



When Whole(ness) is more than the *Sum* of the Parts: somatics as contemporary epistemological field

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ABSTRACT – When Whole(ness) is more than the Sum of the Parts: somatics as contemporary epistemological field – In the text, it is discussed some aspects on somatics in contemporary times, from the starting point of its technical and conceptual basis, clarifying premises and applications, as well as misunderstandings and restrictions. Some aspects include: conceptual, historical, and technical origins; common premises and principles developed by diverse somatic techniques; the difference between somatic technique, method, and approach; transculturality, decolonization, and repatterning; Somatic Attunement and Wisdom; institutionalization in technical and/or academic courses; somatics as autonomous field of therapy, education, aesthetics, and research; somatics as *practice as research*; *somatic-performative research*.

Keywords: **Somatic Field. Research. Principles. Autonomy. Integration/Interaction.**

RÉSUMÉ – Quand le Tout est plus que la Somme des Parties: somatique comme champ épistémologique contemporain – Dans le texte, il est important de discuter des aspects liés à la somatique dans la contemporanéité, à partir de ses bases conceptuelles et techniques, en précisant les prémisses et applications, ainsi que des équivoques et des restrictions. Les aspects abordés sont notamment: l'origine conceptuelle, historique et technique; les prémisses et les principes communs développés par diverses techniques somatiques; la différence entre la technique, la méthode et l'approche somatique; l'aspect transculturel, la décolonisation et la redéfinition des normes; Syntonie et Savoir Somatique; l'institutionnalisation dans la formation professionnelle et/ou académique; la somatique en tant que champ autonome thérapeutique, éducatif, esthétique et de recherche; la somatique comme *pratique de recherche*; *recherche somatique-performative*.

Mots-clés: **Champ Somatique. Recherche. Principes. Autonomie. Intégration/Interaction.**

RESUMO – Quando o Todo é mais que a Soma das Partes: somática como campo epistemológico contemporâneo – No texto, discutem-se alguns aspectos referentes à somática na contemporaneidade a partir de suas bases técnicas e conceituais, esclarecendo premissas e aplicações, bem como equívocos e restrições. Alguns aspectos incluem: as origens conceitual, histórica e técnica; premissas e princípios comuns desenvolvidos por técnicas somáticas diversas; a diferença entre técnica, método e abordagem somáticos; transculturalidade, descolonização e repadronização; Sintonia e Sabedoria Somáticas; a institucionalização em cursos profissionalizantes e/ou acadêmicos; somática como campo autônomo terapêutico, educativo, estético e de pesquisa; somática como *prática como pesquisa*; *pesquisa somático-performativa*.

Palavras-chave: **Campo Somático. Pesquisa. Princípios. Autonomia. Inte(g)ração.**

Structure and Function

Increasingly, somatics has become a relevant and consistently recognized contemporary reference. From specific somatic practices and their therapeutic, educational, and creative applications, somatic approaches have expanded to studies and research in various fields. Only gaining recognition within the last fifty years, somatics has arrived precisely to resolve the many fragmentations between different forms and disciplines, between theory and practice, education and environment, aesthetics and healing, art, creation and performance, experience and reflection, and so on, allowing for a connective political field between personal and collective levels.

This paper aims to discuss some aspects related to somatics nowadays from its techniques and conceptual bases, also questioning the term's recent trend, and the indiscriminate and reckless use of this term, which is seemingly easy to comprehend, but nevertheless has deep meanings and implications in its application.

From a brief historical and conceptual presentation, and delimitation of the field, some key points are explored and discussed, aiming to clarify some misconceptions while arguing the importance of somatic education not just as therapy, but as a key contemporary epistemological field, in line with recent research trends in the arts associated with artistic creation.

One of the important aspects of the term is the sum of the meanings of the word *soma*, which originates from the Hindu Vedas, and goes beyond the mere meaning of "body" (Hanna, 1976, p. 31), exposing an eminent and inevitably contrasting, paradoxical, and integrated constitution in its multiple levels and aspects. The contrasting features of the constituent sum, presented by Thomas Hanna in 1976, will form the basis for structuring the text into seven distinct sections. Consistent with the somatic proposal, the live research is organized according to subject's pulsing:

All somas are holistic processes of structure and function, in constant interchange of matter and energy; somas simultaneously tend toward homeostasis and balance while tending toward change and imbalance, in a paradox that characterizes and produces life; all somatic process takes place in rhythmic, cyclical patterns of alternating internal movement (e.g. diastole/systole, expansion/contraction, parasympathetic/sympathetic, wakefulness/dormancy); in somatic ecology, the soma tends toward autonomy and independence of its

environment while tending toward appetite for and dependence upon its environment – social as well as physical; all somas grow in an alternation between analytical and synthetic functions of adaptation towards differentiation; somas coordinate their parts holistically, intending their growth, differentiation and integration (Hanna, 1976, p. 32).

In this context, terms such as instinct, relationship, connection, harmony, rhythm, and repatterning delineate a field that encompasses techniques, methods, and approaches – each with its specificities. This would be the first misconception that this text seeks to clarify, because often these three instances – technique, method, and approach – are used interchangeably. Another common misconception is that, by not indicating a clear model to be followed or formal and aesthetic ideals, somatic techniques are easy to learn. This last aspect is reinforced by the difficulty of access to training techniques in countries outside Europe and the US, which are often only available abroad and not locally. Subsequently, many believe that somatics consists only of foreign techniques that are colonizing, and its followers end up being *culturally domesticated*. Yet another misconception is that, because of the focus on feelings, personal challenges, and development, somatics puts too much emphasis on individualism at the expense of the collective.

