Re-marks on Source Material

by

Karen Amanda Thompson

B.A. (Dance Theatre), Laban Dance Centre, 2008

Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Fine Arts

in the
School for the Contemporary Arts
Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology

© Karen Amanda Thompson 2013
SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
Fall 2013

All rights reserved. However, in accordance with the Copyright Act of Canada, this work may be reproduced, without authorization, under the conditions for “Fair Dealing.” Therefore, limited reproduction of this work for the purposes of private study, research, criticism, review and news reporting is likely to be in accordance with the law, particularly if cited appropriately.
Approval

Name: Karen Amanda Thompson
Degree: Master of Fine Arts (Dance)
Title: Re-marks on Source Material
Examining Committee: Chair: Arne Eigenfeldt
Henry Daniel
Senior Supervisor
Associate Professor

Rob Kitsos
Supervisor
Associate Professor

Jennifer Mascall
External Examiner
Artistic Director [Mascall Dance]

Date Defended/Approved: September 27, 2013
Partial Copyright Licence

The author, whose copyright is declared on the title page of this work, has granted to Simon Fraser University the non-exclusive, royalty-free right to include a digital copy of this thesis, project or extended essay[s] and associated supplemental files (“Work”) (title[s] below) in Summit, the Institutional Research Repository at SFU. SFU may also make copies of the Work for purposes of a scholarly or research nature; for users of the SFU Library; or in response to a request from another library, or educational institution, on SFU’s own behalf or for one of its users. Distribution may be in any form.

The author has further agreed that SFU may keep more than one copy of the Work for purposes of back-up and security; and that SFU may, without changing the content, translate, if technically possible, the Work to any medium or format for the purpose of preserving the Work and facilitating the exercise of SFU’s rights under this licence.

It is understood that copying, publication, or public performance of the Work for commercial purposes shall not be allowed without the author’s written permission.

While granting the above uses to SFU, the author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in the Work, and may deal with the copyright in the Work in any way consistent with the terms of this licence, including the right to change the Work for subsequent purposes, including editing and publishing the Work in whole or in part, and licensing the content to other parties as the author may desire.

The author represents and warrants that he/she has the right to grant the rights contained in this licence and that the Work does not, to the best of the author’s knowledge, infringe upon anyone’s copyright. The author has obtained written copyright permission, where required, for the use of any third-party copyrighted material contained in the Work. The author represents and warrants that the Work is his/her own original work and that he/she has not previously assigned or relinquished the rights conferred in this licence.

Simon Fraser University Library
Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada

revised Fall 2013
Abstract

I began the MFA Interdisciplinary Arts program with the specific purpose of examining notions of power as these pertained to my experience as a dance artist. Questions surrounding agency, i.e., the dynamics of the collaborative process, and the empowerment of individuals within educational, creative and viewing contexts, all helped to refine my research. I was able to identify more easily the hierarchical structures that exist within the discipline of dance itself, the relationship of such hierarchies to the perception and actions of choreographer, dancer and audience, and how dance artists have historically and are currently addressing these concerns through their various practices.

Keywords: contemporary dance; hierarchy, power; democracy; collaboration.
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my senior supervisor Dr. Henry Daniel and to my 2nd supervisor Rob Kitsos, for their continuous support of my M.F.A research.

Besides my supervisors I would also like to thank the rest of my committee: Dr. Arne Eignfeldt and choreographer Jennifer Mascall, for their encouragement, insightful comments and hard questions.

My sincere thanks also goes to the School for the Contemporary Arts, for offering me the Graduate Fellowship and the Graduate International Research Travel Award. These awards lead me on to diverse and exciting research that greatly informed my final findings.

Lastly, I would like to thank my husband Par Esegbona, for his tremendous love and support throughout my study, and for challenging me at every step of the way.
Table of Contents

Approval ........................................................................................................................................ii
Partial Copyright Licence ........................................................................................................... iii
Abstract .........................................................................................................................................iv
Acknowledgements .................................................................................................................... v
Table of Contents ...................................................................................................................... vi

Chapter 1. Artist’s Statement: Re-marks on Source Material and Play Role ........... 1

Appendix A. Re-marks on Source Material ................................................................. 5
  Somatic Practice .................................................................................................................. 6
  Somatic Approaches to Dance ....................................................................................... 8
  Smooth and Striated Space ............................................................................................ 10
  Dancing the Smooth and Striated ................................................................................ 11
  Conclusion and Considerations ..................................................................................... 16
  Bibliography ................................................................................................................... 18
    Books ................................................................................................................................. 18
    E-Journals ..................................................................................................................... 18
    Websites .......................................................................................................................... 18

Appendix B. Video Files .......................................................................................... 19
  Creator ................................................................................................................................. 19
    Re-marks on Source Materials ...................................................................................... 19
    Play Role ........................................................................................................................... 19
Chapter 1.

