

Ulrika von Schantz and Ketil Thorgersen

University of Sweden

The rise of information and communication technology goes hand in hand with what might be considered a democratic revolution of the teaching profession. The teacher and the school are no longer defining what can be considered valuable knowledge. Basic didactic issues in teaching (what, how, and why) change fundamentally as students express that they 'just do' and 'find' through social media, online resources and software for creation, reflection and presentation. Learning theories and proven teaching models suddenly become superfluous, so concepts such as truth and values must be considered in a new light.

Drama in education involves processing issues through evocative and emotionally engaging design. This fundamental purpose is often formulated as an intention to stimulate critical thinking. However, despite this explicitly democratic intent, drama activities are always site-specific insofar as issues of portrayal, reflection and discussion are staged within the framework of a pedagogical idea. A thought is never free, leaving us with the question of to what extent thinking through drama can be called 'emancipated'. Additionally, drama is still ruled by contextual and physical laws so much so that bodies and voices are limited, gender specific and spatially located. Therefore, emotions are at play and pedagogical setting are carefully prepared and managed by the teacher.

The aim of this article is to make a Deleuzian investigation of into the possibilities and challenges of how best to extend aesthetic bodily communicative and performative spaces in relation to digital technology in drama education. Hence, we are trying to navigate the rhizomatic experience of believing that we know in which direction we need to go, given that whilst we educate drama students they are also educating us.

Groups of children and youngsters seem to be rhizomatic 'by nature', subversively searching for adventures on their own, finding leaks, exploring 'forbidden' areas, conquering cyber space, creating their own drama, while at the same time playing the game of the machine. Virtual life can in these circumstances be both phantasmagoric and uncontrollable.

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### KEYWORDS

*Drama, body, virtual, theatre, human.*

## THE MACHINE, THE BODY AND THE BEAST

***(An)aesthetic experiment – anesthetic experience. Transforming transition: becoming Little Red Riding Hood becoming....***

*(An)aesthetized being leaves aesthetic space: the door is shut, a dramatized moment is enclosed; and the performance site dissolves into performative space. Small feet are climbing up the stairs, and a red riding hood bobs on the top of a little moving body machine. Limbs come to mind in a sense of loss. Something – for a moment composed of Little Red Riding Hood – is dissolving, partly seeking new connections; connections reminiscent of ‘an ordinary human being’. Still something is missing: moving feet connecting to steps; steps bringing the bodily machine upstairs; mind drifting around like a kaleidoscope; diverse dimensions of images, sounds, words, movements are momentarily becoming ‘her’. Mind is slowly taking shape, becoming convergent, becoming corporeal. Mind becomes a body, becoming something called ‘her’; an actualized virtual human being – bones, blood and flesh enclosed by skin – a contingent corporeal being. (Pinching herself, making sure her corporeality isn’t an illusion, like the fictive Little Red Riding Hood). Keeping the red riding hood on, the corps which is supposed to be her feels the door handle while touching it. Behind it seems like empty space, but space echoes, shivers, smells, floats, streaming into different directions. The soft, seductive sound of the big, bad wolf is still trying to cheat Little Red Riding Hood, and splits into fragments, transforming the uncanny voices of new creatures, beasts, werewolves, vampires, sirens, cyborgs, replicants, avatars. The former Little Red Riding Hood is moving, shaping her future step by step, connecting, making new figures, creating life, but becoming what? There is still a weird sense of loss...*

*... on another plane, a little machine is calling from the inside of a suitcase, locked up in a cupboard, calling, screaming, crying out its desire to be connected...*

