

Bodies' Borderlands: Right in the Middle - Dis/abilities on Stage

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Bodies' borderlands

Right in the middle – dis/abilities on stage

Susanne Foellmer

Aging (in dance) is often connected with the question of what a body is able or not able to do. Older dancers for example are often being asked (or asking themselves) within the horizon of audiences' or colleagues' expectations what the body still can do in terms of a certain physical capacity or virtuosity when it comes for example to ballet. However, this assumption is quite problematic. Although companies like the NDT 3 (Netherland Dance Theater) enable older dancers to be still present on stage, they often focus on comic characters, using for example singing as a mode of expression, relying on the idea of a professional life filled with rich artistic experiences made through the lifelong career of each protagonist. Apart from being an important project keeping older dancers (here over 40) in their profession, the whole dispatch of it is still linked to an artistic and social opinion of deficit, where the no longer highly flexible capacities of the body have to be replaced by aesthetic substitutes – for example expressed in a focus on (verbal and mimic) narration in the chosen pieces.

The topos of ability, so the hypothesis, is still a prevailing assumption in dance, even though somatic practices like body-mind centering – used for generating moving material on stage – neglect a virtuosic or representative movement vocabulary. Even more: since postmodern dance a different view on the body has been established, withdrawing increasingly from concepts of beauty – an attitude already present in some experiments of the historic dance avant-garde where some of its protagonists were dealing with an “aesthetics of

ugliness”.ⁱⁱ Nevertheless capable bodies in terms of certain applied dance techniques and skills are still an important factor in the artistic conceptions of many choreographers and dancers, though there is an increasing turn towards alternative practices, such as yoga or Feldenkrais.

When it comes to dis-abilities in contemporary dance they often appear as a mode of deliberate restriction in order to generate new, uninformed movement material on stage – for instance as it has been developed in the work for William Forsythe’s piece *Decreation* (2003).ⁱⁱⁱ Moreover the body is situated as an incomplete other and thus as an appearance of alterity in terms of disfigured or metamorphic motions on stage, presented for example in the pieces of Meg Stuart (*Disfigure Study*, 1991) or Xavier Le Roy (*Self Unfinished*, 1998). In-ability hence serves as a motor in order to gain access to new aesthetic experiences, though usually presented by well (postmodern) trained bodies.

Whereas the strategies in contemporary dance huddle the spectators in a certain comfort zone, (almost) no matter what kind of displacements are happening on stage, the appearance of physically or mentally disabled dancers on the other hand throws a different light on the question of what a body can do, and unfolds a different aesthetic connection between protagonists and audiences. Petra Kupperts highlights that here the “familiar [is] becoming unfamiliar”. Other than in performances of the contemporary dance scene, we are not able to contemplate about a “safely ‘other’” on stage: disabled performers show that “this” could also happen to us.^{iv}

Hence the following text examines artistic strategies of bodily self-restraint as well as extreme exposures of weakness and disability on stage, confronting concepts of a “detoured” virtuosity, aroused through movement obstacles, with a sheer dilapidation of the body by working with actors at the evening of their life. Thus the main focus lies on dis/ability as in/capability through different modes of hindrance.

Capabilities

In the piece *boDY-rEMIX* of the Canadian choreographer Marie Chouinard (2005) the dancers are using various means of physical support that sometimes hinder or deviate their movement.^v These are supplements that usually do not appear on a dance stage and are commonly connected with moving disabilities in consequence of disease. Some of the dancers for instance are using crutches: but contrary to their intrinsic function the supporting sticks are far too short to facilitate an upright walk. Thus the dancers appear like creeping insects, crossing the stage slowly with folded legs. Others are using the crutches by sitting on them, or push a walking frame in order to support their passage on stage like a mobile barre. Utilities like the point shoe or the barre generally used to enable an upright position or to elongate the dancer's leg are here slightly ironized by being reversely converted into devices that are usually applied when "moving-help" for ill or old people is needed. In Chouinard's piece those appliances function as means to facilitate a deformed contemporary dance vocabulary.

Ann Cooper Albright argues that often disabled bodies on stage are codified as being grotesque in terms of appearing "out of norm" but finds examples of virtuosity in this field – for example in the wheelchair dance of Alito Alessi and Emery Blackwell in their piece *Wheels of Fortune*.^{vi} Both this piece and Chouinard's *boDY-rEMIX* are not fostering a freakish defiguration or developing an outside position of monsters and other creatures not fitting into the realm of everyday life.^{vii} But as Chouinard focuses on aesthetic aberrations, letting the dancers appear temporarily as strange insects on stage, are there moments of grotesqueness to be detected?

