//Sandra Chatterjee

Rethinking Collective Artistic Production

The Post *Natyam* Collective, a transnational, web-based coalition of choreographers and scholars, founded in 2004, has developed and cultivated a unique and highly structured mode of process-oriented long distance collaboration, which we keep honing based on the changing circumstances of our professional and personal lives and Needs. *(1) **This process of adjusting our long-distance process, which can be described as a kind of looping is based on reflecting, planning, and evaluating the three major aspects of our process (artistic exploration, scholarly engagement, and organizational structuring) and their intersections in a circular way. Each member's current artistic and/or scholarly interests and needs, along with experiences and insights gained from previous artistic processes, determine how we plan and adjust new processes. In this article I will first review selected notions and theorizations of collaboration and collective authorship as well as production. Then I will outline the Post *Natyam* Collective's model of collaboration through the lens of my practical experience as a founding member** *(2) **in relation to the reviewed articles. Finally I will describe the ways in which the collective's collaborative process opens a space for our critical work that engages South Asian dance and aesthetics based on one example of a shared artistic process.**

(Re-)Thinking collective action in the arts: A selective literature review

Literature on collaboration and collective action in contexts of artistic production and the reception of art works contributes to a contestation of single authorship and the myth of the individual artist genius (see, among others, Becker 1974; (*2) Cvejić 2005; (*10) Marchart 2012; (*11) Rogoff 2002; (*15) Ziemer 2012 (*20)). In the 1970s, sociologist Howard Becker put forward the concept of "art as collective action," with which he builds on and simultaneously critiques previous sociological writing on art in its social dimension (Becker 1974: 767). (*2) Becker talks about art works as well as artistic innovation as cooperations between a number of specialized participants who all contribute to the existence of an art work. He includes everything it takes to produce the artwork into his considerations (beyond the roles that are explicitly considered artistic, including, e.g., those who provide rehearsal space, or publicity to build the audience who experience the work):

> Whatever the artist, so defined, does not do himself must be done by someone else. The artist thus works in the center of a large network of cooperating people, all of whose work is essential to the final outcome. Wherever he depends on others, a cooperative link exists. (ibid.: 769). (*2)

While making decisions, for example, about divisions of labor or the terms of the cooperation, according to Becker, collaborators "rely on earlier agreements [that have] now become customary, agreements that have become part of the conventional way of doing things in that art" (ibid.: 770). (*2) *(3) These conventions, which "cover all the decisions that must be made with respect to works produced in a given art world" (ibid.: 770–771) (*2) are discussed by Becker in their facilitating as well as in their restrictive dimensions: while they make

establishing cooperations faster and more efficient and are usually standardized but not static (ibid.), (*2) they can also restrict artists, particularly because "they do not exist in isolation, but come in complexly interdependent systems, so that making one small change often requires making changes in a variety of activities" (772). (*2) Becker here considers the interconnectedness of aesthetic convention and available infrastructure for the coming into existence and circulation of an artwork (ibid.). (*2)

Recent contextualizations of collaboration, collectivity, and collective producing often gesture towards a "paradox of collaboration" and collectivity (Weizmann 2012: 13, my translation), (*18) particularly regarding the terms' passed down meanings of complicity with hegemonic, authoritarian, or neoliberal structures and politics: collective working can indicate political complicity (cp. Weizmann 2012), (*18) a neo-liberal project-based work-mode and company structures, but it can also be found in movements of resistance (Marchart 2012: 39). (*11) Performance theorist and maker Bojana Cvejić discusses the question of substituting "collectivity" for "collaboration"—prompted by a question that came out of planning a performance project around the theme of collectivity:

> If collaboration is a buzzword for a working habitus in performance today, collectivism is abandoned, or even repressed and repulsive in its very idea […] Collectivity in the models we chose to remember is relegated to ideological disasters or social breakdowns, as if doomed to always fall into fascist regimes of collaboration (Cvejić 2005: n.p.). (*10)

This is true particularly for continental European contexts. In fact, journalist, psychologist, and educator Mark Terkessidis begins his most recent book *Kollaboration* with the assertion that collaboration "does not enjoy a good reputation in continental Europe" (Terkessidis 2015: 7). (*16) *(4) In continental Europe, Terkessidis continues, "most people think of the German occupation during the 'Third Reich'" and people who were complicit with it either because they believed in its ideology or because of the lack of courage to stand up against it (ibid., my translation): (*16) negative associations that carried over into cold-war times. The English "collaboration," however, has increasingly gained importance, in the economic and corporate sector, when combating environmental problems, as well as in politics (ibid.). (*16)

Bojana Cvejić, Irit Rogoff, Mark Terkessidis, and Gesa Ziemer test, probe, and seek to make resonant, rethink, or develop new models for thinking about collective working in the arts. Gesa Ziemer proposes the term "Komplizenschaft" ("accomplice-ship") *(5) as a social model that may provide the basis for thinking through contemporary modes of creative and collective authorship (2012: 124 and 127). (*20) Ziemer uses the notion of accomplices to distinguish this particular mode of collaboration from other forms such as teams, alliances, networks, and friendships (ibid: 125): (*20) teams are pragmatic and goal-oriented, while alliances tend to be strategic cooperations aimed at securing a status of power (ibid: 125-126). (*20) She re-defines "accomplice-ship," which is linked to the legal notion of collective delinquency in a criminal context, and instead proposes to view collaborators of a subversive enterprise as accomplices who get together in order to establish alternative orders (ibid: 124-125). (*20)

