Unfolding space: an allotropic dance in three parts for two players

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Additional Information:

- Unfolding Space: An Allotropic Dance in Three Parts for Two Players is a paper/project of fragmentary visions that explore the interactions (in)between articulation and unfolding space, as might be configured through process, fluidity and our resonant, generative awareness of the creative and seductive potential of ambiguous and elusive coordinates. The paper/project was presented at Articulations, Amsterdam School of Cultural Analysis (ASCA) annual conference, Amsterdam, March 2010. In the authors’ original version the paper contained hyperlinks to a series of audio and video files to create a multimedia document. However in this version you are requested to open the audio or video file listed in the Repository ‘files associated with this item’ at the appropriate prompt contained in the body of the PDF text. The conference website is at: http://www.hum.uva.nl/asca-nw-newsandevents-conferences/archive.cfm/F45D5441-C2B6-4778-9D5B8EAFAB12193F

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Unfolding Space:  
An Allotropic Dance in Three Parts for Two Players  
>Marsha Phil >Marsha Meskimmon Phil >Marsha Meskimmon Phil Sawdon>¹ ...

The following notation is a digital notation; participants are advised that printing the text will inhibit full engagement with all of its elements. The text notation incorporates digital fragments accessed online through hyperlinks.

Adagio: Diamond (C)

Unfolding space resonates, generates, articulates and speculates, but it offers neither resolution nor definition. Space is infinite² [∞], and thus (un)folding does not (seek to) identify, represent or illustrate spatial limits or boundaries, but rather, demonstrates a process of ‘materialization’ along the lines of Judith Butler’s proposition that we:

… return to the notion of matter, not as a site or surface, but as a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity and surface we call matter.’ (italics in original)³

The ostensible stability of matter cannot be taken for granted; neither can it be used as evidence of the existence of sharply-defined spatial coordinates. Spaces are articulated⁴ in and through their unfolding, the very mo[ve]ment of matter’s spatial emergence, its materialisation as becoming-matter. We understand the spaces we ‘describe’ to be both produced and transformed by our articulations and we seek to engage with the elusive and seductive potential offered therein.

Engaging this potential, we perform an allotropic dance, an unfolding||becoming through fragmentary visions and multifaceted encounters that encourage imaginative variation to materialize spaces in process. We introduce the notion of allotropism (‘other manner’) to our dance, as the manifestation of multiple modes through a single substance. In the physical sciences, allotropes refer mainly to variant manifestations of a single element, e.g. carbon materializing as diamond and/or graphite:

¹ > more than
² Michael Moorcock: Lyrics for Black Corridor
Diamond (C): An allotrope (with graphite (C)) of carbon (C); a transparent, rigid lattice crystal of bonded carbon atoms, geologically formed under high pressure (lithification) and specific temperatures. Rough diamonds may be transformed into multifaceted ‘stones’ through a layered process of ‘cutting’ and ‘polishing’.

An allotropic dance draws spaces through multifaceted encounters; its procedures might be likened to those of the lapidary, drawing facets from the rough, unshaped, amorphous diamond through persuasiveness, practised skill and eloquence. This drawing sketches an outline for [a] dance within which thoughts articulate through an [other] manner and the eloquence of the parts/players as they (un/en)fold spaces, bodies and matter, toward the materialisation of difference. Difference thus becomes a matter|manner of multifaceted modes, genres and media in process, a dance of becoming, unlacing polarity through the sensual play of layering, folding and embodied encounters with others.

An allotropic dance materializes spaces through the touch of surfaces at many points, always moving, turning, spinning against each other.

