



Title of the article: The Actions of Presence – Decoloniality in the Klaus Vianna Technique

Name of the Authors: Cora M. Laszlo, Ph.D. Student University of California – Los Angeles (UCLA)

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The Actions of Presence – Decoloniality in the Klauss Vianna Technique

Abstract

The Klauss Vianna Technique (KVT) is a Brazilian contemporary dance, and somatic education approach largely focused on improvisation. Central to the technique, as an important concept and topic of practice, is the notion of presence. In this paper, I will show how KVT works with presence, and the possible implications for dance practices and studies, as well as for everyday movement. I will do so based on my decades of experience with KVT as an artist, teacher, and scholar, as well as by establishing a conversation about how presence is formulated by different scholars, theories, and fields, such as performance studies, *teoria corpomídia*, and decolonial studies. KVT's long gestation, stems from the lifetime work of Klauss Vianna (1928–1992), Angel Vianna (1928–), and their son Rainer Vianna (1958–1995) and reflects their practice that began in the early 1950s, meaning that it is enmeshed in Brazil's recent history. The practice began by questioning the pedagogical imposition of classical ballet not only as a normative form but also in the ways it made Brazilian movement expression ultimately subservient to European models. As KVT continues to be transmitted and reconceived by diverse artists and educators in a country marked by colonial epistemologies, I argue that it can contribute to decoloniality in ways that go beyond its historical genesis. By understanding presence as an ongoing and collaborative practice that occurs by sharpening and shifting modes of attention, KVT allows a critical praxis. In doing so, by focusing attention on their present movements, they can reorient future ones. This text discusses what presence as praxis can contribute to practices of dissent. It also to contribute to the field of international dance studies by outlining aspects of this technique, which remains largely unknown outside of Brazil.

Keywords: Klauss Vianna Technique, presence studies, attention, decolonial practice.

Contact information: coralaszlo@ucla.edu

Chegança

I learned to begin my Klauss Vianna Technique (KVT) classes by chatting while massaging our feet in a circle. Beginning the class this way enables awakening, at the same time, our structural base and propeller for movement and our relationships with the group. It is a *chegança*, a Portuguese word for the ongoing action of arrival—or arriving as an opening, not as an endpoint. A *chegança* is an emerging action merged with its previous and forthcoming temporalities because it embraces both the pathways that allowed one to arrive at that point and the consequences of what has been initiated. The notion of *Chegança*, therefore, stretches and blurs the linear notion of beginning, middle, and end. *Chegança* is also the first definition for “presence” that I will offer.

In this paper, I argue that KVT can contribute to decoloniality through its methodological propositions to an *action of presence*. To substantiate my statement, I will first offer an overview of KVT’s historical development and impact in Brazil, analyzing the questions that guided the developments of the work and how they critiqued Eurocentric frameworks. Secondly, I will explain how KVT practices presence through the study of states of attention. I propose that presence is an action that does not finish in itself but reverberates into other actions—by activating states of attention within the realm of dance, and by attempting a porousness of the relations between the internal and the surroundings, KVT practice of presence can reconfigure the feeling of the present. I will then touch on some ways that presence and attention have

been discussed in performance studies and dance studies. Finally, I will indicate possible dialogues between KVT’s action of presence and decolonial studies.

KVT is a Brazilian contemporary dance and somatic education approach largely focused on improvisation. The technique stems from the lifetime work of Klauss Vianna (1928–1992), Angel Vianna (1928–), and their son Rainer Vianna (1958–1995) and reflects their practice that began in the 1950s in the city of Belo Horizonte and has continued developing over the decades, expanding its geographical reach until now. Central to the technique is the notion of presence, which comes in opposition to the still common understanding of presence as a born gift that only a few performers will have. The way KVT practitioners work with presence functions simultaneously as an important concept that guides the principles of the technique and as a topic of practice and movement research in the studio, on stage, and in everyday life. Through its improvisational practice, KVT proposes tangible actions to build and maintain the state of presence by directing attention to themselves while expanding it to the other student-dancers, the surrounding space, and, when in a performance, the audience. In this paper, I investigate the consequences of centering a dance practice on the study of presence rather than fixed steps or exercises, looking for what it reveals about the understanding of body, dance, and technique.