Mark Terkessidis (2015) articulates collaboration as the guiding principle of the parapolis (2015: 10) (*16) in the contexts education, arts, and aesthetics as well as critique (Terkessidis 2015: 14 -15). (*16) The parapolis is the "ambiguous, quasi illegitimate" version of the polis (Terkessidis 2015: 9), (*16) a para-city marked by multiple-ness and difference as its basic conditions, requiring institutions that can account for its multiple-ness and are barrier-free vis-a-vis difference (cp. Terkessidis 2010). (*17) In the context of the "un-integratable" multiple-ness of the parapolis, Terkessidis proposes collaboration as a form of community in which belonging is not marked by coercion and control, which emphasizes the joint work of Independent individuals (Terkessidis 2015: 329). (*16) Collaboration can render multiple voices audible—a prerequisite for the functioning of this society of multipleness (cp.Terkessidis 2015: 13). (*16)

Irit Rogoff is looking for a new notion of "we"—one that stands for shared production of meanings in the context of temporary relationships established around an artistic work. She seeks to shift notions of perception and participation away from analytical parameters, towards paying attention to their performative functions (Rogoff 2002: 54). (*15) She re-defines central words such as "collectivities," "mutualities," "participation," and "criticality" and argues that performative collectivities are created by the mere fact of assembling in a room around an artwork, exhibition, artistic enterprise, etc. She wants to go beyond the "we's" usually associated with art contexts: "museum- and exhibition visitors," "art lovers," "privileged citizens of the artworld," and critical art theorists. She also includes "we who believe that contemporary art has a part in the formation of citizenship" (Rogoff 2002: 54, my translations). (*15) Rogoff proposes that to think about collectivities amounts to de-essentializing existing models of communities based on geographic or ethnic kinship (Rogoff 2002: 53). (*15) The varying forms of collectivities created in the reception of art, while inhabiting art spaces, can make us aware of new forms of mutualities—beyond ideological mobilizations and trajectories—even as "myths" about engaging with art continue to emphasize individual self-reflection (ibid.). (*15) She draws on the French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy's *Being Singular Plural* in her attempt to dislodge notions of identity and collectivity: if to be is to be meaning (not to have meaning), and if we are therefore part of the circulation of meaning—how does this enable us to think about audience? (Rogoff 2002: 56, (*15) drawing on Nancy 2000 (*14)); meaning happens in the "between" of sharing (ibid.: 57). (*15)

Bojana Cvejić, in her reconceptualization of collectivity draws on the same passage in Nancy. Starting from the assertion that collectivity today is "abandoned," she argues for the importance of asking questions about the status of collectivity in Europe today and whether "we [are] allowed to rethink it in new terms which would serve the critical needs of the present?" (Cvejić 2005: n.p.) (*10) In her critical review of notions of community, collectivity, and collaboration in the context of twenty-first century European performance and dance she argues that the collectives of the anarchist movements of the 1960s actually "provid[ed] food for liberal individualism today" (ibid.). (*10) Working collectively today does not have the same edge and drive it did in the 1960s:

> Collectivity and collaboration, thus, no longer appear as viable models of
> experimentation and critique as they are already subsumed under the

institutional order and a cultural policy trend. (ibid.)🔳 (*10)

She establishes an opposition between self-organized artists who work out sustainable alternatives and the produced, touring contemporary choreographer/performers, who still work within and with an individual star system (ibid.).🔳 (*10) The four points regarding collectivity today emphasize heterogeneities. These heterogeneities need experimental spaces "without the theatre *dispositif* hovering above it" (ibid.).🔳 (*10) Also, Cvejić's "'we' isn't unison, but taking responsibility for relations 'with' in working with one another, with no compromise of tolerance, but sustaining the differential in contact" (ibid.).🔳 (*10)

Yes to each other!: Collectivity–coalition–collaboration and the Post Natyam Collective *(6)

Cvejić's contestation of "unison," her insistence on making difference central and her demand to go beyond the "theatre *dispositif*" (Cvejić 2005)🔳 (*10) resonate with Post *Natyam* Collective's commitments to multivocality, dialogue, and process over product. While Cvejić's (as well as Rogoff's, Terkessidis's, and Ziemer's) theorizations were written in European contexts, the Post *Natyam* Collective was founded in a Californian context where we have been engaging with various identity-based and grassroots political activist communities, such as diasporic (South) Asian and Asian American, "people of color," feminist, queer, and LGBT community formations. *(7) However, the range of identifications within the collective *(8) problematizes *(9) a given community's base in identity politics. In addition, we also hold sometimes conflicting aesthetic and political values, which we bring in dialogue with each other, but do not aim to combine into a "unison" voice (cp. Chatterjee and Lee 2012a)🔳 (*6). In line with feminist theorist Chandra Talpade Mohanty we choose to refer to our collective as a coalition, rather than a community. In our manifesto, we define coalition with reference to Mohanty as a "viable oppositional alliance […] a common context of struggle rather than color or racial identifications" (Mohanty 2003: 49).🔳 (*12)