Articulating|speculating|materializing;
Writing|drawing|dancing|kissing;
(Un)folding|becoming|(un)lacing

The verbs intertwine, interchange and interleave bodies and spaces through word and image, sound and silence, light and shadow. Some turns taken by Luce Irigaray resonate:

Becoming comprises ellipses and eclipses … [a] letting be that is open – in oneself and to the other – to a still unknown speech and silence. …Open, is it still a fold?^6

Yes, it is. Theory and practice unfold definition, desire ambiguity; theory comes out to

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^5 On the fold, we take our lead from approaches to Leibniz in the work of Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, foreword and trans. Tom Conley, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993 and, for example, on the implications of the fold for time, space and aesthetics, Mieke Bal’s eloquent formulation in *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999. The significance of allotropism to our dance, gestures toward the recent encounter with Spinoza staged by Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd, *Collective Imaginings: Spinoza, Past and Present*, London and New York: Routledge, 1999, where Spinoza’s monism is at the heart of imaginative, ethical encounters with difference (beyond dualism).

play and practice kisses [X1xXes] [Please open mp4 video file Adagio fragment from ‘files associated with this item’] her, recognising not a polar opposite, but an alternative manner of articulating/materialising thought... an allotrope.

If you are still thinking, are we allotropic?
Yes. Good night! X

The adagio movement of unfolding space adapts from the notational gestures of music, dance and acrobalance\(^7\), a slow, gently attentive drawing through, an attenuated suspension or balance, with/in difference. In musical notation, adagio directs players to be 'at ease'; our adagio suggests a temporal ‘ease’ other than entropy that describes the generative agency of articulate matter. As a form of notation that marks the manner/process by which the parts dance\(\mid\)move\(\mid\)articulate, the temporal and tonal qualities of the adagio of unfolding space suggest movements that, while coordinated, cannot resolve as one.

This is a dance notation that pauses for prospecting, slows its pace to speculate, is open, generating [the] notes, [the] annotations (including footnotes - foot note) of articulation. And these are, themselves, fragmentary visions, symbolically unfolding ideas and emotions, held together through and during notation as attenuated, resonant play:

Drawing through and with an allotropic dance the thought of drawing as an articulation of ideas/notes;
Drawing through and with the manner of dance a notation for an allotropic articulation of annotated concepts;

The description, an unfolding through notation, of a methodology of thinking: notating||drawing||articulating||dancing||becoming.

Diamond is prospected from layered alluvium that is [geologically] very young. The players/lapidaries of an allotropic dance are likewise prospecting within territory yet to consolidate; their articulation of space is speculative rather than definitive, and generative rather than lithified. Prospecting can be risky, but its returns are great.

\(^7\) In ballet, the adagio elements are slow enfolding movements, designed to enable training of the leg for position/extension and control. In acrobalance, the adagio requires a high degree of care, coordination, proprioceptive awareness, and mutual trust from the performers in order to avoid injury. It is often performed as part of le cirque. Due to their extreme physical nature, acrobalance adagios are usually no longer than eight to ten minutes in length.
Engaging becoming and a lack of resolution, our prospecting unfolds the ‘light performance’ of multifaceted and fragmentary visions: an allotropic dance.

The [multi] facets disperse and return illumination to a viewer/reader: reflections from the external and internal facet surfaces provide the light its properties of ‘brilliance’, ‘fire’ and ‘scintillation’\(^8\). These small flashes of ‘light’ are seen when their source, or the viewer, are moved.

Fragmentary visions are multifaceted and elusive lights, cohering through pleasure and, following Edward Casey’s articulation of erotic body memory, through the free and mutual exchange between bodily parts, in a genuinely intersubjective, intersensory, mode of dialogue. In our dance, fragments are opened to exploration as specific moments within a wider frame of articulation that crystallise thought without necessarily fixing its borders or setting the limits of its connection with other spaces and moments of thought.

Unfolding space is permanent transition; it is a mode of materialisation that is corporeal, memorial and multisensorial, a fluid process through which differences are held together intimately without resolution as one. Such (un)folding refuses sharp and sure descriptions of boundaries, corporeal or spatial, preferring resonance, prospecting and generative agency. Again, taking Casey’s lead, but adding emphasis for our adagio:

… it is difficult to draw any strict dividing line in such a memory between myself-as-being-touched by the other and the other-as-touching me. The two of us form a dyadic pair who collaborate in the experience… [and] are so intimately interlocked that I cannot say for sure where one leaves off and the other begins…\(^9\)

\(\textit{Coda} \mid X\text{XX}\)

[Please open mp3 audio file Coda audio fragment 1 from ‘files associated with this item’]

\(\textit{Étude pour le Cirque: becoming powders}\)

Roll up and run away

A fragmented, visionary conversation/dialogue with Georges narrates a line to the previously undetected drawn study for his unfinished painting \(\textit{Le Cirque}\).

