HOW CAN BODIES PERFORM THE FINANCIAL CRISIS? THE FINANCIALIZED BODIES IN CRISTAL PYTE AND SHARON EYAL’S CHOREOGRAPHIES

¿DE QUÉ FORMA PUEDE UN CUERPO BAILAR LA CRISIS FINANCIERA? LOS CUERPOS FINANCIARIZADOS EN LAS COREOGRAFÍAS DE CRISTAL PYTE Y SHARON EYAL

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Abstract: What is the relationship between the economy and dance? How are moving bodies affected by the economic crisis? Is there a choreoeconomic condition? If one of the main goals of dance and performance art during the 20th and 21st centuries has been to understand the relationship between politics and movement, this paper aims at analyzing how financial economy and its crisis can affect the dancing body, and the way dance has the ability to offer alternatives to the financialization of the social body.

Key Words: financial system, choreoeconomics, financialized bodies, dissimulation, precarity.

Resumen: ¿Cuál es la relación entre la economía y la danza? ¿De qué forma la crisis económica ha afectado a la manera en la que los cuerpos...
se mueven? ¿Existe una condición coreoeconómica? Si la danza y el arte de performance se han preocupado, a lo largo del siglo XX y XXI, por comprender las relaciones entre la política y el movimiento, lo que este artículo pretende es analizar y entender de qué forma la economía financiera y sus crisis pueden afectar al cuerpo danzante y las maneras en las que la danza tiene la capacidad de ofrecer alternativas a la financiarización del cuerpo social.

**Palabras clave:** sistema financiero, coreoeconomía, cuerpos financierizados, disimulo, precariedad.

**Sumario:** 1. Introduction. 2. Financialization of the social body and the economic condition of the dancing body. 3. The somatic condition of the neoliberal reason. 4. Crystal Pite: the staging of the corporative and the precarious bodies. 5. Financial crisis as a performative misfire. 6. Sharon Eyal or the dissimulation of the mechanical gesture as a performative failure. 7. Conclusions. 8. Bibliography. 9. Notes.

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1. Introduction

What does it mean to think about dance in relation to the first major and global financial crisis of the 21st century? What is the connection between the language of movement that is crystallized in dance and the development of globalized macroeconomics? Specifically, how can dance give an account of the crisis in the economic sphere? Or, in other words, how can movement be related to the economic crisis?

These questions are the points of departure of this paper, which will try to cover not only what can be a possible relationship between dance and the economy, but also how the economic mechanisms that triggered the financial crisis in 2007 can be related to the expressions of the body which certain choreographies have developed in this last decade, without forgetting that these choreographic settings are inherited from many other forms rooted in the beginning of the economy’s financial drift during the 1970s.

Throughout this paper, I will first draft a relationship between financialization and the production of bodies in the social realm with its correspondent dynamics of dance. I will then analyze different choreographies in relation to the findings presented in the first sections. In the first section, I will briefly delineate the main aspects of the financial system, as well as a broad overview of the reasons for the 2007–2008 financial crisis – all against a backdrop of the language of dance. In the last section, I will analyze two different types of choreographies as they relate to the theory of the first section. Firstly, choreographies which have tried to depict the embodiment of the financial condition and, secondly, dance pieces which have suggested strategies to undermine this bodily and relational condition. For this purpose, I will consider choreographies by Sharon Eyal and Crystal Pite as examples performed from this point of view.

This paper backs two main theses. Firstly, dance is a privileged language to address the somatic condition of the neoliberal reason, as, on the one hand, dance is not indifferent to the particular movement type that finance puts in play, and, on the other hand, the new financialized social body is not independent of the dancing body, as both are produced in the same social context. Secondly, dance as a performative language can suggest ways to fracture the embodiment of the neoliberal
reason through the failures of that embodiment, something which is understood as an important part of the neoliberal system.

2. Financialization of the social body and the economic condition of the dancing body

Although Neoliberalism, as a social, economic and political system is usually historically connected with President Ronald Reagan in the United States (1981–1989) and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom (1979–1990), that is, the 1980s, it can be said that it started to develop in August 1971, when the then President of the United States, Richard Nixon, announced the suspension of the dollar’s convertibility into gold. The interruption of the Bretton Woods agreement, negotiated in July 1944, not only announced the breakdown of the balances between countries after the Second World War but, more importantly, marked the beginning of the development of the neoliberal financial system. The 1970s were the launching pad of what would solidify in the next decade with the help of right-wing hegemony in the social and political realm.

During the 1970s, many other economic decisions would settle a path towards the financialization of the economy. The rupture of the Bretton Woods agreement hailed volatility in international currency exchange rates. May 1975 marked the most important step towards the deregulation of financial services, when stockbrokers were allowed to charge variable commission rates instead of fixed prices, which meant more volatility and speculation. In 1979, Paul Volcker, head of the Federal Reserve at the time, increased the nominal rates from 9% to 20%, which resulted in the skyrocketing of debt in some countries, especially poorer countries which had their debt in dollars. These financial transformations were implemented within a complicated oil crisis environment during the first part of the decade, as well as the crisis of the Keynesian approach to tackle stagflation, the rising inflation and rising unemployment of the American economy (Martin, 2002, pág. 20-33).

