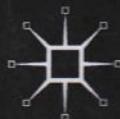


ŽIŽEK
AND
PERFORMANCE

EDITED BY
Broderick Chow
AND **Alex Mangold**



PERFORMANCE
PHILOSOPHY



Žižek and Performance



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14

Collaboration, Violence, and Difference

Simon Ellis and Colin Poole

It would be better if you went upstream and built your own village, for our customs are somewhat different from yours. Not knowing each other's ways, the young men might have differences and there would be wars. Do not go too far away, for people who live far apart are like strangers and wars break out between them. Travel north only until you cannot see the smoke from our lodges and there build your village. Then we will be close enough to be friends and not far enough to be enemies.

Maximilian 1843, cited in Lévi-Strauss¹

We are Colin Poole (UK) and Simon Ellis (NZ) – two dance artists who collaborate as *Colin, Simon & I*. In this chapter we reflect on the nature of collaboration using Slavoj Žižek's thinking about distortion and violence featured in *The Parallax View*² and *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*.³ Without Žižek's permission – indeed, by pulling his ideas from the contexts in which they were written (*isn't that what we do in performance studies?*) – we massage his words and ideas to harness our curiosity and ask questions about how we make and perform choreographies. The writing reflects our artistic experience – particularly with respect to the development and presentation of our performance project *Because We Care*⁴ – in building, maintaining, and challenging collaborative relationships. Whereas collaboration is conventionally thought to demand care, patience, and harmony, we propose that it prospers under conditions that welcome antagonism, difference, friction, and even violence.

By placing our practice of collaboration within this academic discourse it is in danger of becoming *theorised performance* or *philosophical performance*. We are, in effect, asking choreography and collaboration to turn tricks as academic discourse. But perhaps Žižek is the ideal foil to our fabricated anxiety: irreverent, paradoxical, 'nose-rubbing, shirt-tugging',⁵ contradictory,

and nasally verbose. Is it not true that the real paradox is to quote a philosopher in order to be known as choreographers who wish to avoid their work being validated as research or philosophy? Nevertheless, we do need to be clear: we have no desire to smooth out the messiness, vulnerability, and general fucking difficulty in working together and making work.

Humans live, make, relate, write, and converse with blind spots, and we need something or someone else in order to reveal those blind spots. Žižek describes the 'fundamental impossibility ... to narrativise fully one's condition',⁶ and Hannah Arendt wrote that the narratives of a storyteller 'tell us more about their subjects, the "hero" in the centre of each story than the ... master who produced it'.⁷ As artists and people we are curious about these lacunae and what they reveal about our biases, privileges, assumptions, strengths, and weaknesses.

In this chapter – with its various notes, commentary, a single photograph, and multi-perspectival jump-cuts to and from different subjectivities (including responses to *Because We Care* solicited by us and written by performance academics Sarah Whatley, Christina Kostoula and Marisa Zanotti) – we attempt to substantiate the beautiful gaps of collaboration. It is divided into four sections: (i) *Background*, to briefly introduce *Because We Care* as well as the central role of conversation in our collaboration; (ii) *Žižek's parallax gap*, in which we discuss what might be revealed about collaboration through gaps and difference; (iii) *Violence*, which frames Žižek's reflections on violence as a way of rethinking what collaboration is and is not; and (iv) *Imagination and difference*, in which we reflect on the value of imagination in understanding collaborative difference.

The relationships present in this writing – to Žižek's writing, to each other, and to and from various audiences – are generated by and filtered through our methods of working: discussion, writing, practice, dancing, rehearsing, and performance. It is our intention, then, to write frankly, with directness and uncertainty: to reflect on what we do, and reflect what we do.

Background

*Because We Care*⁸ premiered at The Place in London in June 2012. The work was developed in response to a prolonged series of discussions and rehearsals – between November 2010 and June 2012 – in which we reflected upon and tested the nature of care and responsibility between men, and between performers and audiences.

Because We Care inhabits a complex performance world – simultaneously ambiguous and direct – that places acute demands on its audience's imagination. To provide a sense of the work, we describe two key moments below.

Also, a brief video edit of *Because We Care* is available at http://colinsimoni.com/bwc_edit.html.

Colin stands on Simon.