\(^8\) \url{http://agslab.com/spie/spie_lo_res.pdf}  
\textit{Evaluation of brilliance, fire, and scintillation in round brilliant gemstones}

The drawing is allegedly conserved in the fictional Museum of Drawing.

It’s March (28th) and Georges, René Hector and Ada Algren approach The Museum and consult no notice.

It reads:

The Museum of Drawing is open for fetishised tweaking … drifting, lacing, drawing and kissing from half past ten to half past twelve, on Tuesday and Thursday in every fiction.

A crazy, crazy member may introduce personally, or by a drawn order, a sonic depth, a friend and stranger residing above but no person residing, not belonging to the household, shall be admitted who may be introduced.

Under special circumstances, strangers may be admitted towards each other at a time of beginnings when they are unusually shut, by the personal introduction of one of the drawings, or by a mark from consequence.

No person introduced into the Museum shall be permitted to handle their specimens.

No person shall be allowed to take a stick or umbrella into the Museum, or any thing likely to occasion sugar.

A member’s drawing must contain:

A richly embroidered Petticoat
a Piece of Mummy Wrapper
assortment of Halberts
Elephant’s Tail
Preserved Serpents
a pair of Albatross Feet
Skull of an Ox

Portuguese Copper Coin
Sand
Pair of Ancient Gloves
wings of a Flying Fish
A bag of Badgers
Fetching Silver Ring
Pipe Fish

Fine Specimen of Platypus
The Yorkshire Highwayman
Curious specimen
Vegetable Impressions
moss from Bonaparte’s Grave
the kitten heels

a need for sugar
Ada and René confer, … she takes nothing for granted in this company, and is reassured that they have come to the right place, that they have [(not)] been led astray (a merry dance). Her own thoughts are [(marks)] on paper, in grease, pigment, graphite|diamonds and a gum binder.

Ada(h); Hebrew: adornment; Old German: noble; African: first daughter. A programming language somewhat similar to Pascal

“Nothing is known about her except lies!”

She danced, when a child, in the ballet… she was exceedingly bright, an exceptional scholar, she was Jewish, she was Black, she was a cross-dresser, she was naked, she was a spy.

Identity evades representation, eludes definition, yet allures eloquent interlocutors, a host of adoring admirers and suitors, determined to take it in hand. Contingency is [(not)] allowed; contingency becomes articulation.
Who is drawn? An other, an Other, another Ada?

Georges turns away and coughs quietly into his chest as they enter.

Two bearded men in the foreground with elephants are followed by a horse rider, camels and a performing bear (escorted by several smitten sheep).

René and Ada pause inside the entrance whilst Georges swallows uncomfortably … It is strange how fragile this man-creature is.

Are you settled Ada? Can 'theory' come out to play?

She’s coming…

… Below the cliff … a miscellaneous range of temporary buildings … do they extend as far as George’s studio ladder?

No … they are laced on a stone bench and doodle with a conté walking stick outside a thatched cottage

Georges …Parlez-vous français?

Nein. Ich kann nur Deutsch sprechen.
Enormous drawings everywhere … Ada apparently in a nude state, stretched on the back of a wild horse… Young men thronging to witness this combination of poses plastiques with dramatic spectacle…

One drawing [by an unnamed artist] shows … a tin bath hanging, announcing *Baths for hire* … a shop repairing umbrellas … the craving carving on the wall is believed to be part of the stern decoration of a captured sivatherium caught and broken up by a young man in a bowler hat who is the resident engineer.