KVT results from a historical time in performing arts history; one can see the parallels with international investigations interested in

improvisation and everyday movements—such as the Judson Church artists—and the search for a deep body awareness— such as the somatic education practitioners. However, KVT starts from a different place than the Global North. In Brazil, theatrical dance valued imported techniques over local investigations and Klaus and Angel nevertheless opened themselves to listen to their surroundings and experiment other movements with their students and collaborators. Could I then affirm that KVT offers a decolonial approach that stemmed from a decolonial interest?

If decolonial theories are multiplying and becoming an essential agenda to progressive politics and policies that is because decolonial practices and poetics have been in place since the beginning of the colonial process. If we understand that postcolonialism is a concept with no actual object—since colonial structures are reinvented and disguised in neoliberal economies and relations between ex-colonies and ex-colonizers under different names—it is because those under the current colonialisms did not, would not, and could not keep their silence. If there are hints, glimpses of possible ways to dismantle that which Sylvia Wynter and Katherine McKittrick call the “monohumanist Western/Westernized transnational world system” (McKittrick, 2015, p. 32), it is because there were people that have refused, for generations, to be integrated into this unity. In short, decolonization is not a novelty and even less a trend; it is the collective work of a multitude of people across generations. It is the work of the people that have been most affected by colonial and neoliberal necropolitics

(Mbembe, 2019)—that follows a colonial logic of violence based on race, gender, economics, and geography. Above all, decolonization is—or should be—about the struggle to resist colonial exterminations with a politics of life that secures not only survival but that also guarantees vivacity.

It is evident then that decolonization is an enormous task profoundly entangled with the most pressing demands of our time, especially the already ongoing environmental collapse and the Indigenous genocide. By attempting to get hold of this ungraspable reality, I face the enigma Diana Taylor poses in *Presente!*: “What can we do when apparently nothing can be done, and doing nothing is not an option?” (Taylor, 2020, p. 2) Underlying the book’s content, reflections, and propositions is the answer already given in the title: be present as an embodied engagement and political attitude. For Taylor, such presence conflates many meanings: the potency of being with others occupying and transforming the space, the act of remembering others so that they remain present, and also the awareness of one’s own body in the present moment. Presence is needed in situations of refusal, defiance, critique, and joy. Those aspects should not be understood separately from one another. To engage in a transformative presence in the world, we need to occupy its multiple meanings.

Given that KVT provides this paper with a case study and its theoretical axis, I will base my analyses on both primary and secondary sources.¹ I will also rely on my decades long experience studying and working with KVT as a dancer, teacher, and researcher. In this paper, I will not expose all the deep transformations it has produced in contemporary Brazilian performance culture (a fascinating and understudied subject, even in Brazil, that requires substantial research). The goal here is to offer a *chegança* to presence studies within KVT and to the dialogue between decolonial studies and the practice of presence—a research I intend to continue.

Finding Ways

“If you feel your movement is becoming automatic, stop and start again.” So says Klauss as a provocation in a low-quality recording of his class in São Paulo in 1984.² The viewer does not need to see the footage credits to know that we are in the 1980s; all the clothes and colors—leotards and dance gaiters—indicate that decade’s particular contemporary dance atmosphere. However, instead of a studio with people in front of the mirror repeating the same movement, people are constantly going up and down by feeling the regions in their bodies that can push the ground away, thus negotiating their bodily weight with gravity. Each person moves in a different way and tempo, creating

their own relationship with the live music. From time to time, they stop and start again, following Klauss’ instruction. I rewind the footage to see the moment their attention decreases, and an automatism sets in. As I watch it, I remember that feeling of automatism I also have felt so many times, be it in the dance studio or everyday life.

