

ON WALKING WHILE CONFINED

Rui Filipe Antunes

Instituto de Etnomusicologia - Centro de Estudos em Música e Dança, Faculdade de Motricidade Humana, Universidade de Lisboa, Lisboa, Portugal

Sílvia Pinto Coelho

Instituto de Comunicação da Nova, Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Lisboa, Portugal

ABSTRACT

In the apparent paradox that the idea of “walking in confinement” contains — also in its relationship with the city — we have found, in the confinement experience, some possibilities of operating in this paradoxical tension. These will be hypotheses of choreopolitical potency, if put in opposition to the sensation of self-choreopolicing (the self-monitoring of one’s own movement) — and to the extreme attention given to the movement of the “other” as a danger - which can be transformed into propositions for social play.

KEYWORDS

choreopolicing, choreopolitics, confinement, walking

SOBRE CAMINHAR EM CONFINAMENTO

RESUMO

No aparente paradoxo que a ideia de “caminhar em confinamento” encerra — também na sua relação com a cidade — encontramos, na experiência de *confinamento*, algumas possibilidades de operar nessa tensão paradoxal. Serão hipóteses de potência *coreopolítica*, se postas em oposição à sensação de *auto-coreopolicamento* (a autovigilância do próprio movimento) e à extrema atenção dada ao movimento do “outro” como ameaça, que pode ser transformado numa proposta de jogo social.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

caminhar, confinamento, coreopolítica, coreopólicia

INTRODUCTION

It is commonly said that the worn shape of the floor in King Afonso VI's bedroom, in the Palácio da Vila, in Sintra, results from the insane way the deposed king walked in captivity. The floor would have retained, thus, the mark of his walking in confinement¹.

Despite the story and the verifiable facts, we will never know what happened in that room during the nine years of captivity of the king, but we can use it to illustrate a starting point, and from here move on to the idea of “walking in confinement”. The story of King Afonso VI of Portugal reminds us of Xavier de Maistre, who, in his 42 day house arrest after fighting a duel, advocated the creative potential of confinement (Maistre, 1794/2015):

this is how the flâneur strolls in his room: “When Johannes sometimes asked permission to go out, he was generally refused; on the other hand, his father would occasionally propose a stroll by his hand on the bedroom floor. At first sight, it was a weak substitute, and yet... something very different lurked in that gesture. The suggestion was accepted, and Johannes could decide at will what course the walk should take. Then they would leave through the entrance and go to a nearby palace, or further away, to the beach, or stroll through the streets, exactly as Johannes wanted - because for his father there were no limits. As they walked back and forth across the floorboards, his father would narrate everything they saw: they greeted passers-by, cars passed them with a clatter, overlapping his father's voice; the caramelised fruit in the confectioner's shop was more inviting than ever...” A text by the young Kierkegaard (...). This is the key to the scheme of *Voyage autour de ma chambre* [A Journey Around My Room by Xavier de Maistre]. (Benjamin, 1999/2019, p. 549)

We started writing this article like someone drifting with no direction. It is an exploratory article in which we raised questions that we wanted to share, departing from a somatic and empirical experience of walking in the city during the two decreed confinements. This drifting moved in the interval between being able to choose or not being able to choose to leave a space and walk. Experience leads us to write, and writing leads us to reflection. What are we talking about when we talk about the relationship between walking and confinement?

Sharing this reflection seems to impose itself as an urgency before the experience becomes dated. However, the experience we are talking about is, from the start, dated. The experience of the confinement made in the city of Lisbon, at the beginning of the “we still do not know anything about the new coronavirus” has, in itself, the mark of a

¹ In 1667, following a palace coup, King Afonso VI was forced to abdicate the throne in favor of his brother, the future King Pedro II, and was initially banished to Terceira Island for six years. But the permanent fear of his release caused him to be enclosed in the Palácio da Vila, in Sintra, where he was confined to a room for nine years, inaccessible and guarded by soldiers (Rau, 1970, p. 169).

collective accident², the confinement decreed nationally by a government. What is particular for this decree is that it follows global behavioral lines. The recommendation of the World Health Organization is identical for the whole globe given the global phenomenon status of the pandemic. The global–local scale forces us to think:

the leap from I to we, and from a local or national I and we to a global I and we, will not come about through conviction alone, but through experiences: of study, art, travel, love, and community. (...) In our current times, this global awareness and sensibility *also* depend on technology. (Cachopo, 2020, p. 109)

We did not expect it. No one expects to be “detained” — we also think of the detainees, the prisoners. No one expects to walk indefinitely forever — we also think of refugees, of displaced people. What influences us, what do we learn, what is relevant to register from this experience? Returning to the city we are focusing on, homeless people come to mind repeatedly — the newly houseless people produced by confinement, and the way they walk, aimlessly, to eat, to warm themselves, to see someone, a cigarette, some change, a place to sleep. All-day, every day, and every night. That was the most distressing side of confinement. Of course, you only confine yourself if you can. Those who cannot confine, find themselves in a “tune in” situation, get afflicted, attend the scale of the city that corresponds to the affordance³ of human bodies that produce architectural micro-spaces daily. The choice is scarce, among the cardboard “nests”, the tents, the support points, the free canteens that had to be activated⁴ to fill gaps in the “common care”, and some places where you could still see people walking in the street. You could feel the loneliness in the empty street. An uncanny feeling. The city was calm but in a *strangely unsettling way*.

The confined city of Lisbon in March, April, May 2020. The hustle and bustle of the machine, of the economic activity, of anonymous and extemporaneous encounters, and the rhythm of moving bodies, all slowed down radically after March 2020. To study the city, this period of pandemic context offered us a rare moment, an opportunity that allowed a privileged look at the human geography of the city. The confinement in the city awoke in us, the confined, an enormous desire to walk. The restrictions to movement imposed by consensus and fear, by the state and by the *choreopolice*⁵ — there, circulating

² João Pedro Cachopo (2020) in *A Torção dos Sentidos, Pandemia e Remediação Digital* (The Twist of Senses, Pandemic and Digital Remediation), suggests that “the pandemic is not in itself the event. The event, precipitated by the conjunction of preventive isolation and exacerbated use of remediation technologies, is the twisting of the senses through which we recognize ourselves as near and far from everything that surrounds us” (p. 10).