Thus, in the sections that follow, I respond to these misconceptions with the principles and themes of somatics, proposing it as an epistemological field that has been recognized as practice as research, performance as research, and performative research (Fernandes, 2013a). I also demonstrate how I have been applying the somatic approach in what I have been calling somatic-performative research with students of the Laboratory of Performance (TEA 794) of the Postgraduate Program of Performing Arts at the Federal University of Bahia (PPGAC / UFBA), in association with the activities of the A-FETO Dance Theatre Collective of the Federal University of Bahia.

Matter and Energy

The origin of somatics is situated in the revolt against Cartesian dualism in the European gymnastics movement from the end of the nineteenth century with the work of François Delsarte, Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, and Bess Mensendieck. These pioneers “[...] sought to replace the reigning ideology of rigor in physical training

with a more ‘natural’ approach based on listening to bodily cues arising from breath, touch and movement” (Batson, 2009, p. 1). Influenced by the work of pioneers such as Rudolf Laban, Moshe Feldenkrais, and Alexander Mathias, somatics became a field of research approaches and studies and was named as such by Thomas Hanna in the seventies. In 1976, Hanna reinterpreted the Greek word *soma* (body in its completeness) and *somatikos* (lived body) as the body experienced and regulated internally, using them to describe approaches to body-mind integration that he and other therapists and educators were developing.

Although these six key pioneers did not specifically call their approaches and methods as somatics at the time they created them, it was they who laid the foundations for that field. So, when Hanna delineated the term somatics, he did so using a set of existing and widespread therapeutic and educational practices that are now recognized as part of a field with common assumptions, including constant renewal from methods created by disciples of those pioneers in a differentiation, multiplication, and expansion of specialized processes that continues today.

From that common delineation, Hanna renamed the specific technique he created *Hanna Somatic Education*, which now falls within the broader field that was then established in the following decades as Somatic Education, with the creation of the International Somatic Movement Education and Therapy Association (United States) and the Regroupement pour l’Education Somatique (Québec) (Strazzacappa, 2009, p. 49). According to Sylvie Fortin, Somatic Education is a field of study that “[...] encompasses a diversity of knowledge where the sensory, cognitive, motor, affective, and spiritual domains mingle with different emphases” (1999, p. 40).

Among the existing somatic techniques nowadays, we can mention the Alexander Technique, Bartenieff Fundamentals™, Body-Mind Centering®, Connective Tissue Techniques®, Continuum, Dynamic Embodiment©, Eutony, the Klein Technique™, The Feldenkrais Method®, Hanna Somatic Education, Ideokinesis, Postural Integration, Progressive Relaxation, Rolfing, Dynamic Postural Reorganization, the Rosen Bodywork Method, Sensory Awareness, Skinner Release Technique, Spiral Praxis, Strozzi Somatics, the Klauss Vianna Technique, the 3-D Workout™, the Trager Approach, and Voice Movement Integration. Somatic

methods related to somatic techniques include Authentic Movement, the Embodied Conducting™, Kestenberg Movement Profile, the Laban/Bartenieff Movement Analysis (which includes Bartenieff Fundamentals™), Movement Pattern Analysis, Somatic Centering™ (which includes Rolfing), and Somatic Experiencing™, among others. The basic difference between a technique and a method is in the constituent framework, which is exercises (in the case of the technique) or procedures (in case of the method), both guided by principles.

Fundamental aspects of somatics, resulting from the work of the six pioneers initially mentioned, reside in a radical change of approach, which ceases to be in specific styles and genres of body language, and becomes the experience as an integrated and dynamic whole, with the nature of the body as a living being in constant relationship, adaptation, and enhancement with/in the environment. Rather than a quantitative, competitive, and arduous apprenticeship in search of a model, somatics relies on a context of receptive and perceptive learning, facilitating sensory connection through dynamic pause and refinement of integrated muscular effort of the whole person and ambience.

Indeed, somatics destabilizes even the contemporary emphasis on the body, bringing something as seemingly simple as the pulse of life in the space-time continuum as a constitutional foundation and, therefore, is revolutionary and unrestricted in its application: “Living organisms defy being described as ‘bodies.’ They have a moving order and lawfulness of their own which violates the stable concept of ‘body.’ Living organisms are somas [...]” (Hanna, 1976, p. 31). Accordingly, the *soma* is an interaction that dilutes the objectification of the body in favor of the autonomy of the living being integrated across all its aspects, multiplicities and idiosyncrasies, even constituted as paradoxical and metaphysical, self-organizing itself holistically towards its own growth with/in its environment.

This process of increasing maturity and relational autonomy is based on that matter-energy constitution (Hanna, 1976, p. 32). It is precisely when we expand our understanding of physicality to bodily states eminently energetic and paradoxical that these states start to organize (in the sense of organ and organic) all instances. While Sally Banes said that the Greenwich Village movement put “[...] the body

in power” (1999, p. 251), we could say that somatics acknowledges the life force as a constituent of everything and everyone, thus declaring a kind of pulsing of everyone and everything in themselves in interaction/integration, beyond power relationships or body(ies).

Although the term somatics has been inspired by the Greek words described above, the word has its origins in the sacred drink referred to in the Rig Veda (Griffith, 1896, p. 368-420), with the meaning of inspiration or motivating force, corresponding precisely to which Laban (1950) called *Antrieb*, momentum or internal impulse (translated into English as *effort*, not with the sense of exertion, but of expressiveness or expressive dynamics):

Soma in Vedic tradition thus represents essentially a non-physical mind stimulant, and drive. The motivating force for intellect and also the store of scientific knowledge from researches that are source of capability as an enabler of actions for the welfare of the society (Hindu Revolution, 2011, n.p.).

In this ancient cultural tradition, *soma* is a deity and the drink responsible for immortality, and also a substance constituent of all living beings.