*...suddenly the fragments of Little Red Riding Hood are situated in a room, facing a computer, connecting to cyber space. Still something is missing. It feels like amputation, even castration(!). Limbs momentarily assembled, mind confused by the feeling of having lost essential bodily parts – loss of ‘phantom limbs’ like the voice, an extension, a mediator – being is moving around in cyber space, simultaneously connecting to diverse web sites, hundreds of identities, splitting into lots of dimensions – a thousand plateaus. While searching for whatever is lost, the fragmented being suddenly assembles, draws back from virtuality to actuality by something knocking on the door. A waving hand is holding/connecting the missing limb of LRRH - the iPhone is back! The iPhone is put into/connects the hand of LRRH- iPhone and LRRH melt together, assembled for a moment...*

We not only live in a machine (the body, the societal body, the society, the city), but we also constantly constitute one or several machines: not only war machines, but also love machines and machines in general (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984). We work together and against each other in machine-like systems of social construction and destruction (Foucault, 1991). So why do we have such a problem adapting to, adopting and incorporating non-human machines in drama education? And why should we? After all, drama is all about the body, the self and the other(s). One of the purposes of drama is to help liberate us from the burdens and borders of artefacts and technology, to help us construct ourselves and other selves, and to help us to extend the boundaries of our imagination. How can predefined objects possibly help in such processes? Maybe, if not only we were machines but if technology was bodies? What is the border of the body when the physical skin does not enclose it? When and how can the machine be embodied and the body be ‘e-machined’?

We believe in the necessity of *gestaltung* and performance, and know that great amounts of pupils will benefit from the revolting pedagogy that is invoked by our fine students. In the comfort zone we do not need to take into account other means of expression than what we know and love. Despite

that, we feel gradually less comfortable in our comfort zone, as we sense that a possible extension of our performative space could be reached by inclusion of other technologies into our methods.

The Deleuzian entry in this paragraph is supposed to work as a transfer between drama, body and technological media, between subject, object and abject, between lived experience, writing and our discussion. It is written in the aftermath of a multimedia experiment among educators in drama, music and visual arts at the University of Stockholm. It tries to grasp a moment of 'rhizomatic' living in a Deleuzian sense, as well as expressing/identifying certain problems concerning the body and the often proposed dichotomy between the real and the virtual. It also stresses the conflict between a Deleuzian flow of associations/connections/assemblages and a more traditional scientific style<sup>1</sup>.

## INNOCENCE, EXCELLENCE AND IMMANENCE

Since we perform parts of our subject in the form of 'triangulation', framed by certain headlines like the one above, we would like to start with another: subject-object-abject, as is used and found in related discussions. As one of us 'invented' the triad as a tool in her own dissertation (von Schantz, 2007) on body and gender in Actor Education, it was exciting to find the same triad in a new book on theatre and technology by Jennifer Parker-Starbuck (2011). The specific subject-object-abject-triad, while not our main concern in this article, describes well how these terms are being used here. What is particularly interesting to us is how Parker-Starbuck applies it, and the way it can be made use of in the arguments in this article. She points out that the terms 'subject-object-abject' should not be confused by the limiting range these terms often imply, nor should the terms of our own triad. *innocence, excellence and immanence*. Hence, to follow Parker-Starbuck: '[Our] use of the terms themselves is as reiterations, ongoing in their own incompleteness, always shifting and in process/.../[Our] interest in these terms is predicated on how they function in social and aesthetic settings /.../ as fluid terms, hopefully to renegotiate as they intersect with technologies' (ibid. s.43.).

What is the relationship between the terms 'innocence', 'excellence', and 'immanence' in this context? In what way do they put issues of drama/theatre and technology on the agenda? In fact they have here at least two meanings. Due to their fluid character these terms work against closure, whilst simultaneously, in spite of their fluid character, framing our proposed dilemma.