Simon is lying prone, belly up. Colin – in a deep squat – carefully puts his full weight on Simon's chest. Colin's actions are deliberate and patient as he rises to standing. He takes the smallest of steps across and down Simon's chest. With each shift of weight, the compression forces air out of Simon's lungs. The image is loaded with care, power, and the potential for physical trauma.

Licking, sucking, biting and spitting.

Colin and Simon are prowling the front of the stage providing the audience with different reasons: 'Because we care, because we must, because we do it for love. Because we want you. Because we want you to want us too. Because we take things to heart. Because we feel it in our bones. Because we are sticking to our guns. Because all is fair in love and war.' They scrap with each other, revealing different parts of their skin and making tenuous contact at these points. Their struggle physically escalates, and then suddenly Colin places his hand across Simon's mouth to silence him and stop him moving. Colin demands quietly, 'Lick ... lick', and Simon responds, licking Colin's arms, legs, stomach, and face. This dynamic cycles between licking, sucking, biting and spitting and their relationship is urgent, power-driven and sexually ambiguous.

Our first collaboration in the European summer of 2009 began as an exploration of who we might be together, and how we might work. The studio-based sessions started (as is usual for choreographers and dancers) by exploring movement patterns and possibilities. As our differences emerged – how we work, what we see, what we assume – these rehearsals would become extended (often three- to four-hour) conversations and even full-blooded arguments. Our initial collaboration and its problems and failures is documented as a conversation-article ('My name is Colin, and this is Simon') in *Choreographic Practices*.⁹ In the development of *Because We Care* we accepted the central role of conversation in our practice, and chose to work both in and outside the studio to nourish different kinds of dialogues. Indeed, we did not step into a studio until after four months of weekly conversations in various non-studio locations around London.

At the heart of our discussions are questions. There are no easy questions, and there are certainly no easy answers. What is at stake in these discussions is moral ambiguity that we seek to address, and this writing is a further instance of that work together.

