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Territoriality and choreography in site-situated performance

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Chapter 2

Subletting: Touching/ Entangling/ Becoming

A sublet may become an experiment in coming together and coming apart.

In the fall of 2014, through a friend's friend, I was able to sublet an apartment in the east side of Amsterdam for two months. Because of the close community ties, it was an informal arrangement; we verbally agreed on a price and I showed up at the door with my suitcase.

I am somewhat a guest, somewhat a renter. This composite identity consists of some rights and some obligations: I gain autonomy and access by paying the rent, however I must accept the general conditions of the situation. I was given a tour of the apartment, with instructions about watering plants, collecting mail, and keeping things clean, and a tour of the neighbourhood. I was also told that should I run into neighbours, I should let them know I am a friend and am staying at the place for a while. I do not have an official right to be here as a tenant, but no one will pay much attention if I am discrete.⁵²

I don't know the original tenant well, but I know she is an immigrant who has learned Dutch and embedded herself meaningfully in Amsterdam. She is an artist in

⁵² As a Canadian citizen, I was not required to obtain a visa to enter the Netherlands for a period of less than 90 days due to a reciprocal agreement between the two nation states, whereby Dutch citizens may travel to Canada, and Canadians to the Netherlands, for a temporary stay. The ease with which I feel the informality of my sublet relation is in fact sustained and made possible through a formal agreement between nation states of the West. Through a common colonial heritage and an economic relationship beneficial to both parties, the agreement transforms my foreigner status into friendly guest. Further, I am a white woman, and so my foreignness is absorbed as likeness and not transformed into a threat by the European authorities.

search of an engaged artistic community. This personal endeavour inspires me—someone who has immigrated and learned a language in order to contribute to the community. She has constructed a place for herself, and Amsterdam has opened a place for her. In this sense, I am staying in a place of inspiring mutuality.

I was made to feel welcome. I am curious about the extent of this welcome, durational and physical. I feel the responsibility of caring for my friend’s friend’s things. I imagine that my friend’s friend is losing some control of her place. There is some anxiety in her voice as she leaves.

I find myself alone in the apartment. I look around.

In this subtlety, I realize I am *both* the custodian and the guest. At first, this appears to me like two separate roles, but it quickly becomes clear that “being a guest” is a role that entails responsibility. I am a guest in the sense that the place I am staying does not belong to me. But as I am staying here, I become partly responsible for it. It’s not mine, but I feel compelled to care for it. It’s an intriguing situation for me—to care for something that is not mine. Caring means becoming responsive. I must notice what needs to be done and go beyond my usual habits of self toward new inhabitations and relations. Guesting, in this case, entails care, involving myself in the space of the host. By increasing my attention to it, I increase my potential to “become” alongside of it, to be affected by it and to affect it. As the apartment’s custodian, I animate it and it animates me, I become a bit like it and it becomes a bit like me. A becoming is understood as a qualitative transformation, and so caring implies a transformation.

“Becoming is to emit particles that take on certain relations of movement and rest because they enter a particular zone of proximity. Or, it is to emit particles that enter that

zone because they take on those relations.”⁵³

I put my things in drawers, set up a few photos on the desk. I plug in my computer. I put my makeup and toiletries in the bathroom. I make a cup of tea and look around.

I don't rearrange the furniture.

I eat the sandwich that I had in my bag and I wipe away the crumbs.

As the days go by, I have a strange, intimate feeling living amidst someone else's things—dishes, books, bedsheets, art, music, sofas, carpets, handbags, shoes, and plants. It is disorienting; I lie down where she has laid down, I touch her mugs, doorknobs, light switches. I use the same knives, sink, and washer and dryer. I look out the window in the same way. I sleep in the same bed.

Within the subtlety is a sustained reverberation of her presence and, in the repetition of the passing days, I feel I become immersed somehow. I experience a sense of delay or repetition that echoes and refers back to the presence of the original tenant. This has to do with the setup of the items in the apartment, and the physical gestures required to activate them. I reach for a mug as she would reach for it, on the same shelf at the same height. I pull up the covers in the same direction. I hang the towel on the same hook. I look at a portrait of cats, hung at eye level above the table, as she would look at it. I pull on the door handles as she would to enter or exit.

In the details as to where things are situated, a strange “matching” occurs whereby I stand in the place of the original tenant, making the same gestures in the same timings.