This short and rare video footage happened in a moment in which the work of the Viannas was well recognized in the Brazilian theatrical dance landscape, but their practice had started much earlier, in the State of Minas Gerais. Klauss and Angel were born in Belo Horizonte in 1928, where they both studied classical ballet and eventually opened a dance school and company. However, they soon began to question ballet's rigid structures and proper ways and bodies to dance. The Viannas’ decision to break with the dominant ideology of ballet and create something else did not come about suddenly; they questioned it while still learning from it, teaching and performing within its tradition. Klauss Vianna (2008, p.32) affirms that the ballet classroom should not follow the disciplinary model that resembles military practices, where no one asks questions or discusses anything; otherwise, the ballet tradition would only be a repetition of shapes, in which the work is done randomly, without intension. The form, for him, should be a consequence of the movement research. As signature moves of Klauss and Angel’s incipient research, the encouraged

¹ KVT's current bibliography is entirely in Portuguese, therefore this paper offers the first anglophone account of the technique. Documents on the Vianna family can be found in their virtual archives: <http://klaussvianna.art.br/> and <http://www.angelvianna.art.br>. Accessed on November 10, 2021.

² “Vídeo (1) de aula de Klauss Vianna em São Paulo,” recorded in 1984 in São Paulo by Sátilo Valença, 5:24. [http://www.klaussvianna.art.br/busca_detalhes.asp?busca=s%E1tiro&x=24&y=7#\[showDet\]3019](http://www.klaussvianna.art.br/busca_detalhes.asp?busca=s%E1tiro&x=24&y=7#[showDet]3019). Accessed on November 10, 2021.

students to do ballet classes barefoot, used Brazilian music and stories in their pieces, and incorporated gestures from everyday life, creating pieces that had a strong impact in the city.³ Through a non-programmatic, gradual process, which involved a series of challenges to the felt constraints surrounding their pedagogical and artistic demands, their work began to evolve into something radically different from the formal rigidity of European dance practices.

The experimental performances created during the 1950s by the Viannas not only changed the dance scene of their hometown, Belo Horizonte, but granted the couple national recognition. As a result, the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA) invited them in the early 1960s to move to Salvador and help found Brazil's first undergraduate dance course. In Bahia's capital city, they began to learn from, and dialog with other Brazilian embodied epistemic traditions, especially capoeira and Candomblé—a conversation that significantly expanded their movement research.⁴ In 1964, Klauss and Angel went to Rio de Janeiro, where Klauss became involved in the creation of engagé theater plays at the height of the military dictatorship (1964-1985), a period of strong repression of the arts and artists—these pieces transformed Brazilian theater by introducing profound movement research (Tavares, 2010). Angel Vianna still resides in Rio de Janeiro where she runs *Faculdade Angel*

Vianna, a dance college.

In the early 1980s, Klauss went alone to São Paulo where his focus shifted back to dance, building the basis for what would later become KVT. Klauss Vianna approach was based on an improvisational research practice available to dancers, artists, and the general public. The classes usually comprised groups with different dance experiences, a choice deliberately made to instigate heterogeneous interrelational learning. “I hope,” writes Vianna in the prologue of his book, “that [this book] does not establish certainties but awakens the permanent investigation before the dance and the arts—that, for me, gets confused with life” (Vianna, 2008, p.15). In 1992, two years after publishing the book, Klauss passed away. His legacy to his students was this investigative drive.

Klauss and Angel's only son, Rainer Vianna, was a dancer and dance teacher deeply connected to his parents' work. Following Klauss' death, Rainer took on the job of systematizing KVT as a way to preserve his father's work. He made sure to infuse it with strategies that sustained a state of constant questioning resistant to acritical reproduction of movements. As conceived by Rainer, KVT is an artistic and pedagogical approach that envisions horizontal ways of teaching, learning, and creating. Here, we can see KVT's dialog with other Brazilian pedagogical projects, such as Paulo Freire's (2018) ideal of an education constructed *with* people and

³ We can see such impact in newspaper publications of the time, for example the following headline "For the first time in Belo Horizonte a *ballet* shows with modern choreography." See Amélia Carmem Machado, *Diário de Minas*, January 16, 1955.

