

## Force of Care (Notes)

How can we figure the reuse of a (document of a) form-of-practice?  
Where lies its force?

What do the operations of documentation and reuse do to it?  
What does the form “provide access to” through reuse?

A question of force (instead of meaning). I find that the concept of “force” is helpful alongside vitality/situatedness/thickness as it orientates us towards the moment of re/use, as opposed to the presence that is absent.

A form-of-practice emerged from an investigation: there was a need, a problem to crack, a desire to fulfill, a material to work with. That investigation was entangled in a certain ecosystem: as with Grotowski, for example, the practitioners were extremely disciplined in particular kinds and ways of practices – steeped in certain relationalities and aesthetics. The very stuff of the forms – its concepts, themes, operations – were (and still are) contingent on locally determined boundaries stabilized through iteration and care. The form did something for someone somewhere and someplace. Practices are marked by specific relationship of care in time and space; that’s where they garner their force, that’s how they’re cultivated.

What happens when these are peeled away, even jettisoned?

Perhaps we can adopt the metaphor of bones and flesh. Care, being the stuff of flesh, having had decayed, or even been stripped off, leaves the form, bare-bones. What is left in an echo, a ghost, a husk, a vessel. An apparatus crafted to do now simply is.

Perhaps we can theorize a duration of putrefaction, a “best used by” date for a form whereby its historical potency and determinacy wane.

Perhaps flesh is the stuff of mystery and mysticism, the differently reliable matter of a practice which made it tick, gave it the force to proliferate bodies.

What happens when a form is picked up again – without the facilitator having a rich relation of care to it? What of its original force remains? What haunts it?

It seems to me that it still maintains some vitality, a specter which can be manifest as an entry to a certain body, world, dream – some relative reliability of technique, some historical affordances and qualities. In analogy to grimoires, the care dedicated to developing the rituals and their instructions allows a practitioner to enact magic without engaging with its underlying theory. Admittedly, there is a sense of heresy to enacting a form with complete disregard to its poetry.

The distribution of force is contingent on an embodied practitioner and their specific encounter with the grimoire (as a “handle” on technique). Perhaps it has “enough force” to trigger a momentum of embodiment. Perhaps the practitioner has “enough experience” (or is in a certain mood) so the force of the form is insufficient; they experience the form as “not doing anything” or “not being specific enough” – something that was potent becomes impotent, flaccid. There’s also the potential of a force-misfire in a displaced activation.

Crucially, the possibility of recharging the form with new force through care and iteration – responsible alteration, tailoring it to the current needs/care/spacetime. With that, it is also crucial to remember the immanent failure of the re-evocation: the difference in the repetition of things, which perhaps grows as the reactivation extends further from the horizon of origination. An origination which is inherently absent, but perhaps can be triangulated through proxies: authors, events, forms, and so on. These should only serve as a point of reference, not a mythic past to return to; they should remind us of the difference, not seduce us with the promise of “perfect” repetition.

What happens when the force is utterly barren, evacuated? When the quality of absence is stronger than the quality of presence?

At times, it feels like the “emptying” of force makes way of careless appropriation. In the metaphor of irresponsible reuse – what were initially tools of precision become tools of negligence. This often happens when practices pass from subculture to mainstream. As when people claim the use of Butoh, in a way that feels far astray from the technique and poetry of Butoh “proper”, perhaps using it as a referent, an index. This reuse conflates the term to the degree of its deflation; it accrues some much force, it bursts – so much meaning that it doesn’t mean anything anymore (much like the terms Practice and Flow). What do it do for these practitioners, terming their practice “Butoh”? What does it do to its mythic force, and the practice of Butoh itself? \*

Inflicted with the problem of capital, these questions gain another ethical dimension; when a technique or form, a practice is displaced from one artist to another, and the other artist profits from that displacement. In this context, arguing that authorship is performative, and that the technique didn’t belong to any of the individuals involved, glosses over question of responsibility and precarity. That is, not everyone can afford to engage in open circulation, and there is value in using credit to redistribute power and agency. \*\*

That's all... for now...

### Notes:

There is a certain authority (historically) granted to written text – a “master” text. A certain accountability and responsibility that is demanded from the author, which other forms of transmission perhaps do not necessitate. The “scandal” of the body (might be interesting to read *The Scandal of the Speaking Body* by Shoshana Felman) intuitively destabilizes this authority – this works wonders for oral and physical transmission. There is also here the danger that oral transmission becomes mythic, as with the “current” of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn – orality being granted too much power.

It is crucial then to foreground the performative aspect of the (written) document. That is, the document doesn’t describe a thing that was, but is rather doing history, rendering it in a certain way in relation to the body encountering it. (Performative Historiography?) I’ve been thinking on this act of “performative foregrounding” along the spectrum of saturation – making the document increasingly full with force – and interference – destabilizing or diffracting the force of the document.

\* Another potent example comes from the world of videogame design. In 2011, *Dark Souls* was released, proposing a particular gameplay mechanic which garnered great accolade. This mechanic, initially devised for a specific purpose – within certain ludo-narrative harmony, seeking to provide the player with a certain experience and mode of interaction – is now reused (replicated) ad-nauseum, becoming a trope. (For Martha Graham, the qualities of shape, effort, and so on were situated in a specific time for specific artistic ends; over time, they became innocent camp.)

\*\* Think of Yvonne Rainer's copy-righting of *Trio A*. Initially, Yvonne intended for the material to be open-source. Eventually, she realized not making any capital from it (while many others were) has placed her in a no-longer-sustainable precarity, leading to the tight control of the *Trio A* property today.

**Following conversations with:**

**21.02.2024 – Áron Birtalan**

**15.02.2024 – Martin Hargreaves**

**14.02.2024 – Chrysa Parkinson**