⁵³ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 273, quoted in Cvejić, *Choreographing Problems*, 212.

This proximity, this blurring intrigues me. The site choreographs my body subtly. I feel trapped, slightly, by my circumstances.

I let my body be guided by the placement of chairs, of bed, sofa, and toilet. I make no new choices but merely follow the architecture and the furniture. I feel somewhat I am acting and moving as someone else. As Laura Potrović has put it: “What moves is not the body, but its potential to be moved.”⁵⁴

How to think through the notion of boundary in a subtle? Where does her space end and mine begin? The apartment never stops being hers, because of our contract’s temporary nature and her eventual return. And so, the apartment “becoming mine” is embedded in the knowledge that it is “still hers.” There is no exteriority or exactness to the boundary between hers and mine. I am inside the apartment.

Philosopher Michel de Certeau writes on the production of spaces through partitioning practices: “It is the partition of space that structures it. Everything in fact refers to this differentiation which makes possible the isolation and interplay of distinct spaces.”⁵⁵ A partition is a probable first territorialization, but *inside* the apartment’s partitioned space, the boundary appears and disappears as I move. I am brushing up against the sense of her territory. I am in continuous contact with it, yet the edge keeps moving as I do. The more I touch, the more I activate a connection—and a distinction between her and me.

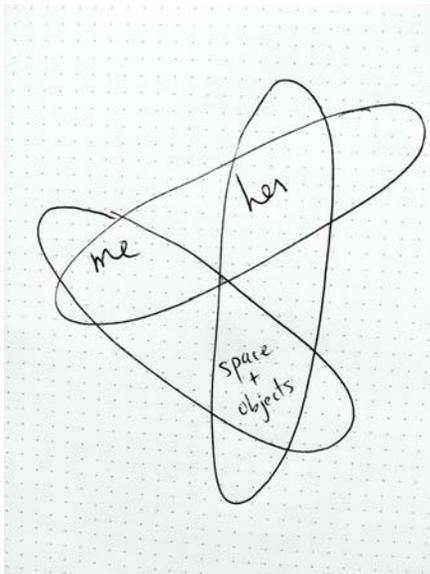
If I consider the notion of boundary through touch, I may conceptualize more clearly how the space is territorialized. I touch the subtle and it touches back—the cool surfaces of the walls, the soft cushions, the smooth, round cups, the sharp forks and the

⁵⁴ Potrović, “What a Body Can Become,” 196.

⁵⁵ de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 123.

edges of the glass coffee table, the warm water, the breeze from the open door. The sensations are momentary, unstable, and hard to quantify. There begins to be a blur between my friend's friend and her surroundings. It's hard to recognize exactly what I am touching. As I touch her things, I feel I am touching her slightly. In a way, she is fused to her objects.

The act of touching expresses a reciprocity, a continuity between body and space. In the objects dwell the traces of her actions, her body. And because I am inhabiting the apartment, in the same objects now dwell traces of my actions, my body. So, there is an inexact boundary between me and the objects, between her and the objects, which traverses an inexactness between me and her. Touch becomes an act of partition that precludes a stable territorialization.



In *The Politics of Touch*, philosopher Erin Manning writes that, “to touch is to

acknowledge that I must also be touched by you in order to touch you.”⁵⁶ The condition of living in this sublet entails touching and, thereby, exposing myself to the touch of another, being within movements of giving/receiving, being moved by it as I move within it.

And yet I am touching an unknowability, a distance. I feel both a connection to her presence inside the apartment, and a distance from it. I cannot touch without disrupting a concept of linear time, as the act of touching touches upon the presence and the absence of her, the original tenant.

Enacting touch in my sublet context troubles pre-existing stabilities of presence and absence, of near and far. Near and far, present and absent become entangled. Touching is a simultaneously reaching out and receiving, touching all that might have been touched before I arrived. I cannot touch without wondering what is touching back.⁵⁷

Responsiveness is central to entangling, to not distinguishing between being (oneself) and being-in-response (to another). Entanglement, writes theorist Karen Barad, is a notion from physics that comprehends particles over long distances as immediately responsive to one another, as indeterminately connected.⁵⁸ According to Barad, “indeterminacy, in its infinite openness, is the condition for the possibility of all structures in their dynamically reconfiguring in/stabilities.”⁵⁹ Becoming entangled opens up my sense of myself to an emergent, multi-directional reality. An entanglement disrupts the possibility of sustaining a distance, of keeping oneself apart from what one touches.