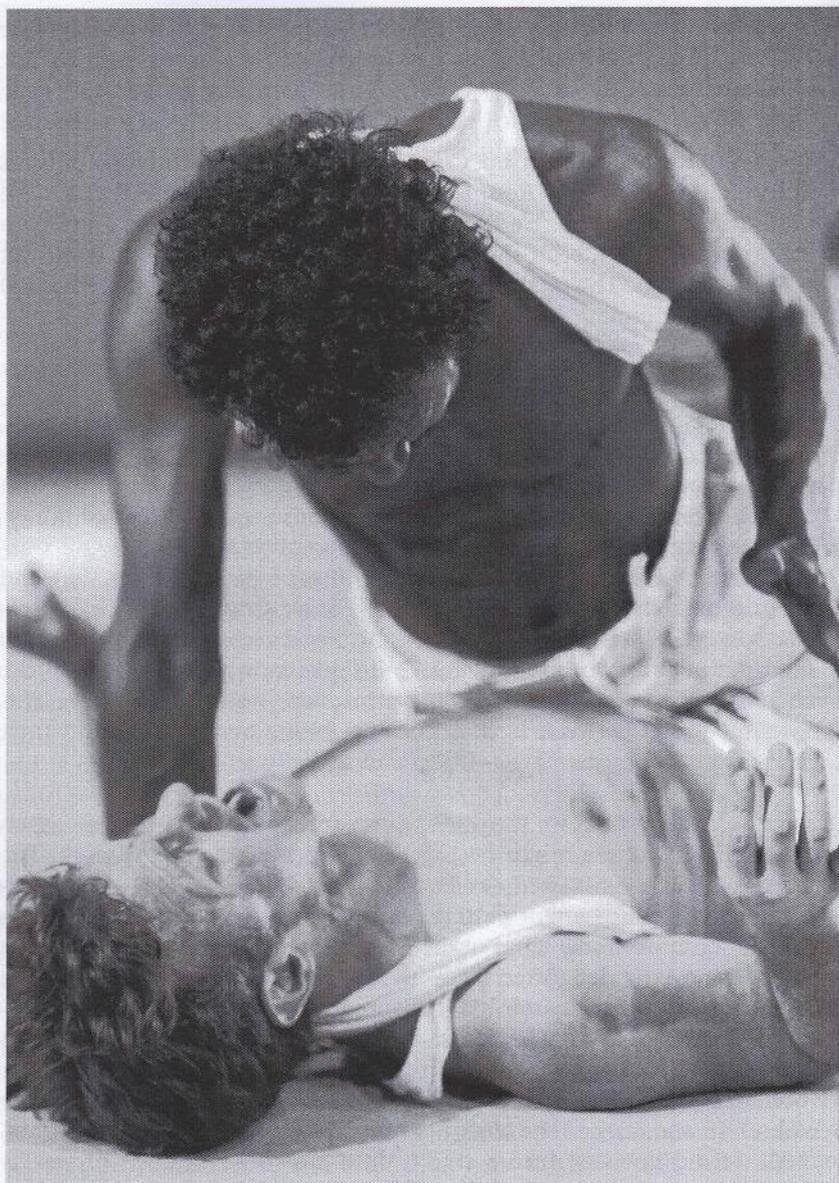


Figure 14.1 Because We Care, production image. Photo: Benedict Johnson. Performers: Colin Poole and Simon Ellis

Žižek's parallax gap

A parallax is a 'difference or change in the apparent position or direction of an object as seen from two different points', and it is a 'distortion; the fact of seeing wrongly or in a distorted way'.¹⁰ It is, for example, the visual displacement of a fishing line in water, *bent* or refracted as it passes the density threshold of air and water.

In *The Parallax View*, Slavoj Žižek introduces the idea of the *parallax gap* as two linked perspectives with no common ground.¹¹ He describes it as a 'constantly shifting perspective between two points between which no synthesis or mediation is possible'.¹²

In articulating such a gap, Žižek compounds the visual error or distortion already present in the term parallax with an irresolvable space. What belongs to experiences of the visual system – parallax – is stitched to the spatial metaphor of the gap.

In the Scott McGehee and David Siegel film *Suture*¹³ – a film Colin introduced to Simon during our first collaboration in 2009 – the central protagonists are nearly-identical brothers played by (the black) Dennis Haysbert and (the white) Michael Harris. The illusion, or perhaps conceit, of the film is compelling. If we remove vision, or what we see, from the experience, then how do we begin to understand experiences of identity, ambition, and opportunity? *Suture*¹⁴ creates *the space* for understanding or imagining sameness and difference. It also challenges what we might take for granted about difference and compatibility.

Žižek's term *minimal difference*¹⁵ – analogous to the parallax gap – marks the smallest difference between a thing and itself, or the 'non coincidence of the One with itself'.¹⁶ It is the point at which a thing has the potential to unravel into a multitude, or split into antagonistic oppositions.

In *Suture*, vision limits the conditions of difference. How can these two men possibly be nearly-identical brothers? But to enter the gap as spatial metaphor (rather than attempting to resolve the parallax through visual perception) affords a dynamic consideration of the nature of difference. It also provides unlikely studio companions in our collaboration: imagination, power, audience, and friction. Together, these studio *friends* make it possible to consider the unravelling or splits in our collaborative work.

Differences between Colin and Simon

You have described your work as nuanced and evocative whereas I have described my work as bold and provocative.

I notice a difference lies in the way we confront limits, impossibility or doubt; I see commitment when you speak of failure.

I suspect you desire to fill in uncomfortable gaps that I'm curious to expose and leave open ...

Perhaps you seek to illuminate mystery in the black box and like to romance shadows whereas in the black box I've come to liken myself as a shadow.

Perhaps a difference lies in the way you're seen and I'm heard, like the difference linking narcissus and echo.

Your rough skin contrasts with your value for refinement and sophistication. My soft skin contrasts with my love for crudeness.

I think you prioritise compassion where for me the issue is justice (I'm not sure though).

You appear to signify trust whereas I raise suspicion.

You move about with generosity whereas I move with hostility.

I confront power where you dream equality ...

People avoid me that approach you ...

I'm in debt ... I'm in debt ... I'm in debt ...

... the world appears to be your oyster.

– Colin Poole

Žižek's parallax gap is based on Kant's *transcendental illusion* in which reason by its nature holds subjectively conceived connections objectively.¹⁷ The no man's land between what we *want* – subjective necessity – and what *is* – objective necessity – is ominous, and in abstract space lies the opportunity for us – Simon and Colin – to discuss our collaboration in terms of antagonism and violence. There is a space of indeterminate value and danger in how people work together and apart. If violence and antagonism lie at the very margins of good or sustainable collaborative practices then how might we bring them into focus and mark them as vital constituents in building performance?