Alongside the financialization of the economy, the 1970s witnessed the testing of a new political and social practice that became hegemonic in the 1980s. After the coup d’état of Pinochet in September 1973 in Chile and the development of neoliberal policies in the Latin American
country under the supervision of the main American gurus of this new political and economic theory, Neoliberalism would become the dominant theory of social, political and economic rule in the main Western countries. But, more importantly, Neoliberalism became hegemonic because it was considered a «theory of everything» (Escalante Gonzalbo, 2016). As Margaret Thatcher once stated, «economics are the method; the object is to change the heart and soul».¹ Economics was the basis, but Neoliberalism needed more than that to assure a new rationality and the new production of subjectivity and identity – and, with that, a new idea of humanity² and society. In Wendy Brown’s words,

Neoliberalism is a distinctive mode of reason, of the production of subjects, a «conduct of conduct,» and a scheme of valuation. It names a historically specific economic and political reaction against Keynesianism and democratic socialism, as well as a more generalized practice of «economizing» spheres and activities heretofore governed by other tables of value (Brown, 2015, pág. 21).

Besides this, and more relevant for what will be subsequently discussed, Neoliberalism and the financialization of daily life also affect the configuration of the social body: that is, how individuals cohere in society. In another of Margaret Thatcher’s well-known quotes, originally proclaimed in an interview of 1987, she stated «there’s no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families».³ This is simply a summary of the Neoliberal perspective on the individual that was boosted during those decades. These theories had their roots in 18th–19th century liberal ideas, but now intensified by placing even more importance on the market (almost to the point of a religion, as the philosopher Ayn Rand suggested in some of her writings), and by postulating a renewed philosophy about human behaviour and social nature, such as the idea of Human Capital, popularized by some Chicago School economists.

The Neoliberal reason implies the erosion of the social body in favour of an individual perspective. This idea has an enormous impact on the dance field: even in soloist pieces, choreography and dance are not as much about movement as about the relationship between corporealities and embodiments; that is, how bodies build and spread social meaning.
Nonetheless, as much as the dance world has generally placed the focus on politics, namely on making political dance, nowadays, especially after the financial crisis, a spotlight should be shone on the economic field, so as to understand how bodies’ sociability has evolved. Although after the financialization of daily life politics was subsumed by economics, they remain two different layers of power. As Randy Martin argues in a paper on dance and finance in the 2000s:

Politics today suffers a crisis of evaluation. Millions around the world have taken to the streets to depose governments, gathered from one state of precarity to enact another. But the tendencies of those on the ground, the dispositions of those who assumed positions of authority, the conditions of the institutions issuing debt and demanding ransom have not been so easy to figure out (Martin, 2012, pág. 63).

Just as they are two different layers, they are two sides of the same coin: one visible, and the other invisible.

On the political side, in a famous redefinition of the politics of aesthetics, French philosopher Jacques Rancière stated that politics was the distribution of the sensible (Rancière, 2004). On the economic side, there is a difficulty in trying to understand or unfold an aesthetic discourse on the economy (or an aesthetics of the economy), since this deals with the invisible, the hidden. Because Capital, «as an infinitely ramified system of exploitation, an abstract, intangible but overpowering logic, a process without a subject or a subject without face, poses formidable obstacles to its representation» (Toscano and Kinkle, 2015, pág. 40), uncovering the embodiment of economics in dance (that is, what dancing bodies display from a socioeconomic understanding) is not an easy task. Discussing how dance can propose a body discourse on what blocks its own possibility to be represented is one of the main goals of this article.

In applying these concepts to the dance field, we must acknowledge two important questions. Firstly, contemporary dance has tried to tackle the politics of the body, the power of resistance in a political body, the choreopolitics – that is, «the redistribution and reinvention of bodies, affects, and sense through which one may learn how to move politically, how to invent, activate, seek, or experiment with a movement whose only sense (meaning and direction) is the experimental exercise of freedom» (Lepecki, 2013, pág. 20). The question arising now is how dance can
look after the economic side of the production of the body. If neoliberal reason is basically the reduction of the whole social sphere to the economic realm, that is, the economization (financialization) of everyday life and, if dance wants to have a discourse on our current embodiments, it needs to understand how economics and the financial system produce bodies and relations among them. We need choreoeconomics, that is, a dancing discourse about how bodies have been transformed into capital and how the body-as-capital is moved and circulated. But choreoeconomics would be a more complicated codification of movement because, as Randy Martin states, finance is a continually spreading movement but without a clear language. Choreoeconomics would be a more abstract understanding of the body that deals with the invisible and opaque sources of our social embodiment. It would be a discourse on dance and the new somatic production of what Murizio Lazzarato calls the Capital-Life (Lazzarato, 2004) – that is, the body as a «machine of expression and constitution of the sensible (desires and beliefs)» (Lazzarato, 2004, pág. 195), which has to do, among other things, with new logics of valorization.