Artist’s Statement:
Re-marks on Source Material and Play Role

During my MFA Studies at Simon Fraser University, I conducted and presented research on dance via a number of different modes and platforms; written essay’s, art works, interdisciplinary workshops, conferences and practical laboratories. All of these initiatives were designed to explore notions of power, i.e., hierarchy, resistance and empowerment, surrounding the articulation and presentation of dance as an art form itself. This cumulative research process has resulted in the creation of two final works that comprise my graduating project, “Re-marks on Source Material” and “Play Role”.

I began the MFA Interdisciplinary Arts program with the specific purpose of examining notions of power as these pertained to my experience as a dance artist. Questions surrounding agency¹, i.e., the dynamics of the collaborative process, and the empowerment of individuals within educational, creative and viewing contexts, all helped to refine my research. I was able to identify more easily the hierarchical structures that exist within the discipline of dance itself, the relationship of such hierarchies to the perception and actions of choreographer, dancer and audience, and how dance artists have historically and are currently addressing these concerns through their various practices².

Re-marks on Source Material and Play Role are two distinct pieces yet connected by similar methodological processes; one is a stage presentation where the

¹ Writers and thinkers such as Claire Fontaine, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, Michel Foucault and Andre Lepecki have influenced my use of this term.

² The work of dance artists from the 1960’s onwards, such as the Judson Dance Theatre, William Forsyth, Xavier Le Roi, Martin Spangberg sand Tino Segal, have been particularly influential in my research and my graduating art works.
research is focused on the rehearsal process towards performance, and the other is a gallery presentation where the research is focused on the process of the performance itself. Both were designed to challenge seemingly established hierarchical structures, roles and positions etc., thus aiming to open the way for alternative views. They are attempts at finding a working method that allows me to address the issues of power in a continuous and reflexive manner. By this I mean always keeping these concerns at the centre of the working relationship between myself as choreographer, and the dancers as performers/collaborators. In this manner the dynamics of power is somewhat destabilized; I am not a dominating force, the dancers are not muted, and therefore we become jointly responsible for a process that allows the work to benefit from that particular relationship.

Re-marks on Source Material is a thirty-seven minute stage piece, accompanied by a sound score composed by Gabriel Saloman - a fellow MFA candidate, and danced by eleven performers – a mix of professionals, graduates and undergraduates from Vancouver contemporary dance/music community and Simon Fraser University. The process began with a period of studio-based exploration of movement tasks, improvisations and discussions. This initial phase consisted of creative tasks designed to undo and/or unpack layers of experience within the bodies of the performers, to better understand old as well as initiate new conversations about personal agency within systems of constraint, whether these exist in the studio milieu or in the real life world. Each task was designed to purposely engage ideas of restriction and freedom, to physically and intellectually engage the dancer and to remind them of the underlying structures that constituted power. I was interested in how the dancers responded to the different parameters I set, and what strategies they themselves employed as acts of empowerment.

The next phase of the research built on the results of this first step, generating movement ideas and material that we used as building blocks for the final work. Ideas included the physical exploration of notions of belonging, fitting in, exclusion, conformity, resistance, protest and refusal, all of which are manifested in the choreography.

Play Role is a dance installation to be experienced outside of the more traditional theatre context (in this iteration the Audain Gallery). A total of ten performers were
involved— a mixture of undergraduate and graduate students from Simon Fraser University. The research methodology involved problematizing the roles of viewer, dancer and choreographer through the act of ‘mirroring’. This is an exercise often used in dance and theatre training as well as in arts therapy to sharpen ones perception and focus to movement and presence, and to build rapport between participants. My use of mirroring in Play Role was as both a restrictive as well as a productive force: A set of rules or parameters were ‘given’ for the viewer to follow (or not), and another set of rules were ‘given’ to the performer to follow (or not). Apart from setting up this ‘installation’, my role involved simply standing back and allowing the process to happen.