³ Gibson’s notion of *affordance* has been employed profusely in the cognitive sciences to characterize the interdependence between actions involving the hands, the peri-personal space, and the manipulable objects in that space. (...) Gibson proposes that this is an intrinsic property of real-time interactions between animals and the environment. Representations of objects and space are intrinsically linked to representations of actions (Di Marco et al., 2019, pp. 1–2).

⁴ For a development of the description and thinking about providing basic services to homeless, workers, and students rendered helpless by the closure of all business establishments and basic support institutions, see Carvalho (2020).

⁵ *Choreopolice* is a concept defined by André Lepecki (2013) in “Choreopolice and Choreopolitics: Or, the Task of the

in town — created a tension that also revealed itself as a potential for action: an almost impulse to go out into the street because “it cannot be” and because “it has to be”. A street with no tourists in a joyful bustle and with a few people looking puzzled. It was spring. Will it be different in winter? Maybe so, the second confinement arrived in January 2021, and the chaotic situation no longer seemed to mirror the initial fear. People were still living and dying (in great numbers!), the sound of ambulances had a much greater presence. It got worse, but the initial fear seems to have subsided, this second time around. Some experts invited to speak in the media mentioned “pandemic exhaustion” a subject we will not elaborate on.

How to talk about the experience of the city in 2020/2021 without talking about the “imprisonment” of bodies? In some cases, an impulse of opposite directions was created: if, on the one hand, the fear of walking in the street, of going out, of sharing a space with others, has perhaps accentuated the fear of the other — of the one who is unknown to us —, on the other hand, in meetings with family and close friends, we found ourselves thinking that the danger was not present, or that it was less dangerous because we knew those in presence.

Finally, the suspension of work — of the routine of regular jobs and the usual classes —, has shown us a raw city pacified from the lack of tourists, with less information, reduced anthropophony, and much subtler rhythms. The pandemic has offered us an environment that contrasts with that city we knew from everyday life before confinement, accentuating and enhancing some of the features obviated by human presence. And, for example, going to the supermarket has gained an unexpected relevance.

As we reflect on walking and confinement, we also observe the *self-choreopolicement*⁶ that this extraordinary moment and the drastic measures of containment and social distancing have brought about. If before the confinement we left home to go somewhere, do something, or see someone without much thought; during confinement, we leave home to leave the house, to walk, with a pretext designed in our self-surveillance, with a shopping bag, with the dog, for example. Leaving home has come to be called “hygienic walking”. Wearing the mask on the face as real protection of the airways — controlling the passages in/out —, the mask also functions, symbolically and sensorially, as a perpetuation of the confinement outside the house. Confining the face, drastically alters expressive identity. It takes away some visibility, inhibits some ability to sense movement, and slows the head down. One can play with the inhibition of the mask by singing underneath it. Whistling does not work so well in cloth masks, because the air stops millimeters away from the lips, blurring the sound.

Dancer”, it was formulated concerning the social movements triggered by several demonstrations that occupied public squares (Cairo, Lisbon, Athens, New York, Algiers, London, Madrid, Barcelona, etc., 2011-2012), in the period following the Arab Spring, the Acampada in Spain, and Occupy Wall Street. Lepecki proposes the use of the concepts “choreopolice” and “choreopolitics” to give prominence to instruments of power that more, or less, subliminally shape the behavior of people in motion and/or in position. In this text, Lepecki proposes to enact choreopolitics as a way to combat choreopolice, and to rehearse ways of learning how to move politically.

⁶ Here we adapt Lepecki’s (2013) “choreopolice” by saying “self-choreopolicement”, in a relation to the integration of ideas of self-surveillance and choreographic discipline of bodies problematized, for example, by Foucault or Agamben.

In the first part of the article, “Walking”, we report on the experience of walking in artistic practice. Namely, with the use of paradigmatic examples simultaneously envisioned as choreographic thinking, in the case of Steve Paxton (2018), and as visual objects/sculpture, in the case of Bruce Nauman. In “Confinement” we return to examples of enclosure by contrasting them with the civic duty of confinement. Finally, “Walking in Confinement” will allow us to reflect on the relations of movement in the city, confined, *choreopoliced*, somewhat fearful, but eventually willing to dance — to propose body–space–movement relations.

WALKING

Walking springs to mind. In human walking, each move begins with a touch down upon the surface of the earth. The surface is an accumulation of all the inert bits huddling down toward the core. On this surface we stride. We also meander, stumble, hobble. On earth, floor, path, slope, marsh, negotiating the next move. (...) I was spending many hours a day in dance classes, trying to understand my body’s movements. But when I walked out of the studio, I forgot to be conscious of it. (...) I tried to catch myself behaving unconsciously, but again, the perception was ruined by turning my consciousness to it. Occasionally, I would remember walking, while walking, and try to continue just as I was before I remembered to watch. I was spying on myself. Self-hacking. (Paxton, 2018, pp. 15–19)

Starting with the question “what is my body doing when I am not conscious of it?”, choreographer and dancer Steve Paxton (2018) introduces, in *Gravity*, a reflection regarding movement, in and out of studios, that helps us talk about the tension between walking and confinement. “Dancers must hack their basic movement programs in order to adapt to new movements” (Paxton, 2018, p. 21). If what Paxton is telling us is to be believed — and there is a matter for it based on our personal and professional perceptions of dance practices — dancers tend to be experts at *self-choreopolicing* to be able to reinvent movement. That is, dancers are skilled, by training of perception, at paying attention to movement and gesture in relation, at sensing others and surroundings, at accounting for a multitude of sensitive events in the myriad of relationships that run through life, and at self-sabotaging themselves so that they can break out of recognizable patterns of movement and perception. In other words, they may be able to make *choreopolitical* proposals that do not take for granted, or given, the already known and recognizable behaviors, and also be agents of *detrterritorialization* and *reterritorialization* (Coelho, 2018).