⁴ Capoeira deeply influenced Klauss' work, after learning it he increasingly started to use the torso movements, changed his

relationship to the music, and developed a deeper knowledge of the movement of his bones and muscles. Because of this, Klauss advocated for the inclusion of capoeira in the Dance BA curriculum at UFBA, thus initiating the discussion on what an undergraduate student of dance should learn. (Vianna, 2008, p.39).

not *for* people (p.43). Rainer died unexpectedly in 1995. The systematization project was resumed in the 2000s by former students and research partners, most notably Neide Neves and Jussara Miller.⁵

Ultimately, KVT's systematization facilitated the proposal of a technique that stems from listening to the body and from the body. Consequently, its systematization is not a “how-to manual” containing steps that envision a specific end and form. It is composed of the *ludic* and *vector processes*. The first contains seven body topics— presence, joints, weight, active support, resistance, opposition, and global axis— and the second eight vectors, which are directions applied on specific bones—metatarsus, heels, pubis, sacrum, scapulas, elbows, metacarpus, and seventh cervical vertebra. All the topics and vectors are interconnected, and there is no strict way to work with them. They are ways to dive deeper into movement investigation and creation, thus provoking dance improvisation, movement research, and choreographies.

The word “process” here highlights the ongoing nature of the research; they are not stages to reach but approaches to explore. Each time you return to a topic, it can—and probably will—be different. When engaging with a topic, such as *joints*, one directs attention to the body's hinges and their possible motions: The student-dancer can investigate each joint separately (*partial movement*) and compare this investigation to the conjoined motion of all the joints (*total movement*). The topics, then,

create highly flexible constraints that allow for the recognition of movement tendencies and habits while prompting multiple ways to dance.

Presence

Presence, the first of the topics in the ludic process, may look more abstract than the others at first sight; nonetheless, KVT deals with it as a tangible matter for exploration. The student-dancer achieves and maintains the state of presence by directing (and redirecting) attention to themselves, the group, the surrounding space, and, when in a performance, the audience. KVT's understanding of presence is neither that of static being nor natural talent, not even that of an acquired condition. Presence is an ecstatic and kinesthetic becoming, a constant attempt to achieve a state that is precisely the state of attempt—which brings a state of readiness.

When KVT teachers and practitioners work with presence as a practice, they oppose a common colloquial use of the term in the performing arts: when it is presumed that “presence” is an innate gift—some performers are simply more “there” while on stage, and others, unfortunately, are less so. Such assumption excludes the possibility of developing the means to embody presence. Even with a diverse range of works that encourage an enlarged perception of the present moment—for example, somatics, meditation practices, and physical theater techniques—I observe that the

⁵ I have learned directly from Angel Vianna, Jussara Miller, Neide Neves, and others whose practices are based on KVT or had their paths deeply influenced by the Vianna family. For a **Journal of Emerging Dance Scholarship** © Cora M. Laszlo

non-exhaustive list of the relevant bibliography, see (Miller, 2007); (Neves, 2008); and (Ramos, 2007).

common view of artistic presence as an innate talent is still common.

The term—presence—has also been largely discussed in multiple theoretical and philosophical frameworks, including performance and dance studies.⁶ André Lepecki (2004) points out that dance scholars and practitioners have dealt with presence as a problem in the field, as something one aspires to but loses as soon as it is achieved because time turns presence into absence, and movement vanishes as it appears. In Lepecki's analyses, dance was split from writing in the course of dance history due to the seeming impossibility of inscribing dance, that is, the impossibility of a notation that encompassed all that happens to a moving body. The author observes that the constant failure of notating dance resulted in a mourning state to dance thinkers and practitioners, that developed an understanding of presence condemned to disappearance, haunted by invisibility, and constantly made absent. Later, Lepecki (2006) identifies in the notion of an expanded present an escape from the mourning of the fleeting now. Drawing his argument from Henri Bergson and Gilles Deleuze, he advances a possible disentanglement by understanding that the former, the "present," stretches outside the moment of the latter, the "instant," through its reverberations—activity, affects, and effects. Hence the dawning of

multiple, interconnected, and coexistent presents. Such expansion of presence not only unshackles dance from the melancholic state but offers a joyful relation to this abyssal temporal condition—transience (p. 130).

Diana Taylor's book *Presente!* (2020, p.19) offers an alternative vantage point to approach presence which also challenges linear notions of time. Stemming from different Latin American Indigenous traditions and thinkers⁷, she addresses the notion of *para-times*, which encourages ways to conceive, feel, and imagine temporalities that do not follow the hierarchical separation between the productive and the nonproductive. In this perspective, geological, historical, environmental, human, and animal time are merged and entangled rather than sequential.