As in the Art of Movement, this supposedly not physical substance is not a reason for abstraction and reasoning which distance us from the body. On the contrary, corporeality is constituted between matter and energy, in flow variations which modulate the other variations of rhythm¹. In this context, concepts emanate of practical actions, of flows and intensities expanding and contracting in diverse rhythms within dynamic space. This premise is, in itself, a revolution in terms of body/mind duality or of all the rational and behavioral hegemonic structure that constitutes the educational, social, and constructive (and reproductive) systems of knowledge.

For this reason, somatics has assumed an outstanding role in various instances of contemporary life. More than ever, the degree of demands and requirements is not human in all implications and contexts, and it continues to increase. It is not by chance that Laban developed his effort theories (*Eukinetics*) precisely in factories, investigating how to promote recuperation of the whole being within highly productive and repetitive cycles (Laban; Lawrence, 1974). Actions repeated for long periods of time, within strong time and spatial constraints, with emphasis on high level of production of

goods, frame and impose specific rhythms to human beings, who have their flow fluctuations clearly manipulated for the sake of quantitative efficacy. It is precisely this quantitative and productive aspect which will be criticized and reverted in recent research approaches, founded on the creative impulse as ways of somatic emancipation.

According to Vilém Flusser (in Baitello, 2012), the human being survived, along his evolution, three big catastrophes. Two of these catastrophes would be, first, the humanization or process of coming down from the trees and becoming biped and erect, followed by knowing and learning through the nomad displacement; and, second, the civilization or process of settling down in villages in order to domesticate animals and cultivate vegetables, associating accumulation of goods and settlement (used by Baitello in the sense of sitting still and sedentary). In this protected and cozy environment, there was the emergence of writing and, as a consequence, numerical systems and logical calculations, besides science and technique. The third catastrophe, through which we go through nowadays, virtualizes space and paralyzes the body for the sake of an increasing flow of information (to the detriment of the somatic flows):

[...] we are living the advent of the third great catastrophe, still nameless, in which residential protection and coziness do not exist anymore, because our houses are perforated by all sides, they became permeable to the 'media hurricanes'. Thereof, our homes became unusual [...] and, consequently, inhabitable [...]. They invite us to be there where we are not, in distant and virtual settings, landscapes, and environments. The place where we really are – always sitting – is the inhospitable place, which does not allow us to inhabit it because it is invaded by the wind storm of visual and sound images of the media. [...] the new 'mobility' or the new 'nomadism' are a paradoxical union of immobility with fluidity. The images flow quickly and we virtually surf on them, while the body, in torpor, is always sitting in some chair, both soulless, body and chair (Baitello, 2012, p. 27-28).

In this perverse context of mandatory settlement – sitting in in many years of school and in most varied activities of daily life – and permanent disembodied conditions, practice as research, especially from a somatic perspective, comes in as a regaining of sensing-feeling-action integration (Cohen, 1993), activating impulses between matter and energy as a way to create and multiply knowledge.

Analytical and Synthetic Adaptation

The premise of the primacy of practical experience as generator of cellular intelligence or Somatic Wisdom (Hartley, 1995) is part of what we could call Somatic Approach, which differs from Somatic Education. In other words, this is a general somatic premise, but it becomes very specific when we are dealing with somatic techniques which are being denominated as part of the Somatic Education field. This differentiation is very subtle, but very relevant, mainly in terms of registered professional certification, somatic applications, and generalizations.

The field known nowadays as somatics – many times used in the most assorted and unpredictable contexts – has originated from specific techniques which are highly structured in terms of principles, procedures, trainings, and applications. These techniques not only have similar premises, but belong to complex, differentiated, innovative, and relevant understructures in terms of application and study, and demand time and dedication. Therefore, these techniques cannot and should not be underestimated or generalized for the sake of the simple use of their general outlines. So we can infer that all Somatic Education technique has a Somatic Approach, but not every Somatic Approach is tied to some Somatic Education technique, although this would be highly recommended and coherent.

In general, this differentiation does not diminish the validity of neither one of them – Approach or Education. This differentiation clarifies and recognizes the values and uses of each one of them in its appropriate context. Nonetheless, many times, somatics has been used indiscriminately as if related to technical education background, when in fact it is not tied to the respective technical fundamentals and practices. The confusion gets even bigger when techniques usually not recognized as somatic ones are mentioned as such or, even more, are criticized as somatic ones, without enough argument, experience, and contextualization.

Obviously, somatic premises can be applied to any instance, including varied body techniques. For example, Jackie Hand, teacher at the Laban/Bartenieff Institute of Movement Studies, New York, taught classical ballet to children for many years, totally based on Laban/Bartenieff Movement Analysis. Also based on this method, I have learned the classical Indian dance style of *Bharatanatyam* with

greater ease (Fernandes, 2007). In my experience, the performance of the difficult Indian exercises was only possible with the somatic warm up of the Bartenieff Fundamentals™ (BF), although both techniques are apparently so different. In other words, it was from exercises on the floor, with free flow and mobilization of the center of weight (BF), that I was able to confidently engage in the controlled and precise verticality and stable center of weight of *Bharatanatyam*. This association was so well-succeeded that my Indian master, Rajyashree Ramesh, decided to pursue the certificate on Laban/Bartenieff, and today teaches *Bharatanatyam* with somatic foundation. But this does not turn *Bharatanatyam* into a somatic technique.

This ground gets even hazier when we deal with a contemporary technique such as the Pilates Method. Sources usually limit somatic techniques to a specific list, although it grows on a daily basis, due to the premises of its own field. Controversies regarding Pilates being or not a somatic technique were discussed in the dissertation by Daniel Becker Denovaro (2011). In his work, Denovaro demonstrates the eminently somatic structure of the Pilates Method, based on a detailed comparison of the Method to Feldenkrais and Bartenieff Fundamentals™. It is also important to clarify that even a somatic technique can be taught in a totally incoherent manner, that is, not somatic. This would be the case, for example, of teaching the Bartenieff Fundamentals™ as a series of exercises to be performed in a pre-established sequence learned by emulation. Therefore, the coherence between method and content is another characteristic of somatics, confirming its integrated character.