Often the grotesque is used as a place holder in the light of occurrences one is not immediately able to categorize. Along with Wolfgang Kayser the grotesque is described as a receptional mode, pointing to the uncanny moment of an aesthetic experience letting the

observer temporarily fall out of any abilities of recognition. The beholder's perception of paintings by Hieronymus Bosch serves as an example to emphasize his observations.^{viii} On the other hand Mikhail Bakhtin focuses on the perspective of the protagonists themselves and especially the (socially) subversive strategies of hyperbolic, open and hybrid bodies in carnival, analyzed with regard to the novels of François Rabelais.^{ix} Within this discourse I am arguing that the grotesque is an event that is always connected to specifically framed situations in a certain apparatus (here the theater) in which grotesqueness is always on its way between social or artistic "margins" – hence a normative exterior – and the (mainstream) center. Here aesthetic phenomena, once being out of any possible categories and thus meant to be unknown, unusual, disturbing and therefore providing a kind of innovative otherness, quickly become a manifest part of discourses as certain patterns of disfigured body images in contemporary dance already show.^x

The philosopher Bernhard Waldenfels differentiates the other, and herein the alien, into three different modes of foreignness: the *normal*, like pedestrians on the street, not knowing each other; the *structural* one, as for example listening to a foreign language or experiencing unknown traditions, but still knowing how to navigate in those patterns of uncertainty; and the *radical* foreignness: events at the borderlines of (rational) comprehension, exceeding the interpretational horizon and leaving the subject in a state of (temporary) disorientation.^{xi} I would now position the grotesque right between the second and the third modulation of foreignness, as there has to be always something familiar left in order to experience it as being grotesque and thus appearing to be out of the habitual framework of aesthetic concepts or social categories.

Back to Marie Chouinard: her piece *boDY-rEMIX* accordingly provides already a canon of deviated bodily movement on stage, fitting into this special field in contemporary dance developed since the middle of the 1990s. Thus the emerging aberrations on stage do not

match the scheme of the grotesque as an aesthetical phenomenon anymore, but rather reach the moment where such dance patterns are a commonly recognized convention in the realm of a current (Western) dance “tradition”. Moreover her dancers are highly capable and rather serving a principle that Albright understands as “Techno Bodies”. Here the idea of technology is strictly bound to a highly trained dancer’s body, as for example Louise Lecavallier’s performances within the framework of the company La La La Human Steps, where she denies the conception of the etherious Romantic ballerina but displays herself in a muscular, sinewy and almost androgynous shape.^{xii} Dance scholar Kerstin Evert even neglects the notion of a natural body, declaring that the body in dance is conceived of as a technological phenomenon from the very beginning, as she elaborates by means of the pieces of William Forsythe (until the end of the 1990s) and Merce Cunningham.^{xiii}

Thus in *boDY-rEMIX* the used shortened crutches and walking frames are rather serving as an “enabling support” to make fragmented or distorted contemporary dance movements possible. They also create an ironic mirror to for example the point shoes as a similar prosthesis in dance, giving the ballerina the semblance of floating. Slipping the hands into the point shoes in one scene of the performance, thus mimicking *Swan Lake*, and using the crutches as a crawling help in another situation, Chouinard and her dancers are making a wry comment on both ballet and the contemporary dance strategies of defiguration after all.

Other than the capable and well-trained bodies in Chouinard’s production the question remains how in-capability is literally dealt with on the theater stage.