⁵⁶ Manning, *Politics of Touch: Sense, Movement, Sovereignty*, 15.

⁵⁷ “Matter is an enfolding, an involution, it cannot help touching itself, and in this self-touching it comes in contact with the infinite alterity that it is.” Barad, “On Touching,” 5.

⁵⁸ “Entanglements are relations of obligation—being bound to the other—enfolding traces of othering.” Ibid., 9.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 7.

2.1 Durational Boundaries

Before my friend's friend left, she showed me the various rooms. I am free to use the soaps and shampoos. Here is the bedding, the tea, the coffee. There are a few drawers, which she asks me not to open. The apartment is coded with degrees of territorialization, meaning degrees of access, restriction, and responsibility.

In the main living room is a closet. She asks me not to open the closet and not to use any of the things inside it. Therefore the sublet becomes sharply delineated right at the door of the closet. It has become differentiated from the rest of the sublet, qualitatively transformed into an intensity, an exclusion, a limit.

As days pass, the effects of this limit spill over into the rest of the sublet. The partition does not stay put; the space of the living room is affected by the sense of an unwelcomeness at the edge of a space of welcome. The living room begins to feel uncomfortable in relation to the closet's closed door, an unknown so close by. I experience the territorialization of the closet as a force of the unknown that infiltrates the rest of the apartment.

Philosopher Brian Massumi proposes the concept of the boundary or limit not as “a sharp demarcation but more like a multi-dimensional fading into infinity.”⁶⁰ This proposition allows for a notion of a boundary as a threshold at which one thing affects another, a dynamic mixing and undoing of interiority and exteriority.

The closet does not become the “outside” of the sublet but composes with the

⁶⁰ Massumi, “The Autonomy of Affect,” 13.

apartment, a mapping that qualitatively transforms the apartment with an awareness that something beyond the room is withheld. My guesting/subletting/caring includes what I am not permitted to see, such that I am living with the apartment's unseen.

Unfortunately, I do not have a high tolerance for the unseen. This force energizes me. It takes me a week or two of settling in, but increasingly I have the desire to open the closet and peek inside. I realize I am transgressing my friend's friend's wishes. The fact that I am not allowed to open the door, but that I just "could," produces tension in my body.

"Boundaries do not sit still."⁶¹ They are durational and dynamic practices. Boundaries may be expressed with each new gesture.

I open the closet.

It is a bit disappointing: shelves of art supplies and what seem like expensive makeup items. But the intensity of the boundary between what is seen and what is unseen dissolves immediately, and the living room feels more relaxed, more at ease.

2.2 Choreographic Practices of a Sublet

"Differences are made, not found!"⁶²

I set up a speculative, playful process that experiments with finding a way to differentiate between my presence in the apartment and the apartment in the presence of the original

⁶¹ Barad, "Posthuman Performativity," 817.

⁶² Barad, "Intra-actions," 77.

tenant prior to my arrival.

Inventing new boundaries enables new ways of locating oneself, new parameters for references and differentiations.

I decided to invite a stranger to help me differentiate the contents of the sublet. I asked a local photographer (whom I had just met) to enter the apartment and take photographs according to the instructions below. His only knowledge of my situation was that I had arrived a few weeks ago and was subletting for two months.

1. Photograph the spaces/objects of the apartment where you observe *my* possessions and actions.
2. Photograph the spaces/objects of the apartment where you observe *her* possessions and actions.

The photographer documented *my* possessions as:

- A stack of books on the table beside the bed
- A toiletry bag on top of the sink
- A towel hanging from the hook rack in the bathroom



The photographer documented *her* possessions as:

- A standing lamp and large potted plant
- A modem plugged into a wall socket
- A chandelier



The materials that were documented as being mine are positioned in transitory spaces: on the bedtable, on top of the sink, on a hook. They cannot be extracted from the action of having been placed there; each is visible in its temporary relation to its context. They become readable as action-objects, temporary events.

Meanwhile, for the original tenant's objects—chandelier, floor lamp, plant, and modem—the photographer selected items of heavier weight and a greater volume, more permanent in their functionalities. When questioned afterward, the photographer said he guessed which things were who's based on common sense assessments of each object's function. Simply, was it for long-term or short-term use?