Growth, Differentiation, and Integration

In fact, not only somatics can be associated to various techniques and fields, but also its foundations seem to be already present in ancient techniques which have influenced it. This is the case of yoga, *qigong* (or *chikung*), and *tai chi*, among others, which also belong to a philosophical and therapeutic framework of integration at all levels. As in somatic practices, these ancient techniques do not seek quantitative technical ability, as an ideal performance model, but, in general, are learned by emulation, different from Somatic Education. Still, this emulation is not formally rigorous, but rather in terms of principles, such as the body meridians, for example. This process of

learning through principles brings these ancient techniques close to Somatic Education. But this does not make these ancient techniques easier, as a quick evaluation could induce.

In the case of somatics, there is a shift in the teaching approach in relation to dance techniques which impose and validate pushing to achieve a formal model:

Somatic learning contexts usually remove dancers from the typical space-time-effort constraints and psychological demands of a dance class. [...] The general tenor of the somatic learning environment is one of personal exploration, self-acceptance [...] and non-competitiveness. Instead of striving to perform the 'right' or 'correct' movement, the dancer learns to move from an embodied source – fully receptive and responsive to the moment of movement. [...] By broadening the intervals between sensing and moving (e.g., by slowing down), dancers can explore prolonged periods of attending to and exploring sensory feedback arising from stillness and movement in an atmosphere freed from goal-directed effort (Batson, 2014, p. 2).

Somatic techniques are sometimes taken as easy because they do not imply in emulation, neither on enhancing towards a formal ideal, nor in a harsh educational context. For these reasons, somatic techniques might be devaluated in relation to other techniques taken as more demanding, in which prevails the saying *no pain, no gain*. The misinterpretation of somatics as easy might result from some short durational and sporadic workshops. A longer study program, as required in certificates of somatic techniques, proves that, on the contrary, these techniques are highly elaborated and demand great dedication, time of study, and practice.

The difficulty of a deeper study program is due mostly to the prices of the certificates in private institutions, mostly in the US or European countries (and currency). This is also another fact that sometimes generates a post-colonial critique to somatics. In this context, somatics is criticized for being a grouping of mostly North American and European techniques which, although wide and adaptable, constitute modes of body training according to cultural preferences. Although they need long periods of merger for a complete learning, these techniques do not imply training manners, and even less on modes of gestural colonization. On the contrary, the *re patterning* principle, common and fundamental to all somatic practices, works precisely on decolonizing usual and

limiting expressive manners, and expand our movement possibilities through re-experiencing the phases of the phylogenetic development (evolution of species) and ontogenetic development (evolution of the human embryo). Thus, we reactivate connections which existed prior to the catastrophes mentioned by Flusser (in Baitello, 2012), and revert contemporary processes of sedentary lifestyle, apathy, and coercive acceleration.

The process of re-experiencing the history of life – from unicellular being to biped – does not imply in a standard movement process in terms of evolutionary phases. All somatic activities happen through sensitive and sensorial experience, which is consequently personal, creative, and unpredictable. In fact, this open structure of learning is much more demanding than simple emulation and is not even a bit easy to be apprehended in its totality full of details. Therefore, the goal of re-experiencing the Basic Neurological Patterns is not that of domesticating the body in search of an ideal form (for more ontogenetic or phylogenetic that it might be), but rather in stimulating the development of relational and adaptive abilities grounded on sensorial experience, through creative interaction with the environment. In this regard, somatics is in consonance with recent theories, such as the Dynamic Systems Theory:

Dynamical Systems Theory (sometimes referred to as quantum, chaos or complexity theory) sees a movement experience as an interaction of the body in relationship to its environment and desired goals – an interdependent triad of body, environment and task. This theory of learning includes concepts like ‘disruption.’ Disruption destabilizes a habitual pattern and therefore is an important aspect of how movement learning and skill emerge. [...] Destabilization leads to coping mechanisms – what Bartenieff would identify as new movement behavior. This principle of self-organization appears in the formative literature in the field of ‘somatics’ (Hanna, 1993) (Eddy, 2012, p. 56-57).

Relearn to learn through relational movement, therefore, is a key process for growth and differentiation towards creative autonomy with/in the whole. In this context, there is no ideal or correct model to be followed, but rather possibilities of challenge, change, and re-adaptation to be discovered and created by each person based on open instructions. After all, each person has her/his own history, so s/he developed preferences and abilities which can be expanded differently from each other. Therefore, in an educational context, it is not a

matter of a quantitative, cumulative, and linear apprenticeship, but of a spiraling process of personal re-experiences and discoveries in a relational context. For example, a person can be an excellent dancer, but has certain difficulty in performing a homolateral movement (body half), and prefers contralateral movements (crossed sides), which are neurologically more complex. Thus, to re-experience the (homolateral) movements of a lizard might be very innovative to this professional, granting even more support for her/his complex movements and expanding her/his abilities. On the other side, a classmate that is not so acquainted with contralateral movement may have developed a homolateral movement for a longer period or stronger emphasis in her/his life. Thus, this duet of students could support each other, exchanging abilities and preferences along *repatterning* exercises.

The culturally specific origin of somatic techniques is, in fact, transcultural, if we consider the uncountable influences along their development. This can be verified in the philosophical and therapeutic congruency among, for example, the organ work of Body-Mind Centering® / BMC (Cohen, 1993) and the exercises for the organ meridians of *qigong*. It is comforting to take a *qigong* class reminding oneself of the BMC experiences, allowing oneself to dilute in inner volumes while performing ancient sequences with fluidity and continuity. In other words, one technique not only mixes with the other, but supports and stimulates the perception and learning of the other.