The composition would unfold according to the choices the viewers made. This more or less shaped the choreography – a composition that not only depended on the set rules but also on the individual’s use of them. As the choreographer, I was curious about how bodies would be affected by the constraints and freedoms offered by the situation. In short, how they dealt with decisions when given an active role of power. Additionally, I was interested in finding other ways of experiencing a dance performance that were different to the seated auditorium frame, which could offer alternative affective and embodied responses to the work.

Both “Re-marks on Source Material” and “Play Role” complicated my position as choreographer, as well as my perspectives on notions of restrictive and/or productive authority. In the event of my breaking down one hierarchical frame, a new one would appear. The challenge of negotiating a shared space of decision/making, and the need to exercise leadership and responsibility were constant. However, I believe that an acute awareness and flexibility to the moment and to the individual was nurtured. My decision to embark on a practice that aimed at providing a space where empowered choices were encouraged, for an individual to feel like he or she could positively contribute and affect the context that they were in was validated. This was not easily accomplished, but the research proved that it could be done.

Whilst a collaborative working relationship with dancers is not a new idea in contemporary dance, and whilst this idea can be practised in many different ways, especially in spaces where audience interactions are more likely to take place, I argue that there is still much to be explored. My work, as well as those of others, seeks to
demonstrate how the discipline absorbs and reabsorbs new conflicts and new encounters. As my experience also demonstrates, new structures of power are as likely to appear. My research gives its primary attention to the process of creation and to these central concerns.
Appendix A.

Re-marks on Source Material

Interrelations between ones everyday life, societal rules and regulations and negotiation of shared space are complex and dynamic. The daily experience and repetition of this embeds itself deeply into the memory of one’s body moment to moment, creating habitual patterning of movement, behavior and perception. If one is not observant, this habitual patterning can be a negative and an entrapping force for the body. Tension can appear in the very fabric of one’s anatomy, and as a collective mass in the fabric of society.

The idea behind this thesis project stems from my experiences of interrelations between liberating and confining areas within the discipline of dance. Both academically and in my artistic practice I have been researching various notions of power both in society and dance. Through this research I have gradually become more interested in methods of empowerment, in my day to day life and in dance: training; making; performing and viewing of art works, as well as developing more democratic spaces to, as Foucault states “permit individuals to effect by their own means, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being so as to transform themselves.”

As a dancer, choreographer and instructor, I am always aspiring to find more freedom in movement: for more articulation, comfort and ease, and more freedom in creative processes: to find different ways to express through movement, and not be afraid of what I may find. Influences of somatic practices help me to do this, through holistic practical examination of my internal and external environment, and the relationship between the two, I am able to keep deepening and transforming my practice. Inspired by visual artist ‘Claire Fontaine’, and their writings on the ‘Human Strike’

Foucault, Michel. ‘Technologies of self’ 1997:225
See Claire Fontaine website for these readings. www.clairefontaine.ws
resistance, which constantly re-work ones actions and thoughts, so as to avoid fixed physicality and perceptions.

By viewing somatic approaches to dance as small acts of resistance - opposed to the more formal approaches, similarities between dance and society in terms of ethical and political issues can be observed. Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari’s conceptualization of ‘smooth’ and ‘striated’ spaces ⁵ enlivens this exploration. By using their conceptualization of the two spaces in distinction, but more importantly how they converge, I consider how it can be extended in to the training, creative and performance spaces of dance. I work to find a way of understanding how this theorization of dance practice, can inform my artistic and educational processes, towards offering a more democratic and auto-didactic environment.

To do this I shall firstly lay out a foundation of the history and development of somatic practices and its influences on dance. This is to draw attention to the how and why this particular method of empowerment evolved in society, and how and why dance artists began to utilize it in their practice. Secondly, I shall outline Deleuze and Guatarri’s concept of smooth and striated cultural spaces, for a basis of understanding, in order to begin to discuss how this spatial concept can be viewed within dance, particularly dance training. Thirdly, I discuss, with reference to the work of dance artists Trisha Brown and William Forsythe, how as Deleuze and Guatarri state, “that the two spaces in fact exist only in mixture” ⁶, and what this mix produces. To conclude I propose other areas within dance that could be researched with this theory, and suggest how this could shed new light on working methods within dance.