Incapabilities

The stage is separated into two parts. While looking like a sickroom on the right side, the left part of it is decorated with some stylish designer furniture composing a sitting room,

dominated by a delicate-looking, clean white sofa. Romeo Castellucci's production *Sul concetto di Volto Nel Figlio di Dio* (*On the Concept of Face, regarding the Son of God*, 2011)^{xiv} reduces the interaction of human beings in this setting to one of its simplest relations: the care of a son for his sick father, suffering from dementia. While the son is meticulously dressed in business clothes, obviously being about to leave for work, the father wears a hospital gown covered by a bathrobe. The son's outfit looks quite inappropriate for the work he is doing when nursing his father: each time he is ready to leave the apartment, the father literally shits in his swaddling cloth so badly that all the liquid flows out and covers the stage. In a Sisyphean attempt of labor the son has to swaddle the father again and again, doing so with an almost unbelievable patience, facing the growing despair of his father. On the back wall of the stage a huge male portrait in Renaissance style is hanging, possibly denoting the face of Jesus watching over the scene unfolding before its very eyes.^{xv} The experience of literally attending this piece of distraught nursing is overwhelming: an almost unbearable smell is creeping through the tiers of the audience, whose reluctance (and shock) to watch the ongoing procedure on stage and perceive this spectacle of decay and devotional care is nearly palpable.

Romeo Castellucci and his Societas Raffaello Sanzio is well known for presenting extreme characters on stage in the sense of for example working with sick or anorectic actors and thus blurring the boundaries of fiction and "realness", as for instance in the piece *Giulio Cesare* (1997). Besides both very bulky and extremely meager protagonists this production also includes an actor deprived of his voice, caused by cancer of the throat, and thus letting sound the technically amplified tone of the voiceless man like an impersonal machine. According to Erika Fischer-Lichte this strategy of staging bears the character of liminality as illness and the presentiment of death is not only acted in the mode of "as if". As a plain matter of fact it causes a deeply unsettling experience for the spectators.^{xvi}

I myself am still troubled by the experience of *Sul concetto di Volto Nel Figlio di Dio* as the idea of theatrical presentability is at stake, which makes it even difficult to distance from it in order to apply an analytical view in a scholarly manner. I hence want to suggest some aesthetical and political trails to walk along, touching the aspects of theatricality, visibility, the “bare life” and again the question of a grotesque body in this case.

In *Sul concetto di Volto Nel Figlio di Dio* the figure of the old man seems to get totally out of line of the theatrical conventions and one could even doubt if this perpetual spectacle of nursing could be regarded as a simple theater play at all. Fischer-Lichte situates the duplicity of the performer’s body as being the basic prerequisite of acting in theater. She distinguishes between the phenomenal body of the person ‘behind’ the actor as such and the semiotic body – for example embodying a role in a theatrical set-up. In his frailty, being unable to literally hold himself together (or at least very convincingly displaying the effect of being incontinent), the father in Castellucci’s production displays an impartible body as the “performance” doesn’t cover the idea of a semiotic figure at all. The body rather seems to be a material body-as-such, a bare phenomenal entity exceeding any possible semiotic significance: excrements simply denote excrements – they boldly are (and smell) what they are.

Certainly the strategy of interweaving the (private) experience of a performer into a theatrical production is a common practice, especially in contemporary dance and performance. **xvii** But the attitude is always disposing of a certain mode or style of performative presentation and usually without leaving the frame of being-set-into-theater. Also the activities of performance artists of the neo-avant-garde, like Marina Abramović, putting the body as artistic material into play, hardly seem to be in line with Castellucci’s provocations at the first sight, as endurance or pain are key features for stepping out of a particular representative theatrical frame. **■** Moreover the actions were usually performed

in galleries or other venues than the “traditional” theater. Castellucci on the contrary affirms the conventions of theater as a site of representation, sticking to its conventions, such as the division between stage and audience. Nevertheless certain “performative effects” with regard to the “authenticity” of the events are emerging, especially when the body of the father denies being split into a theatrical canvas and a living entity. Even more so the maintenance of the theatrical frame gives way to an aesthetics of assault that takes possession of the audience in a situation where it is not prepared for it. Thus a similar liminality emerges as Fischer-Lichte observes it when experiencing body art performances like those of Abramović, whose art lets collapse any theatrical set-ups and leads the audience temporarily into a precarious sphere of uncertainty – for example in relation to the conventions of attending a performance. **xix**

In general Fischer-Lichte emphasizes the concept of co-presence between performers/actors and spectators as a relation of exchange of bodies being present in one joint space and in one specific time span. Being regarded within the perspective of cathartic healing and thus modifying the attitude of the audience (e.g. in a moral sense) in the theatrical tradition of the eighteenth century **xx** the idea of emotional competence of the audience is led ad absurdum in Castellucci’s piece, as any kind of empathy – at least in terms of sympathizing – is heavily repelled at least by the odor of the occurrences on stage. The old and frail body of the father rather guides us into spheres of our own existential orientations, a liminal threshold that not everybody is willing to step over as easily as one could think of when attending a performance of Marina Abramović – where at least the condition of a certain performative “role” of an autonomous artist still seems to apply, regardless of the fact that it involves her/his own sheer body.