KVT's notion of presence dialogues with these other conceptions of time that are not evolutionary and linear. During KVT's classes, teachers stimulate a dynamic between observation, questioning, and responding, highlighting the relational and collective force of presence, which generates transformations. By reconfiguring presence (and the present) as an ongoing and collective practice that happens in the process of questioning, practicing KVT allows us to disentangle enclosed and crystallized notions of the past (even of

⁶ Within the realm of performance and dance studies, presence has been largely debated. Peggy Phelan's (1993) definition of the ontology of performance as disappearance, for example, generated various responses that questioned her argument; for example, Phelan is Philip Auslander's (1999, p.50) point that there are no unmistakable ontological distinctions between live forms and mediated ones, or André Lepecki's (2006) parallel between Phelan's performance ontology and the "ontohistoric formation of choreography as the kinetic emblem of the modern

project of melancholia" (p.126). This discussion around an ontology of performance touches on the question of presence because by questioning what constitutes performance and how it remains, they are assuming different views of what is present (and the present).

⁷ Taylor (2020, p. 20) cites, among others, Leda Martins' "spiral time", Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui's notes on Aymara worldview of time, James Maffie's account on the Aztecs perception of time.

its own), and it can eventually reorient futures. The actions of presence is not the fixed notion of existing in the world. The actions of presence is, instead, becoming with the world.

To deepen the possibilities within these presence studies, Jussara Miller, in her pedagogical practice, coined four states of attention which are published in a paper we coauthored (Miller & Laszlo, 2016, p.160). *State one* is the attention we direct to ourselves by listening to the body both to recognize transformations and to engage with the movement research of a topic. *State two* involves the relationships with the place we are in, the information we receive from it (e.g., sound, heat, lightning, texture, smell), and the active connection we can have with it (e.g., by choosing where to stop, where to walk, how to touch its surfaces). *State three* comprises the attention to other people with us. And finally *state four* is specific to the moment of performance, for it is the relationship with the audience (or the camera).⁸ Presence, therefore, is *relational attention* and these four states facilitate listening in detail to these various possible exchanges. Miller (2014) affirms that the listening of the body whets the kinesthetic sense—which is the awareness of our movement (even in stillness)—by an increased coordination of the dancer’s sensibilities with its ever-changing spatio-temporal coordinates. The act of perception in this heightened state of presence becomes an aesthetic

experience.

I want to highlight that the attention envisioned for the practice of presence is not the kind of attention criticized by Jonathan Crary (2001). The author locates in the late nineteenth century the emergence of our particularly modern form of “attention.” He argues that modern subjectivity is based on a state of distraction by affirming that such a frame of mind depends on attentive norms and practices that became established in that period. His critique is toward the demand for individuals to “pay attention” to one thing with such intensity that a diagnosis for its failure has been created—an “attention deficit disorder.” Television, for instance, is an insidious and effective system for managing attention.⁹ KVT’s notion of attention is neither the unidirectional focus on something nor are states of attention commands because they do not envision control. Quite the opposite: attention is a pathway for connection. Therefore, KVT teachers and practitioners want to find ways and then share the means to avoid such numb and individualistic modes of being.

In a sense, simply questioning “what’s going on?” generates the attentiveness necessary for the state of presence. We thus add another layer to the direction of attention previously discussed by evidencing the active engagement with perception and with its means. As Klaus Vianna (2008) states, “observation and questioning are important

⁸ In this paper, I will focus on the first three states of attention. I believe the fourth state of attention requires other discussions: the multiple relations to an audience, the audience’s task in a performance, different ways of inviting the audience, how to watch live performances, the hierarchization of the visual, neoliberal hyper-visibility, spectacular societies, among others.

To fully address the fourth state of attention, therefore, would require sustained research on the action of presence.

⁹ In the current state of capitalism, the devices to capture attention are much more developed, as Crary discusses in his more recent books (2014) and (2022).

everywhere, throughout life—including in a dance classroom” (p.72). He then encouraged students to choose different spaces in the room to start the improvisations and movement research or stand near a different person each class, observing what reverberations those choices had. This invitation to a non-automatism can unlock other perceptions, creating an ongoing and playful challenge of observation, questioning, and response that is the basis of KVT’s *movement awareness*.

