoh invokes a sense of play and irony; it views poetry, politics, genre, and style as materials to be abstracted, blurred, and rediscovered. It is characterized by its critical approach to dance traditions that seek to disrupt discursive practices of mainstream culture, including dance. Its aesthetic is wide, complex, and performed in various ways, yet, it is mostly recognizable for its extreme visual images (usually frail bizarre looking skinny, white-painted dancers engaged in a form of silent theater performance) (Sas 20).

Butoh performance is often narrated as a form of witnessing; witnessing of the body free of cultural references, open to all metamorphosis, body being danced "by something." Butoh seeks for a primary state of humanity (as opposed to culturally determined) that is expressed through movement – the body is moved/danced by space, humanity, darkness, time. Hijikata has remarked that dancer's movement is already deeply felt and ingrained in their body before they even start composing choreography. Butoh allows for the movement to emerge from the body itself – as a primary state – rather than imposing it from the outside. Kazuo Ohno reveals his dreaming phase as playing an essential role in choreographing his movement. Although Butoh is performed in a sleeplike way, Butoh dancers cannot deliberately set out to dream upon falling asleep. While eyes remain wide open, they are sleeping eyes. "I'm dancing freely among the sprits of the dead. One moment I'm in the afterlife, the next I'm back amongst the living. I'm standing here. Where we all stand, in the midst of life and death, coming and going. Death, life; death life" (Ohno 283). Mastering a dance technique is not a way of Butoh, for if a dancer is to focus on acquiring technical skills they would lose touch with their natural phenomena. One need not get stuck on a movement but let the body uncover movement – explore, shift, and dance within liminal spaces.

Butoh dancer[6] seeks to open mummified areas of the body (mouth and abdomen, for example), wake them up, and pull the movement directly from that body. Eyes dance in pairs with the ears, each altering the other – on the eyelids there are pores, on the pores there are cells – there are endless dancers within. Playful and grotesque imagery is one of the primary states of Butoh where body is turned into a maze, turned into an insect, turned into air, turned into raw bone:

> So many birds are flocking about that it is impossible to count them all. They keep stabbing and jabbing you with their beaks. If left to their own devices, they'll leave nothing on you but

> bone. You'd love to turn into a raw bone, wouldn't you? All birds up there, come, come, peck at my flesh! (Ohno 277)

Butoh choreography utilizes the entire body, physical and metaphorical wholes along with their parts, and it leads to a variety of aesthetic approaches. While not required, nor universally applied in the form, some of Butoh's common features are: search for an individual or collective memory; extreme or absurd environments; slow hyper-controlled movements; almost nude bodies completely painted in white; upward rolled eyes and contorted face; inward rotated legs and feet; playful and grotesque imagery. Butoh is: spiritual, physical, violent, grotesque, and nihilistic (Stein 110). It is a bridge "between action and narrative with dance movement or choreography" (114).

While slow movements and exploration of the body in relation to space remain the focus of Butoh, the most recent Butoh schools of dance express their choreography as avant-garde,[7] for they seem to crystalize Butoh practice in the blurring of the dance genres, by pushing the boundaries, and creating new dance spaces, thus underlining the undefinable qualities of Butoh. Butoh can be without movement at all – purely conceptual; it is performed with or without an audience, and there is often no set style. Most Butoh practitioners resist any definitions of Butoh as techniques and methods with consistent style (Sas 20). Butoh's ephemeral nature escapes any/all attempts at grasping the form: "Butoh is considered by some to be an art form that is current to the present-day culture from which it emerges, more of a feeling or way of being, than an aesthetic" (Waychoff 51).

Hijikata often reiterated that there are as many types of Butoh as there are Butoh choreographers. Miryam Sas writes about Butoh's multiple goals and contradictory methods as its approach to the body remains anti-philosophical and anti-conceptual, characteristics that Butoh shares with surrealism:

> Both movements aspire to effect a radical decentering of conventional systems of thought and consciousness, a rupture of existing symbolic frameworks. By varying means, they work to reach a space of (sur)reality or "actuality" beyond socially defined boundaries of understanding. (20)

Hijikata, similarly, teaches us that dance takes place in imagination; in surrealist liminality between flesh and thought, in "breaking rhythms of language" transforming images into memories and gestures; in a space where we no longer know if the body is a matter of writing or being written, dancing or being danced (48).

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> The spectacular is very much part of the religious narratives by which suffering, throughout most of Western history, has been understood. To feel the pulse of Christian iconography in certain wartime or disaster-prone photographs is not a sentimental projection. (Susan Sontag)

Normalizing the themes of suffering, political conflicts, and violence has been parasitical of religious art and religious public rituals that exploit ethical (often emotional) human responses to violence. Ethical responsibility insists upon relations of care that emphasize spaces of difference and incompatibility as sites for ethical engagement. It forefronts ethical dialogue not transparent through sameness, but made in "the aesthetic of the unfinished" that is heightened across differences and disconformities (Fenske 2).