In order to articulate or shape the voids in our experiences by embracing alternative perspectives on the nature of collaboration, we need to bear in mind that, for Žižek, in the parallax gap there is 'no rapport between the two levels, no shared space – although they are closely connected, even identical in a way, they are, as it were, on the opposed sides of a Möbius strip'.¹⁸

Simon and Colin/Colin and Simon, they are together, they sometimes do the same thing, but they are not the same. The image of linked hands and arms might suggest the continuous flow of energy, but as the work twists, unravels and ultimately gets more knotted, the form accumulates other meanings and it feels more like a state of stasis. This interruption of flow is important in considering the performance; it's the thing that, in a work that is full of disturbing images, perhaps challenges us as an audience most.

Now of course that gets more complex because in performance could the image of Colin dominating Simon be read other than the result of a shared agreement? If a black man is standing on a white man's chest is that speaking to a deep fear, and is this fear going to be resolved in reading that image as somehow the result of a white man granting him permission to do that?

– Marisa Zanotti¹⁹

How are we incompatible? Which side of a Möbius strip does each of us begin and end? We – Colin and Simon – are in many respects the same: we are trained dancers, choreographers, we are middle-aged, we are educated and articulate, we are stubborn and opinionated, we share a love of film, and of challenging and being challenged. We are drawn to artistic work by people like Jérôme Bel, Michael Haneke, Jonathan Burrows, Akira Kurosawa and Jørgen Leth. But we are also mutually incompatible; a collaborative parallax in which our 'symmetry is not pure'.²⁰

This is the game: to celebrate, welcome, and even nourish difference so that the tensions implied, generated, and performed are choreographed to life. Something missing or lacking (or in between) becomes constitutive, even though we are not able to, and nor do we wish to, mediate what is constituted.

The constitution of ideas and experiences are paid for by a series of translations between us, and us and audience. These translations – imperfect, problematic, poetic, and riddled with possibility – cross difference, without diluting it. There are gaps in our collaborative work: between each other, between us and the audience.

This discussion is akin to describing the Kanizsa Triangle more than it is talking about what collaboration is not. We are describing difference in order to reveal the poetics of collaboration.

Surely it is not a realistic description of the situation, but what Wallace Stevens called 'description without place', which is what is proper to art. This is not a description which locates its content in a historical space and time, but a description which creates, as the background of the phenomena it describes, an inexistent (virtual) space of its own, so that what appears in it is not an appearance sustained by the depth of reality behind it, but a decontextualised appearance, an appearance which fully coincides with real being.

– Slavoj Žižek²¹

A *description without place* generates a creative paradox. Whilst we are building arcs upon arcs of context (through this writing and through our performance projects), we are also directing our (and your) attention to the decontextualised essence of the gap around which we work. Žižek describes

Kant's stance as being to see reality neither through one's own viewpoint nor the viewpoint of others, but rather by what is revealed through difference or parallax.²² This antagonism, between distinct viewpoints that cannot be matched or harmonised is an 'impossible difference'.²³ It is an antinomy, and within this divide, we attempt to work.

We are not pretending we have chemistry; things were (and remain) out of sync. We do not act as if we are or have one voice. As we gather many viewpoints and background and foreground perspectives of images, we seek contradictions in how we work together. We are juxtaposing ourselves; we are juxtaposing images such that one is negated by the other. In doing so, a world opens up to create thinking, and change, difference and tension emerge. It is a friction of ideas, feelings, and images.

Surfaces as thematic idea are echoed in the sensory nature of their dance, which draws attention to skin as surface for sliding over, touching, slapping, brushing, squeezing and a canvas which is marked by the sweat, effort and impact of too much weight or pressure. The ease of bodies moving adeptly over and around each other gives way to a brutality that surfaces unexpectedly; a supportive hold becomes a strangle, a shift of weight forces a loss of breath. Flesh, muscle, hair – a touch moves from the functional to loaded with intent. A balance, tip, curve, dive becomes a test, a struggle before equilibrium is recovered and restored.

– Sarah Whatley²⁴

We are aware that as we articulate the negative space of our collaboration, we are also describing the negative space of how we understand our work to function: imagination. We cannot fill this space. It too is an irreducible gap. 'Because nothing demands something of us. The human mind fills blanks with images and ideas; that is what a ghost story is, a way of filling darkness'.²⁵ But, for now, we will resist discussing imagination and turn our attention to violence. The split between our desires and what *is there* described by Kant as a subjective/objective dichotomy serves the basis of Žižek's parallax gap, and it also parallels Žižek's analysis of violence.