Secondly, that opacity of the economy poses a difficulty for how dance can address it. As Toscano and Kinkle suggest, «modern financial instruments are enormously intricate, based on advanced mathematics, and this complexity has been used to shroud dodgy dealings» (Toscano and Kinkle, 2015, pág. 172). This complexity is the core of financial products. As Saskia Sassen contends,

> At the heart of finance is the work of inventing and developing complex instruments. It is the mathematics of physics and its models that are in play here, not the mathematics of microeconomic models [...] The mathematics of the backroom is mostly well beyond the understanding of the highly paid executives of the boardroom» (Sassen, 2014, pág. 119).

And it is this complexity of the reasons that expels people out of the system (Sassen, 2014, págs. 1-11). Whether maths was a key element in the configuration of the space and body organization of dance in its origins, in line with the rationalism that was dominant in that moment (Albizu, 2017, págs. 33-53), it is now more difficult to trace this element in how finance currently produces bodies.
During parts of the 20th and 21st centuries, militant dance worked in the disarticulation of the mathematical language of traditional choreography, from the reorganization of the body articulation in Martha Graham, and the de-syntaxization of ballet language by Merce Cunningham (Copeland, 2004, págs. 20-39), to, making a temporal jump forward, the no-dance of Jérôme Bel or the undertraining of Boris Charmatz (Charmatz and Launay, 2011). However, most of them had a political aim: to produce different sorts of political bodies, to envision new embodiments, to engage new choreopolitics. These new choreographic beliefs were the result of thinking on the procedures that were constraining the social body and they were offered as staged possible solutions or strategies. Notwithstanding, as previously seen with the financialization of the social and political sphere, sources of coercion are even more difficult to find and think of. As Sassen summarizes:

Historically, the oppressed have often risen against their masters. But today the oppressed have mostly been expelled and survive at a great distance from their oppressors. Further, the ‘oppressor’ is increasingly a complex system that combines persons, networks, and machines with no obvious center. And yet there are sites where it all comes together, where power becomes concrete and can be engaged, and where the oppressed are part of the social infrastructure for power. Global cities are one such site (Sassen, 2014, págs. 10-11).

For this reason, dance can hardly address financial crisis as such. Nonetheless, what this paper contends and tries to illustrate through examples is that it is possible to dance the aftermath of opaque financial processes, the traces which the economy leaves in the precarious body put in motion, as well as in the embodiment of the business ontology. In line with this, addressing financial crises, as such, is something difficult to dance; but it is the consequences of crisis that dance can materialize.

3. The somatic condition of the neoliberal reason.

Throughout the previous section, I have summarized many concepts which have a more complicated history, and nowadays more complex shapes, than the scope of this article can fully examine. Since the 1980s,
there have been a number of financial crises, but the one in 2007–2008 is especially relevant because it attacked the financial system as a whole; that is, it was global. While the crises prior to 2007–2008 affected restricted areas of the globe (Harvey, 2005) –for example, the large Japanese crisis at the beginning of the 1990s or the Argentine one at the turn of the century– the last financial crisis developed all over the world, starting in the United States and spreading beyond its borders. This means that, apart from the extension of the situation at a financial level, the financial crisis also dispersed a body condition, namely, the embodiment of the financial crisis.

As previously mentioned, neoliberal economy departs not only from a philosophy of the individual, but also changes the relationships between individuals. Recently, many theorists have put the focus on debt as a new mode of «expression of mutuality» (Martin, 2012, pág. 62), or in other words, «it also functions as a mechanism for the production and ‘government’ of collective and individual subjectivities» (Lazzarato, 2011, pág.29). As «financialization promises a way to develop the self» (Martin, 2002, pág. 9), it also pledges a new way to understand the relationships between selves. As Bifo Berardi suggests in his book The Uprising. On Poetry and Finance, it is necessary to understand the new ways subjectivities come along together. For him, besides multitude, ‘network’ and ‘swarm’ are the two neoliberal ways to associate individualities. On the one hand, Bifo defines network as «a plurality of organic and artificial beings, of humans and machines who perform common actions thanks to procedures that make possible their interconnection and interoperation». This has a highly specific performance, as «if you do not adapt to these procedures, if you don’t follow the technical rules of the game, you are not playing the game [...] the network implies and predisposes pathways for the networker» (Berardi, 2012, págs. 14-15). On the other hand, «a swarm is a plurality of living beings whose behaviour follows (or seems to follow) rules embedded in their neural system» (Berardi, 2012, pág. 15). Although both models of sociability are important for analysing contemporary dance in relation to current economics, Bifo Berardi poses that «in conditions of social hypercomplexity, human beings tend to act as a swarm. When the infosphere is too dense and too fast for a conscious elaboration of information, people tend to conform to shared behaviour» (Berardi, 2012, pág. 15). This figure of the swarm
is going to be key in order to grasp the meaning of the embodiment of the economy put in motion in dance.