KVT thus refuses a fleeting framework by positing presence as *presencing*—a plunge in the multiplicity of present temporalities and the consequent creation of new ones. Again, presence is not trapped in the finished present, a form of transitory perfection—it is, instead, a readiness to a horizon of being. KVT practitioners look for strategies that aim to oppose the anesthetic state of being that Crary refers to with an ecstatic state of becoming, with an expanded perceptiveness of ourselves and our surroundings. With the ongoing attempt of attentiveness, by asking what is going on, one can enlarge the capacity to recognize and refuse subjection. Therefore, KVT’s research about presence is a way of creating a critical praxis.

There are two major theoretical connections that recent KVT research has established in order to deepen the understanding of what KVT does: the first with somatics (thus framing KVT within a mostly North Atlantic field of study); the second with *Corpomedia Theory*, an offshoot of the embodied

cognition trend that is being developed by the Brazilian scholars Helena Katz and Christine Greiner (1998, 2005).¹⁰ This theory breaks with the Cartesian body-mind split and its resulting dichotomies by positing a transforming body in co-modulation with the environment and rejecting the body-as-object approach (i.e., the body as an instrument and container of information). Therefore, KVT’s *movement awareness* refers to the body in movement as much as to the constant movements of the body. Such awareness is achieved by directing attention to ourselves in relation to our surroundings. The objective is that, by constantly engaging in a state of investigation, one begins to notice if and which transformations happen—transformations that have multiple forms, from muscular tone and flexibility to the connection to the group and environment.

KVT is a technique (the term here to be understood in its most capacious semantic range) in as much as it is a series of layered pedagogical devices—or provocations—that aim at engendering a sensory perception that takes into consideration the multiplicity of relationships happening between dancer and the environment. This is KVT’s hard core, so to speak. Based on it, the student can adroitly follow a choreography while remaining labile (Miller, 2012). This lability extends itself to temporal awareness. Lepecki’s (2006) expanded notion of the present applied to KVT shows how directing attention to the goings-of-the-now activates

¹⁰ Christine Greiner and Helena Katz (1998, 2005) developed the *Corpomedia Theory* through an ongoing partnership which has expanded to other research professors at PUC-SP, who continue to further develop and fine-tune it. The *Corpomedia Journal of Emerging Dance Scholarship* © Cora M. Laszlo

Theory results from what they call an in-disciplinary approach to the understanding of body and media assisted by contemporary research on embodied cognition.

connections to multiple temporalities. This rupture in the rigid self-other apparatus opens up mnemonic and imaginative connections which transform the form-reality of the surrounding world by recalibrating the symbolic filtering of the dancer-interpreter.

This commitment to active transformation dialogues with Michel Foucault's (1997) concept of *technologies of the self* which offers a possible framework for analyzing KVT's intentions. Numbering last among the four major technologies that, according to Foucault, humans use to understand themselves, the technologies of the self permit "individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of *operations* on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to *transform themselves in order to attain a certain state* of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (Foucault, 1997, p. 225). What is the *certain state* KVT envisions to attain and through which *operations* does it do so? Foucault's considerations on his own work offer guidance: "I am not interested in the academic status of what I am doing because my problem is my own transformation," says Foucault, "this transformation of one's self by one's own knowledge is, I think, something rather close to the aesthetic experience. Why should a painter work if he is not transformed by his own painting?" (Foucault, 1990, p. 14) Foucault's intellectual practice refused the neat script subjecting academic practice to strict ready-made pathways (Foucault, 1996, p. 461). It is precisely in this search for self-transformation

through one's own practice that I locate their—Foucault and the Viannas—commitment to a contemporary engagement with the technologies of the self.

Klauss Vianna was explicit about his intention to live life as a creative process; a life in which pleasure and resistance work together (body and political resistance); a life in which one learns from and exchanges with everything around oneself in order to avoid stagnation. In this sense, KVT works as a *technology of self-transformation*, in which the *certain states* intended are states of openness, attempt, and playfulness. States of presence and presencing. This condition moves beyond impositions, creating an autonomous attitude of curiosity, exchange, and invention. KVT's *operations*, then, happen through dance improvisation that stems from the topics of the ludic and vectors process. Moreover, even when we study a topic multiple times, the ways of developing it are constantly shifting. If the state envisioned is that of presencing (a presence which is in the process of becoming) then the operations had to steer closer to anti-operations, "provocations."