Our motivation to continue our collective work despite the geographical dispersions is marked by a desire to connect and a simultaneous commitment to sustain a coalition that is nurtured by our differences:

> The Post *Natyam* Collective members continued their artistic connection despite the distance. Why? Because the politico-artistic values that we hold dear are marginal to mainstream dance cultures in our home communities. Contemporary South Asian choreographers in Germany and the US are rare—and those whose work engages politically with postcolonial, queer, and feminist-of-color theory are even rarer. Moreover, we are committed to collaboration, embracing the collective as an organizational structure over the "standard" model of a dance company with a single artistic director. Collaborating allows us to connect while honoring our differing politico-aesthetic approaches. We have resisted developing a signature fusion vocabulary to brand our work, instead finding multiple ways to engage with our individual perspectives, the diversity of the movement traditions that we practice, and our migrations to varied performance contexts and geographical locations. (Cynthia Ling Lee in Chatterjee and Lee 2012b: n.p.)🔳 (*7)

The following criteria are central to our definition of the collective: we want our relationship to be horizontal as opposed to the hierarchies found in dance

companies or organizations working under one artistic director. In line with our reliance on free and inexpensive internet technologies, we are, as we have pointed out in a previous article (Chatterjee and Lee 2013), (*5) inspired by an open source philosophy that emphasizes "collaboration instead of competition; openness instead of proprietary rights and trade secrets; quality code [or choreography] instead of profitability," (Berquist 2003: 223). (*3) Very importantly, "we define 'loyalty' as committing to coalition-building dialogues that embrace productive disagreement and critical feedback" (Chatterjee and Lee 2013: 2). (*5)

A capacity of sustaining disagreement is, in Ziemer's discussion, associated with friendship. While some notions of accomplice-ship as delineated by Ziemer do resonate with the Post *Natyam* Collective, we are not "only" accomplices. Accomplice-ship is, according to Ziemer, characterized by temporality: a short-term relationship targeted toward one specific, subversive project/intervention and lasting through the duration required for completion of this project/intervention. The Post *Natyam* Collective, however, is not short-term, and its members are also friends. Being part of Post *Natyam* Collective means having entered into a long term, committed, consensual, intimate, creative, and personal relationship. According to Ziemer, being friends and accomplices (partners-in crime) *(10) is not mutually exclusive (cp. Ziemer 2012: 124–127). (*20)

For the Post *Natyam* Collective multi-vocality is central: finding a consensus is not necessary in the artistic process, but it is required for moving forward organizationally. Our collaboration has continued to change over the past ten years, catalyzed by several structured and intense visioning processes that included reflecting our individual and shared goals and needs, past experiences of challenges and successes, as well as adjusting our collaboration to availabilities and access to funding and infrastructure. There were two distinct turning points: one occurred in 2008/2009, when we moved away from attempting to get together in person to produce a joint artistic product in favor of a long-distance process; *(11) and the second was in 2011, when we moved away from focusing on creating a joint product altogether to engaging in shared artistic process. These shifts are highly intertwined and affected by processes of self-organizing our collective, in which we strive to pool resources and share—as much as possible—the contributions necessary to create an artistic product (cp. Becker 1974) among collective members. For a large part of the process, we even, in some sense, act as each other's engaged audiences, receiving and commenting on artistic raw materials via the feedback process. Unlike many collaborations, therefore, our process is no longer geared towards a shared goal, a final collaboratively created product; instead it is trying to create artistic support, a shared pool of materials from which we can translate and recycle materials, and an intimate engagement with each other's artistic explorations, as well as expanding our shared knowledge by engaging with disparate (aesthetic, political, theoretical, etc.) positions and local knowledges contingent on our geographic dispersal (cp. Chatterjee, Ling Lee, Moorty, and Tata 2011). (*8) *(12)

"Yes to process!" Constituting a virtual interstitial space via translation and Looping

Challenges for the collective have been our geographic dispersal, the difficulties to raise funding and produce visibility for transnational contemporary choreographic works that engage with non-Euro-American aesthetic and movement forms, the uneven local support structures available to the individual members, as well as cultural and aesthetic differences that are heightened as we consciously engage

with our local surroundings and contexts. Our shared and highly structured artistic process, which includes giving each other assignments, posting artistic raw materials on our blog *(13) (which we have called our online open rehearsal studio), giving each other feedback and support, as well as entering into dialogues and disagreements, has facilitated the creation of a shared, in-between space constituted by the individual members' studies and ideas in dialogue with each other. *(14) It is a space created through and for our transnational negotiations, a space for expanding and testing the limits of ideas and meanings, re-articulating non-essentialized identities and cultural difference.

My notion of an "in-between space" is informed by postcolonial theoretician Homi Bhabha's theorizations of interstitial and in-between spaces, the "realm of the beyond" (Bhabha 1994: 1), 🀫 (*1) an "interstitial passage between fixed identifications [that] opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (Bhabha 1994: 4). 🀫 (*1)

Processes of translation (I am conceptualizing translation broadly here, as translation between languages, cultural translation, and translations of artistic methods, approaches and materials, passed down or created within the collective's long-distance process), I believe, is crucial for establishing the Post *Natyam* Collective's in-between space for and through our artistic process and dialogues. We make a conscious effort to negotiate and interweave local contexts and their differences, which get consolidated in the collaborative process via discussion and engagement with each other's artistic studies. At times, we actively translate each other's materials, questions, and arguments into the different cultural contexts that collective members operate in. The members are free to develop aspects or elements from the process individually or in small groups into projects/products such as performances, papers, talks, videos, etc., that circulate locally or virtually. Via posting and commenting on our blog, our "local" or small group translations, which spin out from the joint process, are virtually "looped back" into the shared space.