Violence

I am the enemy you killed my friend.

– Wilfred Owen *Strange Meeting*²⁶

In *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*,²⁷ Žižek discusses three kinds of violence. The first is subjective violence; it is violence that is most visible or that makes the news. It is performed by an identifiable agent, and is a disturbance of normative peacefulness: a disturbance from which we recoil. The

second and third are both forms of objective violence: symbolic and systemic. Symbolic violence is present in language in a 'universe of meaning'²⁸ that is more fundamental than obvious linguistic indicators of social and relational power. Systemic violence is the price of the smooth progress of our economic and political systems. When a violent crisis 'explodes into media visibility',²⁹ its appearance is the result of hidden cultural, ideological, political, and economic systems. Thus, it is systemic violence that makes possible the standard against which we judge subjective acts of violence. For Žižek the catch is that these subjective and objective forms of violence cannot be perceived from the same perspective. Subjective violence is perceived or acknowledged against a zero-point of non-violence, which itself is sustained by unseen objective violence.

The challenge then – if we are to be decisive about from which perspective we view violence – is to find ways to step back so that we are able to construct glimpses of the invisible that is responsible for what is seen.³⁰ We are easily seduced by the visible actions and events that pierce the normative, but we need to work much harder to comprehend the acts and experiences that support (or make possible) what is seen.

What might this have to do with collaboration? The underlying brutality of how people relate is manifest in many ways. Although victims of collaboration are not headline news, what systemic systems of power and violence are at play in the performance of collaboration, and in the performance of their outcomes?

But before we turn attention to systemic/objectively violent choreographic collaborative practices, let us ask what is the *standard* against which subjective violence in choreographic collaboration could be judged?

In the collaborations of popular culture, ruptures, splits, change, and endings occur due to *creative differences*. Submerged within the obvious irony of this cliché-nearly-a-trope is the fetishised idea that what keeps collaborations strong (or even just *together*) are uniformity, harmony, openness, and the pursuit of symmetry. The absurdity here is that even when a band like The Beautiful South wryly announce that their split was due to 'musical similarities',³¹ the inversion or irony only serves to strengthen the myth of united-we-stand in collaboration.

Further still, the standard of symmetry and harmony in collaboration is nourished by rhetoric that absorbs words like *difficult*, *contrast*, and *disagreement*. Such words make the standard stronger. In other words, the hegemonic understanding of collaboration is that of a shared space in which two or more people have a harmoniously challenging relationship of acceptable difference. This appears natural, or commonsense. In order to get things done, these people need to *get on* whilst they sublimate their differences, they need to be reaching for the same goals: aesthetic, design, or otherwise. The process requires sharing and openness.

Sharing is at best dealing with openness but again who needs openness, openness consolidates what we already know, openness is the very opposite of speculation. Fuck that.

– Mårten Spångberg³²

For Žižek, it is the normalisation of a social phenomenon's characteristics that 'marks out ideology at its purest and at its most effective'.³³ Not only normalisation, but normalisation to the point that one can look at it with cynical distance. It is the distance from the ideology that he says is ideology at its most effective. The gold standard for collaboration is thus ideological and represents a way of relating between people that covets sameness.

But what if collaboration is viewed and pursued more problematically in terms of power, difference, and violence? In 'Class struggle or Postmodernism? Yes, please!',³⁴ Žižek describes the Derridean terms for how 'the condition of impossibility of the exercise of power becomes its condition of possibility',³⁵ and in which 'the ultimate uncertainty and precariousness of the exercise of power is the only guarantee that we are dealing with a legitimate democratic power'.³⁶ This is to define the legitimacy of a phenomenon based on what would otherwise be thought to make it impossible.

We propose that the relational activity of collaboration is made impossible by the presence of violence, and its presence paradoxically marks collaboration as legitimate. The condition of the impossibility of violence in collaboration becomes collaboration's condition of possibility.