Training in improvisation is a practice of listening to what is happening now, understanding that the present also holds the memories of the improviser and that space, as well as the ideas and desires of what can come next. It is a dialogue with the space, group, and time, rather than shaping and imposing metrics to them. Dance researcher Danielle Goldman (2010) affirms that the practice of improvisation is a way of making oneself ready; "it is an *incessant preparation*, grounded in the present

while open to the next moment's possible actions and constraints" (p. 142). An incessant preparation in itself refuses notions of linear time. To be grounded in the present, then, is to be grounded in a multiplicity of times.

Autonomy, then, is an important consequence of the action of presence. Bojana Kunst (2003) warns about the trap of self-sufficiency into which autonomy can quickly fall when regarding the autonomous body as a hyper-controlled body (p. 64). For her, "autonomy is not about the *exclusiveness* of the moment, but about *different possibilities of presence and being in the present*" (p. 66). Since in KVT practice, presence is relational through the three states of attention, then the autonomy achieved is not that of self-sufficiency but of self-transformation. The autonomy KVT envisions stems from an act of courage to the vulnerability of listening and, by doing this, finding and creating alternative histories and stories. Therefore, autonomy to improvise is not an individualistic action independent of anything or anyone else but a collective moving and imagining with all else. Hence, the actions of presence happen through the states of attention, generating autonomy and fostering imagination.

But one must be careful. Lepecki (2017, p. 161) warns us not to mix this life-preserving imagination that is a dimension of freedom, love, art, and resistance with the profitable, utilitarian, and policed creativity demanded by neoliberalism. Imagination here is a vital faculty to actualize the points discussed in this text: the possibility of understanding new temporalities; the capacity to

question; the desire for self-transformation; and the commitment to a decolonial practice. I argue that KVT's strategic provocation to self-transformation avoids not only the Cartesian separations and hierarchies but also the neoliberal snare of hyper-individualistic self-care and self-branding that isolates individuals in what André Lepecki calls a Self(ie) culture (2016, p. 10). Therefore, I agree with Lepecki (2017) when he says that imagination must be defended. I see KVT's actions of presence as a possible way—within a constellation of ways—to defend it. Improvisation is imagination in motion, and the actions of presence opens spaces for imagination and vice versa.

Experimenting Otherwise

I see the decoloniality of KVT's actions of presence as part of a much larger movement to decolonize corporealities and create dance pedagogies that do not reproduce patterns, values, and hierarchies imported from a colonial structure. Decolonization involves the dismantling of a structure of violence, discrimination, and extermination of people and their knowledge with a politics of life that guarantees survival and vivacity.

The Brazilian thinkers Luiz Antonio Simas and Luiz Rufino (2020) discuss the concept of *enchantment*. They say it is an act of disobedience, transgression, inventions, and reconnection—an act of life affirmation. *Disenchantment*, by contrast, drains vitality, creates separations and hierarchies; it is a production scarcity policy, the actual opposite of life. The task of enchantment is for all of us: we need to be alert to the multiple practices that enchant the

world, practices that pluralize the beings and communities, embracing the incompleteness of the process. Enchantment is about being in a community—not only of humans but an expanded notion of community that encompasses nature.

Simas and Rufino are drawing the idea of enchantment from Indigenous and Afro- Brazilian traditions that have been resisting the colonial epistemicide—coined by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2016) as the murder of knowledge.” It is thought-provoking how Taylor (2020) paraphrased this as “the erasure of ways of knowing,” (p. 76) because it makes evident that the genocides, dislocations, and exploitations inherent to the European colonial project not only murder people and their knowledge but their ways of knowing, their pedagogies. Taylor adds an important point when she affirms that our disciplines have been built from systems of compartmentalization, therefore they often inadvertently sustain inequalities they want to address. Confronting this, she asks, “how much do we need to unlearn so that we can learn again, differently?” (Taylor, 2020, 25)