Another term has been very useful for addressing how the financial crisis has affected bodies, individually and as a group: precarity. On the one hand, precarity «is a condition of dependency – as a legal term, precarious describes the situation wherein your tenancy on your land is in someone else’s hands» (Berlant, 2011, pág. 192), or in other words, precarity is the «condition of being conditioned» (Butler, 2016, pág. 23). On the other hand, it «is also newly experienced by many as life lived in relation to a future that cannot be propped securely upon the past» (Ridout and Schneider, 2012, pág.6). Hence, precarity imposes a two-fold condition on bodies: on the relationship amongst bodies and on the chronopolitics of those bodies themselves.

For this section it is important to tackle the question about the dependency of this two-fold condition of body precarity and the body of dance or, in other words, how dance may embody the corporeality of the financial condition spread by the crisis.

In order to better understand this new financial crisis condition of bodies, it is relevant to acknowledge the source of the crisis. The financial crisis of 2007–2008 «speaks that finance is replacing production as the dynamic of capitalism» (LiPuma, 2017, pág. 1), but the main source of the crisis was, broadly, one specific financial product: derivatives. Derivatives are a «species of transactable contract in which (1) there is no movement of capital until its settlement, (2) the change in the price of the underlying asset determines the value of the contract, and (3) the contract has some specified expiration date in the future» (LiPuma and Lee, 2004, págs. 33-34). The 2007–2008 crisis had its source, precisely, in the failure of the contractual form of derivatives and, from this point of departure, further crises came (banks, private and public debt, etc).

Beyond the financial operation of the derivatives (that is, beyond understanding the hidden details of the financial crisis), there are three important features of these products relevant for our argument. Firstly, «derivatives are relations about relations» or, in other words, «relational is its very essence» (LiPuma, 2017, pág. 28). Secondly, derivatives are, nevertheless, contracts:

while the derivative is thus a linguistic artifact, it is even more specific in that it is an invitation to a performative insofar as a derivative takes
full force when it is traded, that is, when two traders arrive at a written contract to exchange (buy and sell) a specific bundle of derivatives (Appadurai, 2016, pág. 4).

More specifically, the derivative is a performative object which creates relations. And lastly, but highly important in this case, as derivatives constitute a product based on the acceptance of a risk in the pursuit of some returns, derivatives are something somatic (Martin, 2002, pág. 84) – that is, derivatives mould a specific kind of embodiment which is, in the end, connected with the precariousness imposed by the financial system.

Therefore, how can dance reflect and think about, around and against this particular embodiment? How is the performativity of the derivatives related to the performativity of the social body and the dancing body? One possible answer can be found in the historical configuration of the dancing body.

On the one hand, the dancing body, as it is currently known, has been since its origin in the Baroque era a textual body. Ever since the Renaissance, body in dance has been «identified with highly rhetorical forms of late Renaissance culture» (Franko, 2015, pág. 15); has been body as a textual entity that shapes the theatrical space. As Mark Franko puts it, «one of choreography’s goals was to inscribe dance in theatrical space» (Franko, 2015, pág. 15). Or, as André Lepecki contends, «the formation of choreography [w]as a peculiar invention of early modernity, as a technology that creates a body disciplined to move according to the commands of writing» (Lepecki, 2006, pág. 6). But more than that, choreography is a mode of relation between body and writing: «dance and writing produced qualitatively unsuspected and charged relationalities between the subject who moves and the subject who writes» (Lepecki, 2006, pág. 7). As a result, the dancing body is a performative embodiment, a body that follows the route of a written contract (choreography).

On the other hand, choreography is a process of subjection, a production of a very precise subjectivity. As Lepecki understands it:

Choreography demands a yielding to commanding voices of masters (living and dead), it demands submitting body and desire to disciplining regimes (anatomical, dietary, gender, racial), all for the perfect fulfilment of a transcendental and preordained set of steps, postures, and
gestures that nevertheless must appear ‘spontaneous’ (Lepecki, 2006, pág. 9).

Lepecki, from Althusser’s theory of the production of subjectivity, thinks that choreography is, above all, an apparatus of capture (Lepecki, 2007).

As previously mentioned, when describing the connection between the financial sphere and the body, finance also has a somatic condition: the actualization of the embodiment of neoliberal reason. The somatization of risk produces a body in tension in constant movement and circulation, but with no coherence or language whatsoever. In Randy Martin’s words, «finance is indeed all about compulsory movement, the obligation to keep going at all costs, to go forward into the future unencumbered by historical claims,» but, as he specifies,

[Finance] generates no language of movement, no sensibility regarding how we are disposed to go one way and not another, no logic by which we might grasp how the imperative to move rules us, how we are oriented by it, through it, against it toward some realization of how else we might be moved and by what we might rule together (Martin, 2012, pág. 68).