Similar to literature on collective authorship, as well as Derrida's notion of authorship as Ziemer utilizes it, we have thought about translation in the past as a choreographic approach that is opposed to a notion of choreography as a singular act of innovation. With our emphases on translation and recycling, on the other hand, we are "rewriting the choreographer as translator rather than author" (Chatterjee and Lee 2009: 150). 🀫 (*9) Translation, therefore, for us, has to do with engagements with and re-contextualizations of received materials and insights, meanings, approaches, concepts that emerge from new connections that are being drawn (cp. Chatterjee and Lee 2009). 🀫 (*9) For Bhabha's "beyond," too, translation is crucial. Shaobo Xie summarizes in a review of Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*:

> Living in the interstices of culture and history, he maintains, the subject of cultural differences assumes the status of what Walter Benjamin describes as the element of resistance in the process of translation (224). In translation there are many interstitial points of meaning whose determination is also a violation. In much the same way, the ambivalent migrant culture, the interstitial minority position, 'dramatizes the activity of culture's untranslatability' (224), and therefore reveals the indeterminate temporalities of the in-between. (1996: 162) 🀫 (*1) *(15)

The notion of an in-between space also resonates with Hannah Arendt's notion of "Erscheinungsraum" (space of appearance), *(16) which Irit Rogoff connects to the realm of art in her article on collectivities and mutualities. However, Arendt's

"'Erscheinungsraum'—the spatial in-between in which people appear in front of each other," is temporal and "does not last beyond the actions in which it started to exist" (Arendt in Rogoff 2002: 58, my translation), 🎴 (*15) which is in tension with the permanence that is created by our blog. But, Arendt also argues that through action and speaking, one can create a spatial in-betweenness, that is not tied to a home and can settle anew anywhere in the world (ibid.). This aspect of "Erscheinungsraum," I believe, can connect to Post *Natyam's* system of creating local "products" out of the shared process, which circulate and temporarily interface local audiences with our transnational process. The challenge here is to undo patterns of presenting and reception that easily relegate transnational and collective dimensions into the background.

Queer/ing: The artistic process queering Abhinaya

In conclusion, I would like to briefly outline our artistic process titled Queering Abhinaya to illustrate the above discussions about collectivity, collaboration, coalition, and opening an interstitial space via artistic engagement and dialogue. *(17) Queering Abhinaya exemplifies the collaborative interstitial space that is opened via mutual (artistic) engagement, via translation and via looping insights emerging from the collective's scholarly activities and organizational insights into our artistic practice. Queering Abhinaya picks up from theoretical investigations co-written by Cynthia Ling Lee and I, in which we have been thinking about the intersections between queer theory and the South Asian performance technique abhinaya (expression of emotional intent) (cp. Chatterjee and Lee 2013), 🎴 (*5) as well as the notion of cultural queerness/ing, which we have been developing in the course of scholarly comparisons between contemporary "Indian" dance in Germany and the US. *(18) A working definition of "cultural queerness" served as the basis for the first assignment of this process:

> Cultural queerness refers to the disruption of a dominant essentialized cultural norm in a way that complicates notions of cultural authenticity, cultural appropriation and identity-based representation. It aims to undo the easy equation between nation, race, and cultural/artistic production without ignoring uneven power hierarchies or histories of inequality. *(19)

However, within the collective different, conflicting notions of queerness collide and have been negotiated in this process, which, as Shyamala points out, of all the collective's processes, has had the most fundamental disagreements around definitions, specifically around "queer" and "queerness." *(20) Our conflicting and incompatible notions of queerness range from asserting queer/ness as a term referring exclusively to identitarian categories such as gender non-conformity and sexual orientation (particularly relating to North American formations of identity politics) to a desire to expand "queer" beyond sexuality and gender-(non)-conformity-based identity politics and pushing the limits of queer as oblique to the norm, going against the grain, for example connecting to the German etymological roots of queer in the word "quer" meaning "oblique." *(21)

The assignments—each of which was an opportunity for each collective member, given a particular assignment, to emphasize their particular approach/point of view on "queering abhinaya" evoked various levels of challenge and discomfort, which were, for example, related to not personally identifying as queer, and hence feeling trepidation around dangers of unduly representing queerness by engaging with it artistically and pushing its limits, or, conversely, feeling constrained by the narrowness of queer as an identity category. An important aspect, spearheaded in our final discussion by Cynthia, centered on distinctions of queer as a noun or

adjective/identity marker vs. queering as an active process. While the disagreements and discomforts around queering (as a verb) were not as disparate and intense, there was also no agreement on the meaning of queering in relation to, for example, subverting, the political and manifestations of activism (Sandra and Meena). *(22)