For D. Soyini Madison it is clear that critical work in performance and ethnography begins with an "ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain" (5). Politically engaged and self-reflexive performance stands as a cultural and ideological site where ethics, justice, compassion, and responsibility are negotiated. This assumes "intense spectatorship" and unending self-reflexivity in audiencing performance (Valentine), as well as resisting ethical pitfalls that trivialize and exoticize the other, ultimately foreclosing possibilities of a dialogue (Conquergood). Dwight Conquergood offers "dialogical performance" as a means to express ethical tensions and ambiguities grounded in political commitments of performance ethnography. According to Conquergood, dialogical performance resists conclusions in its commitment to keep the dialogue between the performer and text open and ongoing. Ethical responsibility of this kind of performance does not end with empathy, he insists:

> There is always enough appreciation for difference so that the text can interrogate, rather than dissolve into, the performer. More than a definite position, the dialogical stance is situated in the space *between* competing ideologies. It brings self and other together even while it holds them apart. It is more like a hyphen than a period. (9)

Ethical obligations are global in character, notes Judith Butler; they emerge in contentious politics of both the local and distant contexts. Valorizing proximity as a condition for ethical encounter assumes an immediate demand for nonviolence and claims to rights, she argues. Embodying objection and resistance to violence across space and time, however, underscores an ethical demand[8] of solidarity in a form of "ethical solicitation," that encroaches on us and compels us to negotiate questions of distance and proximity (Butler, *Precarious Life, Vulnerability* 135). Media framing of suffering at distance compels us to respond to perceived injustice, perhaps in spite of ourselves, or against our will. The kind of ethical obligations that emerge through the media depend precisely on the reversibility of proximity and distance that characterize cohabitation as bonds of interdependency. Such ethical responsiveness acknowledges our social existence as precarious bodily beings whose sociality and sustenance are fragile and persistently at risk of destitution under unequal and unjust political conditions (Butler, *Precarious Life* 149). For Judith Butler ethical responsibility is implicated in a domain of the "nonconsensual ethics," that does not allow us to abstract and evacuate human from the ontology of bounded beings whose life we seek to preserve.

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> The rod does not appear under the sign of willfulness; It becomes instead an instrument of its elimination. One form of will seems to involve the rendering of other wills *as* willful; one form of will assumes the right to eliminate the others. (Ahmed 2)

In *Willful Subjects,* Sara Ahmed maps out politics of willfulness as a "stray philosophy" (16). A body becomes a willful thing when it gets in the way of an action being completed (43). For Ahmed, to be identified as willful is to become a problem; willfulness is thus understood as a problem of will. The distinction between will and willfulness is significant in its capacity to explain abstract and pedagogic violence that distributes moral worth and orders human experience (2). Will is both existential, and experiential/embodied will with clear practical aims and possibilities. Ahmed reads a politics of willfulness located in "a refusal to cover over what is missing, a refusal to aspire to be whole" (184).

Willing is also a social activity done with Others. The force/power of "social willing," is such that it is not only "the rod" by which willful objects are directed to "will right," but also the mandate for attunement. Those who are not in tune, "or who are out of tune become the obstacles," they become willful and must be pressed to advance the will of society. The social will supporting harmony, then, is a project towards which willing subjects must reach, and under which willful subjects will be shaped by force.

While Ahmed argues that will has historically been developed as a straightening and tuning device, this essay considers the concept of willfulness to trace the will of the enduring stillness in Butoh. As a compelling element of Butoh dance, stillness is performed and theorized against the wider context of modernity's fixation on movement. LEIMAY's *Becoming Series* manifest political commitment established in its reflexive dynamics that empower subjects in their stillness. Ahmed's concept of willful body that does not fit in because it "sticks out" is of particular significance here inasmuch as it helps articulate the embodied revolt in a quiet, durational Butoh choreography. LEIMAY's *Becomings* instinctively choreograph spaces for slowly moving bodies, technologies, lights, sounds, and sites to perform stillness as "a stray philosophy" (16).

Butoh aesthetic draws images in non/movement. It can dance feelings, stories, and textures (i.e. it/s/he dances a sensation of incineration, a prosthetic limb, dullness). This non/dancing body nourishes, thus moves itself through its own desire to move – through dreams and memories. "Invoking memory, accessing the uncanny, and creating nonnarrative movement that summons a narrative past constitutes butoh mind" (Martin and Schechner 172). This concept emerged some years ago when Butoh began to incorporate modern dance in order to identify choreography grounded in improvisation and developed from excavating memories and inner worlds, thus revealing the fantastic beauty of the grotesque (172). When contextualized within violent political and ideological conditions of modernity, Butoh aesthetic form resists, not by moving, acting, shifting. It choreographs resistant bodily acts as marked in enduring stillness.

Bissell and Fuller identify collective acts of stillness as having the capacity to augment the affective intensities of the body. This engagement with stillness rearranges dualisms of activity and inactivity, moves beyond mobility and immobility, shifts intensities, "folds through the vital and the vulnerable, providing a new set of political and ethical concerns" that produce the resistant and disruptive models of subjectivity (Bissell and Fuller 14). Similarly, Harvey Young theorizes stillness as a source of agency and strength, where black subjects engage in resistant performances of stillness, observing and cultivating tremendous activity of an inner life thus challenging the idea of black subject's quiet interiority (47).

Stillness in Butoh emerges as a radical form of action. Žižek stresses this politic of stillness and writes:

> The truly difficult thing is to step back, to withdraw. … Do you mean we should do nothing? Just sit and wait? One should gather the courage to answer: YES, precisely that! There are situations when the only truly "practical" thing to do is to resist the temptation to engage immediately and to "wait and see" by means of a patient, critical analysis. (7)

Certainly, throughout the *Becoming Series* the audience is absorbed by and enveloped in the enduring, exquisite, and grotesque stillness – we witness the body trigger will, memory, history, anxiety, and responsibility. The audience is invited to "become"

together; to become corpus, to become borders, to become frantic beauty (LEIMAY). Collectively we experience the meditative stillness of the extreme physicality on the stage, reflect on the quiet, observe our own interior worlds, and witness our becomings together.