**Somatic Practice**

The word somatic comes from the Greek word “soma’ meaning “the body in its wholeness,” ⁷ and the term ‘somatic practice’ was first coined by Thomas Hanna in 1976

---


⁶ Ibib p474

8, to describe various approaches and techniques to body-mind integration which he and others in the west were developing. Influences of Eastern philosophy, medicine, martial arts and spirituality were highly influential in the development of European and American somatic practices. Practitioners such as: Joseph Pilates (Pilates) was influenced by Yoga (India), in terms of movement and breath co-ordination; Ida Rolf (Rolfing) was influenced by Hindu philosophies relating to moral structure and behavior towards one’s body, and Moshe Feldenkrais became one of the first westerners to receive a black-belt in Judo.9 The pioneers of somatic practice shared the opinion that “being engaging in attentive dialogue with one’s bodily self we, as humans, can learn newly, become pain free, move more easily, do our life work more efficiently, and perform with greater vitality and expressiveness”10 For the purpose of this essay, somatic principals shall be defined as by the description that the International Somatic Movement Education and Therapy association uses to unify the various techniques 11:

- Focus on the body both as an objective physical process and as a subjective process of lived consciousness.
- Refine perceptual, kinesthetic, proprioceptive sensitivity that supports homeostasis and self-regulation.
- Recognize habitual patterns of perceptual, postural and movement interactions with one’s environment.
- Improve movement co-ordination that supports structural, functional and expressive integration.
- Experience an embodied sense of vitality and extended capacity for living.

The essay shall also refer to the terms somatic approaches and somatic sensibilities. These definitions are to be understood as referring to the principles of somatic practice in terms of: wholeness, agency and self-regulation in dance technique, improvisation or composition. Somatic practice is not a means to an end in terms of a cure, or a ‘quick fix’, but operates within one’s life as a pure means of continuous self-observation. It is an embodied ethical approach in pursuit of positive self-autonomous

9 Ibid p12-13
10 ibid p 6
11 www.ISMETA.org
change. These small acts of kinesthetic resistance “demands a continual re-articulation rather than a subsuming into the same” 12. As early as the late nineteenth century, modern dance began to investigate this process of re-articulation both in training the body and creative processes.

**Somatic Approaches to Dance**

Finding freedom in one’s moving body is the very crux of somatic practices.

It was artists such as Francois Delsarte (musician), Emile Jacques-Dalcroze (musician), Rudolf Laban (dance artist), Mary Wigman (dance artist) and Isadora Duncan (dance artist), whom brought somatic ideas to the forefront of western movement practices, and carved the way for later developments in the 1970’s, for pioneers of somatic practice 13. In 1945, Anna Halprin, began to utilize holistic approaches towards people’s ‘self-healing’ potential, bringing improvisation as part of her training and creative methods, for individuals to discover their own ways of moving and expressing. Merce Cunningham used precepts of Zen Buddhism such a ‘chance’ in the making and performing of his works. Mind-body techniques developed by movement specialists Bonnie Bainbridge-Coen and Irmgard Bartienieff began working more closely with dance artists and in dance education.14

One could say that postmodern dance in America during the 1960’s and 70’s, began to incorporate somatic approaches and sensibilities to training and making, as a means of ‘kinesthetic strike’ 15: a political gesture to de-center what dance and a dancing body was. At that time, many dance artists, particularly those associated with the Judson church movement, were re-examining the role of the body within performance. Their aesthetics of movement and thematic ideas were, for many of them politically charged. They were searching for ways to relate to the ‘democratic majority’, stemming from egalitarian political principles. These ideas led them to emphasis of the everyday, the

---

14 *ibid* p15
15 As a strategy against control
ordinary, and the questioning of ‘spectacle’ and hierarchy in dance and art. At this time, somatic practices were beginning to be incorporated in to the training by artists such as Trisha Brown and Steve Paxton.