Looking back at the process in our final dialogue/reflexion, it became apparent, as Shyamala in particular points out, that the challenging engagements with disparate notions of and approaches to "queer/ness" (contingent on our commitment to pushing our comfort zones and engaging with each others' points of view) opened up a particularly productive artistic space. *(23) This in-between space was opened by assignments that articulated the individual members' approaches to the project's main tenets—"queering" and/or "abhinaya"—informed by their geographical, identitarian, political, and artistic positionalities. This, at times, meant confronting each other's positions, pushing each other to explore beyond our comfort zones and limits and translating the assignment articulated from one member's positionality vis-à-vis queer/ing into a response articulated from each of our own positionalities and/or cultural contexts. The responses to the assignments at times, led us on paths that went beyond abhinaya as well as beyond queering, or required processes of cultural translation, such as, for example in assignment 3 („Queer Pairings" – Abhinaya and Indigeneity"), which—formulated by Meena in relation her familiarity with indigenous communities in North America—inspired Cynthia, who is Taiwanese American, to begin an exploration of issues relating to her Han Chinese and Taiwanese indigenous heritages and challenged Sandra to investigate the notion of indigeneity in a German cultural context. *(24) Acknowledging the fact that the process, through and beyond our disparate approaches and discomforts with the topics we explored yielded productive explorations in our concluding discussion we refrained from evaluating the assignments in terms of their relationship to queer/ing or abhinaya, as well as attempting to come to a conclusive agreement about a shared notion of queering or abhinaya. In the same vein, I will conclude this essay with a selection of responses to some of the assignments, in order to give a glimpse into the process.

Assignment 1: Shyamala's Response *(25)
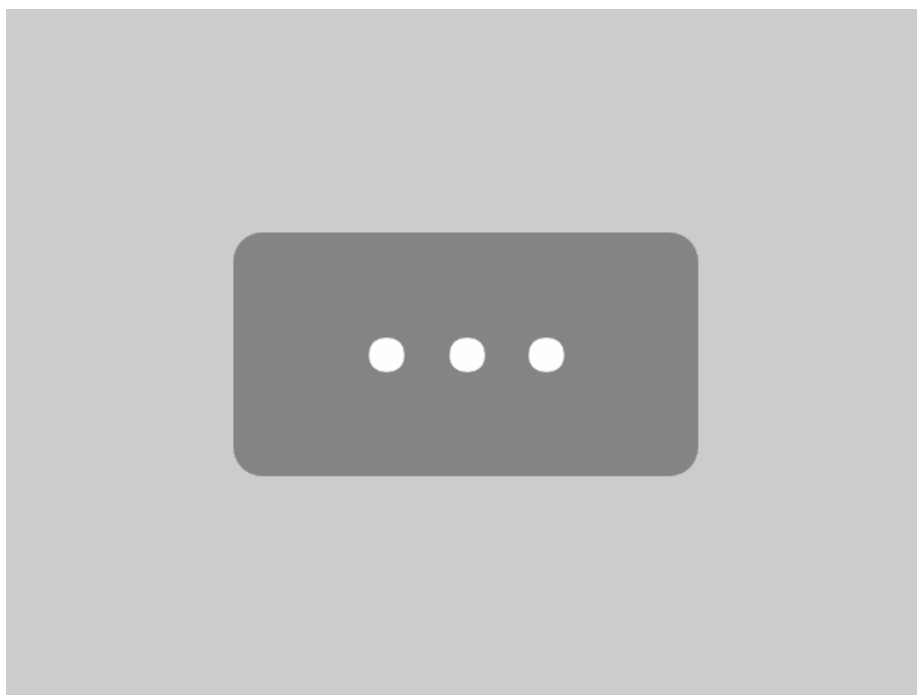
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Assignment 2: Meena's Response *(26)

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//Focus area Science&Art, University of Salzburg in cooperation with University Mozarteum
//bergstr. 12 //5020 salzburg//T+43(0)662/8044-2383 // w-k.sbg.ac.at/conart

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**Sandra's dance-for-camera work inspired by assignment #2. Music
by Oliver Rajamani**

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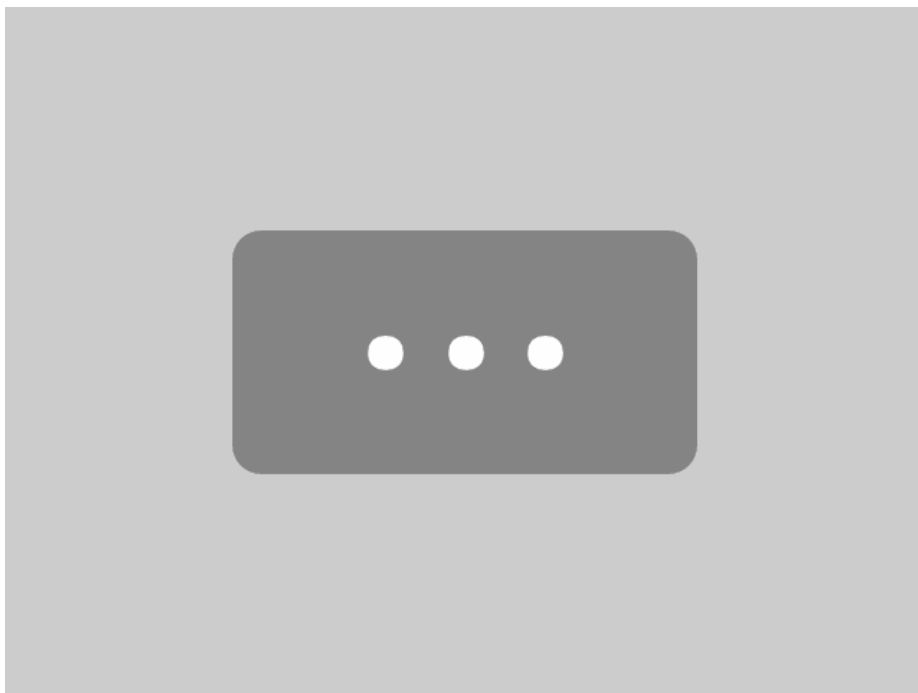Click on **Load video** to unblock Vimeo.
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Assignment 3: Cynthia's blood-run study *(27)

