Marlene Monteiro Freitas: Choreographing Openness by Alexandra Balona

Contradictory thoughts do not try to eliminate one another, but continue side by side, and often combine to form condensations products, as though no contradiction existed.

The Interpretation of dreams, Sigmund Freud

Guincho (2010) is a concert, a drawing, a dance, a circus show, a wax figure. Of Ivory and Flesh – Statues Also Suffer (2010) is a dinner, a reality show and a ballroom that gathers the petrified, the statues, the musicians and the dancers, the humans, the animals and the hybrids, visible and imaginary, real or phantasmatic.

To approach Marlene Monteiro Freitas’ choreographic worlds is to relate to theatrical settings that are always open and never self-enfolded, that (dis)organize themselves through unanny and contradictory dynamics. Where the relations between the visible and the invisible, cause and effect, perceiving and thinking – and from there, writing – can no longer be taken for granted as unified discourses, but as unstable, oneric ensembles.

In fact, the work of this Cape Verdean-born dancer and choreographer can hardly be translated into words, as it is not contained within the realm of language. Here is an artistic search for intensity, strength and atemporal “pathos”, rather than transmission of a meaning or intellectual concept. But this “pathos”, as a condensed force or emotional condition engrained through time in images and gestures, is disrupted through strategies of metamorphosis and the contradictory simultaneity of kaleidoscopic montages of images, figures, music, and bodily movement.

In Freitas’ works, a deeply embodied, insular heritage of music, rhythm, and dance praxis is combined with an array of eclectic references from visual art, cinema, music, and theory. But they also draw on the aesthetic licentiousness, irony and “becoming other” of the utopian ritual of Carnival – “the festival of joyful otherness” (Coderch and Stoichita, 1999: 52), and references derived from Freitas’ archive of everyday life.

To experience Freitas’ work is to enter an open and unconfined space, undefined and uncertain, where familiarity and strangeness co-exist. As with Carnival, one witnesses not the destruction of opposites but their structuring. By the same token, Freitas seems more attracted to the tension between these polarities, than to emphasizing their opposition. She usually begins each work with extensive research, on an on-going atlas of references that informs her movement research, together with a musical pre-selection. Music is a crucial tool as it allows the choreographer and the performers to access specific working areas, intentions and imaginariness. It is precisely from Freitas’ relationship to music and composition that relevant choreographic ideas arise.

Guincho, or the incoherence of all matter

“Guincho” can take several forms. However, notes Freitas, between all these forms there is no resemblance, only the simultaneous contradictions, the fury and strangeness that never self-enclosed, that (dis)organize themselves through unanny and contradictory dynamics. Where the relations between the visible and the invisible, cause and effect, perceiving and thinking – and from there, writing – can no longer be taken for granted as unified discourses, but as unstable, oneric ensembles.

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