Trisha Brown began to use methods from Susan Klein (Klein technique), in professional and company dance classes. She began to present her dance works within gallery settings, such as ‘Walking on the Walls’ (1971, see Trisha Brown ‘Walking On The Walls’, 1971, Whitney Museum of American Art, http://www.trishabrowncompany.org/?page=view&nr=481), challenging ideas of how dance could be presented and how dance was defined. In viewing ‘Walking on the Walls’, ones perception of orientation is totally confused, as the dancers ‘stroll’ along walls in harnesses horizontal to the vertical stance of the viewer, making it look so natural. One knows that they have to work really hard so as their lower arm does not fall with the pull of gravity, and that they are using the muscles in their necks so as to keep the head in alignment with the spine. Yet ones bodily perception is so primarily affected, that thinking seems to proceed this, and then a constant shifting or dialoguing between the two emerges. The body-mind response to this work suggests a type of somatic viewing, in the sense that the awareness of body and mind working in tandem is at the forefront of one’s sensation and consciousness.

Steve Paxton’s approach to the body, in the somatic sense, came through his development of contact improvisation in 1972. Contact improvisation is a dance form (still continuously evolving) based on the interaction and dialogue between two moving bodies in constant contact (see Steve Paxton and Nancy Stark-Smith, contact improvisation photo, Bill Arnold http://www.contactquarterly.com/vd/vd.html). In his 1979 edition of the journal ‘Contact Quarterly’, Steve Paxton describes it as:

*Spontaneous physical dialogues that range from stillness to highly energetic exchanges. Alertness is developed in order to work in an*


17 Klein technique was created and trade marked by Susan Klein, as a “way to teach people to learn who they are in their bodies, how their bodies functions in movement and stillness, how to work as correctly as possible, with the body as a whole system” Klein, Susan. “Klein student handbook”. New York. 2005
energetic state of physical disorientation, trusting in one’s basic survival instincts. It is a free play with balance, self-correcting the wrong moves and reinforcing the right ones, bringing forth a physical/emotional truth about a shared moment of movement that leaves the participants informed, centered, and enlivened.

('CQ' Vol. 5:1, Fall 1979)\textsuperscript{18}

As homework from Robert Dunn, alongside other members of the Judson Church group, Paxton was asked to question: what was dance? And how could it be different to what was already present? By exploring the small movements of the skeleton, the flow of energy and identifying small sensations, with and in contact of another body, he began to create the practice. He incorporates rolling techniques of aikido, in which he was trained, in order to be comfortable falling and rolling in different directions.\textsuperscript{19} Contact Improvisation continues to flourish and develop today, and is often a part of contemporary dance training.

**Smooth and Striated Space**

The kinesthetic strike within dance can also be viewed through Deleuze and Guatarri’s concept of Smooth and Striated spaces, Before elaborating on this, I shall lay out a basic understanding of this concept. It is important to state that I am aware that I shall be overlooking intricacies of this concept, and in the future, under a more intensive study program, I wish to return to these intricacies. However for the purpose of this essay, I find it sufficient to focus on simple notions to illustrate my thinking.

In the book ‘A Thousand Plateau’s’\textsuperscript{20} Deleuze and Guatarri distinguish two kinds of cultural spaces: smooth space and striated space. They define smooth space as occupied by the nomad: a subject operating outside of the organisational state and moving from place to place, and striated space as occupied by the sedentary: a subject operating inside the organisational state and moving as a city dweller.\textsuperscript{21} Within the

\textsuperscript{18} Steve Paxton. ‘CQ’ Vol. 5:1, Fall 1979 http://www.contactquarterly.com/vd/vd.html.
\textsuperscript{19} Steve Paxton. ‘CQ’ Vol. 5:1, Fall 1979 http://www.contactquarterly.com/vd/vd.html.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid p474
environment of smooth space, there are no fixed points but sets of relations, ‘the points are subordinated to the trajectory’\textsuperscript{22}, meaning a nomadic journey, for example, is not pre-determined by pre-set measurable constructions. Journeys are determined by sensual and tactile responses to nature at that moment, such as the sound of the wind or the melting of the ice. In striated space, the fixed rational methods of measurable points such as time, roads and buildings, determine the sedentary journey.\textsuperscript{23} The sea is described as an archetype of smooth space: sensual, tactile, flowing, unpredictable, with no points or lines, and the city as an archetype of striated space: confined spaces, specific time frames\textsuperscript{24}. To further understand their concept, they analyse smooth and striated space through various models such as the fabric modal, the technological modal and the musical modal. In offering a dance modal of smooth and striated space, I place the somatic approach to dance as holding qualities of smooth, operating within the striated space of the institution of dance.