How to adapt the specialization of attentive perception to movement to a political potency by thinking *choreopolitically* instead of attending to a place that very easily can become an obsession for *self-choreopolicing*? If we are specialized in other occupations, maybe we can sometimes just stop for a while to allow ourselves another kind of attention. Maybe to recognize the agency of what “touches” us.

In “Choreopolice and Choreopolitics: Or, the Task of the Dancer”, Lepecki (2013) invites readers to look each day for ways to move politically (or in freedom). He begins his article by introducing us to a quote by Hannah Arendt (1993, as cited in Lepecki 2013): “we have arrived in a situation where we do not know — at least not yet — how to move politically” (p. 13). Given that Arendt associates the idea of true politics to the notion of freedom, Lepecki (2013) suggests that this phrase could be re-written as “we have arrived at a situation where we do not know — at least not yet — how to move freely” (p. 14). It is with this initial formulation that the author develops, with examples, the possibility of countering the attempts of policing — the *choreopolicing*, or surveillance and control of human movements —, with the power of *choreopolitical* proposals. In the end, the article suggests that this can be a dancer’s task: to create ways to move politically, that is, freely.

Choreopoliced movement is related to blind, or distracted, obedience to systems of behavior that aim to homogenize a norm easier to deal with. The task of *choreopolitics* may be finding the pockets of freedom in behaviors, ranging from movements in cities to the way we use videoconference screens. To observe our own movement is already to realize a potency. In each step taken, a possibility for a re-actualization of the *modus operandi*, considering the singular situation, in place and in a concrete moment. Other hypotheses of relation with the slope of the terrain appear as possibilities of re-proposing postures and movements. Within a certain freedom of choice we can glimpse the dances produced to fulfil, for example, a safety distance. The rule, the distance of about 2 meters, being clear to everyone, we can play with it, without imposing an image of avoidance on our behavior and that of others. Lisa Nelson, in 2012, taught us this game in the studio. If we stick to just one rule — for example, keep two meters away from a person walking in the studio — and if we add others — for example, keep two meters away from two people walking simultaneously in the studio — instead of triggering avoidance, instead of fulfilling a *choreopolicing*, we can bring out the dance of our attention, the dance of choice. An attention that is simultaneous to us and others, in movement. An attention that takes care of what is at stake, can be an “attentive attention”. How to produce freedom instead of surveillance and control? By not trying to watch or control. That is, no judging, just playing. Just observing, caring, and re-proposing according to the relationships already in play. Making it explicit that one is playing so that someone else can enter the game.

Walking practices influence perception patterns and the relationship we have with the city. We can think of the act of walking as being propositional (the everyday walk, with an origin, a destination, and an optimized duration of the route), discursive (in the sense of the *flâneur* — walking with no direction), or even conceptual (psychogeographic drift, performative walking actions; Wunderlich, 2008). However, these categories do not capture the spectrum or timbre of the act since we see walking as an integral part of distinct pretexts and purposes (with more or less performativity): such as protests, processions, parades, strolling, stalking, or even hookups. In his analysis of the unconscious symbolism of walking, Michel de Certeau (1990/2000) argues that “to walk is to be placeless, to be absent and in search of one’s own” (p. 183). It will certainly be so in

the cases of the pilgrim seeking transcendence, which is distinct from the survival walk of refugees who cross borders and countries to escape political situations. It will also be so in the walk to recover the intimacy of immigrants who live in overcrowded rooms, and it is in the street that they will find their personal space. The walk can be transgressive, crossing borders to access private forbidden territories. It can also be a very useful tool to fight boredom. But what about the differences in *qualia* that exist in the act, the mode of attention involved, the coincidence between us and the city? Whether we walk thoughtfully and engrossed, whether we go attentive to our surroundings, whether we devote attention to the body. A 2019 study suggests that the walker can move in the city without paying conscious attention to urban signs, although he integrates these signs into his locomotion (Harms et al., 2019). However, despite being able to move around, the spatial perception of the distracted walker changes. On his cell phone, he zigzags. He produces an individual virtual space. Knowledge of the walking speed and the number of steps taken, the appearance of the environment and details, the effort and emotional states involved contribute to the production of the sense of distance (Popp et al., 2004). The studies of Bhalla and Proffitt (1999) indicate that the sensation of the slope of the terrain may also be subjective, varying according to the load and clothing carried by the hiker, and that the perception of distance is greater on hills than on flat terrain.

Walking is also communicating with people, moving bodies, animals, cars, relating with others in the middle of a “becoming city”. Beyond trajectories, the way of walking transmits a style. Brandon La Belle showed us that it was enough to see John Travolta walking to the sound of Bee Gees in the movie *Saturday Night Fever* to realize the redundancy of the development of the character in the rest of the movie. We all have a distinct way of walking (La Belle, 2010). Werner Wolff (1943) argued that most of us make an unconscious assessment of another’s personality based on the way they walk. An understanding long understood by cartoon animators from Walt Disney to Hayao Miyazaki. Also, the simulation of humans in virtual reality tries to incorporate emotion and personality into the way characters walk (Antunes et al., 2017). The communication of our condition seems to happen still in other degrees. When we walk, we share and can identify signs of illness in others, as Sundelin et al. (2015) suggest. If walking is also communicating, what else are we activating while moving, during confinement, at home, in the bedroom, or going out into the street, in the supermarket, or even walking outside the city?