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## INNOCENT EXCELLENT DRAMA

To begin we have to trace the notion of 'educational drama and theatre'. In her dissertation, Mia-Marie Sternudd (2000) presents a close link between ancient theatre and the birth of Western

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<sup>1</sup> In fact, in order to become more Deleuzian (perhaps against his own will) we should skip the ordinary commas, periods, 'and' etc., replacing them with a more anarchic use of signs to perform the 'Deleuzian mode', i.e. use the idiosyncratic style of Deleuze himself. Though exciting, it isn't always easy or intelligible. We do not intend to be so much Deleuzian, as rhizomatic, meaning associative, unpredictably connecting, turning in different directions, or assembling.

democracy. She refers to the idea that the individual and critical thinking have emerged out of the common experiences offered by the theatrical event. Important here is the double effect of both drama and theatre, which is to say the interaction between: emotional arousal triggered by performance – feelings of ‘blood, sweat and tears’; – ‘peace, love and understanding’ through acting as well as ‘specta(c)ting’ (Boal, 2002); and the virtual exploration of reality from a logical, rational point of view. The interchange between acting-feeling-seeing-feeling-observing-thinking in drama and theatre settings is supposed to strengthen the ability to empathize, to analyze, and to formulate possible consequences. (a.a. p. 22)

Following several earlier drama theorists, Sternudd claims that it is possible to educate individuals to act as independent people, who, together with others, take responsibility, make decisions, and are able to gain knowledge about themselves and the world through drama. The possibility to create and recreate a democratic society is thus a basic requirement of educational drama and theatre (Sternudd, 2000, p. 186).

Traditional educational drama and theatre have often set the physical body and the human senses at the centre of their discussions. Specific dilemmas, human relations and bodily experiences are processed and discussed. Educational drama and theatre in Sweden is to some extent inspired by ‘the Poor Theatre’ – an empty space and a group of people who orchestrate and manipulate human affairs, using nothing more than imagination and their own personalities/ bodies. The extent to which artificial, technological equipment has been used as scenographic elements such as light and sound has often been ‘objectified’, regarded as stimulus, reinforcements or incentives. Up to now, digital technique and communication has been used to announce, record or account for different dramatic and theatrical events, though the issue of entering technique as an equal, co-acting subject remains undeveloped. This is the case unless we speak of performance art/ theatre, which is still not very frequently mentioned or elaborated in Swedish education, though drama, paradoxically, often uses the dynamic and interdisciplinary concepts of performance art, as for example with collage technique.

From this perspective, the notions of educational drama and theatre that were established in Sweden in the early seventies still rules. It could probably be referred to as a cultural heritage that promotes an idealistic and romantic, ‘non-materialist’ discourse, characterized by an ideological and innocent distinction between the human and non-human (in this case technology). The real human being could be described as body and soul, intelligent by nature, and an authentic, vulnerable, sexual, and emotional creature that is simultaneously innocent and excellent. Her body is soft and sensitive, while technology, though useful, is hard and non-human, invented, constructed, artificially intelligent, and soul-less, and often intimidating for human beings. Paradoxically, technology is intended to strengthen and improve human life, and as such has to be excellently produced and mastered. Technology serves to repeal human shortcomings, and is thus an excellent extension of innocent human life. One could call this an ‘innocent’ comprehension of technology in which it is at their service, and objectified’, produced and mastered by human beings. In this sense, technology is, and should remain separate from and subordinate to humanity.

It is however ironic that within the ideological distinction between humans and technology, whereby humans are considered to be both innocently and excellently superior to technology, humans emerge as creatures, which themselves produce an 'abject', technological beast, a living monster machine, which is out of control, or perhaps even controlled by external powers of communication and technology.