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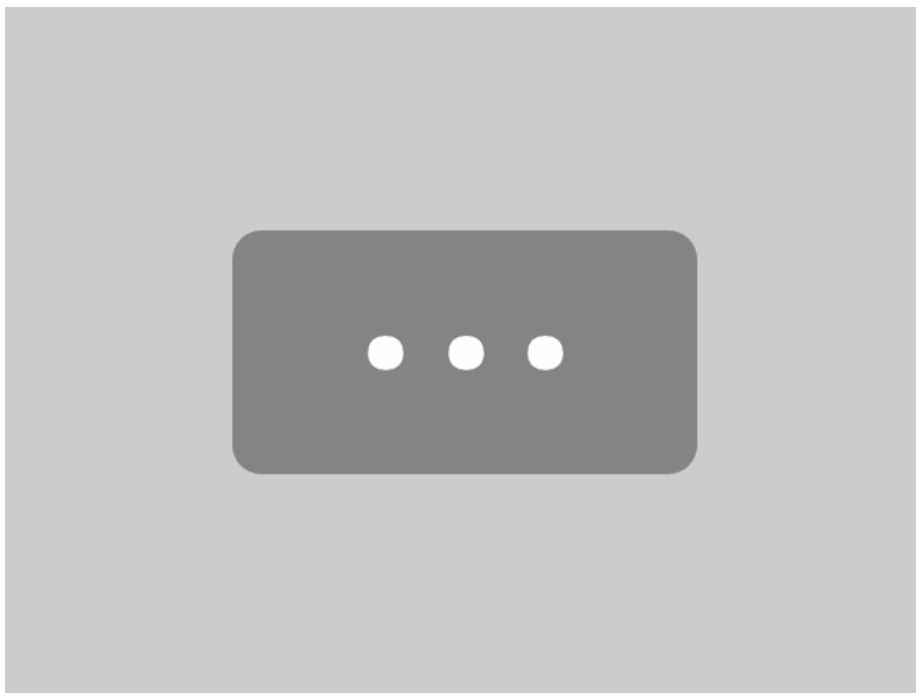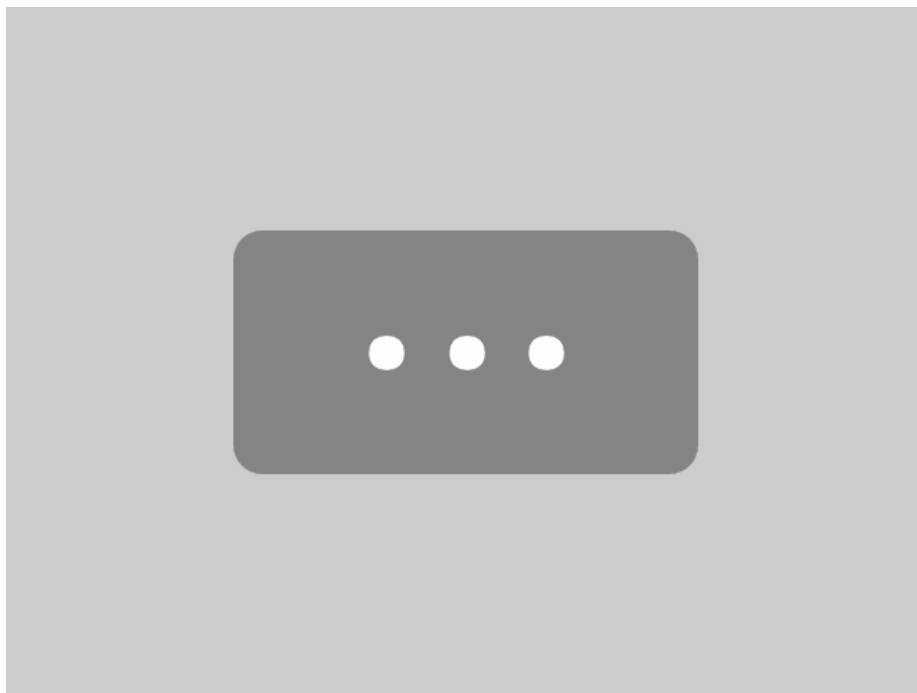Click on **Load video** to unblock Vimeo.
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Sandra Chatterjee

Sandra Chatterjee is a choreographer and cultural studies/performance studies scholar who combines her interests of choreographing, writing, and organizing. She is currently a postdoctoral research assistant at the Department of Art, Music and Dance studies at the University of Salzburg. In her choreography she draws on her training in classical Indian dance – Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam – Polynesian dance, modern/postmodern dance, and yoga. She is a recipient of the Hawaii State Dance Council's Choreographic Award and Cultural Preservation Award and holds a PhD in Culture and Performance from UCLA. As an independent choreographer she primarily performs in India and Europe, creating solo work, working with the Post Natyam Collective, and engaging in collaborations with artists such as Eko Supriyanto (Surakarta), P. Senthilkumar (Vienna) and Aditi Biswas (New Delhi). She has been a visiting scholar teaching at UCLA's Department of World Arts and Cultures and has completed a diploma in Arts and Organisation in Vienna, Austria (University of Vienna and Institut für Kulturkonzepte).