BACKGROUND OF PERFORMATIVE WALKING

If the disciples of Aristotle were known as the strollers, the peripatetic, it was especially in the 19th and 20th centuries that the act of walking in the city began to be considered a cultural act per se. The figure of the *flanêur* is associated with the observation and understanding of urban modernity. In *O Pintor da Vida Moderna (The Painter of Modern Life)*, Baudelaire (1863/2006) describes the *flanêur* artist as a passionate spectator, a

lover of the crowd and urban transformations. The city and the urban spectacle are a text that the flâneur reads from an absorbing and itinerant perspective. He inhabits a space that is at once familiar and phantasmagoric and moves around observing, with a distant and aesthetic eye, the details of city life and the spectacles provided by the incitement to consumption. Simultaneously inside and outside the crowd, as Benjamin (1999/2019) tells us, “on the one hand, the man who feels watched by everyone and everything and by all, the authentic suspect; on the other, the one whom nobody can find, the hidden man” (p. 548).

In the 1920s, walking was integrated as an aesthetic process by the Dadaist and surrealist schools (Careri 2002/2013, pp. 71–80). In Dadaism, it appears as a practice of an avant-garde anti-art aesthetic. Surrealist *wandering* seeks to move away from the representation of urban experience, introducing elements of psychology into the experience of *flanerie* in mundane and banal places. Surrealists were interested in chance and the unconscious (Breton, 1924). André Breton and Louis Aragon actively sought the experience of the unexpected and the uncharted. In *Nadja*, a novel from 1928, Breton (1928/1972) tells us of wandering through Paris in search of himself, through the eyes of a mysterious woman. Brassai, in turn, photographed Paris at night as a strategy to reach a state of disorienting loss of control to “get in touch with the unconscious part of the territory” (Careri, 2002/2013, p. 80).

The passivity and voyeurism of the flâneur and the dreamlike character of surrealist wanderings were openly criticized by the situationists. They pointed to the way geography and the urban environment affect us. The city conditions the experience of the walker through “psychogeographic contours with constant currents, fixed points and vortices that strongly discourage entering or leaving certain zones” (Debord, 1958, p. 19). The personal experience of the urban creates living zones that are distinct from the administrative ones. The situationists proposed an attention to the emotional aspects of the city, through the radical act of *Drifting* (Dérive), suggesting that the walk should be implied in a political intention through choice and not only sustained by arbitrariness (Debord, 1958).

With more performative, sensorial and poetic approaches, the art of walking became more experimental in the 1960s and 1970s. From land art to the “Fluxus” movement, artists like Dennis Oppenheim, Vito Acconci, Richard Long, and Hamish Fulton, extracted new dimensions from their performative walks, questioning the body, space, territory and the formal boundaries of the artwork. In these decades, there has been a shift in the focus on walking that started with a look at the city, went through a reading of the rhythms and emotions caused by the encounter with the city, and ended up by focusing on the body of the walker and on the act of walking itself. For example, in *A Line Made by Walking* (1967), Richard Long walked back and forth repeatedly in a field covered with marigolds, inscribing a straight, ephemeral line created by crushing vegetation, a photographically recorded spatio-temporal intervention (Tate, n.d.). In *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner Around the Perimeter of a Square* (1967-1968) — a 16 mm

film — Bruce Nauman (1967-68) walks obstinately on a square made with crepe tape on the floor of his studio. This lends itself here to be an almost literal example of what walking in confinement can be like. Bruce Nauman's contemporaries in this period of experimental film-choreography are the protagonists of the "Judson Dance Theatre" movement and, later, of the experimental Grand Union Group, among the many artists and groups that emerged in this decade. We quoted Steve Paxton above, a choreographer mainly known, for the "invention" of contact improvisation. But many choreographers dedicated themselves to thinking about everyday movements — like walking — as a matter of choreographic thought, aesthetics and performance. Besides Paxton and a series of other elements of the Grand Union Group, the choreographic proposals of Yvonne Rainer, Simone Forti, or Trisha Brown bring to the universe of the artistic scene an integrated thought of human movement, in the most varied situations. For example, Trisha Brown's *Walking on the Wall Performance* (1971) — where performers question gravity and verticality by walking on the facades of a New York building and on the walls of an art gallery — is a demonstration of this investigative ethico-aesthetic quality that has gained more visibility in the art world. Not coincidentally, the pedestrian quality was one of the defining characteristics of these protagonists' dances.

We bring *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner Around the Perimeter of a Square* (Nauman, 1967-68), to suggest that this almost caricatural image of walking while in confinement can be considered an accumulator of potency. What if the accumulated potency of thinking while walking, even if with not much displacement, would expand into the space of the city? Nauman measures, shims, and exhausts the act of walking, using an exaggerated manner — which counterposes a lateral edge of the pelvic girdle to the knee of the opposite leg, that is forced to bend to progress and place one foot exactly in front of the other foot — walking, step upon step, on top of the square he has marked with paper tape in the centre of his studio. "Nauman's choreographic experiments disclose language acting on and through the body; they display how language mobilizes" (Lepecki, 2006, p. 24), as they strictly fulfil what they enunciate in his titles. This title gains an "authorship authority" that is evidenced as choreographic performative:

A friend who was a philosopher that he imagined him [the friend] spending most of his time at a desk, writing. But in fact his friend did his thinking while taking long walks during the day. This made Nauman conscious of the fact that he spent most of his time pacing around the studio drinking coffee. And so he decided to film that — just the pacing. (Bruggen, 2002, como citado em Lepecki, 2006, p. 29)

In choosing for his experiments a confined space for choreography, which he thought equivalent to the space of philosophizing, Nauman recasts his studio as cranial space. (...)

So, for Nauman the mind is the room, just as the room is the mind: both intimately bound to language by the means of a commanding, mobilizing speech act. This is the solipsist thought-space Nauman builds when he starts not only to ‘pace in his studio’ but to carefully execute extremely precise walks. (...) The choreographic happens in a space explicitly defined as solipsistic, choreographic, and philosophical: the space of thought moving. (...)