This is not the same as saying that collaboration is synonymous with violence. Žižek's conceptualisation of the Kantian break – as the difference between 'he is dead', 'he is not dead', and 'he is un-dead'³⁷ – is useful here. The indefinite judgement – 'he is un-dead' – reveals what Žižek calls a third domain that cracks open the basic distinction between, in this case, life and death: 'the "undead" are neither alive nor dead, they are precisely the monstrous "living dead" ... marked by a terrifying excess'.³⁸

Here are three statements:

This choreographic process is collaborative.
 This choreographic process is not collaborative.
 This choreographic process is *incollaborative*.

The first statement has shined many Arts Council applications, and represents the normative zero-point of collaboration that is characterised by harmony, sharing, tolerance, dialogue, and symmetry. The second statement involves behaviour and activity that falls outside – or is external to – normative collaborative choreographic processes. The third statement 'negates what we understand'³⁹ as collaborative, but also marks a 'terrifying excess'⁴⁰

of processes that intervene into our understanding of what collaboration might become.

It is by turning our attention to ways of relating – including violence, antagonism, betrayal, and suspicions – that are normally sublimated by the fantasy of normative collaboration, that the richness, depth, and unfathomable qualities of *incollaboration* might be desirable. These excesses mark a form of relational complexity that is nourished first and foremost by difference.

So can Žižek's notion of objective violence really matter in the context of collaborative processes? It does because objective violence 'the violence inherent in a system: not only direct physical violence, but also the more subtle forms of coercion that sustain relations of domination and exploitation, including the threat of violence'⁴¹ also reflects the inherent betrayals, violences, and power structures in the way people relate.

Incollaboration is therefore marked by violence and other ways of relating that are difficult to talk about. These relational actions are not readily welcomed (or acceptable), and are not normally valued. They are the invisible violent practices that continuously build the standard of symmetrical collaboration. In our work, we have found it impossible to ignore these unacceptable ways of relating; and as we have got stronger and better prepared for such terrible encounters, we have readily sought them out.

The key in our work together is the pursuit of difference; we understand ourselves to be 'thinking partners who aren't echo chambers'.⁴² Our differences as collaborators are not to be overcome. We have no desire to turn the other into One.

As soon as there is the One, there is murder, wounding, traumatism.

– Jacques Derrida⁴³

Žižek's thoughts about contemporary *tolerance* towards others are revealing in our understanding of the zero-point of collaboration: the point of symmetry and smoothness that marks collaboration as worthy or desirable. He describes how the Other is fine so long as 'his presence is not intrusive'⁴⁴ such that we might respect each other's distance, to not get too close, and to ensure that a facade of trust is maintained by remaining at arm's length from each other.

It is therefore extreme closeness that marks the difference between collaboration and *incollaboration*. Where collaboration keeps the Other at a respectable and comfortable difference (as signified by tolerance), *incollaboration* is a means of relating akin to Žižek's conceptualisation (after Freud) of the Neighbour. The Neighbour is 'primarily a thing, a traumatic intruder, someone whose different way of life ... disturbs us, throws the balance of our way of life off the rails, when it comes too close, this can also give rise to an aggressive reaction aimed at getting rid of this disturbing intruder'.⁴⁵

If neighbourly intrusion defines a type of uncomfortable collaboration, then for Žižek it is language that produces conflict: objective symbolic violence. He asks, 'What if ... humans exceed animals in their capacity for violence precisely because they speak?'.⁴⁶ Rather than words being valued as the means for peace and forgiveness, they become a 'violent medium of immediate and raw confrontation'.⁴⁷ This is because human communication is not symmetrical: '... there is never a balanced reciprocity in my encountering another subject. The appearance of *égalité* is always discursively sustained by an asymmetrical axis of master versus servant ...'.⁴⁸

With *Colin, Simon & I*, we ask how the three parties – Colin, Simon, and the unknown other *I* – might be neighbours in the Žižekian sense of the word; to be traumatic intruders marked by destabilising encounters that press each of us into *incollaborative* encounters of intolerance, friction, inequality, and extreme proximity. Together, these activities – forged in the asymmetry of language – are a thorn in the side of respectable distance. In their antagonism, we approach communicative and physical breaking points; or 'points of impossibility'.⁴⁹

We confront difference and friction – we contest each other, and the other that is audience – slowly, deliberately, and with dogmatic intensity such that the work might take hold. In the case of *Because We Care*, our approaches towards each other are mirrored by patient waiting. *Because We Care*, more than anything, simply waits; its temporal gaps are painstakingly stretched, it offers many questions, and few if any solutions. In its *waiting* lie the months and years of conversation-duels that have spurred our imaginations, and the imaginations of our audiences, with cuts, prying, and prodding, and the will to hurt each other's egos, biases, and understandings.