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*18 Weizmann, Eyal (2012): Prolog: Das Paradox der Kollaboration. In: Miessen, Markus: Albtraum Partizipation. Berlin: Merve.

*19 Xie, Shaobo (1996): Writing on Boundaries: Homi Bhabhas Recent Essays. In: ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature, 27 (4) October 1996, pp. 155–166.

*20 Ziemer, Gesa (2012): Komplizenschaft: Eine kollektive Kunst- und Alltagspraxis. In: Mader, Rachel (Ed.) Kollektive Autorschaft in der Kunst: Alternatives Handeln und Denkmodell. Bern: Peter Lang, pp. 123–139.

//Fussnoten

*1   *Cynthia Ling Lee and I have dialogically retraced this development (2004–2012) in a previous issue of this ejournal (Chatterjee and Ling Lee 2012): https://www.p-art-icipate.net/initiate-transform-sustain-reach-out-post-natyam-collective-members-reflect-on-long-distance-collaboration/)*

*2   *Currently members are Shyamala Moorty (Los Angeles); Cynthia Ling Lee (Greensboro/Los Angeles); Meena Murugesan (Los Angeles/Montreal); and I (Munich/Salzburg/New Delhi).*

*3   *Martin Niederauer's article in this issue discusses Becker's notion of art worlds.*

*4   *"Kollaboration hat in Kontinentaleuropa keinen guten Ruf" (Terkessidis 2015: 7).*

*5   *Here we encounter a parallel moment of untranslatability: Ziemer focuses on the German noun Komplizenschaft, which translates into English as complicity. The English noun complicity, however, resonates differently than the German Komplizenschaft does, as it has already been redefined beyond the legal realm for critical contexts of resistance and is used to refer to various modes of participation in the perpetuation of hegemonic structures. In a recent article on female complicity, Guiliana Monteverde provides the following definition for herself, which resonates with my understanding: "The definition of complicity advanced here refers to the broad notion of participation in a practice, belief, behaviour, or understanding that can lead to oppression, discrimination, or exploitation of your own or another group (group here is a loose term referring to identity politics; I acknowledge that all people cross several identity groups)." (Monteverde 2014: 63-64).*
The English accomplices and "partners in crime" are similar to the German "Komplizen"—but do not describe the state of the relationship that is discussed in Komplizenschaft.
In my considerations I will hence use the invented translation "accomplice-ship."

*6   *These reflections on the collective draw extensively on materials that were written prior to 2014, when there was a change in membership: Anjali Tata is at the moment not a member of the collective, and Meena Murugesan joined since then. The extensive citations of co-written material come out of an effort at creating a text that is infused with multivocality.*

*7   *All the members of the collective have studied at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Los Angeles, UCLA, and the grassroots (politicized) art scene of Los Angeles are part of the context out of which the collective emerged. Geographic dispersal happened over time.*

*8   *Taiwanese-American, mixed heritage Indian-American, Indian-Canadian, and mixed heritage German-Indian; queer and allies/accomplices. Meena Murugesan has pointed out the shared identity category "of color" in the process of revisiting our manifesto with her as the most recent member.*

*9   *Exploring the (identity political and historical) differences of notions of community, collectivity and collaboration in the transnational contexts Post Natyam operates in (USA, Germany/Austria, [South] Asia, Taiwan), will be important and necessary, but goes beyond the scope of this article.*

*10   *In a recent internet "provocation," which Cynthia has pointed out to me while reading a draft of this paper, the term accomplices is proposed to substitute "allies" in a critique of the "ally industrial complex" (Accomplices, not Allies: Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex, 4 May 2014. Online at: http://www.indigenousaction.org/accomplices-not-allies-abolishing-the-ally-industrial-complex/ (accessed 20 August 2015). The critique targets allies, who "advance their careers off the struggles they ostensibly support [...] in the guise of 'grassroots' or 'community-based'" work (Ibid.). Accomplices, on the other hand, share the risk. The provocation defines accomplices:*
Accomplices listen with respect for the range of cultural practices and dynamics that exists within various Indigenous communities.
Accomplices aren't motivated by personal guilt or shame, they may have their own agenda but they are explicit.
Accomplices are realized through mutual consent and build trust. They don't just have our backs, they are at our side, or in their own spaces confronting and unsettling colonialism. As accomplices we are compelled to become accountable and responsible to each other, that is the nature of trust (ibid.).