In KVT classes, people often want to get rid of acquired habits. KVT’s approach to this is *experimenting otherwise*: observe the habit and try other options. Do you always get up from the same side? Try the other one. While dancing with someone, are you always imposing your choices? If so, try to follow more, try to listen. Do you always choose the same place to lie down in the studio? Try many different ones. By making changes, one can break the linear way of doing things. By learning otherwise, we eventually unlearn, not by erasing the

previous knowledge but by refusing its monolithic centrality and truth. To experiment otherwise creates differences, nuances in a world that is collapsing into sameness. Ailton Krenak (2019), a Brazilian Indigenous activist, points toward the many absences that are being created in our times, one of which is the absence of a meaning of the experience of being alive. Krenak says that this state generates an intolerance against those that still experience pleasure in being alive, dancing, and singing. However, he points out that there are constellations of these people scattered all over the world, people who dance, sing, and communicate with nature (Krenak, 2019, p. 26). This transgressive-yet-joyful experiencing of life is constantly being co-opted by neoliberal engines. Nonetheless, we keep trying otherwise.

KVT’s lability has made it a technique that imposes no right body or way to dance—the very understanding of “technique” moves with those experiencing it. It is common in a workshop to have people of all ages, different abilities, and body knowledge. I believe the task today is to guarantee and expand this access. Placing KVT as part of the decolonial practices requires an ongoing questioning of this affirmation, an ongoing attempt to do otherwise, to observe if and where the technique is reproducing and being complicit to colonial inequalities in different spheres (in the classroom, in the academic research, or during a creative process). The actions of presence, the relational attentions, and the decolonial struggle move these non-linear transformations in a constant attempt to re-enchant the world.

Arriving and Leaving

“Dancing is what we make of falling,” says Fred Moten (2015, p. 23). Falling is arriving and leaving at the same time. I will share some last thoughts here as I arrive at and leave these pages, some final comments to this ongoing (in)conclusion. We have so far established: presence generates presence in a web of relations, reverberations, and transformations—the presence of the teacher generates presence in the student and vice versa; the presence of the student-dancer generates presence in the others and vice versa; combined, then, these presences exceed the class thanks to their protracted, self-enforcing effects.

Moreover, the states of attention layer the perception of events. In doing so, they can eventually transform the interpretative patterns coordinating the mass of occurrences and semi-conscious connections into what we call “the world.” By inviting a reconfiguration of presence and, consequently, our relation to the present, improvisation becomes KVT’s main strategy. Again, Moten (2018): “improvisation can always be seen as the enactment of a certain impatience with, or troubling of, the limits of notation” (p. 155). Klauss and Angel have used their impatience to move somewhere else. KVT became—and is constantly becoming—a technique of dance improvisation, in which the attempt is to open multiple channels to the flow of impermanence, finding ways to dance with and within movements and their stretched and para-temporalities.

KVT researchers, following the steps of Klauss and Angel, claim a series of non-

separabilities: of dance and life, practice and theory, technique and creation, body and mind. The structuring of these as dichotomous is dissolved in praxis. Presencing blurs barriers and creates connections. Through embracing presence and attention as physical processes, KVT finds strategies to listen and provoke movements of all sorts—from isolating joints into partial movements; to the flow guided by the releasing of the weight; or to fast locomotion and jumps when researching the active support by pushing the floor— shaking the dichotomies that are the pillars sustaining colonialism, such as the cartesian body and mind split and hierarchies that stem from such artificial division; or the linear and evolutionary notion of time. Hence, I observe that KVT, as praxis that does not rely on these premises while also questioning and trying to dismantle an idea of European artistic superiority, contributes to fostering decolonial tactics.

An ongoing *chegança* is the method by which KVT actualizes the complete entwinement of dance and everyday life. An ongoing arrival and departure. Greetings and waves. Falling, as Moten says. Incidentally, the third topic of the ludic process is that of *weight*, the study of dancing with gravity. By feeling our weight, we feel where we are. Presence is relational; it moves with our weight. KVT’s actions of presence is constantly pointing at possibilities of doing otherwise. Of coming and going. Of being present and absent. The actions of presence is choosing where and when to be present or absent—absence as refusal. Therefore, absence as presence. A perpetual action of arrival. A *chegança*.

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