**Dancing the Smooth and Striated**

\textit{“In striated space, lines or trajectories tend to be subordinated to points: one goes from one point to another. In the smooth, it is the opposite: the points are subordinated to the trajectory”}\textsuperscript{25}

This quote describes the processes of a journey within the space of the smooth and striated. I wish to focus on ‘processes of a journey’, when looking at the distinctions and interplay between the nomadic and the sedentary spaces of dance. By first presenting hypothetical and extreme notions of simple oppositions within dance, I put forward ethical and political issues in relation to freedom and restraint. Again, as Deleuze and Guatarri state “we must remind ourselves that the two spaces in fact exist only in mixture”\textsuperscript{26}, which in reality, is how the spatial concepts operate in dance and which shall be discussed.

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{ibid} p478  
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{ibid} p479  
\textsuperscript{24} \textit{ibid} p482  
\textsuperscript{25} \textit{ibid} p480  
\textsuperscript{26} \textit{ibid}
In daily life, we depend on the body to enable us to move and engage in the world, although awareness of the processes in doing this is mostly non-existent. As an adult, it is impossible to be in a constant state of consciously perceiving our every movement, therefore as Mable Elsworth Todd states, “A vast number of movements are habitual, that is automatic”\(^\text{27}\), resulting in the potential for bad muscular patterning, and in time restricting the body through pain and stiffness. Approaches to more formal techniques such as ballet, rely on the repetition of codified movement on a body. The development of ballet during the seventeenth century was informed by anatomical analysis\(^\text{28}\), yet its main function was to “wed physical training to state power”\(^\text{29}\). One can still observe this and the many ‘state’ striations placed on the dancing body in ballet classes today, such as: the rigid execution of fixed vocabulary. The requirement to attain a specific and universal perfection; praise is given to those whom achieve this perfection in a manner that those who do not are demoralized; the mirror is the external dominant overseer keeping the dancer ‘in check’ making sure that they look exactly like how they should.

In relation to Deleuze and Guatarri’s striated space of the state, ballet’s codified movements, the hierarchical spatial set up of the classroom, the dominating mirrors and the clothing, become the authoritarian “walls, enclosures, and roads between enclosures”\(^\text{30}\). In Foucauldian terms the ‘inscription’ of power created by the ‘imposing of operational laws of movement’\(^\text{31}\) shapes the ballet body externally. However if that ballet body does not conform to the ideal aesthetic, internally this has dis-empowering repercussions for the individual. Reading the manifesto on the ‘Ballet To The People’ website, created by ballet dancers is further evidence: ‘No suffering for your art, No despotic teachers, No tutus oozing blood, No one sitting on your shoulders to force your

\(^{27}\) Elsworth-Todd, Mable. “The thinking Body: the balancing forces of dynamic man” 1937. P51
split, A place where beautiful dancers come in all shapes and sizes\textsuperscript{32}, are just of few of the points that suggest ballet is still holds oppressive ‘fixed’ tendencies.

Somatic approaches to dance training change the power relations of technique on a body from external to internal. The practical processes involve a person subjectively tracking his or her own felt-sense experience during a given task or phrase of movement, therefore exploring what happens between points. The economy of time within somatic approaches to training is different to that of more formal ones. Within a class, time is often extended for exercises, to explore movement through slowly repeated reflection. Set phrases of movement are directed at observing the processes of the action, in order to understand how body parts relate in the execution of movement to the individual. Opposed to ballet, emphasis is not on finding the correct positions, but more geared to exploring the sensory stimuli of the movement: breath, touch and initiation. Agency of the dancer is encouraged, to bring about, as Susan Leigh Foster states, “the possibility of a body that is written upon, that also writes”\textsuperscript{33}.

Striated space is seemingly hierarchical, oppressive and inflexible, but it does not necessarily mean that it is inferior to smooth space, in the sense of potential. As mentioned earlier in the essay, Deleuze and Guatarri state that the two spaces exist only in mixture. What interests them in this mix is “how the forces at work within space continually striate it, and how in the course of it’s striation it develops other forces and emits new smooth spaces”\textsuperscript{34} Therefore striation can be viewed as holding positive potential which draws me to the following quote by Claire Fontaine “Our potentiality can only become perceptible for us if we take it as a possible reality, if – that is – we free ourselves of the parasite of the economy and refuse to think of only the thinkable”\textsuperscript{35}. In this sense as well as striated space ‘capturing’ the creativity of smooth space, it also gives rise for smooth space to re-emerge, re-invent, re-engage and re-think.