*11   *See Chatterjee, Sandra with contributions from Cynthia Lee, Shyamala Moorty, and Anjali Tata (2009), "Case Study: The Post Natyam Collective—Towards sustainable, transnational, collective practice," in Gesa Birnkraut, Karin Wolf (ed.), Kulturmanagement konkret: Interdisziplinäre Positionen und Perspektiven, 03/2009, Hamburg: Institut für Kulturkonzepte Hamburg, e.V., Eigenverlag), 101–107.*

*12   *In Chatterjee, Sandra and Cynthia Ling Lee (2012b) we extensively quote and contextualize the relevant part of our manifesto*

*13   *http://postnatyam.blogspot.com.*

*14   *See Siglinde Lang's article on participatory spaces in this issue*

*15   *Page numbers in Xie refer to Bhabha 1994.*

*16   *"Dies räumliche Zwischen ist der Erscheinungsraum im weitesten Sinne, der Raum, der dadurch entsteht, daß Menschen voreinander erscheinen und in dem sie nicht nur vorhanden sind wie andere belebte oder leblose Dinge, sondern ausdrücklich in Erscheinung treten" (Arendt in Rogoff 2002: 58)*

*17   *Participants in process were Cynthia Ling Lee, Shyamala Moorty, Meena Murugesan, and I.*

*18   *We have first developed our thoughts around "cultural queerness" in the joint conference presentations: Chatterjee, Sandra and Cynthia Ling Lee, "Decentering Nationalist Discourses and Remapping Identity in Contemporary (Indian) Dance." SDHS/CORD Conference, Riverside, CA, USA. 15–17. November 2013. Presented by Cynthia Ling Lee. We are further discussing and developing the notion in our forthcoming article: Chatterjee, Sandra and Cynthia Ling Lee (forthcoming): "'our love was not enough': queering desire, gender, and cultural belonging in contemporary abhinaya," in Clare Croft (ed.), Meanings and Makings of Queer Dance. Under contract with Oxford University Press, projected publication date: 2017.*

*19   *http://www.postnatyam.net/work/queering-abhinaya/ (accessed 27 June 2015)*

*20   *Final Queering Abhinaya Skype-conversation between Cynthia, Meena, Shyamala and myself, 14 July 2015.*

*21   *Final Queering Abhinaya Skype-conversation between Cynthia, Meena, Shyamala and myself, 14 July 2015.*

*22   *Ibid.*

*23   *Ibid.*

*24   *See note 26 for the full assignment.*

*25   *Assignment One: Queering Cultural Memory*

"We (Cynthia and Sandra) have been formulating a theoretical concept, "cultural queerness," which we'd like to use as the inspiration for this assignment. Here is a working definition (still in process): "Cultural queerness refers to the disruption of a dominant essentialized cultural norm in a way that complicates notions of cultural authenticity, cultural appropriation and identity-based representation. It aims to undo the easy equation between nation, race, and cultural/artistic production without ignoring uneven power hierarchies or histories of inequality."
Think of a personal memory of feeling uncomfortable with a dominant essentialized cultural norm. For instance, Cynthia might address how it feels to be a non-Indian classical kathak dancer, while Sandra might reflect on a "relegation to Indianness" and the resulting exclusion from Germanness.
Explore this memory through a 10 minute free-write. Translate the memory into a subversive artistic or embodied product (such as choreography, writing, dance-for-camera, photos, etc…)."
http://www.postnatyam.net/work/queering-abhinaya/ (accessed 27 June 2015)

*26   *Assignment Two (created by Sandra): Abhinaya as a Tool for Queering*

"This assignment focuses on utilizing techniques and compositional strategies associated with abhinaya for queering beyond a Indian/South Asian context. Therefore, I would like you to focus on an aspect of your work, which explores a context/content/form that is not Indian/South Asian. This could, for example, be a study inspired by a specific cultural context (i.e. in my case the German context of the integration debate), by a narrative set in a specific cultural context, or a formal/aesthetic exploration/deconstruction (i.e. in the German context: a deconstruction of conceptual dance)."
http://www.postnatyam.net/work/queering-abhinaya/ (accessed 27 June 2015)

*27   *Assignment Three (created by Meena): "Queer Pairings" – Abhinaya and Indigeneity*

"This assignment is inspired and informed by a talk I went to given by Professor Gayatri Gopinath at UCLA on April 17th, 2014 as part of Professors Anurima Banerji and Sue-Ellen Case's course "Queer Performance and Politics." Gopinath used queer theory as a tool of analysis (not as a term of identity) to connect diasporic communities and indigenous peoples as part of the same colonial expansionist project that among other things, attempts to contain and police racialized bodies (often literally i.e., low income housing projects and residential schools were mentioned). Gopinath analyzed the work of visual artists Tracey Moffatt (Australian Aboriginal) and Sehar Shah (Pakistani US) to develop a strategy that was termed as a "queer pairing" in order to talk about braided histories and non-normative bodies. For this assignment: 1) Choose an indigenous artist (the artist identifies as indigenous) that works with any medium – photography, sculpture, movement, performance, film, sound, poetry etc. I am most familiar with indigenous communities in North America so First Nations, Native, Aboriginal. However, please invite into this assignment what indigenous might mean in relation to places you have lived – Germany, India, Taiwan, Hawaii or other places. I am interested in this idea of home – who used to (and still) call the places we now call home, home?" http://www.postnatyam.net/work/queering-abhinaya/ (accessed 20 August 2015)