On the other hand, sometimes, some specific cultural and contextual aspect can be present in a somatic technique. Nonetheless, in the individually adapted learning process, which is a foundational characteristic of somatics, this type of difference can only bring more expansion, either to the student exposed to the creative challenge of difference or to the technique itself, which is always open to reformulations rather than imposing itself as a model to the student. For example, the Klein Technique™, created by Susan T. Klein, from the Bartenieff Fundamentals™, includes a prolonged flexion of the torso. In this exercise, the upper body relaxes its weight forwards and downwards, aiming at elongating the posterior muscles of the thigh, which tend to shorten in sedentary life. The torso flexion, also very common in various Yoga exercises (*asanas*), decreases the

curve of the lumbar spine and, consequently, decreases the common tendency to lordosis.

Nonetheless, some people have the opposite tendency, that is, they have a straightening of the lumbar spine which, sometimes, turns into an inverted curve in relation to the natural one. This tendency can be a result of postural habits, of sedentary life (for example, many hours of sitting without the support of the ischia or *sitz bones*), of physical constitution or even a sum of all of these factors. The fact is that, independent from the cause, a person with straightened lumbar spine or inverted lumbar curve does not have much to gain from a torso flexion. Very much on the contrary, this flexion can aggravate a condition that is already of little use (the spine curves are fundamental to protect against shocks and also to distribute and transfer the weight of the head until the ground). In this case, it is up to the instructor to observe these variations from student to student and adapt the technique, suggesting a variation of the torso flexion to the student with straightened lumbar spine.

Autonomy and Interdependency (Somatic Ecology)

In a somatic technique class, not everybody is performing the same exercises together. Besides those formal adaptations, there are also rhythm variations among students, some students perform some exercises longer than others etc. It is not that each one is following her/his rhythm as s/he wishes, but it is important to connect oneself with one's own rhythms which many times are lost or run over in routines and obligations of daily life. In this context of rediscovery of our own rhythms, it is also possible to explore the different variations beyond our preferences, expanding them and conquering *spaces-times* of dynamic variations beyond our productive (post-) industrial restrictions.

Many times, to focus on personal rhythms and challenges in the learning process can be misinterpreted as an emphasis on individualism, at the expense of collective binding. Nonetheless, discover and follow our own rhythms does not mean that each one is merged in her/his own world, isolated from her/his context. Very much on the contrary, from the offset, all class is connected through the same instructions (which are not demonstrated on a first moment to avoid copying) and based in images which stimulate

the connection between different body parts and the perception of different nuances of body volume in dynamic space. Besides, many times the class includes working in duets, trios etc., having one classmate helping the other by touching bony landmarks or specific structures, facilitating sense-perception and inner-outer relationship.

Many times, somatics' personal emphasis might lead to the misconception that it is an extremely individualist and separatist approach. But somatics' emphasis on personal experience and on the student's adaptation is based on a comprehension of the whole, in this personal level as much as in a broader context:

What is critical to comprehension of these perceptions [of movement] is that they be understood as a whole – without fragmentation. Change in any aspect changes the whole configuration. Obviously, the experience of self as a whole transcends the consciousness of specific parts, but understanding the parts helps one to recreate the whole, to enliven its mobility, and to play harmoniously with a continuously changing environment (Bartenieff in Bartenieff; Lewis, 1980, p. x).

It is not by chance that this book by Irmgard Bartenieff and Dori Lewis – one of the most important ones in Somatic Education – is entitled *Body Movement: coping with the environment* (1980). As already pointed out at somatics' premises (Hanna, 1976, p. 32), *soma* is necessarily relational and ecological. In this regard, Peggy Hackney indicates three fundamental concepts in the context of Bartenieff Fundamentals™ – relationship, connection, and integration. The bases of movement is change, which is relational and patterned; and we can choose until what point we will change or interact with change. The process of change starts making connections within ourselves and in interaction with the world. Connections are made according to Fundamental Patterns of Total Body Organization (Hackney, 1998, p. 17).

This relationship/connection/integration between being and environment is even more evident in the experience of Somatic Attunement (Nagatomo, 1992), which does not imply a purely internal connection, but rather the inner-outer *relationship*, in a radical change of paradigm:

We have maintained that the term, attunement, is descriptive of the *relationship* obtaining in the fluid bilaterality between the personal body and the living ambiance. This means that we have shifted the locus of

the traditional epistemological investigation away from both the mind as an epistemological *subject* and the shaped thing as an epistemological object. [...] somatic knowing is a fruition of attunement. [...] the *locus* of somatic knowing lies in the personal body (Nagatomo, 1992, p. 200-201).

Nagatomo recognizes that the world is replete of activities of life's energy (*ki*) and, therefore, points out this relational connection between being and the environment as part of a "somatic field" (1992, p. 202). In this context, we shall recognize the invisible dimension of the personal body – a kind of "unconscious quasi-body" – which acts much beyond our limited conscious perception (Yuasa in Nagatomo, 1992, p. 203).

Homeostasis and Change

These statements have direct implications in contemporary life, especially in approaches, methodologies, and procedures of research in the arts field. Although somatics was created in association to the performing arts, especially dance, it is surprising to observe that, precisely in this art form, somatics still has little academic recognition. Besides, due to somatics' transdisciplinary origin, and the great influence of psychology in its development, somatics is often more associated to psychology than to the arts.