Similarly to choreography, finance creates performative movement, a movement which depends on a written contract, but finance makes the movement precarious in the senses described previously – that it is a conditioned movement (conditions which, by the way, are opaque to their representation), and a movement which chronopolitics have aligned with the temporal production of the subjectivization by finance. Although these two spheres seem to be independent, the dance body cannot be split from its social production, and as Karl Polanyi argues:

Ultimately, that is why the control of the economic system by the market is of overwhelming consequence to the whole organization of society: it means no less than the running of society as an adjunct to the market. Instead of economy being embedded in social relations, social relations are embedded in the economic system. (Polanyi, 2001, pág. 60).

That is why dance has very much to say about how we live the economy and economics.
4. **Crystal Pite: the staging of the corporative and the precarious bodies**

Crystal Pite is a Canadian choreographer and dancer who worked in the British Columbia Ballet and afterwards with William Forsythe in the Frankfurt Ballet. She has her own company, Kidd Pivot, and is an associated choreographer in other dance companies, such as Nederland Dans Theatre (NDT). Recently, she has been working with the British Royal Ballet and the Nederland Dans Theatre 1 setting up different choreographies. For this analysis I will be focusing on two choreographies staged by these two dance companies. The first one is *Flight Pattern* choreographed for the Royal Ballet, first danced in 2017 and re-staged in 2019. The second one will be *The Statement*, a short choreography performed by the NDT 1 and with Jonathon Young’s dramaturgy, with whom she also collaborated in her overwhelming piece *Betroffenheit*.

The interesting point about these two choreographies is that they tackle two different embodiments of the crisis. While *Flight Pattern* tracks the gestural dimension of the precarious body, the dependent body, *The Statement* covers the performativity of the corporative body, that is, the embodiment of business ontology. The point of these two pieces is that they connect these two kinds of neoliberal bodies, as one feeds the other, and one is necessary for the other; they are co-dependent.

*Flight Pattern* uses the first movement of Gorecki’s Third Symphony, also called *Symphony of Sorrowful Songs*, as music to depict the bodies of the humanitarian crisis of refugees. This crisis is not only a matter of wars and the displacement of people from poorer to wealthier countries. Financial crisis was based, amongst other things, on the speculation of investors in the debt of countries whose economies are more dependent and not as strong. In this choreography, Pite does an exercise of gestural mimesis, a meticulous study of the gestures of precarious bodies and a translation into the dance language.

What Pite does with 36 dancers is show how precariousness and dispossession is a performative condition of the political, but also of the economic (Butler and Athanasiou, 2013). She builds a collective body in which one body depends on the other, even doing different movements. Nevertheless, what she choreographs is only the aftermath of the crisis, the visible. The gestures and the bodies of the dispossessed are only the visible face of opaque processes that are happening in the
background but that are impossible to uncover. The economic produces these bodies, but the source of this production is difficult to locate. The only way to understand how this works is to study the performative dimension of its consequences.

The title of *Flight Pattern* comes from the double meaning of flight, to fly and to escape, «to leave an impossible situation, and that sense of hope, possibility and freedom that is yearned for» (Pite, 2017). The impossible situation from which it is impossible to escape is not only the war conflict, that is, the humanitarian crisis, but also the precariousness of a body unable to find an egress from a situation because it is stuck in the performative wheel produced by other structures beyond its power.

*Flight Pattern*, then, stages the difficulties of leaving the condition of precarity, but also depicts this condition in its choreographical essence. What Pite also displays is that the body condition of precariousness, its performative production, has a spatial and social dimension. The social space of precariousness is shaped bodily. As Sara Ahmed contends, «the alignment of some bodies with some others and against others take place in the physicality of movement» (Ahmed, 2014, pág. 54). What Pite shows is how these precarious bodies are aligned and move together, how «the organisation of social and bodily space creates a border that is transformed into an object, as an effect of this intensification of feeling [hate]» (Ahmed, 2014, pág. 54). Although the production of a particular sort of space is one of the most important features of our neoliberal era, as well as a new temporal condition (Harvey, 1990, págs. 223-356), this is an issue that needs to be further tackled in future research, because of its complexity. However, it is necessary to acknowledge that body and space, as two important dimensions of dance, are socially connected when they are produced. The body which this precarious body faces is the corporative body, which Pite puts to dance in her choreography *The Statement*.

In *The Statement*, with electronic music by Owen Belton and dramaturgy by Jonathon Young, Pite deals with the embodiment of the business ontology. The play pictures an argument between four people who are being asked to take responsibility for a conflict related to shareholders’ profits. In order to cover for their superiors, they are asked to make a statement fabricating the reality. The scene takes place in the dark room of an office building and the four characters dance around a black table zenithally illuminated.
The choreography resembles another important and historical choreography, namely, *The Green Table*. This ballet, choreographed by the German Kurt Joos and one of the first pieces of dance theatre, created in 1932, tried to depict how unproductive politics is when war is at stake. War and confrontation seem to be the easiest solution to political conflicts, and the discussions on the table (green, in this case) seem to indicate that what is at stake in war is beyond the political, beyond what they can do in that room. Gestures and body language show frustration and hopelessness. The subsequent scenes display the consequences of war.