Among the flags are a pair of sea-boots, fishing baskets and a ‘gansey’ – a collection of decorations for a fisherman’s wedding with some large cod laid out for sale. *Best Boots and Shoes.*

Here and there a French artist sets up an easel near Coffee House End to draw on a harbour scene. He has put on a laced apron, which suggests he is drawing in. Apart from the inevitable small boy, he has also attracted an admirer. Madeleine. Trade appears to be slack, as the young man has time to read and draw me in a minute.

The crowd behind the ice-cream hut are listening to an itinerant brass band. The hut was owned by Ada who sold lace. It was unusual in having five wands or sails. *He came into the hut, she didn’t really know why… he had paper(s), she hoped he might stay.*

On the footpath and by the kissing gate you can buy a piano. Ada is in the pony and trap enjoys a joke with a friend and her windows are sufficiently low for young noses. Then, as now, this was a popular place for those who just like to watch.

The drawing in question is indeed enormous, overwhelming, unforgettable.

Ada moves toward Georges, looking at his hands… he is *looking down again*… Perhaps we’ll… *lose control on Thursday morning*… be better able to see the drawing from here (*laying down again*).

Ada continues to look at his hands, and then *down again*; from a distance, she can still focus, but up close, there is no drawing… Georges’ hands beckon: *come closer*… *become closer… become… becoming… be coming… be coming closer*… this close, drawing becomes Ada becomes drawing

Lacing, drawing… gentle circles, bold strokes, forceful gestures… the work indeed overwhelms. Ada turns to René: *Hector, can you hear me?*
Swept by a green sea running up the lifeboat slipway... *Ada is being swept away, slipping away, becoming water, becoming gesture, becoming... closely now, and closer still, so close... be coming. Ada, out to play where theory and practice unlace one another becoming drawing||writing...* two shadows struggle through the gale among the slabs of paving ripped up by the sea on the previous day.

*Be coming this close, there is no Ada, no René, no drawing, only powders: allotropic entropy*

Spinozism ran foul of the iron man ... on to the harbour bar and was washed ashore near the Spa Ladder.

Georges coughs ... *no drawing, only powders, unfinished practice*

René takes the donkey [that ate the pencil] to be watered ... 

Ada notes that George’s dust is fused as she close[s] the door ...

The Museum of Drawing is closed to fetishised tweaking.

No notice displays:

> Drawing ... an absence
> 
> [Please open mp3 audio file *Coda audio fragment 2 from ‘files associated with this item’*]

**Allegro: Graphite (C)**

Playing the *allegro* to diamond’s *adagio*, graphite (C) is formed more quickly in nature and is the more stable of the two allotropes of carbon. In an atmosphere devoid of oxygen, diamond may become graphite through additional energy known as the ‘energy of activation’, and graphite, though extremely soft, can itself conduct electricity and transmit energy. It is stronger than diamond in its flexibility, its movement and the dynamism of its chemical structure. In diamonds, the carbon atoms form an inflexible three-dimensional lattice, whereas in graphite, the atoms are tightly bonded into sheets, which can slide easily over one another. Graphite is thus multilayered, rather than multifaceted; its energy, strength and durability come from the productive slippage of its layers as they dance across one another forming charged spaces between. Elementally, we might see graphite as both matter and air, carbon and ether, intimately interconnected yet never simply resolving as one.

<...>
In Ionic philosophy, ether (aether) was itself conceived elementally as the quintessence, or fifth element. In the Aristotelian system, ether was deemed to have no intrinsic 'qualities' (neither being hot nor cold, wet, nor dry) and to be unchanging, hence atemporal. It did, however, serve an important function as a place-maker, an immaterial element that enabled the terrestrial, more material, elements to be in place. In the language of unfolding space, ether is a necessary component of materialisation.

*Ether* is also the etymological root of *ethereal*, and they share elemental affinities with light, fire and air. Ether's elemental emplacement is in the upper region of the sky, where the gods lived and breathed its essence; moving in a circle between divinity and our bodies, ether dances with the ethereal, the celestial, breath and word.