This can be verified in the US, a country which hosts the larger number of schools and institutes of specific and registered somatic technique degrees. In that country, greater part of the undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in dance offer somatic technique courses and, in some of them, registered technical degrees are offered in association to university degrees. This is the case of the master's degree in dance of the University of Colorado Boulder (with certificate in Alexander Technique, Body-Mind Centering® and Pilates), of the University of California Berkeley Department of Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies (which offers the certificate on Integrated Movement Studies, coordinated by Peggy Hackney, disciple of Bartenieff) and of the master's degree in dance/movement therapy of the Columbia College Chicago (with certificate in Movement Pattern Analysis, created by Warren Lamb, disciple of Laban), besides the dance program at Washington University at St. Louis, which offers the Certificate in Somatic Studies (not bond to registered techniques). Nonetheless, most part of university degrees

in somatics are not connected to dance, but rather to psychology, such as at California Institute of Integral Studies, at JFK University, at Meridian University (degrees in Psychology with concentration in Movement/Dance and Expressive Arts, in connection to the Tamalpa Institute, coordinated by Anna Halprin), at Naropa Institute and at Pacifica Institute. On the other hand, in the U.K., university courses and degrees in somatics are connected to dance at both University of Central Lancashire and at Coventry University. But, in both institutions, the degrees are not associated to a certificate on a specific somatic technique. Also in the U.K., somatics is associated to academic research in dance, such as at the Centre for Dance Research (C-DaRE), directed by Prof. Sarah Whatley (Coventry University), and at the Choreographic Lab, directed by Prof. Vida Midgelow (Middlesex University), in association with Prof. Jane Bacon (Chichester University).

In Brazil, somatics is increasingly gaining recognition at the universities, and has become a specialty in vacancies for professors in arts and performing arts departments. In the last decade, more and more institutions are creating and offering courses with somatic techniques, in both undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in performing arts and dance. Besides, some higher education institutions are grounded in these techniques, such as the Faculdade Angel Vianna (Rio de Janeiro) and Anhembí-Morumbi (São Paulo).

Nonetheless, great part of studies in dance still restricts the somatic knowledge to purely therapeutic or educational, and not specifically aesthetic or applied to research, or to all these levels simultaneously. This is evident in the limited number of Brazilian professors at universities who use somatics as the primary source of their publications, advising, and lectures, although they certainly use somatics as foundation for their practical classes and creative activities (which is many times still not properly recognized and widespread). In many cases, somatics is still placed within a theoretical field or methodological framework outside itself, in order to validate it, legitimate it, or shyly bring it to the predominantly theoretical and rational academic setting.

An example of the association of somatics with other research methodologies is that of “somatic research”, named by Rosemarie Anderson (2002). Anderson’s proposal is inspired in somatics and phenomenology to create an “embodied writing” (Anderson, 2002)

based on transpersonal, intuitive, and sensorial experience, which includes felt sense and kinesthesia. Nonetheless, her proposal comes from humanistic and transpersonal psychology, constituting (still) qualitative modes of research (Anderson, 2002/2003). Anderson's laudable initiative only misses its pioneering role for still binding itself to accepted and consolidated modes of research, which have been criticized in the last few years. In fact, Anderson's "somatic research" seems to outline yet another much more updated approach. Therefore, her proposal seems to be much more coherent with a third research paradigm, beyond quantitative and qualitative methodologies, more specifically in the arts field.

Of course nothing hinders somatics to relate and interact with diverse fields, theories, and approaches, especially because interaction is somatics constitutive characteristic. Likewise, though, somatics constitution implies its autonomy. Therefore, it would not be coherent to diminish somatics to casual illustration, object or appendix of other theories, fields, or methodologies, as if somatics in itself would not be enough to generate its own theories and methodologies. From the starting point of recognizing somatics as an epistemological field, somatics necessarily interacts with diverse theories and approaches in an autonomous, coherent, and creative manner.

Thereof, somatic research is not only made through and with somatic techniques (having them as objects of study), or by using generalizations of somatic premises in still quantitative or qualitative inquiries. Somatic research structures itself as live and relational pulsing in an integrated process of growth, and stimuli to unpredictable and innovative Somatic Wisdom (Hartley, 1995). In other words, somatic research is grounded in extensive somatic practice, constitutes itself as a flexible and consistent conceptual apparatus, is structured as a dynamic whole according to its own methodological coherencies related and/or applied to other fields. This research becomes in itself *soma*, that is, it ceases being an object or a merely quantitative production. Hence, somatic research does not define itself neither as quantitative nor as qualitative, and not only as "performative research" (Haseman, 2006):

In general terms, quantitative researchers are not much interested in the phenomena of human practice (unless it can be measured, of course, say by Masters and Johnson [1966]). Similarly, mainstream

qualitative researchers established research strategies [...] positioning of practice as an object of study, not as a method of research. [...] However, in recent years some researchers have become impatient with the methodological restrictions of qualitative research and its emphasis on written outcomes. They believe that approach necessarily distorts the communication of practice. There has been a radical push to not only place practice within the research process, but to lead research through practice. Originally proposed by artists/researchers and researchers in the creative community these new strategies are known as creative practice as research, performance as research, research through practice, studio research, practice as research or practice-led research (Haseman, 2006, p. 2-3).

In this “emerging paradigm” (Haseman, 2006, p. 5), practice is in itself the research method, the main axis and organization means of research. In this setting, creative impulse is much more important to outline the research development than the hypothesis or the problem. But practice as research differs from research made only as part of an artistic project or data collecting and exchange in order to gather information and create a net of practices, for example. Practice as research is a form of academic inquiry where one seeks to discover and establish new knowledge through practice, with many times simultaneously practical and theoretical results. Through practical exploratory practices, one establishes pathways, unfoldings, and choices of the inquiry (even those related to data collecting, networking, and artistic creations).

In the case of artistic practice as research, the creative process generates a dissertation or a thesis, which can be accompanied or not by an artistic piece. The artistic process organizes the whole development of the research, which may be historical, anthropological etc., without necessarily involving a final performance or artistic result. However, in most part of these researches, there is a conclusion which associates academic oral exam and artistic presentation. This can even be shown as a work in process, which is coherent with contemporary tendencies which emphasize unfinished events and which happens in real time.