This classification of objects as *hers* involved deducing the temporal relation the object has with its surroundings. Grosz writes on Henri Bergson's concept of temporality as a force that produces difference: "Bergson attributes to the universe as a whole a durational power that both enables all objects, things, to be synchronized, that is, temporally mapped relative to each other, divisible into different fluxes while nevertheless capable of participating in a single, englobing current forward."⁶³ The photographer's selections of images show that the apartment may be understood as having multiple, co-existing temporalities, and emphasize the recognition of objects in their temporal organization with reference to when they arrived and their participation in this "englobing current forward."

The impossibility of creating a completely clear division between her possessions and mine is revealed in the photos. The photo-document of "my" stack of books includes the table on which they had been placed (*her* table), the photo of my towel includes the hook (*her* hook), the photo of my toiletry bag includes the sink (including yet another fold in the chain of proprietors, the *landlords*'s sink!) The objects are not extracted from their contexts completely; they are in intricate relation to the apartment's architecture and objects, forming assemblages and relations with them.

Trying to divide the objects into two groups reveals that an object may not be entirely extracted from its movement; is not an autonomous piece of matter but enveloped by its surrounding active relations. *The space of the apartment can be felt, seen, and sensed within the object.* The space of the sink presses into the toiletry bag, the hook pierces the space of the towel, and the table pushes up into the space of the books.

⁶³ Grosz, "Bergson, Deleuze and the Becoming of Unbecoming," 11.

The items are inseparable from their positions, their physical relationalities, how they touch other things; in short, their entangled spatiality is revealed.⁶⁴

This situation recalls Spanish choreographer Norberto Llopis Segarra's 2013 performance *Orientation*,⁶⁵ wherein he writes:

...An object crosses the space ... mmm...
...a space crosses an object ... mmm...

In *Orientation*, Segarra displays multiple pieces of black paper on stage in a grid. Objects are photocopied onto certain papers, but mostly the sheets are solid black. Segarra speaks about how the space cuts into these copies of objects on the two-dimensional plane, and how the object cuts into the space of the paper. Later in the performance, he wonders aloud: "Where do the two movements meet?"

Following Segarra's line of questioning, I begin considering the space of the sublet as crossing into my objects, and the space of my objects as crossing into the sublet. Taking up Segarra's intriguing question—where do the two movements meet?—I transpose the question from the paper's two dimensions to a three-dimensional space. This crossing of the spaces of apartment and object meets in:

MY HAND

⁶⁴ "The world is a dynamic process of intra-activity in the ongoing reconfiguring of locally determinate causal structures with determinate boundaries, properties, meanings." Barad, "Posthuman Performativity," 817.

⁶⁵ See: <http://www.tretigri.org/projects/136/Orientation%202011>.



My hand is the point of becoming of two space-times—hers and mine—in that both my hand and the sublet are continually constituted and reconstituted through every touching, shifting, pressing, and probing; the apartment becomes, appears through my (temporal and spatial) touch.

Objects move bodies, and bodies move objects. A body conceived as a dynamic conduit—intensifying connections.

object crossing // hand crossing // space crossing

Touch becomes more than a sensation. It is a plane of experience entangling many boundaries and dimensions.

2.3 Itemizing⁶⁶

“Then draw up the inventory of everything that surrounds, encircles, enrobes, implicates the present or past reality of the object...”⁶⁷

As the weeks pass, I am increasingly intrigued by the dynamic intersection of guest/host/space/object in the sublet. In the awareness that my body and all my objects are being crossed with someone else’s space, and vice versa, I begin to probe how a performative, choreographic process might bring the complex relations in this territorialized intersection to emerge.

A key operation of choreography is articulation, which may be considered as the expression of how one is paying attention. To articulate something is to set it in motion and to give it value. The “thing” articulated has been communicated in a particular way and has been weaved into the temporal moment of its articulation.

Choreography theorist Petra Sabisch defines articulation as a “double and simultaneous movement of composition and of differentiation.”⁶⁸ In other words, articulation is at once the process of differentiating and separating out heterogeneous parts, as well as composing these parts (into a new way of considering them). This double operation of articulation produces new qualities, which in turn lead to new relations.