If the chamber is an accumulator of subjectivity, what kind of subjectivity does it accumulate? (Lepecki, 2006, p. 30)

A step forward to return to the same place. A repetition that inevitably leads to difference through fatigue, human error, or exhaustion. The ideas of “thought in motion” and “accumulator of subjectivity” are also contained in this loop. Is the movement score chosen by Nauman (1967-68) also an accumulator of choreographic potency — or movement of thought — prone to be subsequently expanded “freely” in the city?

CONFINEMENT

A child in the dark, overcome with fear, comforts himself by singing. He walks and stops to the rhythm of the song. Lost, he takes shelter or orients himself the best as he can with his little song. This is the outline of a stable and calm center, stabilizing and calming, at the heart of the chaos. The child is likely to jump while singing, speed up, or slow down the tempo, but it is already the song that is itself a jump: it jumps from chaos to the beginnings of order in chaos, it also risks breaking apart at any moment. (...) Now we are, on the contrary, at home. But our home does not preexist: it was necessary to draw a circle around a fragile and uncertain center, to organize a limited space. (...) A child hums to gather within himself the forces to tackle the schoolwork. A housewife hums or turns on the radio while taking care of the antichaos forces of her task. Radio or television sets are like a sound wall for every household and mark territories (...). For sublime deeds like the foundation of a city (...), one draws a circle, still, above all, one marches around the circle as in a child’s wheel and combines the consonants and rhythmic vowels that correspond to the inner forces of creation as to the differentiated parts of an organism. (...) Finally, now the circle is opened (...). We jump; we risk improvisation. But to improvise is to reach the World or meld with it. One leaves home along with a little song. Along sonorous, gestural, motor lines that mark the usual path of a child, “lines of wandering” and graft themselves onto or begin to bud “lines”, with different curves,

knots, speeds, movements, gestures, and sounds. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/2004, pp. 395–396)⁷

In confinement, the physical spaces of copresence, empathy and seduction, are suppressed. We can seduce only with sound and image, but aesthetics begins perhaps in the sense of smell-tact. Just observe how a new-born baby “chooses” to live: he seeks the *techno-aesthetic* connection of his mouth to his mother’s breast. Gibson (1979/1986) might say that there is an *affordance* before there is a choice. Even before any ability of judgment, the preference for the milk-smell-taste of that breast appears. It is not a reflected choice. The taste chooses us. This kind of “seductive” *affordance* is hardly produced online. It can catch us in the adolescence of a disco dance, in an arcade, in a drunken kiss between a game of pinball for two, and a pool table, in dance classes, or overcrowded concerts of bands in ecstasy. Online, something else gets produced, perhaps more related to *voyeurism*. Vision dominates the present.

The pandemic was prodigal in the adaptation of body techniques that we called, for fun, “dome techniques”. Those that work the body without leaving the place, without leaving the “dome”. These are most of the meditation techniques, the various versions of pilates and yoga, and even all the adaptations of online classes of the most diverse body and dance techniques. We can talk about the Klein technique, that although being designed for the body in movement — for example, while walking —, its precision is so admirable that the class can perfectly run for 2 hours without us leaving the same place, and just shifting the weight from one foot to the other or focusing the attention and the breathing on a part of our body. Susan Klein, an expert on the human body’s way of walking and proponent of this technique that bears her name, was one of our companions during confinement, directly from her home—studio in New York to our adapted marquee in Lisbon. The “dome techniques” were better suited for somatic practices in confinement, in solitude and facing a screen.

According to Franco Berardi (2020), in his *Crónicas da Psicodeflação (Chronicles of Psycho-Deflation)*,

in the last thirty years, human activity has profoundly changed its relational, proxemic, cognitive nature: an increasing number of interactions have moved from the physical, conjunctive dimension — where linguistic exchanges are imprecise and ambiguous (...), and any productive action consumes physical energies, as bodies get in touch in a flow of conjunctions — to the connective dimension, in which linguistic operations are mediated by computer machines and therefore respond to digital formats. Any productive activity is partially mediated by automatisms, and people interact more and more densely although their bodies never meet. The daily existence of entire populations has been increasingly chained to electronic devices

⁷ Texto dos autores apoiado na tradução Brian Massumi.

related to huge loads of data. Persuasion has been replaced by pervasion, as the psycho-sphere got innervated by the flows of the Info-sphere. The connection presupposes a hairless and dust-free accuracy. Computer viruses might interrupt or divert this accuracy, which does not know the ambiguity of physical bodies nor does it contemplate inaccuracy as a possibility.

Now, here it comes, a biological agent introduces itself into the social continuum, makes it implode, and forces it into inactivity. (...) don't leave your house, don't visit friends, keep a distance of two meters, don't touch anyone on the street... (pp. 38–39)

This is how we identify in Berardi's (2020) daily notebooks a series of recognizable experiences common to our own such as witnessing an enormous expansion of time we spend online. A doubling of the tasks of adapting work and socializing online. "And then? What happens next? What if this connection overload ends up breaking the spell?" — we continue with Berardi (2020), and like him, we can imagine or wish for an "explosion of a spontaneous caressing movement, inducing a substantial part of the younger population to shut down their connective screens, as reminiscent of this unfortunate lonely period" (p. 39).