Alternating Internal Movement(s)

According to Haseman “[...] new strategies and methods have to be (and some have been) invented” in order to “[...] completely accommodate the surplus of emotional and cognitive operations and

outputs thrown up by the practitioner” (2006, p. 8). This is the case of somatic-performative research, among many current approaches of artistic practice as research (Barrett; Bolt, 2012).

The approach I have been proposing is structured in somatic practice, and consists of a category of both practice as research and performance as research, and constitutes an unfolding of performative research (Haseman, 2006). For this reason, I have been calling it somatic-performative research (*pesquisa somático-performativa / PSP*). At the Postgraduate Program of Performing Arts at Federal University of Bahia (PPGAC/UFBA), Salvador, Brazil, this approach has been part of the third line of study, which had its name replaced from “*Body in/and Performance into Somatics, Performance, and New Medias*”, in order to better accommodate the research made by its professors. Somatic-performative research is structured on twenty dynamic principles (Fernandes, 2013b) which shaped themselves along one decade of inquiries, and continue to adapt and multiply themselves. The researches that are part of this creative process consist of dissertations and theses which have somatics as theme, as well as those which do not deal directly with somatic techniques. In both cases, somatics is a self-organizing and performative approach, rather than a passive object to be analyzed under qualitative and/or quantitative perspectives and frames.

Somatic-performative research is grounded in the art of movement as an integrated system of performance, improvisation, interarts, research, education, and therapy. This approach was developed from a synthesis of the following tendencies present in my background: somatics – particularly Laban/Bartenieff Movement Analysis and *Authentic Movement*² –, dance theater, performance art, and dance improvisation. At the Performance Laboratory of PPGAC/UFBA, together with the A-FETO Dance Theater Collective of UFBA, the art of movement under somatic perspectives guides us in its own dynamic and unpredictable (performative) modes of interaction/integration with/in the research.

While Haseman based himself on J. L. Austin’s Speech Act Theory (1962) to create active modes of inquiry, at somatic-performative research we ground ourselves on somatics to establish a field where we move and are moved by our dynamic researches. Associated to somatics, the performative is not primarily associated

to “[...] how to make things with words” (Austin, 1962), but rather to move and being moved by a pulsing environment, which includes things, words, texts, cells, intra-, inter-, and trans-corporeal liquids, objects, landscapes, planets etc. In this transcellular connective space, we experience how the research moves and organizes itself, and how it moves us to write with it, rather than about it (Lepecki, 2004, p. 133). Inspired in Bausch’s perspective of being “not very interested in how people moved [...but] in what moved them [...]” (Schmidt in Servos; Weigelt, 1984, p. 15-16), we are interested in “[...] how does ‘what moves us’ move itself?” (Fernandes, 2012, n. p.). As part of the research, the writing follows unpredictable strategies and dynamic principles which emerge along the explorations, with the association of somatics and performativity in the discovery process of cellular and molecular intelligences:

Laban further argues that if the stability and harmony of the universe is reflected in the cell, free from the control of the central mind, then these qualities can be said to have existed before man. They are not, therefore, subject to his control, and were not initiated by him. If they are not manmade, and we accept that they do exist, from where do they originate? It is possible to deduce an answer to this question by the conclusion that Laban drew from an analogy based on the paths of electrons. While most electrons follow, complicated but regular tracts there are some, which do not obey any physical law. These apparently exercise free will in the choice of their paths (Thornton, 1971, p. 26-27).

This moving process of somatic-performative research dissolves power relationships between researcher and research, analytical writing and body movement, somatic and performative. At the same time, there is a transferring of focus to creative and transitory modes of connective flows among differences. The art of movement cannot be a stable and controllable object of study, because it consists precisely of “[...] the way in which we form things (Bausch in Servos; Weigelt, 1984, p. 239), which is a relational process between structure and unpredictability. In somatic-performative research we recognize, validate, and follow somatic dynamics and, by doing so, we respect the art of movement in its freshness and unique contribution to ecological and up-to-date research and learning modes. As posited by Irmgard Bartenieff: “Movement, no more pondering, is what brings new knowledge” (in Hackney, 1998, p. 3). In somatics, movement is understood as the fluctuation between *Stir and Stillness* – poem by

Laban (1939, published 1984) –, in rhythmic nuances (one principle of somatic-performative research).

As examples of the use of somatic-performative research in research of students of PPGAC/UFBA, I will briefly present two studies, one part of a doctorate degree, and the other, part of a master's degree. At the doctorate research of Patricia de Lima Caetano (2012), *Body-Mind Centering*[®] (BMC) was the axis-technique, which brought life and organized the body-dissertation, made of differentiated cells, tissues, and systems, which constituted and named chapters and procedures. The solo performance *Jelly Fish* (which in Portuguese has a double meaning as *Live Water / Água Viva*), composed along the research (and not at the end as a result), created a “[...] somatic consistency plateau” (Caetano, 2012, p. 387) for intercommunication among different aspects and nuances of the study, in a dynamic exchange through semi-permeable membranes. That is, through the performance, the BMC technique became subject of its own discourse, organized according to its own somatic premises, which provided the main framework where the other theoretical fields were placed and discussed. This approach to the theme of study – a specific somatic technique – confirmed its autonomy, interaction, and integration with/in its (academic) environment.

On the other hand, at the master's thesis by Mariana Terra Moreira (2013), the main theme was lighting design. In this case, the somatic-performative approach allowed the kinesthetic integration of the different performing activities, which generated imagery experiences in the shape of various conceptual prisms connecting different levels of/in the research. This is an example of somatic-performative image, one of the twenty principles of the approach. Somatic-performative image is based on the use of image in techniques of Somatic Education, as a means to facilitate sense-perception and stimulate the integration between conscious and unconscious. Through somatic-performative image, we reverse the process of acceleration of images tight to physical torpor as referred by Baitello (2012). Contrary to this “third catastrophe”, we use the visual apparatus rather as part of a complex somatic system of learning and inter-relating: “We must perceive in order to move, but we must also move in order to perceive” (Gibson, 1979, p. 239).