Articulating points of interest reveals how I am attending to something, and to what I am attending, amidst an infinity of things to express. I separate out and thus turn a

⁶⁶ *Itemizing* is the process of separating out the contents of a room in order to take an account of them. It is a process of keeping track of things, of determining what is missing.

⁶⁷ Cramer, “Experience as Artifact,” 24.

⁶⁸ Sabisch, *Choreographing Relations*, 13.

focus upon certain movements and things. According to Sabisch, this choreographic process of expressing and identifying how one is paying attention “qualitatively transforms the relations between the parts.”⁶⁹

I consider how a process of itemization, namely of selecting, identifying, and ordering a list of my sublet’s contents, might actualize the economic, corporeal, and territorial forces at work here. The itemizing practice is a form of articulation of what is observed or not observed. The object-items appear through my spoken articulation and my bodily actions. When I show an item, I purposefully articulate a few aspects about it, but hold back from providing a more complete description. As much as I am demonstrating certain items, I am also bringing into focus a non-articulation of the surrounding things that I am choosing not to speak about. An articulation is a cut, a partial understanding of how an assemblage of body-space-object might move.

I set up a camera and, alone in the space, I begin dancing for the camera a series of items that I have collected. I consider the camera the frame for my unplanned process.

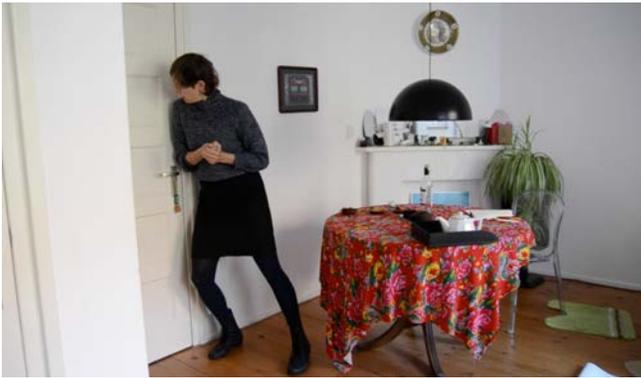
Who is the “I” that is dancing? The space of the sublet is threading through my body. Within the sublet, my body’s beginning and ending are uncertain. In this dancing practice, I found myself jumping right into the action of displaying the apartment without introducing myself. I do not elaborate on how I found myself to be in this space, how I belong, or how I might account for my presence and the absence of others. I don’t even have a name for myself as yet. Perhaps I aim to be a stand-in for the pleasure of a nameless, supposedly innocent occupant.

⁶⁹ “We will call articulation any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice.” Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 105.

I display a series of items for the camera, not mentioning (at first) how they came to be here or to whom they belong. My tone is formal, polite, and upbeat. I find myself performing self-sufficiency and enthusiasm as though I had every right to show someone else's things.

I realize that every move I make is a *tiny trespass* against the original organization of the place upon my arrival. Gently, I probe and amplify this feeling of trespass. I bump into things, I rearrange, I pick up garbage and display it, and I drop things. As I probe my relation to these objects, I am probing *what kind of guest* I might be in this situation. I begin to insert the objects that I have brought with me into the collection sourced from the sublet, and do not always offer an explanation of which objects are whose.

Excerpted Dance: Script and Stills. (Body actions written in blue.)



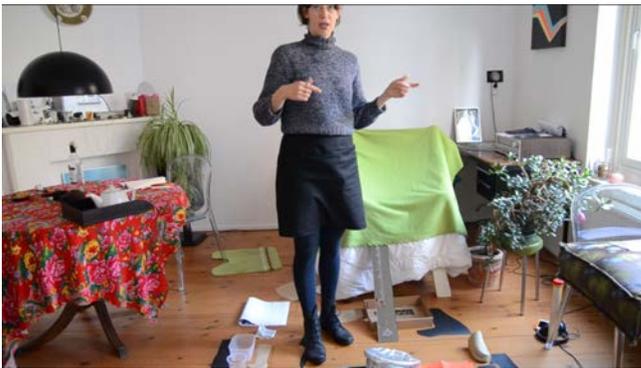
Item 1. I lean against the wall and thump it with each side of my body.



Item 2. I place a blanket over a chair. There we go!



Item 3. I rotate a painting on the wall. Right!