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> If, say you feel that a blood-thirsty beast is stalking you, don't dismiss that fear out of hand; instead experience the anguish of being preyed upon with every single step you take. If a lion bites your foot, live through that horror for all its worth. Even if that beast rips your limbs apart, don't let that stop you from delving into the depths of that excruciating pain. What does being able to endure such an experience mean? The important thing is that you live every step, every stride painstakingly. You're a robot at heart, that's why. (Kazuo Ohno 234)

Ximena Garnica and Shige Moriya, the artistic duo behind *Becoming Series* describe the performances as a dance experience of altered time and space. Garnica and Moriya create stage works and installation performances within their organization LEIMAY. LEIMAY dance performances feature Butoh movements, photography, light, video, and art installations, and are experienced in immersive, mesmerizing environments. Their choreography is rooted in contemplative stillness and powerful body physicality. LEIMAY cultivates the mechanisms for the conditioning of the body's physicality, voice, imagination, sensorium, and intellect:

> LEIMAY performers work towards conditioning the body that is simultaneously subject and object: a body that can be moved by the environment as opposed to a body that moves itself. Physical and mental openness, strength, and pliability are needed to trigger different states of transformation. (335)

Garnica and Moriya host workshops taught by the top international Butoh dancers at their live-work space CAVE in Brooklyn. They co-founded New York Butoh Festival (2008–2011) and continue to offer residencies and educational programs that have contributed to the dissemination of the work of Butoh artists. They describe CAVE as a "vortex defying categories," where dance, performance art, and experimental sound are intermingled with photography, sculpture, painting, and installation. Cave is a "schizophrenic space" that fosters an atmosphere of intense energy and subversion that has given Garnica and Moriya the opportunity to imagine many ways of being and coexisting (Garnica 327). Their dance ensemble, LEIMAY, confronts questions orbiting body's connection to its environment beyond social identity, "stretched out of its social existence" (328). LEIMAY values confrontation for its generative power:

> We believe that through the tension of confrontation in an environment of coexistence new ways of relating and being emerge which transcend the personal. We have recognized that when these moments of connection/confrontation appear, they are born deep within oneself and carry a powerful life force of transformation in them. (328)

As a first installment of *Becoming Series*, "Becoming Corpus" depicts relationships and transformations among beings, the individual, and society. This is a performance of meditative stillness and physical extremity within an environment of six-channel real-time video projections. In this piece the aesthetic, social, and political performance of stillness is theorized as resistance to the incessant drive to move; stillness is set against empty compulsions that are obstacles to connectedness, awareness, and community

engagement. "Long durational work is the key to experience. Our lives are so fast. Art must slow us down."[9]

In "Becoming Corpus," the audience observes eight dancers emerge from darkness. There are six live video projections from overhead that diffuse light on the dancers' bodies. The bodies are wearing light and projections that are abstract geometry of lines and colors. They dance quiet stillness. Their movements are demanding in their enduring silence. When the bodies erupt in action, they fall, roll, and tremble across the stage to the score that is a cacophony of dissonant vibrations, noise, and echoes. "We hear a body rubbing against the floor, the thud of heaving body weight, the slap of a body flipping over from laying full out on the stomach to full out on the back" (Martin and Schechner 173). It is a performance of bodies engaged in acts of acquiring themselves. Their choreography is always becoming, continuing to reveal experiments with non/movement, meditative bodies, photography, and complex light. The performance is "beautiful at the level of control, execution, and body language," note Martin and Schechner, "and alternately horrific or sublime at the level of theme. It is simultaneously a dystopic universe, the end of the world, and 'nothing more' than pure movement" (173).

"Borders" is a sequel to "Becoming Corpus" where stillness is again set against strong physicality of bodies turned inside out. Garnica and Moriya describe the choreography as "locating and de-locating impulses to move," forcing us to question boundaries and how we relate to others (LEIMAY). Six dancers are lit by projection of textural light. Their formlessness is accented by the soundscapes of digitally manipulated sounds and live piano music. The performance utilizes instinct-grounded choreography that builds upon the aesthetics of "Becoming Corpus," where body forms quietly dissolve through sound, light, and shadows as the stage morphs into a haunting landscape of bodies dancing stillness. Through the mixture of voices, sounds, light textures, and choreography of high physicality, "Borders" seeks to shrink the gap between space and time in order to expose the ambivalence in the way borders are created, perceived, traversed, and dismantled:

> As individuals within a global city constantly negotiating or carrying borderlines with us, how does this shape the ways in which we engage the world? When do we transgress our own boundaries? When do we become borders ourselves? With *Borders*, we delve into what these aspects of borders mean in order to raise questions of how our choices and our strategies for making connections, affecting, and being affected impact the world around us. (LEIMAY)

While experiencing LEIMAY's *Becomings* one could easily drift into meditative states of sublime stillness suspended in time/space. The audience witnesses contorted bodies and faces in their grotesque vulnerabilities – beautiful and primal. The choreography is patient, quiet, decelerated. Deep focus. Presence. LEIMAY's dancers push their bodies to the limit not only of strength and endurance but also imagination. "They are capable of movement far beyond what ordinary people can even conceive of as physically possible: movement that comes from an imagination that far exceeds the usual domain of the corporal" (Martin and Schechner 170). The dancers are abstracted beyond their social existence, bodies stretched out in ambiguity, defying definitions; they perform both the power of their transformation and the power to let the body transform, where the body seems to disappear to reveal the space itself. *Becomings* achieves this aesthetically critical

potential in the moments that propel the audience to confront our own attentive and affective limits. Stillness in LEIMAY's *Becomings* allows critical and creative capacity for ethical encounters that emerge across space and time. Garnica describes the attraction to these specific transformative moments as:

> personal, and perhaps connected to our condition as immigrants, the constant assertion of and contravening of our identities, our skepticism of certain societal systems of indoctrination, and our belief in personal revolution as a catalyst for societal change. A body that resists any definition is unpredictable, and even dangerous, as it is hard to control. (330)

