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8: METAMORPHOSIS
A DANCE OPERA
BY NICOLE BEUTLER

All machinery is derived from nature, and is founded on the teaching and instruction of the revolution of the firmament. Let us but consider the connected revolutions of the sun, the moon, and the five planets, without the revolution of which, due to mechanism, we should not have had the alternation of day and night, nor the ripening of fruits. Thus, when our ancestors had seen that this was so, they took their models from nature, and by imitating them were led on by divine facts, until they perfected the contrivances which are so serviceable in our life. Some things, with a view to greater convenience, they worked out by means of machines and their revolutions, others by means of engines, and so, whatever they found to be useful for investigations, for the arts, and for established practices, they took care to improve step by step.

Maurits Cornelis Escher (1898-1972) was a Dutch artist who created his own world inspired by awe and amazement about the order of the universe around him. Fascinated by themes such as infinity and eternity, Escher researched circle limits, perpetual motion, metamorphoses and interconnected spaces. Nature is one of the basic elements of Escher's work. Salamanders, birds, fish, plants, ants, beetles and frogs constantly reappear, sometimes as a part of a metamorphosis or cycle, occasionally as the main subject. Like many European artists of his time Escher experimented with perspective, choosing an unusually high or low vantage point to draw from. He also played mysterious games with mirrors and mirror images. Escher exploited reflections in various ways, including a large number of self-portraits which always involved the use of a mirror or a convex mirror (a mirror in the shape of a ball). Space was a flexible concept for Escher. Unending cycles recur countless times in his work. Between 1937 and 1969 Escher largely produced a series of three Metamorphoses: Metamorphosis I features only shape-shifting, Metamorphosis II contains both shape-shifting and a cycle pattern and Metamorphosis III is an extended version, Escher's largest print.

There was a clear pool [...] Narcissus, wearied from hunting in the heat of the day, lay down here; for he was attracted by the beauty of the place, and by the spring. While he sought to quench his thirst, another thirst grew in him, and as he drank, he was enchanted by the beautiful reflection that he saw. He fell in love with an insubstantial hope, mistaking a mere shadow of his real body. Spellbound by his own self, he remained there motionless, with a fixed gaze, like a statue carved from Parian marble. [...] As golden wax melts with gentle heat, as morning frosts are thawed by the warmth of the sun, so he was worn and wasted away with love, and slowly consumed by its hidden fire. [...] He laid down his weary head on the green grass, and death closed the eyes which so admired their owners' beauty. And even when he had been received into the house of shadows, he gazed into the Stygian waters. [...] His sisters the Naiads lamented, and let down their hair for their brother, and the Dryads lamented. Echo returned their laments. And now they were preparing the funeral pyre, the quivering torches and the bier, but there was no body. They came upon a flower, instead of his body, with white petals surrounding a yellow heart.

metamorphosis

Ovid (43 B.C. - A.D. 17) was among the most sophisticated of Latin writers. His magnum opus was the *Metamorphoses* (Books of Transformations), a narrative poem in fifteen books. It comprises over 250 myths from Greek and Latin folklore, from Babylon and the East. Transformation is a unifying theme. Ovid raises its significance explicitly in the opening lines of the poem: *In nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas / corpora* – (I intend to speak of forms changed into new entities). Accompanying this theme is often violence, inflicted upon a victim whose transformation becomes part of the natural landscape.

mirror stage

The key to this phenomenon lies in the prematurity of the human baby: at six months, the baby still lacks coordination. However, its visual system is relatively advanced, which means that it can recognise itself in the mirror before attaining control over its bodily movements. The baby sees its own image as whole and the synthesis of this image produces a sense of contrast with the uncoordination of the body, which is experienced as a FRAGMENTED BODY; this contrast is first felt by the infant as a rivalry with its own image, because the wholeness of the image threatens the subject with

fragmentation, and the mirror stage thereby gives rise to an aggressive tension between the subject and the image. In order to resolve this aggressive tension, the subject identifies with the image; this primary identification with the counterpart is what forms the ego. The moment of identification, when the subject assumes its image as its own, is described by Lacan as a moment of jubilation, since it leads to an imaginary sense of mastery; '[the child's] joy is due to his imaginary triumph in anticipating a degree of muscular co-ordination which he has not yet actually achieved'.