Deleuze and Guattari (1972/2004) begin a chapter of *Mil Planaltos, Capitalismo e Esquizofrenia 2 (A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia)* with the *ritornello* of a child. They show us a path for the construction of our city, of "our house". Not just any city, but the one we recognize and to which we give meaning. By confining ourselves, or by reducing our space of territorialization, we can imagine that in the confined space of recognition, our territory unfolds in senses inside the house. As some children do, recognizing and producing more spaces, corners, and avenues from the bedroom to the bath, from the living room to the kitchen. It is a practice of this kind that seems indicative of the tour of *Viagem à Volta do Meu Quarto (A Journey Around My Room)* by de Maistre, already mentioned (Benjamin, 1999/2019, p. 549). Maistre proposes a journey in the form of a mental exercise, he seems to suggest that an exploration of a room, or an expedition to a distant continent, involve similar levels of adventure. The young Kierkegaard appeals to the power of the imagination by suggesting a "virtual walk". We started this article with the cloistering of King Afonso VI, and we thought a little about him getting mad. However, the voluntary or involuntary characteristics of confinement make all the difference in issues such as the condition of freedom or the way we can move "freely", that is, politically, as Lepecki (2013, p. 14) suggests quoting Arendt.

Meanwhile, although in trips confined to the bedroom, the universe of ambient stimuli may be smaller, nowadays' "trips" can be done online; for example, in virtual visits to closed museums. Perhaps the stimuli are minimized by a familiarity with the home environment, or maybe we can stimulate the senses with exercises linked to a variety of mindfulness practices. But with digital remediation, a "twist of the senses"

became evident (Cachopo, 2020). Indoors, we confined the potential for a full-body walk outdoors in the city. Eventually, we may have voluntarily approached Bruce Nauman's potency for subjectivity production by wandering in the studio. But we did so by sitting in front of a screen to travel virtually maybe around the world.

Of course, one thing does not replace the other, nor is it a priority or a better one. It is just another thing in the collection, the repertoire, and the toolbox of relationships. Considering the act of walking inside a dance studio a simulacrum of a stroll with no sense of a "route" — since it sticks to the studio, and it goes not from one place to another, but from one point to another in a short space —, what if by walking in the studio, as a regular practice, we also tune the perceptual power for when the wander leaves the studio? Does the rehearsal of the poetics of movement open space for the realization of new ways of relating to the city?

The hypothesis we put forward is that some sensory walking exercises prepare us for the permanent territorialization that we naturally produce as children to learn how to walk. But that somehow gets clouded by the excess of information, expectations, and various projections when we take on a "professionalization" of life's tasks. How can we renew the sensitive repertoire in the city when the confinement is over? "The imaginary is the fossil energy of the collective mind, the images sedimented by experience and that delimit and circumscribe the imaginable. Imagination is the renewable energy of the psycho-sphere: not utopia, but recombination of the possible" (Berardi, 2020, p. 33).

Images of various kinds are a common way to activate synesthetic experiences in dance classes and somatic practices. Walking requires the active use of perception in mobilization, as the ground constructs bodies and people. "Landscapes regulate our palate", palpable fissures open up, deviations in the sidewalk, the cold reduces the space in the shoulder girdle, heat dilates the cells and expands the body. The horizon line seen in the distance will be like projecting, imagining.

WALKING WHILE CONFINED

I have thought of consciousness as fluid - able to fill whatever shape it encounters, given patience. The more we find out about it, the more completely we might fill that shape. (...) Learning or creating actions to be slower than our normal thought/action relationship gives a mind time to step out of its habitual and practical relations to events, and experience what were, before, transitional instants. (Paxton, 2018, p. 28)

Square, sidewalk, alley, backyard, promenade, stairway, street, avenue, pavement, boulevard. In a space marked by urbanism and architecture, we think of ways to create places through walking. Can we self-choreograph ourselves with the city? The walkers go through meanders, drifting streets, following pulses and tuning their place. The street is

occupied by urban furniture, inert bodies, and other living ones — in movement, trajectories, flows, detours, speeds, circulation. The space of the city does not come with an instruction book. It is the automated and naturalized *self-policing* that induces, in each one of us, which rules we will integrate to pass unnoticed in the daily life of a certain normality. These rules are subjective. They vary with cultures of all kinds — for example, with familiar or individual cultures and even body training cultures. They also diverge with the physiognomy, the physical condition, the psychology, the state of attention of each individual. An intention, a step, an imbalance, another step, automatisms allow us to relax our awareness, but the vigilance returns when there is an abrupt change, like, for example, limping with crutches. We look at the act of walking as an open-meaning gesture. We consider it as a process of relationship between oneself and the world in a succession of situations, rhythmic experiences modulated and tuned with varying intensities, rhythms, and pauses.

Walking implies dialogue relationships with politics and community. The city is made up of structures that condition the agency of those who live in it: preponderant architectural landmarks, imposed orders of forms and of models idealized by politicians, architects, urban planners, engineers, designers, or simply by “skilled” people, which are then accepted, or subverted by the uses that people and institutions give to them. Is a city without human movement still a city? Michel de Certeau (1990/2000) tells us about the confrontation between space and place. The distinction between space and place helps us to understand: the space as a constructed structure; and the place as a space that is inhabited and reconfigured by its uses. Walking is the to produce city, encounters, relations according to Sofia Neuparth. “Walking is always ‘to walk with’, ‘in-between bodies’”, she argues (Jara et al. 2020, 00:02:43). Walking in the city constitutes an enunciation of space, a negotiation of presence in a place of experiences (Certeau, 1990/2000).

The city also builds us up. The hardness of the pavement shapes our bodies in a constant feedback game. In each step, an inclination. A route is made of thousands of calculated trajectories, avoided shocks by a silent communication of intentions, a choreography formulated in real-time, a dance of communicating and improvising bodies in the street. Quick, almost instantaneous decisions, to run in relation to the traffic, in a myriad of movement feedback. Detours scraping obstacles — I avoid, hesitate, approach, greet, speak, position myself. The embryonic matrix already holds all this modulating potency of reciprocal, affective, and affectable bodies. Stopping can be deadly, as we can witness by the degradation of health generated by some longer involuntary confinements, such as Julian Assange’s.