Somatic-performative image is a particularly relevant principle in contemporary times in which exacerbated and increasing visual

stimuli contribute to distance ourselves more and more of our sense-perception, added to the imagery empire of a robust, hyperactive, automaton, and eternally young body. As we have seen, it is not a matter of maintaining an ideal and hyperactive body, fighting against time or searching for a form or a final and ideal product. Through somatics, we learn to accept the challenge of growth and of change as part of our constitution, interaction, and integration with the live environment, replete of energy. Between pulsing and interaction/integration, somatics and performativity, artistic creation is not only restricted to the scene or to the art piece and its processes. Artistic creation permeates all expanded aesthetic experience as/in *soma(s)*, which connects unrestricted approaches and applications. As epistemological foundation, somatics dissolves dichotomies and teaches us to live in the paradox of “[...] a world of constant change” (Hackney, 1998, p. 17), an eminent territory of alive inquiries. In this somatic field, wisdom resides in perceiving (oneself) and co-creating the changeable and performative connections which, as a sacred drink, immortalize attunements and multiply differences increasingly more complete within themselves and with/in the whole.

Images that follow: 1 to 16. A-FETO Collective associating somatics and performativity in explorations to the question *how does your research move?*.



Image 1 – Leonardo Paulino at Performance Laboratory. School of Theater, Federal University of Bahia, Salvador/BA, 2014. Photo by the author.



Image 2 – Eduardo Rosa at Performance Laboratory. School of Theater, Federal University of Bahia, Salvador/BA, 2014. Photo by the author.



Image 3 – Mariana Terra, Carlos Ferreira, Ricardo Fagundes, Martin Domecq, Yann Schettini, and Paulo Henrique Dias at Performance Laboratory. School of Theater, Federal University of Bahia, Salvador/BA, January 2013. Photo by the author.

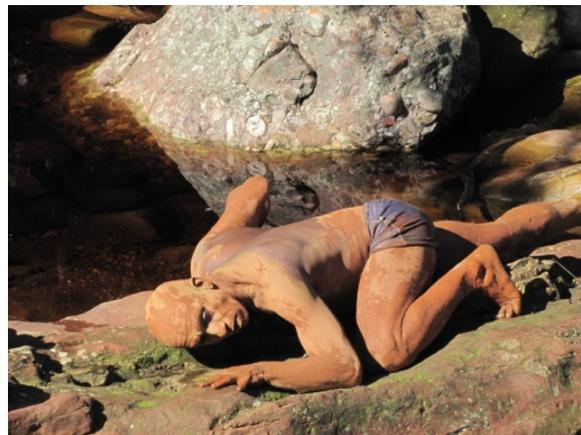


Image 4 – Cláudio Silva in field research of the Performance Laboratory. Lençóis/BA, July 2013. Video Still by the author.



Image 5 – Líria Morays in field research of the Performance Laboratory. Lençóis/BA, July 2013. Video Still by the author.



Image 6 – Ana Milena Navarro in field research of the Performance Laboratory. Lençóis/BA, July 2013. Video Still: Thales Branche.



Image 7 – The author and Yuri Tripodi in *Stem Cell*. Cañizares Gallery, Salvador/BA, 2013. Video Still: Wagner Lacerda.



Image 8 – Carlos Alberto Ferreira in *Stem Cell*. Cañizares Gallery, Salvador/BA, 2013. Video Still: Wagner Lacerda.



Image 9 – Felipe Monteiro and Susanne Ohmann in *(De)vitruiating*. Cañizares Gallery, Salvador/BA, 2014. Photo: Luis Leão.



Image 10 – The author and Cláudio Lacerda in *GEBO δ (Difference)*. Cañizares Gallery, Salvador/BA, 2014. Photo: Luis Leão.



Image 11 – Cecília Retamoza, Saulo Moreira, and Cláudio Lacerda in *GEBO δ (Difference)*. Cañizares Gallery, Salvador/BA, 2014. Photo: Luis Leão.



Image 12 – Neila Baldi in *Everything is Home*. Noble Auditorium, Dean's building, Federal University of Bahia, Salvador/BA, 2013. Photo: Washington da Anunciação.



Image 13 – Leonardo Harispe and Lenine Guevara in *Everything is Home*. Noble Auditorium, Dean's building, Federal University of Bahia, Salvador/BA, 2013. Photo: Washington da Anunciação.



Image 14 – Elizabeth Doud in *GEBO δ (Difference)*. Cañizares Gallery, Salvador/BA, 2014. Photo: Sol Tapia.



Image 15 – Morgana Gomes in *HipNose – the smallest distance between two points*. Cañizares Gallery, Salvador/BA, 2012. Photo: Silvia Jura.



Image 16 – Ricardo Malveira and Susanne Ohmann in *HipNose – the smallest distance between two points*. Cañizares Gallery, Salvador/BA, 2012. Photo: Frank Händler.

Notes

¹ Laban's disciple Dr. Judith Kestenberg (1977) expanded the five phases identified by Freud into ten organic rhythms present in human development since uterine life, plus their combinations and uncountable variations. These Tension Flow Rhythms consist in one of the nine categories of the *Kestenberg Movement Profile* (Amighi et al. 1999).

² Dance therapy method created by Mary Starks Whitehouse (1910-2001), former student of choreographer Mary Wigman, who was Laban's main collaborator in developing his *Eukinetics* theories. Authentic Movement is a method that dialogues with Carl Gustav Jung psychology. The method associates moving with the eyes closed and without music to the feedback between partners (mover and witness). Witnessing of the partner's eyes closed movements is made without critique or value judgment.

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