MAN _ Somewhere in every man's head there is a governor, an unconscious inner voice sending instructions through the intercom. This governor is the boss of every man's personal branch of the Department of Masculinity. This Department wants to maintain standards. Every man's personal governor has picked up instructions from a variety of sources – parents, teachers, friends, films, TV, books – on what it is to be masculine. He takes ideas and images from these sources and assembles them into a model of a perfect man. The governor then sits there, constantly checking that his man is living up to this ideal. If the man fails, he is made to feel unworthy, he may hate himself, he may take it out on others. A man may not be aware of this governor – he may think that he is his governor or that men are free to behave how they like – but until he is aware of and understands the Department of Masculinity, he will be totally under its command. I want men to be holding this book when they enter the governor's office. I want them to ask brave questions and look to the future, for we must negotiate a new deal ...

of course, men who really want to camouflage themselves when getting up to nefarious activities wear a grey business suit. i think a primary function of their sober attire is not just to look smart, but to be invisible in the same way that burglars often wear hi-vis jackets to pass as unremarkable 'workmen'. the business suit is the uniform of those who do the looking, the appraising. it rebuffs comment by its sheer ubiquity. many office workers loathe dress-down fridays because they can no longer hide anonymously behind their suits. they might have to expose something of their messy selves through their 'casual' clothes.

Grayson Perry, The Descent of Man, 2017

A necktie, or simply a tie, is a long piece of cloth, worn, usually by men, for decorative purposes around the neck, resting under the shirt collar and knotted at the throat. In some cultures men and boys wear neckties as part of regular office attire or formal wear. The modern necktie that spread from Europe traces back to Croatian mercenaries serving in France during the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648). These mercenaries from the Croatian Military Frontier, wearing their traditional small, knotted neckerchiefs, aroused the interest of the Parisians. Because of the difference between the Croatian word for Croats, Hrvati, and the French word, Croates, the garment gained the name cravat (cravate in French).

repetition can always be 'represented' as extreme resemblance or perfect equivalence, but the fact that one can pass by degrees from one thing to another does not prevent their being different in kind.

Many
 Manic
 Maniac
 Manual
 Mannerism
 Manly
 Manlike
 Manila
 Mandela
 Mandala
 Mansion
 Manhood
 Manhunt
 Mankind
 Mango
 Manga

Mantra
 Manage
 Manager
 Manners
 Mandarin
 Manicure
 Mandolin
 Mannikin
 Manifesto
 Manifold
 Manuscript
 Manufacture
 Manipulate
 Manoeuvre
 Manifestation

Shaman
 Gunman
 German
 Packman
 Hanuman
 Caveman
 Spaceman
 Boogieman
 Weatherman
 Gentleman
 Transhuman
 Talisman
 Bildungsroman

Nymphomaniac
 Romantic
 Humanoid
 Kleptomania
 Megalomania
 Pyromaniac
 Permanent
 Permanence
 Performance
 Impermanence
 Humanitarian
 Emancipation
 Humanitarian

[Menu](#)
[Mental](#)
[Mentor](#)
[Menace](#)
[Menage](#)
[Menthol](#)
[Meniscus](#)
[Menswear](#)
[Menopause](#)
[Menstruation](#)
[Menstrual](#)
[Meningitis](#)
[Mentalities](#)

the song of the cold genius

what power art thou
 who from below
 hast made me rise
 unwillingly and slow
 from beds of everlasting snow