When we finally allowed ourselves to (re)find the street, we changed trajectories — the lines connecting two points became parabolic curves to distance ourselves from others in transit. We moved away from the crowds of people. We looked for side streets. The body whispered suspicion, walked sideways; the gaze echoed fear at the lack of mask on

the other. Even holding our breath, we saw an interaction mirrored in someone in front of us. We are also a threat, another possible contagious agent. The sidewalk — a place where we would compete for shadows in summer and sunshine in winter — demands much more space for distance. By repelling each other, we are like equally polarized magnets.

Our walking in Lisbon during confinement allowed us to imagine the urban rhythms as they were before the tourist boom of the cosmopolitan city of the 21st century. It reminded us how quiet it was to walk in specific areas on Sundays. The same areas that in recent years have become synonymous with bustle, movement, and noise. Walking through almost ghost-like neighbourhoods, stripped of both tourists and their former inhabitants — due to gentrification — we could hear with our whole bodies how the city changes without the excess of sound, and how this transforms the aesthetic experience of everyday life. It was possible to think in movement, the corporeal and ambulatory sensibility of the “*sentient*”, but confined city.

One of the relevant characteristics of thinking will be to walk — for example, during the “confinement” we impose ourselves when writing a PhD. To walk to reactivate the sensory circuits that allow us to be in relation, finding the relevant connections to be able to share a thought “oxygenated” by wandering, and reinventing a language that makes sense to “more than one”. The pandemic experience invites us to rethink the importance of critical thinking “in movement” as a complement to the critical thinking about “stopping” done, for example, by Lepecki (2006) in *Exaurir a Dança, Performance e a Política do Movimento* (*Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement*).

The pandemic has stopped us only apparently, for we are online, and the essential workers continue to circulate. How to produce new discourse? How can we produce freedom by creating new spaces with and beyond confinement? How to be a citizen in and out of the city? And online? How to make the city act now? Or, on the other hand, how to occupy the virtual space, for example? Berardi (2020) maintains that “the ongoing crisis is not a real crisis”,

it is a RESET. It is a matter of turning off the machine and turning it on again, after a while. Yet, when we turn it back on, we can decide to make it work as before, running the risk of finding ourselves living the same nightmare all over again—or we can decide to reprogram it, according to science, consciously and sensitively. (p. 58)

In confinement, we propose to slow down our haste, to slow down the physiological speed that presses us, because almost all the places we go are online, with no need to leave the same space. To be able to say that you *run* from one meeting to another is to imagine that in a few clicks, changing only the faces on the screen, you actually went from a round table in Coimbra to a conference in Faro. The body, which we also are, may

have shot up that running speed, but it could not experience the journey between spaces. Thinking with the path can pass through walking, concretely, by incorporating a movement of thought displacing itself, taking spaces, and constituting places. But we can also move on to produce alternatives to this. For example, we can finally procrastinate as a prevention of exhaustion or as a form of resistance to prevailing modes of production, and we can eventually relax the “guilt” inculcated by constant lateness or by loosening the obligation of overdue work. Perhaps, by decelerating, we can slowly recover synesthetic modes that are simultaneously contemplative and critical. Opening, finally, space to formulate new choreopolitical proposals, ways of seeing, thinking, and walking side by side with the city, or even with citizenship.

The water that weighs us down — “we’re 70 percent water” (Paxton, 2018, p. 65) — guides our body to the ground in a way that is always experimental. Even if we accomplished the main learning in early childhood, we can always try to feel the weight that guides us. The weight of physical concreteness — which we also are — may help us to root and radicalize (in the sense of finding the root of issues) our *choreopolitics* — a singular score prepared to change according to everyday freedom. Is this a dancer’s task as Lepecki (2013) suggests? Could this be one of the ways to move politically (Arendt, 1993, as cited in Lepecki, 2013, p. 13)?

Translation: Rui Filipe Antunes and Sílvia Pinto Coelho

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This article was supported by the Foundation for Science and Technology, through the Research Project TEPe - Technologically Expanded Performance (PTDC/ART-PER/31263/2017) and the Competition for the Stimulation of Individual Scientific Employment 2017 (CEEC Individual 2017).

REFERENCES

- Antunes, R. F., Cláudio, A. P., Carmo, M. B., & Correia, L. (2017). Animating with a self-organizing population the reconstruction of medieval Mértola. In T. Schreck, T. Weyrich, R. Sablatnig, & B. Stular (Eds.), *Eurographics workshop on graphics and cultural heritage* (pp. 1–10). The Eurographics Association. <https://doi.org/10.2312/gch.20171286>
- Baudelaire, C. (2006). *O pintor da vida moderna* (T. Cruz, Trans.). Nova Vega. (Original work published 1863)
- Benjamin, W. (2019). *As passagens de Paris* (J. Barreto, Trans.). Assírio e Alvim. (Original work published 1999)
- Berardi, F. (2020). *Crónicas da psicodiflaccção* (N. Leão, Trans.). Tigre de Papel. (Original work published 2020)
- Bhalla, M., & Proffitt, D. R. (1999). Visual-motor recalibration in geographical slant perception. *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 25(4), 1076–1096.