\textsuperscript{32}http://ballettothepeople.com/manifesto/
\textsuperscript{33}Susan Leigh-Foster in ‘Agency and Embodiment’ by Carrie Nolan (2009) p 3
\textsuperscript{35}Fontaine, Claire. ‘Imperceptible abstractions’. www.clairefontaine.ws
As much as one could continue to divide the discipline of dance into these conceptual spaces, and it can serve the purpose of understanding how ethical and moral issues arise in dance in relation to authority, hierarchy and importance of the individual, one has to come back to the reality of the spaces interrelating, and what this produces. A great example of this, is choreographer William Forsythe, whom in the 1980’s and 1990’s as Mark Franko suggest “was attempting to radically reconfigure the most disciplinary movement or codex of the West: Classical ballet” 36. Forsythe’s creative and choreographic practice embody in my opinion, the mix of smooth and striated space. Although his methods do not directly use practical elements of somatic practices in his training or creative periods, I suggest that his underlying principles and approaches are much the same (refer back to definition of somatic practice)

Born in New York in 1949, William Forsythe began training in classical ballet at the age of 18 under Nolan Dingman. In 1969 he went on to train full-time at the Joffery Ballet School, New York, and in 1973 was employed by John Cranko to dance in the Stuttgart Ballett. In 1976 he was given the opportunity to create a piece for the company and was subsequently commissioned to create several more. In 1984, he became the director of the company renamed Ballett Frankfurt, where he began to experiment with his own ideas, and became known for bringing ballet in to the 20th century. 37 Using mostly ballet-trained dancers, Forsythe focuses on the interplay between delineating and opening forces, or in other words exploring interaction of smooth and striated gaps and boundaries. He takes the striation of a ballet-trained body, and uses this as “an object of transferrable knowledge” 38, hence respecting the tradition of ballet, but bringing it in to contemporary reality. The reality being that todays society, in the West, is, although arguably, more democratic, and that dance training, making and viewing is exploring methods which incorporate democratic values for example: somatic approaches. Furthermore, through the mixing of Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptual spaces, I suggest

Forsythe’s methods and works, can tell us how the smooth can hypothetically ‘capture’ the striated.

“State space is ‘striated’, or gridded and limited by the order to preset paths between fixed and identifiable points. Nomad space is ‘smooth’, or open-ended. One can rise up at any point and move to any other.
(Massumi, 1988, p. xiii)

Improvisation is a method that Forsythe uses extensively within educational and creative spaces. In ‘Improvisation Technologies: Self meant to Govern” 39, describes the methods that he uses with his dancers, in order to “re-harness power towards the dancer’s visceral thinking” 40. With reference to Massumi’s quote, Forsythe’s desire to enable agency of the dancer, in both their own moving body and in contribution to creating components of the choreography, in my opinion is, as Franko remarks “an ethical use of choreographic movement” 41. An example of one of the many improvisational tasks, described in Forsythe’s CD-ROM, is the method of ‘Lines and Avoidance’. This improvisation asks the dancer to draw an imaginary line in space and to avoid or move around this line in whichever way they can discover. The line can be moved and redrawn, as long as the dancers keep the integrity of the line, making sure not to cross or break it whilst exploring. The dancer is simultaneously creating a ‘fixed and identifiable point’, and then capitalizing on this through the creative exploration of the ‘open-ended’ space surrounding it. In place of the fixed line, Forsythe asks the dancers to place themselves in one of the many codified positions in ballet. Again the dancer uses the outline of this shape to indent the space, to then explore around that space, I suggest “with an activist sense, the choice within constraining systems to act. To notice, have reflected, observe ones actions, how one can affect the space.” 42