Sul concetto di Volto Nel Figlio di Dio is hard to bear not only because of its attack on the spectator’s senses but also as it shows a body that usually is visibly hidden in a (digitally) media-driven society. Not surprisingly quite often the notion of visuality and visibility is very

prominent when it comes to the aging body in different scholarly discussions – for example of the artist’s body. In the anthology on aging women by Kathleen Woodward, Jodi Brook for instance focuses on the performance of Gloria Swanson as Norma Desmond in *Sunset Boulevard* (1950), putting age as a mode of crisis into the center of her reflections. Here the situation concentrates on the moment of realization that the actress’s body is no longer regarded as young and thus always renewable to an audience’s gaze. Gloria Swanson is acting out the moment of becoming aware of it, and Brooks asks,

What happens to these “aging actresses” who themselves once represented the modern and the new? What happens when this “new” is discarded for another “new” [. . .] What happens when these women no longer represent the shock of the new, that is, the common fetish, but rather a different kind of shock, the shock of finding oneself discarded? **xxi**

Those reflections frequently go along with the awareness of a changed visibility in the double sense of the outer appearance and along with it an often decreasing attention within the network of the fe/male gaze. Accordingly Simone de Beauvoir articulates aging as a visual shock effect:

I have known many women whose age has been revealed to them by the same kind of unpleasant experience that happened to Marie Dormoy: she told [. . .] how a man, deceived by her youthful shape, followed her in the street; as he overtook her he saw her face, and instead of accosting her he hurried on. **xxii**

The other functions as a facial mirror in which our own age and thus our social status are reflected literally as a visual matter of fact. **xxiii** While the problem here contours the double nature of visibility, of both being shocked by the dissonance between face and body and then consequently shading away the view or letting older women nearly disappear in the circle of erotic desire, the body of “physically impaired” people (here performers) often changes from

the “invisibility” especially older women are suffering from – as well as the marginalization disabled people have to deal with – to a “hypervisibility”^{xxiv} in the light of a curious, hardly hidden “medical stare”, as Petra Kuppers points out.^{xxv}

Such a visual concept in theater is accompanied by a mode of presence that Fischer-Lichte denotes as being a “strong concept of presence”, usually bound to a special bodily presence and talent of an actor, providing an “intense experience of presentness” while performing on stage and thus being able to strongly attract the attention of the audience.^{xxvi} Hence I would argue that in working with disabled performers this concept is a composite one: a meshwork between the visual appearance of the (physically) impaired performer(s) and their professional abilities to act on a theater stage.^{xxvii} In Castellucci’s piece now this concept of presence seems to be not bound to certain acting skills anymore but merely comes into being by the very fact of being sick. Thus it goes beyond age as a crisis in life – for example in middle age – and hence being a (terminal) situation to get over with successfully, but plainly shows disability with regard to progressive decline. Also the performance reaches far beyond the conditions of the visible and a curious gaze executed by the audience in a quite literal sense, perceiving the almost unbearable smell while the spectacle of decay is developing on stage. We as the audience are undergoing this experience while being watched ourselves by the gaze of the portrait of Christ, being placed in the back of the stage and observing the events both on the proscenium and in the auditorium, thus reverberating our own frailty. It hinders any curiosity or a medical stare as we are reminded of what might happen to us and what we would love to avoid being reminded of.

With Giorgio Agamben the body especially of the father can be regarded as being situated in the context of the “bare life”.^{xxviii} Agamben understands the human being closely connected to its body in a sociopolitical sense, as both an exclusion from and a basis for political subjectification. With Aristotle he distinguishes the “simple fact of living” and

the “politically qualified life”.^{xxix} The father in *Sul concetto di Volto Nel Figlio di Dio* is no “homo laborans” any more with regard to an active, productive human being, as Agamben argues with Hannah Arendt.^{xxx} He is contrasted by his professionally employed son, who is, however, hindered in going to work because of his indigent father – but doing “bare”, home-based “body work” in nursing his parent.