I am a mother and teacher and the phrase 'because we care' rings as an instruction, a reality and a responsibility that I often do not seem to comprehend. What does it mean to care for others, what does it mean to care for ourselves? What are the terrible violences we commit 'because we care'?

– Christina Kostoula⁵⁰

The systemic violence at play within our relational work reveals a beautiful evil that lies at the heart of the encounter between us, and between us and audiences: 'The evil is part of the inner circle itself: it is *imagined* by its members'.⁵¹ Imagination expands violence beyond the duality of our collaboration and into the lives of others. These others – audiences – are ghostly figures, absent from the day-to-day of the collaboration, but we are always aware of them, we hear their voices, we marvel at their intelligence and curiosity, and yet we do not know who they are. Through their imaginations and ours, we are collaborating with ghosts.

Imagination and difference

What we have in this collaboration at all times are two key relationships: the one between us (Colin and Simon), and the one between us and the audience (us and them). These relationships are present at all times, regardless of where we meet, and the circumstances of those meetings: in the studio, in performance, in informal meetings. It is an internal dialectic with centrifugal tendencies. We constantly test our ability to talk about what is important to us without even having those others in the room. We are already in relation to these others (they are in the room in our imaginations); we have a map of the (potential) dynamics between us. What is key is the theorisation of the audience as subject; it is an uncanny relationship between self and other, subject and *other* subject. Incompleteness is already going on. We are already part of the situation, the context, of *ours*. This 'conversation' – between them and us – is happening even before they have arrived. We are already in each other's worlds. What are the openings and closings and power dynamics of these relationships? Even our collective imagination is not simply circling around *us*: it includes them, even in their absence. Hence, *Colin, Simon & I*.

We embrace our capacity to welcome difference and violence in order to produce effects and traces of the actual and imagined (virtual) dialogues and exchanges that have occurred during rehearsal and development. The focus is not on what causes effects, but on the effects themselves. Indeed, we choose to leave behind any understanding of the causes as a method to enrich and provoke the imaginations of our ever-present Other – the audience.

Raimond Hoghe's *L'Après-midi*,⁵² made for dancer Emmanuel Eggermont, is a performance work that seems to present *effects*. Although the timing of the work is deeply measured and spacious, there is also a decisive gap between the subject of the material performance, and our Otherness as audience. At the same time, we are implicated in the work – we are not outsiders – and are obligated to be involved and to question our values as spectators. *Within the space and imaging of the work, it is impossible to be or feel neutral, and instead we are given permission (and time) to look at the work morally and ethically.*

This is starkly different from, for example, the work by Lloyd Newson's DV8: *Can We Talk About This?*⁵³ In this performance, it is as if Newson and his collaborators have done all of the thinking and imagining for us, the audience. They provide the questions and the answers, and this strips the audience of our job: to breathe life and ambiguity into the work with our imaginations, curiosity, intelligence, and experience. Who is the *we* in *Can We Talk About This?* It is most likely the *we* of DV8, not the collective that is built by an audience and their performance. There is in fact no talk about *this*, it is a didactic monologue (presented, composed, and performed with consummate skill).

The purpose of our collaboration, in contrast, is to create dissonance in the imaginations of an audience. It is the unlikely yet inevitable endgame of our differences, our questions, our violence, and the performed *effects* of these methods of production. It is also made possible by the paradox of friction that emanates from gaps. In this writing, we have married two paradoxical ideas about collaboration: extreme proximity leading to friction that in turn produces heat and violence, and the gaps between things that can only be viewed from disparate perspectives. How can friction – and all that it implies about contact, closeness, exchange, and tension – occur in the irreducible gaps that mark our relationship? One is a physical, psychological, and emotional interface, the other is a non-interface (an irreducible space), an abstract space which activates our and their imaginations. We are, in effect, collaborating with antagonism whilst delivering the promise of openness, and it is a promise that is built on and nourished by the terms and possibilities of difference.