39 A CD-ROM produced by ZKM, Frankfurt Ballet and the German Dance Archive in Cologne in 1996, created by William Forsythe
41 ibid p92
Forsythe’s work ‘One Flat Thing Re-produced’ which premiered in the year 2000 (see Ballett Frankfurt in ‘One Flat Thing, reproduced’, Jack Vartoogian and BAM, http://www.exploredance.com/article.htm?id=1041) oscillates between the rigid organizational structure of 20 tables, and the fluid innovative movement of 14 dancers. Although highly choreographed, the dancers, using methods of ‘Improvisation Technologies’, create the vocabulary. As they move between the tight empty spaces of the symmetrical and mathematical organization of the tables, these spaces begin to expand, as the dancers explore and inhabit all the possibilities. What ensues is not only the visible potential of what a body can do in terms of its range, but also how the dancers individually become the ones in control of how to manipulate or change the relationships in space. This somatic sensibility is in my opinion, what makes his dancers so strong and versatile. Each dancers understanding and exploration of the movement is different, and these differences unearth multiple possibilities of individual execution, yet still inhabit harmoniously the same space, as Carrie Nolan comments form Sartre’s ‘Being and Nothingness’, “kinesis and the sensations it engenders are also a source of possibilities offering freedom from situational constraints.”

Conclusion and Considerations

“Of course, smooth spaces are not in themselves liberatory. But the struggle is changed or displaced in them, and life reconstitutes its stakes, confronts new obstacles, invents new paces, and switches adversaries. Never believe that a smooth space will suffice to save us.”

With reference to William Forsythe, I would suggest that through the concept of smooth and striated space, one could look back on ballet and understand that the freedom was always potentially available for the individual dancer, but society at that time did not make it possible or easy for resistance. In the beginning of Forsythe’s career as a choreographer, he was greatly criticized as “the destroyer of ballet”45, but through

his resistance of conforming to the tight tradition of ballet, he has managed to change perceptions of the discipline. By analyzing his contemporary dances through Deleuze and Guatarri’s spatial concept and through ideas of somatic approaches, I have discovered how dance can be viewed as engaging in the notions of strike or revolution in support of self-autonomy and empowerment of the dancer, as well as the lessening of hierarchy within the institution of dance.

Forsythe was chosen as his practice clearly and purposefully works between the smooth space of the dancer’s autonomy and striated space of the ballet technique placed upon the dancer, however, there are many dance artists whom train in and use more recent contemporary techniques. I believe that by considering Deleuze and Guatarri’s smooth and striated concept in terms of a dance modal, it could become a conceptual, creative and positive tool for all dance artists who wish to further explore and understand restriction and potential in their practice. Furthermore I believe that by observing somatic approaches to dance practice, in relation to ‘smooth and striated space’, it gives another perspective on the practice of freedom and processes of providing democratic spaces in training, performance and viewing.

This essay only touches upon one aspect of William Forsythe’s practice, that being one example of the many methods in his ‘Improvisation Technologies’, and one of his works ‘One Flat Thing Re-produced’. Further research would analyze his improvisation methods more deeply, through the modal of smooth and striated and with Spinoza’s question of ‘What a body can do’. Forsythe’s installation works raise the question of ‘agency’ and ‘somatic’ engagement of the viewer; therefore researching ‘participatory’ works would also be of interest when looking through Deleuze and Guatarri’s spatial modal. There is also the issue of ‘high’ and ‘low’ art to consider through this modal, which I believe would highlight a great deal of ethical complications, related to funding and what gets funded. Improvised and choreographed performances would be a very interesting area to explore when looking at the mix of smooth and striated spaces, in terms of processes and agency. Thinking through dance to shed new interdisciplinary viewpoints on smooth and striated, as well as the smooth and striated giving insight in to the dynamics of power relations in dance, is something that I look forward to investigating further.
Bibliography

Books
Hanna, Thomas. ‘Bodies in Revolt’. Holt. Rinehart & Winston: USA, 1970

E-Journals

Websites
http://www.donhanlonjohnson.com/somatics.html
www.clairefontaine.ws
Appendix B.

Video Files

Creator
Karen Thompson

Re-marks on Source Materials
Filename: rosm.mp4
Description
A 6-minute excerpt of the contemporary dance piece Re-marks on Source Material – The starting point for this piece was examining the individual’s behavioural compliance and complicity in society’s simultaneous networks of power relations.

Sound composition: Gabriel Saloman
Lighting Design: James Kokol

Play Role
Filename: play-role.mp4
Description
A time-lapse documentation of the installation ‘Play Role’ – a game-based interactive performance which actively shifts the roles between choreographer, performer and viewer, curiously examining how an individual deals with decisions when given an active role of power.