The romanticism of drama and theatre, as described above, should not be confused by the humane in a religious sense. Rather it arises as a part of a political movement from existentialist and phenomenological debates and from Marxism. However, as orthodox Marxism stresses, humans are victims of a cynical market, whilst existential phenomenology sets human meaning-making before material and economic forces, for in order to change the world we have to change the way we think. Educational drama and theatre is based on the conviction that seemingly natural and immutable processes are decided on by human beings, and are consequently possible to change. Thus, as activities that deconstruct preconceptions and taken for granted truths, one can consider drama and theatre as kinds of excellent post-structuralist activities. However, educational drama and theatre in this context often rely innocently on representation and depiction, and are based on a given structure that we criticize, judge and reflect on from a certain point of view, so that us acteurs in spite of our 'revolutionary' intentions, seem to lock ourselves in. This ironic paradox is an interesting dilemma, that makes Deleuze's thinking important to our discussion. In Deleuze's writings, paradoxes are not only seen as natural features of human action, but even more so as human thinking and interaction. 'Paradoxes [...] inhere in language, and the whole problem is to know whether language would be able to function without bringing about the insistence of such entities' (Deleuze, 2004 p. 86). Paradox is defined in opposition to good sense and common sense, whilst, perhaps more surprisingly, it is also compared with contradiction. While contradictions represent incompatible views of reality, paradoxes are surprising and unforeseen twists in reality that are recognized almost in disbelief. Deleuze and Guattari (1994) consequently show the connection in philosophy between art and the construction of meaning and immanence: 'Immanence is necessary, but it must be immanent to something transcendent, to ideality.' (ibid.)

If drama is to be liberating, it needs to free itself from the chains of its corporal history. To be artistically interesting, and to offer possible paths of imagination, nothing should be considered impossible or uninteresting. Drama and theatre needs to connect to the notions of art that are 'neither virtual nor actual; they are possibles, the possible as aesthetic category ..., the existence of the possible ..., whereas events are the reality of the virtual, forms of a thought-Nature that survey every possible universe" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994 p. 177). The utopian image by which we imagine education where imagination is trained to meet, encounter and create the innocence, excellence and immanence that the universe of art can open up even though it is soon blurred by reality.

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## EXCELLENT, INNOCENT DEMOCRACY

Innocence, as well as excellence, could refer to some rather utopian facets of certain goals in the Swedish curricula (Skolverket, 2011). Likewise, the emphasis on human and democratic rights,

whether ethical, ethnic and aesthetic values, and as well as diverse perspectives on equality, are what is at stake in the goals of drama and theatre in education. While the utopian goals described in the curricula coincide with the goals of drama/theatre in education, individual syllabuses are characterized by the prescribed tasks and presumed results that are related to the detailed grading system. Students will be assessed on a range from 'not good enough' to 'excellent', or, as formally expressed 'from A to F' in accordance with Bologna's regulations. How does being assessed as 'not good enough' or 'excellent' when exploring human affairs through drama and theatre, concur with democratic ideals of both the national curricula and the self-image of drama in education? We agree with the idea that, through the potential complexity of dramatic and theatrical activities, democracy in education could be within grasp, but we denounce the currently innocent view of the concept of democracy, as well as the use of it when speaking about drama and theatre in education. There will always be powers at play and capital at stake as all societies are constructed around tensions between hegemonic conservation and possibilities for upheaval or reorganisation. In Deleuzian rhizomatic thinking, these possibilities will exist simultaneously and without clear boundaries between the zones of stability and instability, since they are interdependent phenomena, meaning that one cannot exist without the presence of the other, like peace and war (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994). In a modernist view the democratic potential of drama in education lacks contextualization and a critique of the concept of 'democracy' *per se*, as well as the seemingly innocent doxa that drama is democratic by nature.