The contorted bodies on the stage tap into a kind of transformative force, which although originated from inside them, transcends their social identities, and projects the power of transgression and subversion. Whenever there is a sense of such subversive force, there is an opportunity to dig deeper into the extreme artistic power and the choreographic form. Watching the bodies fall across the stage the audience witnesses a fleeting glimpse of a limitless dimension that draws us into an emotional vortex, thus renders our own inner lives perceptible. Here, the aesthetic form and the execution of the physical motions involved in slow-falling and moving, delineate extemporaneous, expressive environments of the realms of the visible and the invisible. The aesthetic form and the power of *Becomings* creates conditions to sense, connect, pause, decelerate. "I love to see a dance in which the movements aren't only performed on the surface," notes Kazuo Ohno. "I'm deeply touched when a performer barely moves, or simply keeps standing stock-still. By moving very quietly, it's possible to walk with great care," without losing sense of what we are doing (Ohno 214). Here, in this atmosphere the multitudes of forces collide "to make something previously imperceptible perceptible, or to give birth to something not there before" (Garnica 328).

While deeply subjective and sometimes circumstantial, the aesthetic of *Becomings* manifests a space to listen to the voice of someone that the audience might have not chosen to hear, or to understand an event that they have never elected to know about or see. As an ontology of relatedness, ethics embodied in *Becomings* touches everything and subsumes all individual expressions to a shared affect. Bodies dragging and pulsing – performing decelerated movements compel the viewer to navigate terrains of power and contours of ethics located in the defiant stillness perpetually opposing the politics of resignation. Stillness as revolt, a tactic of nonviolent resistance is a compelling act that acknowledges the power of embodied ethics in "doing nothing."

This aesthetic of stillness is willful and transgressive inasmuch as it is deeply connected to the other/ body, transforming from the inside outwards, thus revealing critical space for tension, confrontation, revolt, power, and agency. Garnica and Moriya demonstrate their ceaseless commitment to generating spaces where their dancers/choreographers and their audience are free to explore alternative ways of being and relating in the world. LEIMAY dancers' physicality seems effortless; they perform deeply felt space of undisciplined movements and intense gestures to awaken us to what lurks beneath; we all tumble together in a limitless fall into the depths of our subconscious/universe. Their bodies move of their own accord, within illusive immobility. Somehow the audience begins to see our deeper inner lives unfold in the moments of such expressionist spatial and temporal displacements. These formless bodies move us toward becoming –violence, beauty, borders, memory, responsibility, and power – all of which frame their visibility.

While to the audience LEIMAY dancers appear to be still, the dancers' inner worlds are, in fact, the most energetic, dynamic, and strong; they are never completely still. They engage in microscopic movements that are at the brink of imperceptibility. The bodies sink into the floor, begin to subside, while the cycle of the intensity of emotion and radical physicality begin anew; suspended in time that is paused, compelling unstable stillness, twitching, pivoting, trembling. They push the audience to confront our own affective, critical, attentive, and ethical limits in the moments of witnessing their quiet struggle. Kazuo Ohno agrees:

> The audience can be moved without trying to comprehend all that goes into making the performance. Isn't that the very reason we dance – to engage the audience on a visceral level? That's why I'm at a terrible loss to hear people talk of understanding my performance. (Ohno 198)

For Kazuo Ohno, moving very quietly reveals the true nature of dance; the feeling that cannot be codified – movements that cannot be defined. This distinctly, is the patient work of stillness; the choreography that reinforces the relational and participative power of slow-paced, micro-movements sustained over an extended duration of time. *Becomings* offers the language of the human body, the movements and forms in all of their exquisite density. Their creativity lies in strangely shocking movements of the body structured, extracted, and alienated; their sudden quietness against the sudden shouts and the extreme physicality continually betray audience's expectations. Their half-awake, half-dreaming stillness pushes on our bodies, affecting all of our limits of attention and physicality. Concentrated on stage, the exploding movements of dancers slide into space that is frantically full of contradictions. It is not that there exists a space in which the bodies dance, rather space appears through the whirling, pivoting, and fluttering of the bodies.

To say that *Becomings* can be read as a self-aware, performance of contradictions generated through radical physicality and stillness, is to amplify the transformative characterization of choreography and its altering energetic states. In Butoh work, or performances strongly influenced by Butoh aesthetic and vocabulary, it is clear that the actions and the flow of movements are not fixated on perpetual motility. Judith Hamera finds it most useful to locate the difference between elongated gestures extended over time in Butoh, and accelerated choreography that describes most of Western movement-based performance, in the relationship between action and meaning:

> In general, in Western movement-based performance, action/movement and meaning coincide; such a performance "means" through what it does. Movement is read as text to generate meaning. In butoh work, this relationship seems quite different. Instead of movement and meaning coinciding, the minuteness of many of the gestures and the length of time over which they are executed, leads me to suggest that, in work of this type, "meaning" and "opportunities for reading" exist at least as much in the "spaces between" actions as in the actions themselves. (Hamera 57)

Similar to Victor Turner's concept of liminality, the idea that the meaning resides in the elongated space between movement/action is central to Butoh aesthetic. Andre Lepecki further foregrounds this form of awareness in his characterization of Western performances, and specifically, modernity's fixation on movement. Lepecki's argument is compelling inasmuch as it problematizes Western choreographic interpellations,

notably, the confinement to movement that disciplines and stabilizes subjectivity. It is through choreography and in modernity that subjects become "kinetically disciplined," obeying and performing choreographic orders. The fantasy of the modern kinetic subject is the display of movement; in modernity the dance has been aligned with an ideal of ongoing motility, the demand that the body be constantly in motion, unrelated to the violence of "the colonial plundering of resources, bodies and subjectivities that are needed in order to keep modernity's 'most real' reality in place: its kinetic being" (14).