In *The Human Condition* Arendt links labor to ancient slavery and develops the concept by focusing on biopolitics in terms of “occupations that served the needs for the maintenance of life. [. . .] To labor meant to be enslaved by necessity, [. . .] the necessities of life”.^{xxxi} With John Locke she distinguished between “working hands”, comprising producing craftsmen (“Handwerker”), and a “laboring body” that is not involved in the circle of production but “simply” has to fulfil the “necessities of life”.^{xxxii} Thus “work” and “labor” are differentiated by their relation to a product, which with regard to “labor” is missing, as Arendt points out.^{xxxiii} Transferred to Castellucci’s piece the son literally becomes a bare (corporal) laborer, trying to serve and fulfill the needs of his father. Following Agamben, he himself could be regarded as a biopolitical outsider: the “bare life” is assigned by being excluded from any political power but by the mechanisms of inclusion as he emphasizes:

Instead of the decisive fact is that, together with the process by which the exception everywhere becomes the rule, the realm of bare life – which is originally situated at the margins of the political order – gradually begins to coincide with the political realm, and exclusion and inclusion, outside and inside [. . .] enter into a zone of irreducible indistinction. At once excluding bare life from and capturing it within the political order, the state of exception actually constituted [. . .] the hidden foundation on which the entire political system rested.^{xxxiv}

Thus Agamben refines Michel Foucault's concept of the disciplined body as an area of political examination in terms of a "new micro-physics of power"^{xxxv} but claims the body-as-such as being already intrinsically tied to the political system. Albeit the father's body in Castellucci's piece does not provide an area to be disciplined anymore: he and especially his caring son are deeply connected to the political relations of power.

As an excursus I would like to refer to the German health care system, from which people suffering from dementia are profiting only since January 2013. (Old) people having to be cared for are divided into so-called nursing levels, grading from I to III, based on their competence to deal with everyday life ("Alltagskompetenz").^{xxxvi} For demented persons the level of competence is hard to define, though, because what such a person is physically still able to do highly varies from case to case. In Castellucci's work the father hardly can walk or do any "ordinary" movement necessary to manage everyday life. While he slowly staggers around, his movements also shed light on the seemingly simplicity of ordinary motion. With Roberta Galler, Ann Cooper Albright criticizes the "myth of the perfect body" and accentuates "the need for physical and bodily control" in American society. Referring to Ynestra King she points out this need for control as a means to manage the exigencies of society and thus situates "the disabled body as a social antithesis – a body out of control."^{xxxvii} *Sul concetto di Volto Nel Figlio di Dio* presents bodies out of control: both the father, who is literally not capable of holding himself together any more, and the son, whose life is dominated by the needs of his helpless father, thus losing control of a well-managed and chronologically organized life.

Back to Agamben: he further marks the entrance into becoming a human and hence a political being with Aristotle at the passage from voice to speech, distinguishing man from other creatures: "There is politics because man is the living being who, in language, separates and opposes himself to his own bare life and, at the same time, maintains himself into relation

to that bare life in an inclusive exclusion.”^{xxxviii} In the piece both men step out of this order as the father mostly mutters words of desperate apology for his ongoing incontinence, which the son responds to by murmuring consoling verbal formulas. Usually those phrases have an appeasing effect, but here the attempts of the son are without any consequence. Both looseness and moaning continue, creating an eternal circle of despair. Also conversation in the sense of exchanging information or another form of elaborated speech does not take place anymore.

Thinking again about the notion of the grotesque, the scheme of a grotesque body does not apply here. While Bakhtin is focusing on open bodies and overflowing liquids blurring the boundaries between body and world,^{xxxix} the body of the father becomes an individual one, which is, in Bakhtin’s concept, the contradiction of the open materiality of the grotesque body. He is especially denominating the face as primarily not holding to the character of grotesqueness as it bears the signs of personality and hence performs the individuality of a human being.^{xl} Castellucci’s piece shows a face of suffering mirrored by the son, and then the even-minded face of the son of God in the portrait overlooking the occurrences and the fruitless attempts to console the father both physically and mentally with its everlasting gaze, thus turning the individual drama on stage into an allegory of social and human in/abilities (fig. 8.1). Furthermore the portrait’s gaze confronts the audience with its own vision in a double sense of its meaning: it unfolds the view on individual yet social dramas that we usually avoid being confronted with, and it reveals the already existing vision of an aging society beside the clean and seemingly effective world of profession and work – consequently uncovering it as being labor.

