

# The defecating chimpan- zee

— Quim  
Pujol



June 2009, Oaxaca, Mexico

Photo: DD Dorvillier

On a trip to the ruins with the *CPAU*, *Get Ready!*

Gang during PRISMA Forum in Oaxaca.

In a recent text, my colleague Aimar Pérez Galí linked the job of the dancer to that of the translator, in that both are subaltern subjects in the sense given by Gayatri Spivak in her essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” In effect, both positions are subaltern, since the dancer like the translator assumes responsibility for adapting information that in theory does not come from him or herself, but from the original author or the choreographer, and in a certain measure they are denied visibility and their own discourse.

Of course this is only possible in a society obsessed with the ideas of authority and originality; fixated on grand gestures and incapable of seeing that reality actually depends on the performative chain, that subtle fluctuation of difference and repetition that eliminates and reconstructs around us that which we call reality. In fact, small gestures are much more important than big landmarks, for the simple reason that they are more numerous. The gestures of activists like Rosa Parks would have borne no fruit if a multitude had not insisted on their importance, and had not adapted them thousands of times, until they achieved a palpable change in society. And yet the obsession with origins persists.

In the middle section of *Choreography, a Prologue for the Apocalypse of Understanding, Get Ready!* (2009) DD Dorvillier and I performed a duet, in which she assumed the role of a dancer who was acting the fool (she noticed that her volume of Slavoj Žižek’s *The Plague of Fantasies* matched her purple tights, among other things) and I interpreted the role of an interpreter translating what she said into Spanish. DD danced while I described her movements and my descriptions shifted from as impartial as possible to a free interpretation in which the interpreter’s speech could in no way correspond to the movement of the dancer.

Later on, as a solo, the translator interpreted the movement that DD had just executed. There is an exercise that’s known in French as *passations*, which entails adapting over and over again a work conceived by another artist. In essence, this duet was a chain of countless *passations*: between one tongue and another, between DD’s corporal memory and her live improvisation, between her movement and my language, between movements and my capacity to project something distinct about them with words, between her movement and my movement.

Over the course of the past century, the changing relationship between the body and language has transformed dance. In this sense, this duet takes place at a crucial point, asking a question that has yet to be answered.

The duet ended in an embrace that we called “the egg”: the two of us on the floor, my body and arms around DD’s torso, and her arms and legs around mine. And because the relationship between the body and language is a question that can never be totally unraveled, we don’t know to what point it would be useful to explain what is signified by the warmth of her body against mine, the pulsing of that other blood, the slight dampness of its breath, the caress of that skin against my neck.

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