Slavoj Žižek maintains that it is a political choice to do nothing, to slow things down as a political intervention. In *Becomings* we see the bodies on the stage taking space to take time; it is an arresting choreographic choice that slowly reveals itself. The drawn-out, slow-moving bodies oblige the audience to pay a different kind of attention, yet they have also performed a transgression and a transformation – willfully, slowly, and imperceptibly. Profound and absorbing through the intensity of their specter, LEIMAY's *Becomings* beckon the audience to witness quiet, out-worldly shapes haunting the performance space. The dancers determinedly catalyze exhausted arms and disoriented feet as if compelled by intense vulnerability or unspoken responsibility. Balanced in their stillness these shape/less bodies are halting in aggressive attempts at connection, twitching nervous energy, thus activating the materiality of the subject's ceaseless, confrontational inertness. They offer a physical practice and process to enact this transgression in the audience as well as to articulate the confrontation through performance.

The third installation of the *Becoming Series*, "Frantic Beauty" features minimalist choreography of quiet meditation, abstract video projections, and an original musical score by Jeff Beal. Here the audience first observes a single point of light where white rays are dispersed across the stage partially lighting the dancers. The light changes and the bodies become visually fragmented as they sink and emerge – their movements are visceral, slow, quiet, and nuanced in their stillness. Their muscles infinitely trembling in their constant application of imperceptible intensities of speed/slowness and specifically targeted energy. Their quietness is never made visible; rather, it is felt in the moments sustaining their slow-paced choreography over an extended duration of time. The energy shifts as the bodies begin to swing, tremble, and fall – they emerge in and out of shadows, un/familiar shapes – human, material, texture, object. The bodies emanate guttural noises which are underscored by the minimalist visuals and intense, enveloping soundscapes. "Frantic Beauty" is transfixing in its capacity to suspend time – the dancers are motionless, their bodies bent, limbs contorted, eyes gouged. There's an eerie stillness, the quietness in the bodies that is moody, destructive, violent, and uncontrolled, yet focused and purposeful in its sustained intensity. LEIMAY's sculptural bodies teeter from live bodies to still images. They face away from and threaten a radical economy of staging dance as spectacular kinetic movement. The bodies assist the audience in attending more slowly and closely to what Andrew Murphie has called, "the revenge of the still." LEIMAY's silent bodies are perceptibly performative and political, revolting in their stillness.

From a performance approach this quietness in/of the body is distinguished as a performative act with all its agentic risks and freedoms. It is a social performance with complex political, material, and ideological histories, and like any other cultural practice, it is never static. Richie Hao has further argued that silent performances legitimize critical commitments to agency and dialogue by revealing how power operates in knowledge

production. Similarly, cultural rituals de/legitimizing silent bodies and performative acts of silence are always and already ideological (Hao, *Pedagogical Performance* 303).

Silence is resistance. *Becomings*, thus, offers a critical choreographed space for the willful quietness and slowness to stress the importance of bending bodies and histories; to reinforce the importance of politicizing and archiving the history of the bodies that resist, bodies that slowdown, complicate, decrease production, increase revolt. Here choreography of decelerating movement stands as a refusal: "a refusal to cover over what is missing, a refusal to aspire to be whole" (Ahmed 184). The aesthetic of stillness is performed as an opportunity to continuously create new spaces and politics possible; to connect deeply and explore exhaustively. Their choreography and aesthetic principle involves what Ahmed names "going astray and/or getting lost," but it is a means to intervene and actualize in the dance/history.

Histories of willfulness are histories of those who are willing to put their bodies in the way, notes Ahmed. Feminist, queer, and antiracist histories are histories of those who are willing to be willful, who are willing to turn a diagnosis into an act of self-description (Ahmed 134). Examining willfulness as a choreographic method in *Becomings* means grappling with heightened emotional space that intervenes in the misreading of the form as orientalist, the misrepresentation of unmarked whiteness of the aesthetic, and consequently, the further desecration of their absent histories, yet offers no movement, no catharsis, and no resolution in repeating cycles of utter stillness and extreme physicality.

While Western-influenced Butoh productions remain tinted with power, Garnica and Moriya are cautious not to foreground essentializing Western techniques that connect Butoh to universal or culturally unmarked bodies/choreographies, both of which are rooted in values of whiteness. These ever-present universal choreographic methods unmarked as white space illuminate the fraught shortcomings of "orientalist," racial, and ethnic categorizations which have always haunted Butoh form and the aesthetic. The problematic of un/intentional reinforcement of orientalist discourses in Butoh research and practice relies on the disavowal of ontological, political, and historical contexts that underpin them, thus the tendency to experience Butoh as a "recurring site of exoticism for artists looking to recreate the aesthetic of the form" (Neideck 344).

What LEIMAY practice ultimately amplifies is that their orientation toward Butoh inspired aesthetic of stillness affects different ways of directing our struggles toward ethical obligations. Here slowness as aesthetic politic affirms contemporary ethical urgencies in theorizing sights and sites of in/visible economies of violence. Such implications of the invisible violence embodied in racially and culturally unmarked choreographies are not unique to Butoh; they are a larger issue faced by many Asian and Asian American dancers. While "American modern and postmodern dance forms are always already Asian American," choreographers and dancers of Asian American cultural backgrounds have been largely erased from American dance history, and they remain invisible (Wong 81). Thus, Western adoption of Butoh, the urgency of access to Butoh visual style as political, and the understanding of its transgressive potential, must be claimed as multidimensionally transformative revolt. In this sense, the act of claiming Butoh as a site of protest mobilizes its polysemous aesthetics to stage political manifestations of exoticism, disturb ideological narratives of cultural annihilation and erasure, and challenge orientalism and unmarked whiteness that lurk around Butoh. The physical labor of LEIMAY's bodies sharing weight, dragging feet, bodies that extend into and inhabit

spaces struggling for balance, is a crucial reworking of the dance site that rejects choreographic interpellation in favor of paradoxical temporality where stable modern body and its absent history are no longer possible. LEIMAY's *Becomings* rehearse parallel aesthetic choices where decelerated bodies generate connections, subvert order, and effectively engage in a slow, sustained, and quiet process of change. Rosemary Candelario notes that:

> Slowness as choreographic method provides the time to learn how to develop alternative ways of working in the world, including tactics that may allow one to pass outside the visibility of subjective violence, reveal the functioning of objective violence, and create alliances that could prove effective in countering objective violence. (8)

These qualities are expressed aesthetically in amplified cacophonies of LEIMAY's dancers quietly pulsing, soaking up shadows, taking space, suspending time. *Becomings* asks audience to witnesses the slow tensions between bodies in constant state of becoming through growth and decay, beginnings and endings. The intensity of awareness is activated and sustained through sound, light, and shadows. Here stillness claims the space that disobeys. Stillness is revolt. It claims alliances through prolonged performance of insistent delay and waiting. Stillness suggests that dwelling in the intensity of in/action be viewed as subversive act. It expands the critical understanding of the labor of slowing down, its centrality, its creativity, the willful audacity of what it can achieve (i.e. rehearse spaces within which intense spectatorship and unending self-reflexivity amplify ethical tensions in audiencing violence). Stillness is choreography of sustained refusal to allow invisible economy of violence to disappear fully. Stillness is political. Stillness is revolt.

Rooted in the aesthetic of powerful body conditioning, LEIMAY's sculptural bodies endure temporality in choreographies where they move between utter stillness and extreme physicality, dance and sculpture, subject and object, performing shifting philosophical, aesthetic, and social dance scenes. The imagery connected with the viewer accesses a visceral feeling state, leaving behind logic, analysis, or motivation for dancing/crawling across the stage. Garnica and Moriya effectively place emphasis on transgression and confrontation as altering physical and energetic states encouraging dancers to adopt new space and movement – to crawl the stage, and find a new way to transform and recreate. *Becomings* reawakens this aesthetic of transformation by embracing anti-formalistic style, underscoring their complex choreographies, experimental content, and historically new shapes and sensibilities. The dark aesthetic of bodies convulsing and burning up, shadowy beings whose slow steps create evocative images eliciting shapes and responses, manifest LEIMAY's aesthetic politic and its creative process that are not canonical:

> Our subjects continue to question the ambivalence of human nature; the perception of the spectator; the intervals between spaces, objects, and time; the energetic flow of spaces and bodies; and the tension between the organic and the inorganic. We continue to seek transformation as an aesthetic and the potential of what is yet to exist. (Garnica 336)

This utilization of Butoh visual style furthers LEIMAY's commitment to the multidisciplinary artistic practice that echoes Garnica and Moriya's intercultural relationship, and their resident/immigrant situation in Brooklyn. For the duo, the autonomy of Butoh aesthetic and choreography was a function of a rejection of the institutionalization of Butoh. In the moment of current political and anti-immigrant violence, the

implications of the globalization and the Western adoption of Butoh, travel far beyond rehearsal studios and academic avant-garde theater sites. LEIMAY's claim for artistic independence and control over their visual style and aesthetics has extended a new ethic of vulnerability that has further politicized and complicated the relationship between subjectivisation, national and cultural backgrounds, and the migration (of) movement.

Ultimately, as the bodies in *Becomings* move delicately across the stage, they repeatedly enter and leave space, vanish in the light, and are born in the sound, abandon the sound, appear again in obscurity. It is with a similar theatrical language that this elusive mode of performance enacts ideological resonance with the cultural zeitgeist within which it is presented. The audience seems to be emotionally and politically mobilized through witnessing the vulnerability and tension enacted in the liminal spaces between dancing power and revolt, extending subjectivities, facing each other in our differences, through stillness and into the world. *Becomings* invites the viewer to examine how we function within sociocultural and political contexts to recreate meaning, negotiate differences in power, and reflect on our privileges against larger socio-political structures.

Accounting for our own conditions of emergence in systems of power and privilege points to the urgency of the current political moment that creates factors amplifying the silent revolt (Butler, *Giving an Account* 7). Stillness is key to understanding resistance as bodily confrontation. It is nothing short of performative act confronting the viewer as a body with agency, acting in revolt by not moving. And while political and aesthetic commitments of slowness are devoid of explicit activist messages, such choreographic method proposes ways of being in the world that perpetually challenge structures of power.

**

> So don't hurry. Don't hurry. If a wolf suddenly
> Creeps up on you from out of nowhere,
> just stop and stand still. (Kazuo Ohno 215)

Violence projected across bodies in stillness is a shared cultural and political performance of both power and revolt. Certainly, to do nothing in the face of violence, to withdraw activity, demands a lot of energy – to stand against in stillness is a performative nod to revolt, and "the first gesture to provoke a change in the system" (Žižek 214). Our performance studies colleagues remind us that ethical responsibility does not end with empathy; rather, it is performed in spaces of liminality where the dialogue, political power, body, and agency perpetually interrogate competing ideologies and historical contingencies. The intensity of awareness in *Becomings* is performed and experienced as an aesthetic site in all its ambiguities, with an infinite potential for mobilizing ethics of responsibility. In effort to translate culturally between our own lives and that of others, bodies in stillness perform intersections of politics, sociohistorical context, and ethics; they highlight "collisions and collaborations with others as we trace cultural norms and expectations together, provoking critical reflection upon differences in power and privilege for personal and political transformation" (Spry 57).