Notes

1. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 254–255.
2. Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).
3. Slavoj Žižek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (London: Profile Books, 2010).
4. Colin Poole and Simon Ellis, chors, *Because We Care* (London: Colin, Simon & I and The Place, 8 June 2012). <http://vimeo.com/colinsimonandi/becausewecare>.
5. Dan Colman, 'Slavoj Žižek Demystifies the Gangnam Style Phenomenon', *Open Culture*, 8 January 2013. http://www.openculture.com/2013/01/slavoj_zizek_demystifies_the_gangnam_style_phenomenon.html. Accessed 9 January 2013.
6. Žižek, *Violence*, 184.
7. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 184.
8. Poole and Ellis, 'Because We Care'.
9. Elizabeth Boyce, Simon Ellis, and Colin Poole, 'My Name Is Colin, and This Is Simon', *Choreographic Practices*, vol. 1, no. 1 (January 2011), 65–78, doi:10.1386/chor.1.65_1.
10. OED Oxford English Dictionary, "'Parallax, N.'" (Oxford, 1 June 2005). <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/137461>. Accessed 7 January 2013.
11. Žižek, *Parallax*.
12. *Ibid.*, 4.
13. Scott McGehee and David Siegel, dirs, *Suture* (MGM, 1993).
14. Suture is an important concept in Lacanian film theory and in Žižek's political theory. In terms of parallax it refers to an imaginary thing that takes the place of – or sutures – the parallax gap. See, for example, Žižek's *The Fright of Real Tears: Krzysztof Kieślowski Between Theory and Post-Theory* (London: BFI Publishing, 2001).
15. Žižek, *Parallax*, 14.
16. *Ibid.*, 36.
17. Michelle Grier, 'Kant's Critique of Metaphysics', ed. Edward N. Zalta, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Stanford, 21 June 2012). <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2012/entries/kant-metaphysics/>. Accessed 10 January 2013.
18. Žižek, *Parallax*, 4.
19. Marisa Zanotti, 'Because We Care response' 13 August 2012 (personal communication).

20. Žižek, *Parallax*, 386.
21. Žižek, *Violence*, 5.
22. Slavoj Žižek, 'The Parallax View', in *Interrogating the Real*, ed. by Rex Butler and Scott Stephens (London: Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd, 2005), 231–246.
23. *Ibid.*, 232.
24. Sarah Whatley, 'Because We Care response' 7 July 2012 (personal communication).
25. Jonathan Jones, 'Invisible: Art About the Unseen 1957–2012 – Review', *Guardian* (London, June 10, 2012). <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2012/jun/10/invisible-art-about-unseen-review>. Accessed 9 January 2013.
26. 'Strange Meeting: Wilfred Owen', *Poetry Foundation*. Accessed 12 February 2013. <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/176833>.
27. Žižek, *Violence*.
28. *Ibid.*, 2.
29. *Ibid.*
30. *Ibid.*
31. Paul MacInnes, 'Beautiful South Split Due to "Musical Similarities"', *Guardian*, (London, 31 January 2007). <http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2007/jan/31/popandrock.paulmacinnes>. Accessed 15 January 2013.
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33. Žižek, *Violence*, 31.
34. Slavoj Žižek, 'Class Struggle or Postmodernism? Yes, Please!', in *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*, ed. by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (London: Verso, 2000), 90–135.
35. *Ibid.*, 94.
36. *Ibid.*
37. Žižek, 'Parallax View', 234.
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*
40. *Ibid.*
41. Žižek, *Violence*, 8.
42. Margaret Heffernan, 'Dare to Disagree', 2012. http://www.ted.com/talks/margaret_heffernan_dare_to_disagree.html. Accessed 19 February 2013.
43. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 78.
44. Žižek, *Violence*, 35.
45. *Ibid.*, 50.
46. *Ibid.*, 52.
47. *Ibid.*, 51.
48. *Ibid.*, 53.
49. Ian Parker, *Slavoj Žižek* (London: Pluto Press, 2004), 11.
50. Christina Kostoula, 'Because We Care response' 14 February 2013 (personal communication).
51. Žižek, *Violence*, 23.
52. Raimund Hoghe, 'L'Après-Midi', chor. Raimund Hoghe (Montpellier: Festival Montpellier Danse/Théâtre du Hangar, Montpellier, 4 July 2008).
53. Lloyd Newson, 'Can We Talk About This?', chor. Lloyd Newson (Sydney: DV8, 1 August 2011).