The birth of democracy in ancient Greece is historically described as deeply embedded in societal transformation. As a citizen you were expected to engage in different democratic forums, as for example the theatre, and to fulfill the notion of a citizen you had to be a free, grown up man. The ancient democracy of Greece excluded women, children, slaves and immigrants, implying that it is contextually conditioned then as now when children, people with psychiatric diseases and foreigners without permanent residence are denied the right to vote. In her groundbreaking book *Feminism and Theatre* Sue Ellen Case (1988) discusses the intertwining of theatrical and societal issues, claiming that Western ancient theatre was when women became subordinated to men. Men not only wrote the dramatic texts, but they also selected the winners, staged the dramas, performed all the scenic characters and formed the audience. Men had precedence on every level, even when it came to acting as a 'real woman'. From our point of view this looks like a skewed democracy, as might ours from a different perspective. Deleuze and Guattari recognize this when they state rather dryly that 'there is no universal democratic State' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994 p. 102), and therefore propose a philosophical society of 'brothers' (ibid). The democratic ideal thereby remains an ideal, but under a different name, so it remains something to strive for but impossible to reach (Patton, 2005). A truly democratic society would honour all voices, let any individual have any chances, respect minorities and at the same time make sure the majorities are in charge. Personal opinion and desire, discursive agendas and societal needs would all be transparent and at the same time protective, simultaneously liberating and sheltering everyone at all levels. So how does drama take care of such tensions?

Drama in education means to process issues through evocative and emotionally engaging design, and to explicitly strengthen and develop democratic values through interaction between individual

reflection and group reflection. This purpose often stems from an intention to stimulate critical thinking. However, despite this explicit democratic intent, drama activities are always situated in a context, and guided by more or less conscious laws and regulations. A dramatic situation, whether a particular plot, a specific space or selected characters, are site-specific in nature. Issues of portrayal, reflection and discussion are staged within the framework of a pedagogical idea. A thought is never free, and the question therefore concerns the extent to which thinking through drama can be regarded as emancipated. In what sense? Could it be that drama is actually more like a (clueless) method to control and manipulate? After all, though drama and theatre in education, as well as in 'real life', are to some extent virtual, they are still ruled by recognized structures and contextual and physical laws. Bodies and voices are limited, gender-fixed, and space-located. Emotions are at play and the pedagogic setting is carefully prepared and managed by the teacher.

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## IMMANENCE

It seems, at least in most educational contexts, as if the principle of a prior object to the subject, like material reality, humans, consciousness and the world, as well as to a subject who is experiencing, interpreting, learning about, and defining what's out there, is part of a Western 'collective unconscious'. We presume a subject, who gets to know a predefined world outside itself (transcendence). To follow Kant and Husserl, we have on the one hand, 'life', and on the other, a 'thinking' that assesses and describes 'life'.

Deleuze' answer to these categories is 'immanence', meaning his distinction between transcendence and the transcendental. Transcendence is that which attempts to go beyond or above a highest grounding principle such as thought or consciousness.

*The transcendental is not the transcendental. Were it not for consciousness, the transcendental field would be defined as a pure plane of immanence, because it eludes all transcendence of the subject and of the object. (Deleuze, 2001:26)*

What is proposed instead is a transcendental field, a 'plane of immanence', wherein consciousness no longer establishes the essential thinking subject.

*What is a transcendental field? It can be distinguished from experience in that it doesn't refer to any object or belong to a subject (empirical representation). It appears therefore as a pure stream of a-subjective consciousness, a pre-reflexive impersonal consciousness, a qualitative duration of consciousness without a self. (Deleuze, 2001:25)*

Like Little Red Riding Hood, who, as was proposed at the opening of this text, was consciously in place, out of place, in time and meta-consciously aware of her role, seamlessly drifting in and out of different roles and worlds, between reflection and pre-reflection; and combining a desire for innocence, excellence, and reaching for immanence. Still very much in the physical body, but grasping for the virtual, embodying the virtual whilst at the same time being embodied by it. The virtual provides a key to immanence by offering otherness and liberation from the actual. As such



the virtual is not defined in opposition to the real, but as the flip side of putting the actual into perspective.