Tami Spry's words ring true in the current political moment inasmuch as performance of stillness appeals to ideological imaginaries of freedom that are contingent and

politicized, naturalized and essentialized, yet always dedicated to reflexive critiques of their own social positioning; dedicated to dance and performance; dedicated to ethical obligations that "address the kinds of pain that occurs at our social/historical/political intersections with one another – the pain caused by our social ills" (Spry 36). Equally relevant to our field is addressing the existing gap in performance studies literature orbiting the question of performance spectatorship and ethics of responsibility. Perhaps LEIMAY's *Becomings* speaks to these questions more directly, as well as to the need for refining and reinforcing existing theories of ethics and witnessing in our field.

Butoh aesthetic of stillness reveals the necessity of awareness in witnessing violent ideological interpellations. Its resistance to being defined and codified, as well as its infinite and elusive styles of performance further underscore Butoh aesthetic as a site of protest confronting the apathy of seeing in/visible economies of violence. While mobilizing Butoh stillness as a political intervention ascertains its aesthetic as revolt, one must not fail to acknowledge cultural hegemonies and fantasies of privilege embodied in political ontology of body in stillness. What keeps the still body in place? What creates LEIMAY's scenes of stillness? Here lies the paradox: the surrealist method of Butoh choreography, its stillness as creative source of agency, cannot be abstracted from the re/productive labor, capital relations, colonial, and racist institutions that hold the bodies and keep them in stillness – as in any discourse of power. Likewise, the essentialism that has often characterized reception and migration of Butoh demands further politico-ideological and aesthetic consideration, as well as an ethically responsible recontextualization of Butoh history and development. How has Butoh traveled? Where was it granted entry and for what purpose? Rosemary Candelario reminds us that Butoh and Japan have been discursively constructed for American audiences, which came to understand the form, and specifically Japanese performing artists as "purveyors of a timeless and ahistorical cultural heritage" (247). When Butoh is adopted and adapted by dancers/choreographers from different national, cultural, and political backgrounds, what exactly is transmitted? Something essentially Japanese?

While Butoh invites performance studies scholars, activists, and teachers to consider ethical demands, the weight, and the responsibility embedded in the discourse of witnessing, I remain pessimistic, perhaps skeptical, that any performative exploration of invisible economies of violence can be circulated ethically, without the risk of objectification that occurs in moments of making violence, inequalities, and atrocities visible. Acknowledging these complexities further recognizes that ideological framings of such violence and its political power do not directly mirror social structures and their historical contingencies. Aesthetic and discursive interventions which aim at global ethical obligations and political transformations must remain open to new freedoms, new ethics, and therefore new dangers. Performance art/studies oscillates between never-ending process of political struggles and new social formations within which nonconsensual ethical obligations are not guaranteed by any political necessity. The task of performance studies criticism is to discern accepted spaces of violence that sustain performative ethics of witnessing. Any neutralization of claims to violence, political power, and agency is a performative gesture of violence par excellence.

Notes

1. Economy of violence is framed within the discourses that constitute, legitimize, normalize, and circulate systemic and symbolic (mundane) marks of violence (i.e. hegemonies of whiteness, absent histories, capitalist, political, and economic institutions that obscure violent inequalities of social relations).
2. *Becoming Series*: multi-disciplinary works that utilize Butoh dance, video projections, and light and sound installations. *The Series* embrace different performance styles, including meditative stillness techniques found in Butoh that have the transformative power in their approach to physicality. *Becoming Series* deals with a "constant state of becoming through growth and decay, beginnings and endings" (Leimay). This manuscript looks at the live performances of *Becoming Series* that took place between the years of 2013 and 2017 at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM).
3. I have come to learn Butoh (as a student and as a performer) through the teachings of Ximena and Shige in their neighborhood life-work space in 2010. At that time I knew very little about the form, but I quickly immersed myself in the physicality of the movement, the conditioning of the body, the acquiring of the senses, and understanding of its critically substantial history, all of which grounded my performance method. In 2011 I performed "Piercing Butoh" at the Ferment Series under the direction of Ximena Garnica. This inaugural performance, coupled with my growing curiosity and scholarly writing about Butoh method, was followed by several solo performances, almost always within the context of the academy – by invitation, and as a part of inter/national performance studies conventions. I have continued to cull from Butoh aesthetic in my academic explorations of agency, ethics, violence, and subjectivity.

   While COVID 19 pandemic has forced LEIMAY to close the studio at CAVE home, Ximena, Shige, and LEIMAY ensemble continue to produce work, although at a reduced capacity. In October of 2020, as a response to the current political, environmental, and world health concerns, LEIMAY presented a sculptural installation performance – *Correspondences* – where audience was invited to bear witness to daily activation periods of the human body, machines, natural elements, and urban square in an entangled "poetic microcosm." https://here.org/shows/correspondences/.
4. Maria Pia D'Orazi. "The Concept of Butoh in Italy: From Ohno Kazuo to Kasai Akira."
5. I observed this interaction during post-performance talk/event in Brooklyn.

   Interviewer (white woman): what meditation technique do you practice before your performances? Do you find Zen/sand garden helpful in your meditations? Yoga?