*The Statement*, a one-scene piece, departs from this idea, the table in the middle of a dark room, the table where the corporative bodies gather for meetings. While in *Flight Patterns* the economic source of the production of the precarious body is opaque, here nothing is different. The corporative body dances differently and has embodied differently the business and neoliberal ontology, but not for being closer to the Capital do the bodies uncover the truth of it. One important element in *The Statement* is that the bodies are language driven, but, differently from the textual body of the baroque dancer (Franko, 2015), here the speaking body is less obvious, less readable. The dialogues in *The Statement* constitute a *prosopopeia*. As Toscano and Kinkle state:

> The personation, or representation, of the real abstraction of value in the relation between commodities (this is still at the level of the relative form of value, before the revolutionising representational and abstractive powers of money enter the stage) is not a mere rhetorical ploy. It involves displacing the locus of subjectivity from person to value [...] In a world that truly is inverted [...] men and women too speak, or are spoken by, the language of commodities. (Toscano and Kinkle, 2015, pág. 41).

In a post-Fordist world they are spoken by Capital in itself. This is what Crystal Pite is staging, the ventriloquism of the Capital through which bodies enflesh business ontology. The source is still opaque, but the embodiment is performed. The Capital cannot be danced, but what can be choreographed is the illusion and the embodiment thereof, the performative incarnation thereof. *The Statement* examines the value and the valuing of bodies, which body is less valuable and, thus, can carry the guilt of the shareholders. *The Statement* is a choreography about the
valuation of bodies, the speculation on putting some bodies at risk. As Lazaratto contends, the new forms of Capital have changed the logic of valorization, among other things, because of the performative power of advertising (Lazaratto, 2004, pág. 189), and the dynamics of financial regulation and valuation (Lazaratto, 2004, pág. 195). The Statement is, in the end, about the financialization of language and its expression through voice and movement. Here, the embodiment of language, as Baroque dance did in the dancers’ bodies, is performed through voice and, as Toscano and Kinkle discuss, «the fact that here it is the voice that ‘represents’, that stands in and articulates a fantasy of capital, of its inhuman agency, is significant,» because of «the voice’s singularly ambivalent position between matter and immateriality, body and spirit, external authority and inner conscience» (Toscano and Kinkle, 2015, págs. 44-45).

Both The Statement and Flight Patterns depict the different performativities and embodiments which neoliberal ontology can produce. The common ground of both pieces is the impossibility of showing the actual sources of the socializing body that neoliberal and financial power entail. Nonetheless, these two shows display the tension between the constant process of valuing bodies and their lives (the grievability mentioned by Judith Butler (2016)) and the ways in which Capital produces these bodies and puts them in circulation.

5. Financial crisis as a performative misfire

What is, then, the role of the financial crisis in this relationship between the economic socialization of the body and the staging of the social body?

One of the most infamous quotes from the Quaderni del Carcere by Antonio Gramsci defining crisis was that it «consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear» (Gramsci, 1979). However, although our future world cannot be born yet, it is possible to envision it in the consequences of the financial crisis. As we have previously seen, the financial system is taking the place of production as the main capitalist process (LiPuma, 2017). In particular, the crisis hints at the substitution of production by circulation. Notwithstanding, this replacement
involves a different set of relations between people, as appreciated in its definition:

Production creates value; its motive is profit (surplus value) deriving from the exploitation of labour; its aim is the accumulation of capital. Circulation does not create value; it results in profits, but these derive mostly – though not exclusively – from redistributing surplus value (Lapavitsas, 2013, pág. 10).

The concept of value is also important for the production of the subjectivity which finance boosts. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that the changing dynamics of economics also alters the socialization of the body. An economy focused on production needed a productive body, the social body which «exists only in a market economy or a mercantile mode of production» (Guéry and Deleule, 2014, pág. 60). By contrast, a financial economy based on circulation will have a highly different sort of body, namely the circulatory body. Although this is not the topic of this article, it is important to note that dance and performance art dealing with the consequences of the financial crisis do talk about the transformation of the social body from the productive to the circulatory.

Dance will also have to face the financial crisis as the failure of the performative as a mode of knowledge-power of the new socioeconomic era. Performance to this century is understood as «what discipline was to the eighteenth and nineteenth: an onto-historical formation of power and knowledge» (McKenzie, 2001, pág. 176) or, as André Lepecki summarizes it, performance «also expresses a whole new political condition of power that is co-extensive, and yet has totally different goals, to the political-aesthetic promises embedded in the artistic practices we usually identify as performance» (Lepecki, 2016, pág. 8).