Item 4. We are going to pretend that there is no difference between outside and inside.



Item 5. I move a painting from one side of the room to the other.



Item 6, which is actually two items, but I call them one single item. [Unstacking a pair of cardboard shoe spacers.](#)



Item 7 is a bit tricky, because it's actually just the outside of the book, not the inside. So for Item 7, please just think about the outside of the book.



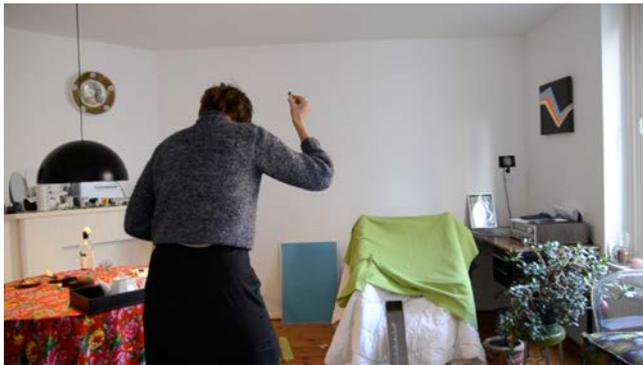
Item 8 is partially hidden. It's this measuring stick right here. [I lift it up and let it drop.](#) Its surface is burnished, so there's some nice reflected light, and it may break.



Item 9 is a bit funny. It's composed of a fork, a pen, an elastic, and my mouth. I'll just wrap this around like that. It, too, is actually just one item, called a "pen-fork-mouth." [I play with it against my teeth. A vibrating sound is emitted.](#)



Oh yes ... Item 10 is really special. It's somewhere between an action and an object. (I take two empty plastic containers and cross my arms. Slowly, I put one container inside the other). So, that was Item 10.



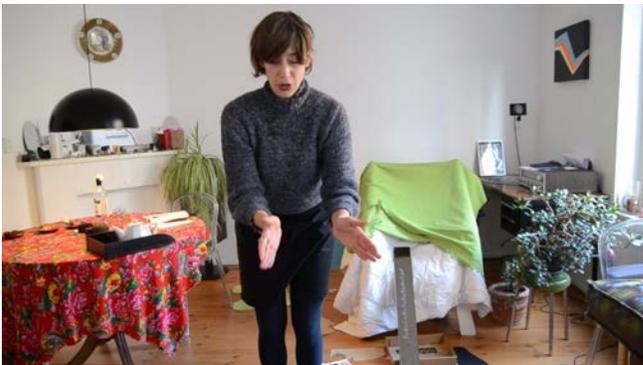
Item 11 is somewhat historical; it works in my country, but I am not sure if it can work here. The figure on the front of this coin here is a sailboat, and the sailboat is called the *Bluenose*. The *Bluenose* was a fishing schooner, built in the 1920s to fish cod, but what happened instead was that it became a famous racing boat. For seventeen consecutive years, it beat all the other American and Canadian ships—this strange, hybrid boat. Given subsequent improvements in fishing technologies, in the 1940s the *Bluenose* was sold and eventually sank somewhere off Haiti. That's the *Bluenose*!



Item 12 is this blue cushion. It's an especially bouncy cushion. *And this hat I am wearing is not my hat.* It is specially chosen because it is not mine.



I let the cushion drop. We can't see that bounce very well, but take it from me, it was a very nice bounce.



Item 13 is quite lovely as well. It takes you, the viewer, and places you over here, nicely up against the wall so that you may see me from the side. It's a simple one, but a nice one. Now you are just a little bit closer to the ocean than you were a moment ago.



Item 14 is the very beautiful difference between speaking and thinking. [Pause](#).



Item 15. I am going to just sit down here, get a nice perspective, and think about some spaces to show you:

So, a
space between the chimney and the jade plant
between my chin and the cooking egg
teapot and my ear
edge of the table and top of your head
the Amsterdam shadow of a tree to the measuring stick
the hat that is not mine to the fork that is mine
piece of ginger and the palm of my hand
the inside of my elbow and the tiptop of the plant
my spine and the camera
between each of my fingers
and I think I will end with underneath the chair and my tongue.