*It is the virtual that is distinct from the actual, but a virtual that is no longer chaotic, that has become consistent or real on the plane of immanence that wrests it from the chaos – it is a virtual that is real without being actual, ideal without being abstract. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 156)*

Of course the virtual does not refer solely to technology here, but rather to an almost Deweyan notion of imagination (Dewey, 1934/2005), or to the notion of possibility proposed by Næss (1999). The combination of virtuality's realness through its connection to visual possibilities, and its bridging of the imaginative past, present and future, makes the virtual, even in technological shape, relevant for drama in education. This is particularly so when we consider the Deleuzian notion of the man as machine controlled by affects, just as a machine is controlled by its controller, but also through the idea of the man-machine assemblage whereby the machine is a part of human being and vice versa. It is, in other words, only one way to avoid working with the virtual and technology in drama, which is to pretend that parts of the body are non-existent or irrelevant. To play with virtual representational bodies goes to the core of what drama in education is about.

### **Performative space and bodily gaze**

*The real challenge to Drama education is to deal with the reality that students are entering a new world and, as romantic or practical as our attachments to classical and traditional forms of Drama might be, we must realise that our students will be the ones defining the forms of the future. And in so doing there is bound to be a weaving together of the real and the virtual. While many Drama teachers might be asking how computer technology might be changing Drama, we really should be starting to ask how Drama could help to make computers more human. (www.drama-education.com)*

Deleuze's thinking can be seen to build upon the work of Merleau-Ponty's treatment of the (virtual) body (Olkowski, 2002). Since drama is often assumed to be working with the body as a tool for understanding, it is worth looking at what a body is, or could be. Merleau-Ponty treated the body as the centre of the experienced lived world. Simplified, the body could be described as the complete being with intersubjective relations to the other. The body's borders are not defined by the physical body since tools can be embodied to the extent that we would be crippled or surprised if the tool was not there or worked in unpredictable ways – just like if the leg suddenly stopped supporting us, or the vision became blurred. The blind man's white stick is the most common example of such an extension of the body (Ihde & Selinger, 2004). But in our context, the dancer's shoes or the trumpeter's trumpet are closer examples. The virtual body could be seen as both an extension to the real body, and as an alternative to the actual.

In their first book Deleuze and Guattari (1984) coined the expression 'body without organs' (BwO) with reference to the fact that bodies have purpose and act not only mechanically, but also as limits to that capacity. BwO should not be understood as something else than a physical body, but rather as an almost pragmatic view of the body as capacitor and machine for solving actual problems (Buchanan, 1997). This is best understood in relation to the rhizomatic ontology that makes the



interdependency, paradoxes, border(lessness) modularity and flexibility combine with limits, most obviously even for the body. Consequently, when drama uses the physical body, virtual bodies and bodies without organs will be present and evoked whether intended or not. The question is whether drama can cater for the virtual body by including technology and by working with virtual bodies through virtual lives, thereby creating opportunities for extending the body when a virtual world meets the lived world.

Virtual life can be truly phantasmagoric, uncontrollable. Compared to seductive, multifaceted, anarchic cyber space, traditional drama in school seems to be more of a (clueless?) method to control and manipulate when threatened by the unknown. However, as we proposed at the beginning of this essay, groups of children and youngsters seem to be rhizomatic 'by nature', subversively searching for adventures on their own, finding leaks, exploring 'forbidden' areas, conquering cyber space, creating their own drama, while at the same time playing the game of the machine. But while virtual life can be truly phantasmagoric and uncontrollable, it still has borders, and is definitely a machine in itself, with its own agendas and predefined patterns of action.

There is a need for schools to offer performance spaces for pupils (and teachers) wherein alternative realities can be explored, created, conquered and contested. Only through performance in actual and virtual worlds, and through actual and virtual bodies can education that targets democratic ideals develop. To ignore the virtual life is to leave Little Red Riding Hood looking in vain for her grandma, limiting her to her well known trails where grandma once was. She might find the way herself though thereby increasing school's irrelevance for her. Drama surely has the potential to help create rewarding trails between the actual and the virtual, the body with and without organs, the innocent and the excellent. What activity other than drama in education might be up to the task of creating planes of immanence as performance spaces for pupils to look through the limits of rationality? The aesthetic without immanence is nothing but anesthetic: lifeless and without power.

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