Performance is, thus, a dimension of language, a new level of power, a new artistic practice related to the body and the social embodiment, and a mechanism of production of subjectivity. In addition, performativity is the functioning of economy. As Donald MacKenzie has shown, market and economic theory are linked by a performative relationship. As Appadurai states, derivative markets (the source of the financial crisis) were based on performative contracts. It was the failure of the performative chain of contracts that triggered the crisis. MacKenzie
goes further in affirming that economic theory shapes markets and the individualities that conform to it (MacKenzie, 2006).

What is the financial crisis, then? It could be said, following Appadurai, that it is the failure of the performative, the misfire of the capitalist engine. Nonetheless, far from the end of the system, it seems that financial crisis has strengthened some of the system’s dynamics. For example, one of the consequences is that financial crisis has polarized even further the accumulation of wealth (Foster, 2010; Vakulabharanam, 2009). It is possible to think of financial crises as these failures in the system, but what should not be overlooked is that failures in the system are inherent; that is, misfires are essential to the performative system. Something interesting happens when these failures occur. What the system can control is what is in the range of possibilities of the felicity or effectiveness of the performative. But when counter-performativity occurs, that is, when «practical use of an aspect of economics makes economic processes less like their depiction by economics» (MacKenzie, 2006, pág. 17), there is a wide range of reactions that the system is unable to predict or even respond to. Although failure is something essential to the system and, at some level, some outcomes of these failures are possible to manage (such as the overaccumulation of wealth because of the crisis, the increasing of public debt, etc), others are not that predictable and escape the restructuring of the system. As Shoshana Felman argues, «the act of failing thus opens up the space of referentiality – or impossible reality – not because something is missing, but because something else is done, or because something else is said: the term ‘misfire’ does not refer to an absence, but to the enactment of a difference» (Felman, 1980, pág. 57). That is, the financial crisis has opened up the possibility to see different dimensions of non-performativity, of resistance to the financial use of performance so as to mould our bodies and subjectivities.

6. Sharon Eyal or the dissimulation of the mechanical gesture as a performative failure

Sharon Eyal is an Israeli choreographer who danced in Ohad Naharin’s Batsheva Dance Company between 1990 and 2008. Although this company started out working with the Graham technique, since 1990, when Ohad Naharin was appointed artistic director, the company has been
developing its work using Gaga as its method and movement language. The Gaga movement emphasizes the sensation of bodies testing their limits. As Ohad Naharin states in an interview, Gaga is also a mode of communication with dancers and a way of relating with one another through their bodies. In 2013, along with her long-time collaborator Gai Behar, Eyal launched her new company L-E-V. Although her language has Gaga nuances, she has been able to forge a new movement language in her latest pieces, where the music of DJ Ori Lichtik is essential.

In 2015, Eyal created *OCD Love*, after Neil Hilborn’s homonymous poem, in which she put into practice her new choreographic language. One of the verses of that poem reads:

> When you have Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, you don’t really get quiet moments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Even</th>
<th>did</th>
<th>I lock the doors?</th>
<th>Yes.</th>
<th>thinking:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did</td>
<td>I</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did</td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Did I wash my hands? Yes. (Hilborn, 2013)

Precisely, what Eyal does is transform this thinking obsession of having everything under control into a compulsive body which cannot stop moving. *OCD*’s dancers do not stop moving around the stage, in consonance with the rhythm of Lichtik’s electronic music. Eyal creates an industrial body that is in constant circulation, a body that works constantly between synchrony and dis-synchrony. The organization of the dancers’ bodies plays with this tension and, while in the lower body we can see a homogeneity amongst the bodies, the upper part shows a more fluid and organic kind of movement. There is, hence, a tension between the common and the particular; that is, between the homogeneous and the individual. It is this aspect that is more interesting for this article.

Something which Eyal first created in *OCD*, but which would develop in subsequent works, is the choreography of the asynchronies within the industrial body, thus creating an egress of this mechanical and automatic body. Probably, the best depiction of this gestural line of flight was performed in *Used to Be Blonde*, a choreography created with 16-
23-year-old dancers from the National Youth Dance Company (United Kingdom). All the bodies dancing in unison form an indistinguishable mass of bodies in movement, a motion which does not belong to them, but which is equated to their bodies in an organic way. Nevertheless, from amongst the bodies, the spectator who is carefully observing can always distinguish a body starting to dance out of synchrony. This out-of-joint body begins an arrhythmia within the automatic body from a dissimulation. This discrepant body does not mark its individuality, but its singularity, and starts dancing with the other bodies, in the stream of movement captured by the choreography apparatus (2007), reaching a point where it may be seen diverging from the movement of the others, hence creating dissonances within the system. Eyal works, precisely, with the unexpected resolution of the failure in a performative system. It is a misfire (a gesture) inherent to the system (dance), but which disrupts the whole structure and triggers a modification which cannot be predicted, as appreciated in Shoshana Felman’s theory. The relevant matter of this process is that the differing body makes all this change through dissimulation: through slight – at the beginning imperceptible – changes in the choreographical movements, thus modifying the structure of the choreographic system until disagreement is visible and all the system and the social body are reshaped. It is this discrepancy that changes the whole system, even if the singularity is extracted from the material of that system.