2.4 Analysis of Itemization (Choreographing an Inside and an Outside)

I assemble a heterogeneous collection of items: objects of some value, disposable objects, her objects, my objects, my body parts, and the spaces around objects. I am considering my “items” to be a series of movements that assemble objects, spaces, and bodily parts. All these I organize as equivalencies or consistencies, without dividing corporeal events and matter.

What does it achieve, not to distinguish between spaces, objects, and movements? To undo the boundaries between these parcelled-out phenomena? It smashes bodily movement into objects, and object-ness into the body’s movement. It makes a new body, a new bodying. Erin Manning writes that the process of ‘bodying’ suggests the capacity of the body to continuously transform (to take new form) through its circumstances. ‘[B]ody’ is an ecology of processes, [...] always in co-constellation with the environmentality of which it is part. A body is a node of relational process, not a form per se.”⁷⁰

Item 9, named a “pen-fork-mouth,” composed of a fork, a pen, an elastic, and my mouth, is body-as-relational-process. As I play with it against my teeth and a vibrating sound is emitted, my teeth compose with the sonorous pen-fork-mouth, and the pen-fork-mouth vibrates with the friction against my teeth.

This process untethers these cheap plastic materials from their recognizable status as disposable commodities within a regime of capital, and propels them toward a sonorous quality and an intimate relation with my mouth. Of course, they do not stop

⁷⁰ Manning, *Always More Than One*, 19.

being “cheap materials,” but they do evince new qualities through their movement. The boundary that proposes the strict separation of body and object is troubled. The choreography of attending to these objects (with small, sharp movements against my teeth) forms a new body, or, “more precisely, conditions of a certain body giving itself a form.”⁷¹ With Item 9, I am experimenting with what this body in the moment might produce.

With Item 15, I name the spatial relations in between objects and body parts in the apartment. By naming the spaces between objects (as in *between the teapot and my ear, between a piece of ginger and the palm of my hand, between the inside of my elbow and the tiptop of the plant*), I draw attention to the fact that each object is fused with its position relative to other positions. These in-between spaces that I am naming will morph if I shift the position either of myself or the objects. This means that the simple act of moving an object across the room shifts not only the object but animates the object’s relations with other objects. More precisely, by rearranging the objects in space, the space in between the objects get rearranged too. This consideration lends the act of moving an object across the room a significant impact, as it causes the infinity of other spatial distances surrounding it to fluctuate.

Attuning to the in-between space of *the teapot and my ear* delimits these elements and composes them together, the double operation of articulation that Sabisch has identified. The teapot may be considered through its distance to my ear, and my ear may

⁷¹ Potrović, “What a Body Can Become,” 98.

be considered through its distance from the teapot, thereby “qualitatively transforming the relations between the parts.”⁷²

2.5 A Hat *That Is Not Mine*



In Item 12, I state for the camera that I am wearing a hat *that is not mine*. Somehow, I do not directly belong to this item, and I am articulating (confessing) this non-belonging to the camera.

I have established that every object in the sublet is threaded through with the space of the sublet, and that the space of the sublet is threaded through with the objects in it. My body, considered as object, is already part sublet, the sublet already part body. The status of each discrete item has suddenly become relational.

The hat has been territorialized by the original occupant, and yet, by placing it on my head, with this gestural element I compose a new body. I am testing the intensities of

⁷² Sabisch, *Choreographing Relations*, 104.

a new body that doesn't belong entirely to itself, testing whether the hat in the sublet has the potential to be reterritorialized. As Deleuze and Guattari state: "It may be all but impossible to distinguish deterritorialization and reterritorialization since they are mutually enmeshed, or like opposite faces of the same process."⁷³

By stating that the hat does not belong to me, a difference is created, and the hat retains a belonging to something else, far away. A tension is choreographed, through the direction of my arm drawing the hat up toward my head, and through the words I speak, which pulls the object out of my grasp.

I consider this sequence a powerful convergence of territorial forces: the body's gesture of putting on the hat and finding its new form, in composition with the spoken words of the object's territorial belonging to someone else. Notions of inside and outside, hers and mine, merge yet also sustain a distinction. Territorializations, articulations, partitions, and touch express nuances of entangled space.

2.6 Embodiment and Subjectivity in Modernity

To describe the situation of dwelling in a sublet as an experience of touching that which *is not mine*, is to immediately enter into territorializations based on strict distinctions between inside and outside. Practices that create strict boundaries between things is a formulation that ushers in an entire Western system of classification and order,

⁷³ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 258.

the Cartesian practice of parceling out an I-it distinction between mind and body, and a I-world distinction between body and world. With this utterance “this is not mine”, I usher in practices of embodiment and subjectivity in Western modernity.