Figure 8.1 Romeo Castellucci, *Sul concetto di Volto Nel Figlio di Dio (On the Concept of Face, regarding the Son of God, 2011)*. Photograph courtesy of Klaus Lefebvre.

On the theatrical level Castellucci disturbs the “pact of reception” establishing the relation between audience and performers by keeping the distance of watching and being watched.^{xli} He simultaneously transgresses the unilateral direction of the gaze by letting the larger-than-life portrait look back at us and thus catches us in the act of excessive demands of our senses, caused by the overwhelming smell that baffles the reclined, distanced attitude of the common spectator.^{xlii}

Far from using artistic practices of the grotesque, *Sul concetto di Volto Nel Figlio di Dio* confronts the audience with the brutal and usually invisible and superseded fact of aging. An uncanny familiarity^{xliii} provoked by the ongoing choreography of failure reveals that “this” not only could but also is very likely to happen to us. By a way of “acting” that exceeds any notions of (physical) capability, concepts of theatrical ability are shifting into general questions of social and human behavior.

Marie Chouinard’s *boDY-rEMIX* shows perfectly trained bodies deviating and hyperbolizing ballet’s and contemporary dance’s movement principles but at least holding strictly to the methods of artistic alienation already established in the contexts of choreography since some decades, and hence uses grotesque strategies rather as a common tool in a mainstream artistic apparatus. Thus our gaze is rather an aesthetically led, curious one that never endangers our safe position as a watching audience. On the other hand, while Romeo Castellucci’s characters fail to be grotesque in a Bakhtinian sense – as being filled with an ongoing drama of human relations – the piece then again approaches the field of the grotesque in the way Kayser puts it: as the “experience of an alienated world”.^{xliv} Alienation here takes place as a paradoxical motion which by the smell attacking the senses simply skips the level of (distanced) vision: transgressing the borders of aesthetic experience (following theatrical conventions) and hence provoking an atmosphere of uncanniness, the piece leads us into the sphere of the social and the all too well-known but often repressed problems of

everyday life, which we are either well acquainted with or at least cannot escape from sooner or later. *Sul concetto di Volto Nel Figlio di Dio* dunks us into the disaster of aging by literally learning it the hard way, thus confronting us with existential themes of life, hidden in the body that all too suddenly lets us feel that we are not always the master of our own house: a sudden awareness of being both suppressed and insufferably close.

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i As for example in the pieces of the Berlin-based choreographers Frédéric Gies and Isabelle Schad.

ii Gabriele Brandstetter, *Tanz-Lektüren: Körperbilder und Raumfiguren der Avantgarde* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1995), 35. The dancer and actress Valeska Gert could serve as one example for that. See Susanne Foellmer, *Valeska Gert: Fragmente einer Avantgardistin in Tanz und Schauspiel der 1920er Jahre* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2006), 144–149.

iii See Dana Caspersen, “Der Körper denkt: Form, Sehen, Disziplin und Tanzen”, in *William Forsythe: Denken in Bewegung*, ed. Gerald Siegmund (Berlin: Henschel, 2004), 114.

iv Petra Kuppers, *Disability and Contemporary Performance: Bodies on the Edge* (London: Routledge, 2004), 68.

v I saw the piece on August 11th 2005 at Hebbel Theater Berlin (Festival Tanz im August).

vi Ann Cooper Albright, *Choreographing Difference: The Body and Identity in Contemporary Dance* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1997), 89.

vii On physical “outsiders” often being regarded as “freaks” or “monsters” see Philip Auslander and Carrie Sandahl, “Disability Studies in Commotion with Performance Studies”, in *Bodies in Commotion: Disability and Performance*, eds. Philip Auslander and Carrie Sandahl (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 1–12: 3.

viii Wolfgang Kayser, *Das Grotteske: Seine Gestaltung in Malerei und Dichtung*, reprint of the issue from 1957 (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 2004), 198, 36.

ix Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1968), 303–367.

x Pieces like *Self Unfinished* by Xavier Le Roy already became a kind of model for disfigurations of body and movement in contemporary dance. See Susanne Foellmer, *Am Rand der Körper: Inventuren des Unabgeschlossenen im zeitgenössischen Tanz* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2009).