   Butoh dancer/choreographer: avoids answering the questions; smiles uncomfortably; makes jokes.
6. During my time with CAVE, Garnica (my Butoh teacher) facilitated qualia-guided movement conditioning. I performed black hole face: a black hole was inside my mouth and my eyes, and it sucked my whole face into it. My bottom legs are Auschwitz: legs holding legs holding legs holding legs – my feet melting, bending toes. My arms and shoulders are helium balloons and they float up high until the sun burns/pops the balloons … my head is a wet cloth drying in the wind; it is evaporating – my head is a water turned into gas … Garnica guided body conditioning teaches me to feel the body as an end in itself, not a tool or a means to an end.
7. Characterized by political rebellion to the institutionalization of the movement, relying on improvisation rather than rigorous choreography in order to keep its creative energy challenging regardless of social and politico-ideological borders.
8. Ethical demand is contextualized in the tensions between violence and responsibility that recognize ethical obligation/responsiveness as a radical vulnerability in the condition of being human.
9. Marina Abramović, in *The Mystical Stillness*.

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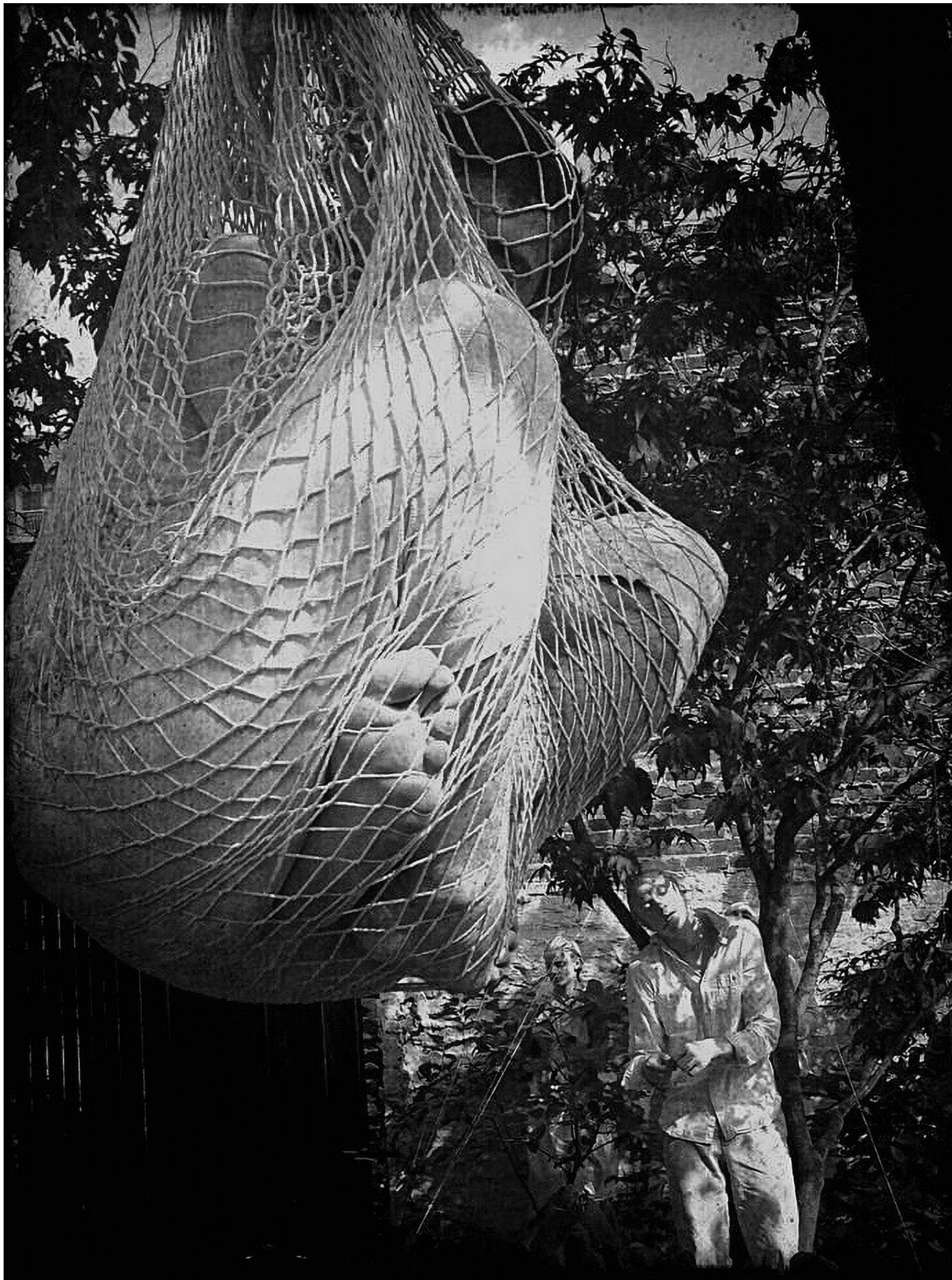
Appendix

Thresholds LEIMAY photo Marc Veit Schwär.

Created for the mausoleums of the Green-Wood Cemetary, *Thresholds* explores the fragility and resilience of life through falling/raising dance at the threshold of death.



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Created for the mausoleums of the Green-Wood Cemetary, *Thresholds* explores the fragility and resilience of life through falling/raising dance at the threshold of death.

Qualia – La Casa & In Illo Tempore Vignettes LEIMAY photo by author.

In Illo Tempore Vignettes is a performance that addresses the stories of the exiled. The exiled bodies are suspended in time, revealing the echoes of memory and alienation. The performers parade through relentless streams of invisible stimuli in a voyage between presence and absence.

Qualia – La Casa & In Illo Tempore Vignettes LEIMAY photo by author.

In Illo Tempore Vignettes is a performance that addresses the stories of the exiled. The exiled bodies are suspended in time, revealing the echoes of memory and alienation. The performers parade through relentless streams of invisible stimuli in a voyage between presence and absence.

Correspondences LEIMAY photo by author.

Sculptural installation performance. Audience is invited to bear witness to daily activation periods of the human body, machines, natural elements, and urban square in an entangled "poetic microcosm."