Modernity, in the West, as a system of beliefs, attitudes and practices, is expressed through the development of individualism, capitalism, technological progress, urbanization and the birth of the nation state. Modernity, as a complex and vast project that extends far outside the scope of the thesis, is addressed here as a “form of subjectivity,⁷⁴ and a mode of embodiment, acts of perceiving, experiencing and drawing meaning from the world.

Modern subjectivity is that which places subjectivity as a process cut off from directly experiencing the world. Subjectivity is conceptualized as an equivalency with a subject, a bounded, coherent identity. “Cartesian practice draws an absolute boundary between ‘inside and ‘outside,’ and privileges the former at the expense of the latter.”⁷⁵ In his book *Exhausting Dance*, André Lepecki situates modern subjectivity as a process that ensnares the “ego as the ultimate subject for and of representation”⁷⁶ and that views the “body as independently existing and governed by immanent laws.”⁷⁷ This view promotes a notion of the subject as a coherent, unified entity, remaining mostly constant and unaffected by new environments. Further, considering the body as “governed by immanent laws,” presupposes that sense perception is pre-cultural, disengaged from accounting for the situated, social and cultural nature of experience.

Modern embodiment is organized through Cartesian principles, prescribing a

⁷⁴ Ferguson, *Modernity and Subjectivity*, 5, quoted in Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, 9.

⁷⁵ Larkins, “The Idea of the Territorial State,” 51.

⁷⁶ Courtine, “Voice of Consciousness and Call of Being,” 79, quoted in Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, 11.

⁷⁷ Ferguson, *Modernity and Subjectivity*, 7, quoted in Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, 11.

body as an independent and discrete agent in the world. “The distinctive feature of modern embodiment lies in the process of individuation, in the identification of the body with the person as a unique individual and, therefore as the bearer of values and legally enforceable rights.”⁷⁸ This way of classifying the body as an individual becomes the basis for social, political, and legal institutions. The enactments of modern embodiment organizes and governs persons as coherent entities with clear edges.

My choreographic process in the sublet attempts to trouble this inherited modern understanding of the discrete individual, in order to re-conceptualize subjectivity and embodiment as evolving and ongoing, as multiple, as ongoing processes across each new situation. A subject may enact multiple subjectivities, subjectivities are composed and re-composed through each situation.⁷⁹ Subjectivities (in the plural) considered as a critical way of signaling the subject’s processes of subjectification.

Subjectivities produce embodiments, and embodiments produced subjectivities. Subjectivity and embodiment are not unchanging, they are forces and feelings that may move transversally across the I-it body-world boundary. I reference once again Barad’s key notion that boundaries are practices, not inherent, that “boundaries do not sit still!”⁸⁰

Referring back to the question I posed earlier in the chapter; Who is the “I” that is dancing? I now offer a few proposals. My ways of composing and differentiating elements between myself and the sublet aim to dismantle a certitude of embodiment and subjectivity, a reaching towards an unknowability, an entanglement.

⁷⁸ Ferguson, *Modernity and Subjectivity*, 38, quoted in Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, 8.

⁷⁹ Subjectivities are “a process of subjectification, that is, the production of a way of existing [that] can’t be equated with a subject.” Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 98.

⁸⁰ Barad, “Posthuman Performativity,” 817.

The “I” that is dancing is not only enacting physical movements of the body, but forming a new relationship with the sublet, producing contrasts, qualities and desires. I am dancing in order to entangle the role of guest to the role of dancer.

The “I” that is dancing is becoming multiple. The “I” that is dancing is practicing a state of unknowing, not knowing exactly what she is touching, not knowing what exactly is touching back. The “I” that is dancing is a body that is not self-contained, but a processual body, bound to others, “enfolded traces of othering.”⁸¹

The “I” that is dancing is oriented toward thinking subjectivity and embodiment through entanglement. Thinking entanglement is giving priority to indeterminate connections across my experience and the circumstances of the site, and foregrounding the senses. The “I” that is dancing is not exempt from the forces of modernity, yet is not limited to them.

⁸¹ Barad, “On Touching,” 9.