xi Bernhard Waldenfels, *Topographie des Fremden: Studien zur Phänomenologie des Fremden I* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1997), 10–37.

xii Albright, *Choreographing Difference*, 28–35.

xiii Kerstin Evert, *DanceLab: Zeitgenössischer Tanz und Neue Technologien* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), 10.

xiv I saw the performance on March 6th 2012 at Hebbel am Ufer, Berlin (HAU 1).

xv In the following text I am concentrating on the main part of the piece. It is then followed by two final sequences: children entering the stage and throwing deactivated hand grenades on the portrait, which is then ripped from the supporting wall, “causing” dark liquids to drip down the almost shredded image.

xvi Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics* (London: Routledge, 2008), 177.

xvii For instance in Xavier Le Roy’s lecture performance *Product of Circumstances* (1999), where he combines autobiographical narration with cut-outs of his pieces. See also Gabriele

Brandstetter, “Geschichte(n) Erzählen im Performance/Theater der neunziger Jahre”, in *Transformationen: Theater der neunziger Jahre*, eds. Erika Fischer-Lichte, Doris Kolesch and Christel Weiler (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 1999), 29.

xviii Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson talk about an “aggressive resurfacing of the artist’s persona through the enactment of her or his body in or as the work of art” since the 1960s. Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson, “Introduction”, in *Performing the Body/Performing the Text*, eds. Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson (London: Routledge, 1999), 4.

xix Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 175–176.

xx Ibid., 38–39, 94–95.

xxi Jodi Brooks, “Performing Aging/Performance Crisis (for Norma Desmond, Baby Jane, Margo Channing, Sister George – and Myrtle)”, in *Figuring Age: Women, Bodies, Generations*, ed. Kathleen Woodward (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 234.

xxii Simone de Beauvoir, *The Coming of Age* (1970) (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), 288.

xxiii Ibid., 291.

xxiv Koppers, *Disability and Contemporary Performance*, 49.

xxv Petra Koppers, “Bodies, Hysteria, Pain: Staging the Invisible”, in *Bodies in Commotion: Disability and Performance*, eds. Philip Auslander and Carrie Sandahl (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 147–162, 148.

xxvi Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 95–96.

xxvii This concept applies for example to the piece *Disabled Theater* by Jérôme Bel and Theater Hora (2012), where the disabled protagonists are showing well their professional abilities to act and even lead the beginning curious gaze of the audience into a view on professionally acting people on stage.

xxviii Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

xxix Ibid., 2.

xxx Ibid., 3.

xxxi Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 83–84.

xxxii Ibid., 80.

xxxiii Ibid. Michel de Certeau refers to the idea of production with regard to dying. In the discourse of work the dying human being appears as being expelled from the social conditions linked to it: “The dying man is the lapse of this discourse. [A] subject[] without action”. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 191.

xxxiv Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 9.

xxxv Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 139.

xxxvi Referring to the information provided by the German Ministry of Health, “Pflegestufen”, <http://www.bmg.bund.de/pflege/wer-ist-pflegebeduerftig/pflegestufen.html>, last accessed April 12th 2013.

xxxvii Albright, *Choreographing Difference*, 73.

xxxviii Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 8.

xxxix Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 334–339.

xl Ibid., 316.

xli Adam Czirak establishes this unilateral relation of the gaze between audience and performer as a fundamental constellation in theater, which in contemporary theater and dance often is interrupted or dissolved. Adam Czirak, *Partizipation der Blicke: Szenerien des Sehens und Gesehenwerdens in Theater und Performance* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2012), 203–210.

xlii In an interview, Castellucci explains his choice of the portrait by wanting to “create[] the impression of a reversed spectatorship”. Romeo Castellucci on July 24th 2011, after Sandra d’Urso, “On the Theology of Romeo Castellucci’s Theatre and the Politics of the Christian ‘Occupation’ of His Stage”, in *Theatre Research International*, Vol. 38, No. 1, March 2013, 34–46, 39. As D’Urso reports, the performance at Théâtre de la Ville in Paris (October 21st 2011) was interrupted because of religious reasons when a group of young Christians conquered the stage, finally causing a police operation in order to calm down the situation. D’Urso, “On the Theology of Romeo Castellucci’s Theatre”, 34–35.

xliii Cf. Koppers, *Disability and Contemporary Performance*, 68.

xliv Kayser, *Das Grotteske*, 198.