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Abstract of the doctoral thesis *Clowning Bodies. The critical and affirmative potential of selected Polish choreographic performances (2011-2021)*, written under the supervision of Prof. Anna Łebkowska.

In this thesis, I focus on the emancipatory potential of contemporary choreographic practices. My goal is to describe the microcosm of contemporary Polish dance as a space for activities that are both critical and affirmative. I look at how dancing bodies operate in social networks and how they use their performative, world-creating potential. One of my goals is to highlight the relationship between stage (micro)resistance movements and visual activism. I am interested in choreographic performances whose creators expand the field of what is being performed, danced, and spoken on stage (whether theatrical or public) by rejecting the normative rules of visibility.

At the beginning of the thesis, I introduce the notion of the "clowning body," which in my proposed approach becomes the equivalent of an unruly and insubordinate body, one that resists normative practices of taming it by, among other things, radically manifesting its otherness. I try to prove that it can become a subject of subversive stories that contain projections of new possible worlds. When I write about clowning bodies, I am referring not only to the characters of clownish provenance but above all to those that act against the hegemon and emancipate themselves from the structures of the homogenous public sphere, undermining the existing order and its hierarchies or configurations of the perceptible (sensible), as understood by Rancière. The clown, a possessor of an open and obscene body, who makes aberrations public and hyperbolizes their non-normativity, becomes an ally of critical and engaged choreography. The clowning body combines criticizing and affirmative functions, it formulates opposition to hegemonic narratives and is the basis for a practice of alternative world-making.

I aim to show how the scenic presence of the unusual – non-normative, queer, grotesque, or alien – bodies that dance on their own behalf or in the place of the Other, expands the space of the common sensorium with what the homogenous, patriarchal-capitalist system pushes to its periphery. For this reason, I interweave considerations of a strictly choreological or teatrological character with cultural studies, using, among others, research tools developed by feminist criticism, queer studies, disability studies, xenology, poststructuralism, and postcolonial studies. The methodological confusion I introduce reflects the heterogeneity and interdisciplinarity of contemporary Polish dance, eagerly – as I try to show – associating itself with emancipatory discourses, with engaged and affirmative humanities (in terms of Rosi Braidotti and Ewa Domańska).

The dancing body appears as an activist subject who, clowning the existing order, introduces significant shifts in it. The heroines and protagonists of my thesis represent the repressed Other (or are themselves the Other) – women, non-heteronormative communities, communities of people with disabilities, and refugees. Moreover, in many of the choreographies, the stories of queer desires, unusual identities, and grotesque bodies, which ultimately lead to the experiences of systemic, cultural, and political exclusion(s) are combined with embodied narratives about the otherness of dance itself, understood as a homeless and nomadic art. It means that their creators move around different modalities of the political – at the same time activating perspectives of institutional critique and speaking out on important social issues.

The thesis is divided into two parts, entitled "The Choreographies of Conflict" and "The Choreographies of Encounter." The dramaturgy of the first is organized by the category of obscenity, and the second by Derridian hospitality. In the first part, I discuss performances whose creators ostentatiously violate the binding regimes of visibility, making the obscene visible, thus coming into direct conflict with normative aesthetics (and politics). In the second, I focus on choreographies that encourage spectators to participate in the design and practice of inclusive, welcoming communities. Remaining aware of the arbitrariness of this division, I want to make it clear that those distinguished strategies for clowning normative reality are intertwined. Both in the conflicts and the encounters performed on stage, the game is played to free the Others from the necessity of mimicry and purely performative belonging to the (hetero)normative majority.

These two dominant strategies are recurring themes in contemporary Polish choreography. They focus on: the subversive potential of the obscene body (chapter *Obscene Scenes*), the emancipatory dimension of female acts (chapter *Femininity Beyond the Principle of the Spectacle*), the representation of queer and creep desires (chapter *Choreographies of Non-normative Desire*), the critique of homologous communities and the design of alternatives for them (chapter *Welcoming Otherness in Polish choreography*), the ethical problems of dancing on behalf of the Other(s) (chapter *Choreographies of Otherness*), and the constructivist character of the norm (chapter *Wayward Choreographies*). In assigning the topics to the chapters, my goal was not to organize the field of contemporary Polish dance, but rather to highlight its political character. My aim was not a synthesis, but rather a disintegration, which I see as a way of affirming the hybridity and unorthodoxy of what we call engaged choreography.

In describing the choreographic performances, I have tried to think about contemporary Polish dance as a laboratory of hospitality in which temporary heterotopias (Foucault's "other places") are being produced. On the one hand, they enable the formulation of embodied resistance against hegemonic narratives and, on the other, practice alternative world-making and participation in the processes of collective celebration of diversity. They can be understood as embodied allegories of possible futures – alternatives to homeostatic communities subordinated to the ideology of the Same. While writing about the welcoming of otherness in contemporary Polish dance, I was thinking not just about the individual performances, but also about the field of critical-affirmative choreographies as a whole. I believe that the engaged independent dance, by placing itself in the uncomfortable position of art still discriminated against, skillfully uses the potential of its own difference and marginality.

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