*An ethereal incantation, you whisper sweet nothings, a sonic text of bliss… the grain of your voice plunges us into deep blue water, the visceral within the virtual.*

The tightly-bonded layers of graphite consist of carbon atoms linked covalently and hexagonally. In this structure, each carbon atom has three bonds and one free electron. The extra electrons are delocalized and can be moved along the layers by applying energy. An *allotropic dance* intimately intertwines three parts, yet invites spatial unfolding, integral deinterlacing and delocalizing; its contingency is the mo[ve]ment of becoming.

Here dancing touches drawing, the parlay of aleatoric composition connecting with the materiality of graphite to turn, with one sure gesture, probability toward possibility. The contingency of articulating space unfolds the creative ambiguity of elusive coordinates:

AN: I would definitely identify drawing with the infinite space of sensation … that limitless space is embodied in the reality of the white page, which I would say is a space of fragmentation … an interminable potentiality, … an undifferentiated space...

CdZ: Is the undifferentiated space language, that Other, everything that is outside of us? It is, I think, the entity of possibility.

[Avis Newman and Catherine de Zegher in conversation]¹⁰

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mutual constitution of subjects and spaces in and through difference and affinity (the two, drawing near), her statement suggests an ethical and aesthetic commitment to ‘corporeal generosity’ and the logic of the gift.\textsuperscript{12} Accepting an invitation to dance with desire and difference is compelling and risky.

Spaces that unfold through corporeal generosity are intimate in many senses – they must ‘touch’ us, yet protect us too. And in such spaces, an allotropic dance lends itself to proprioceptive exchange; the sensory understanding of the body’s position in space is effected through mutuality, by response to stimuli from within the body of the self and from the other in connection. Proprioception thus participates in intersubjectivity and corporeal generosity, generating spaces that belong (are proper to) two, rather than one. Fostered by sound, gesture and touch, unfolding intersubjectivity articulates a profoundly affective, ethereal space, one where ‘…the celestial lies not only above our head, but also between us’.\textsuperscript{13}

\textit{The one and [the] other share breath: the ether becomes ethereal in a sublime X|xx}

[Please open mp4 video file \textit{Allegro fragment} from ‘files associated with this item’]

Sublimation is a process of unfolding materialisation, of matter becoming ether, linked as much to the physical phenomenon of breathing as to eloquence, rapture and the sublime. The ethereal transformation of matter unfolds the fixed boundary with/in the intimate space of desire and difference; we belong in the silence of the other’s drawn breath and in the infinity of their perfumed shadow. We dance their presence, draw their absence and generate spaces that are as visceral and embodied as they are mutable and mutual.

\textit{Run outside in the desert heat, get your dress all wet and send it to me…}\textsuperscript{14}

Drawing me||dreaming you

<…>

The sighting of graphite, a lack of definition (ambiguity) enables spaces <4> some more concepts to graze and scratch [additional tools] in the dust <…>

\ldots becoming drawing an analogy \ldots becoming an icon <psrmAAH’09>

<mind the gap(s)>

\textsuperscript{12} Rosalyn Diprose’s figure of ‘corporeal generosity’ choreographs for us the transformative power of the gift as: ‘… being given to others without deliberation in a field of intercorporeality, a being given that constitutes the self as affective and being affected, that constitutes social relations and that which is given in relation.’ Cf. Rosalyn Diprose, \textit{Corporeal Generosity: On Giving with Nietzsche, Merleau-Ponty and Levinas}, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2002, p. 5

\textsuperscript{13} Irigaray, \textit{The Way of Love}, op.cit., p.147.

\textsuperscript{14} Francis Black, \textit{Cactus}, from the album Surfer Rosa, 4AD, 1988.
On blank and open paper and on common land, sheep are a travelling drawing wandering through the spaces in the boundary of the extended field.

Identification is only an important issue if artist researchers need to know which sheep belong to them and which to their field.

Interdisciplinary and allotropic … **LOOK** … the sheep are wandering through the spaces in the boundary dressed as diamonds. They are trying so hard *to get somewhere* … let’s cut their hair …

… with pen and ink ?

No … now we have pencils … *with trees and flowers growing* their hair to *get nowhere* … so we do.

P.S. What happens?
I’ll find him in a dream shadow looking for me. M.M.