- Breton, A. (1924). *Manifesto surrealista*. <https://www.marxists.org/portugues/breton/1924/mes/surrealista.htm>
- Breton, A. (1972). *Nadja* (E. Sampaio, Trans.). Editorial Estampa. (Original work published in 1928)
- Cachopo, J. P. (2020). *A torção dos sentidos, pandemia e remediação digital*. Sistema Solar.
- Careri, F. (2013). *Walkscapes, o caminhar como prática estética* (F. Bonaldo, Trans.). Editorial Gustavo Gili. (Original work published 2002)
- Carvalho, L. (2020, December 31). How does one shoot a frozen clock? *Ill Will Editions, Partisan Analysis of the Present*. <https://illwill.com/how-does-one-shoot-a-frozen-clock>
- Certeau, M. (2000). *A invenção do cotidiano* (E. F. Alves, Trans.). Editora Vozes. (Original work published 1990)
- Coelho, S. P. (2018). Práticas de atenção: Ensaios de desterritorialização e performance coreográfica. *Cadernos de Arte e Antropologia*, 7(2), 43–55. <https://doi.org/10.4000/cadernosaa.1595>
- Debord, G. (1958). Théorie de la dérive. *Internationale Situationniste*, (2), 19–23. https://www.larevuedesressources.org/IMG/pdf/internationale_situationniste_2.pdf
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (2004). *Mil planaltos, capitalismo e esquizofrenia 2* (R. Godinho, Trans.). Assírio e Alvim. (Original work published 1972)
- Di Marco, S., Tosoni, A., Altomare, E. C., Ferretti, G., Perrucci, M., & Committeri, G. (2019). Walking-related locomotion is facilitated by the perception of distant targets in the extrapersonal space. *Scientific Reports*, 9, article 9884. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-019-46384-5>
- Gibson, J. J. (1986). *The ecological approach to visual perception*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. (Trabalho original publicado em 1979)
- Harms, I. M., van Dijken, J. H., Brookhuis, K. A., & de Waard, D. (2019). Walking without awareness. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, article 1846. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01846>
- Jara, A., Paim, F., & Lundin, J. (Hosts). (2020, December 11). Journey #3 - Caos e ordem [Audio podcast episode]. In *Journeys to the in-between#3*. MAAT. <https://soundcloud.com/user-868936935/journeys-v3>
- La Belle, B. (2010). *Acoustic territories: Sound culture and everyday life*. Continuum Books.
- Lepecki, A. (2006). *Exhausting dance: Performance and the politics of movement*. Routledge.
- Lepecki, A. (2013). Choreopolice and choreopolitics: Or, the task of the dancer. *TDR: The Drama Review*, 57(4), 13–27.
- Maistre, X. (2015). *Viagem à volta do meu quarto* (C. S. Almeida, Trans.). Tinta da China. Original work published 1794)
- Nauman, B. (1967-68). *Walking in an exaggerated manner around the perimeter of a square*. Moma online. https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/bruce-nauman-walking-in-an-exaggerated-manner-around-the-perimeter-of-a-square-1967-68/
- Paxton, S. (2018). *Gravity*. Contredanse Editions.

- Popp, M., Platzer, E., Eichner, M., & Schade, M. (2004). Walking with and without walking: Perception of distance in large-scale urban areas in reality and in virtual reality. *Presence: teleoperators and virtual environments*, 13(1), 61–76.
- Rau, V. (1970). Morte ou libertação del-rei D. Afonso VI. *Do Tempo e da História*, 3, 169–192.
- Sundelin, T., Karshikoff, B., Axelsson, E., Höglund, C., & Axelsson, J. (2015). Sick man walking: Perception of health status from body motion. *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity*, 48, 53–56.
- Tate. (n.d.). *Richard Long: A line made by walking 1967*. <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/long-a-line-made-by-walking-p07149>
- Wolff, W. (1943). *The expression of personality: Experimental depth psychology*. Harper & Brothers.
- Wunderlich, F. (2008). Walking and rhythmicity: Sensing urban space. *Journal of Urban Design*, 13(1), 125–139. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13574800701803472>

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Rui Filipe Antunes is a researcher at INET-md, Institute of Ethnomusicology, Music and Dance Studies, branch of the Faculty of Human Motricity of the University of Lisbon, integrated in the project “TEPe- Technologically Expanded Performance” (PTDC/ART-PER/31263/2017). His academic path was supported by prestigious entities such as the European Research Agency (Marie Skłodowska-Curie Global Fellowship — a project between the University of Genève and the Faculty of Sciences of Lisbon) and FCT, the Foundation for Science and Technology (a PhD in art and computational technologies at Goldsmiths College, University of London). Previously he did artistic training at Ar.Co - Centro de Arte e Comunicação, where he was a scholarship holder. His artwork was awarded at the art and artificial intelligence competition VIDA (editions 12 and 13), promoted by the telecommunications company Telefónica. In 2009 his work was part of the exhibition “Lá Fora” (Out There), an exhibition of Portuguese artists living abroad promoted by the Presidency of the Republic at the Museu da Electricidade (Electricity Museum).

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3268-3005>

Email: rui.filipe.antunes@edu.ulisboa.pt

Address: INET-md, Faculdade de Motricidade Humana | Universidade de Lisboa, Estrada da Costa, 1499-002 Cruz Quebrada – Dafundo, Portugal

Sílvia Pinto Coelho is a choreographer and researcher at ICNOVA - FCSH (CEEC-FCT), where she is working on her post-doctoral project on Attention and Choreographic Thinking. She directs the online magazine *INTERACT* with Luís Mendonça. Sílvia holds a PhD with the thesis *Corpo, Imagem e Pensamento Coreográfico* (2016, FCSH, UNL), with a grant from FCT and supervision by José Bragança de Miranda. She also holds a master's degree in Communication Sciences, a degree in Anthropology FCSH (2005) and a bachelor's degree in Dance from Escola Superior de Dança - IPL (1996). She attends c.e.m. since 1994, in Lisbon. She also attended CIDC at Forum Dança (Lisbon 1997-99)

and the Tanzfabrik studio (Berlin 2002-05). As an artist, she presents her choreographic work in Portugal, in Berlin, where she lived for three years, and in Madrid. Since 1996 she choreographs and participates in research processes, teaching and films with collaborators from various artistic fields.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4934-2127>

Email: spcoelho@fcsh.unl.pt

Address: Instituto de Comunicação da NOVA, Colégio Almada Negreiros, Campus de Campolide, Gb.348. Avenida de Berna, 26 C. 1069 – 061, Lisboa, Portugal

Submitted: 31/01/2021 | Accepted: 26/03/2021

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.