In Used to Be Blonde, Eyal worked on the choreography in collaboration with the dancers. The young dancers came from different parts of the United Kingdom and their dancing backgrounds were diverse. Although the corps de ballet works as a unit, as a swarm, in Berardi’s words, some of the dancers gradually separate their gestures in order to change the organization of the dancing system. Dissimulation is the condition of possibility of a movement which escapes the choreographical power of financialization. It is a movement which escapes the non-language of finance (which homogenizes it through circulation) through a singular language, through an infiltrated gesture. It is an arrhythmia within the system:

In permeating our actions, neoliberal conditioning shows how it has already captured subjectivity. Having captured subjectivity, it permeates the making of art and the making of discourses about art. The
conditioning becomes our shared nervous system. Including art’s and theory’s nervous systems. Through them, we sense and make sense, we enflesh. Bodies fibrillating with and against the rhythms of our era. However, in between systole and diastole, in arrhythmia, we discover the permeability in neoliberalism’s permeation of subjectivity. There and then, between beatings, we breathe and take a break, we find vacuoles and gaps, we cut grooves where we run, dance, write, study, make love, live, and permeate back to infiltrate and undo the conditioning (Lepecki, 2016, pág. 12).

When the discrepant body, the singular one, starts to disagree with the swarm, the conditions of financial subjection start to be transparent. The singular body is playing a choreographical game in which dissimulation is key, because it has a two-fold feature: first, to uncover the processes of subjection at a performative and choreographic level; second, to show other ways of ‘enfleshing’ the movement, that is, to depict performative alternatives.

The movement is dissimulated because it does not attempt to be a unique way to leave the swarm, that is, it is not a recipe of resistance. As previously seen, neoliberalism is a powerful tool to subsume every aspect of everyday life into the economic realm through financialization. Everything can be financialized. Dissimulation is a possible way, but not the only one, and has no clear goal, except to allow the emergence of singularities. As Lyotard explains:

It would be the bottle thrown into the sea, but without desperation, without ultima verba, without its launch being a last attempt to signal and communicate a message entrusted to it. There would be no message in our bottle; only a few energies, whose transmission and transformation were left and were desired to be unpredictable (Lyotard, 1993, pág. 255).

What Sharon Eyal does with this choreographic movement is show how the financialized body, the automatic body, can be undermined. Nonetheless, it also shows that this eroding process is, firstly, something local and, secondly, not possible to do through a general plan, as it does not serve for each body. Each body has to find its way to dissimulate, as dissimulation happens contextually, that is, locally. Notwithstanding,
within this different dissimulation, the different bodies have to find singularities amongst themselves.

7. Conclusions

Throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, dance and performance art have attempted to generate a new language of the political body which challenged the different ways through which Capitalism has shaped bodies. The main goal of the militant dance has been the design of different choreopolitics capable of diverging from the different ways in which Capitalism is embodied and socialized. Nevertheless, dance has overlooked the power of the economy in producing embodiment and how this is displayed in dance.

This paper has attempted to explain the highly important relationship between dance and the economy. Within this wide topic, I have tried, on the one hand, to understand the importance of the financial crisis to uncover some of the processes by which the economy produces different types of embodiment. On the other hand, it has been important to grasp how the financial socialization of bodies has a translation into choreography, and how this translation has its foundation in the historical structure of dance.

Firstly, the aim of this paper was to understand the somatic condition produced by the financialization of social sphere and how dance stages this embodiment. The production of bodies by neoliberalism and the financial system creates new types of movement that can be traced by dance and its choreographic apparatus. As a pending topic related to this issue, it will be important to fully understand how body and embodiment are connected to the socioeconomic production of space in neoliberalism, and to apprehend how movement is conditioned by this production. Secondly, dance can show how the system failures at the body level can give us a way to break the performative wheel of the financial system.

So as to illustrate the theory developed in the theoretical parts of the text, I have analyzed some choreographies covering the embodiment of the neoliberal reason and a possible performative/choreographic line of flight in the pieces by Crystal Pite and Sharon Eyal. Obviously, these
dance works are only brief examples, but they are used in this paper to provide instances of different approaches to choreographic analysis.

Notwithstanding, this paper proposes various ways to understand the relationship between the economy, the financial system, structural crisis and dance, something which even so needs to be further analyzed in future papers. Likewise, the choreographies used herein may also be discussed in more depth and related to other choreographers, performers and works which can shed light on this topic.

8. Bibliography


Pite, Crystal (2017). «‘My way of coping with the world at the moment’ - Crystal Pite on Flight Pattern (The Royal Ballet)», available in https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9tSBkT9AFWA [17/8/2019]


9. Notes


2 For further information on the neoliberal idea of humanity, see Escalante Gonzalbo, 2016, págs. 141-174.