see'st thou not how stiff
 and wondrous old
 far unfit to bear the bitter cold

I can scarcely move
 or draw my breath
 I can scarcely move
 or draw my breath

let me freeze again
 let me freeze again to death

For two days he walked northward on the ice. The only thing that makes life possible is permanent, intolerable uncertainty. He had no food with him, no shelter but his coat. On the ice nothing grows and no beasts run. It was the month of Susmy and the first great snows were falling those days and nights. He went alone through the storm. On the second day he knew he was growing weaker. On the second night he must lie down and sleep a while. On the third morning waking he saw that his hands were frostbitten, and found that his feet were too, though he could not unfasten his boots to look at them, having no use left of his hands. He began to crawl forward on knees and elbows. He had no reason to do so, as it did not matter whether he died in one place on the Ice or another, but he felt that he should go northward. After a long while the snow ceased to fall around him and the wind to blow. The sun shone out. He could not see far ahead as he crawled, for the fur of his hood came forward over his eyes. No longer feeling any cold in legs and arms nor on his face, he thought that the frost had benumbed him. Yet he could still move. The snow that lay over the glacier looked strange to him, as if it were white grass growing up out of the ice. It bent to his touch and straightened again, like grass blades. He ceased to crawl and sat up, pushing back his hood, so he could see around him. As far as he could see lay fields of the snowgrass, white and shining. There were groves of white trees, with white leaves growing on them. The sun shone and it was windless, and everything was white.

o n t h e T s a n d w a n d e v e r a w h i t e
 t h e m h e h o e i n d a n d e r y t h i t e
 o h s u n a a l e s s w i n g
 n e T s h w e e a w h i t
 s h d i n d v y h n
 s e l r t h n
 m e n o n e s i s
 u n d e s g e

Everywhere on earth the ice is changing. From the Arctic to Peru, from Switzerland to the equatorial glaciers of Man Jaya in Indonesia, massive ice fields, monstrous glaciers, and sea ice are disappearing. [...]

Oceans, in effect, mimic some functions of the human circulatory system. Just as arteries carry oxygenated blood from the heart to the extremities, and veins return blood to be replenished with oxygen, oceans provide life-sustaining circulation to the planet. Propelled mainly by prevailing winds and differences in water density, which changes with the temperature and salinity of the seawater, ocean currents are critical in cooling, warming, and watering the planet's terrestrial surfaces—and in transferring heat from the Equator to the Poles.

Fluid system. The body is made up out of 80% water or fluid that changes properties and characteristics as it passes through the different areas of the body.

These different characteristics of flow can inspire different qualities of communication. Applying and transforming this approach to movement as proposed by Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen creates a vocabulary for qualities of communication with the body and voice. Each specific fluid quality affects the space and everything inside it differently. Out of the seven main fluid qualities inside the body we work with the following four:

arterial flow – the heart pumps blood through the arteries, from the center toward the periphery, unstoppable, uncompromisingly outward, rhythmical, excitement, passion, being alpha

venous flow – the venes transport the blood back towards the heart, against gravity, continuing the circle, wave-like, collecting, gathering, guiding, receiving, listening, collaborating

lymph flow – the lymphatic vessels are the cleaning system of the body, a clear liquid in a web-like structure, a quality that is architectural, skeletal, always in control, aware of spatial organization, clear in details, precise

synovial flow – the synovial fluid is produced in the joints while moving, oiling the body's mobility, so that there are no boundaries, all is spirals, free flow, all joints are smooth, re-bouncing from gravity – it is like being care-free

In Tibetan Buddhism, the time between one life and the next is called the bardo, the “between.” We feel that things are different now, that we are in a bardo-like transition space regarding ecological awareness. But really what we are noticing is that things just don’t stay put, they don’t stay the same. Trying to get over this bardo-like quality results in damage to life-forms, damage to thinking, damage to experience. The impulse behind racism,

b a r d o

for example, is also what empowers a thin and rigid distinction between humans and nonhumans. The violence has already occurred, in the form of the abjection and dehumanizing of some humans. We humans contain nonhuman symbionts as part of the way in which we are human; we couldn’t live without them. We are not human all the way through. We and all other lifeforms exist in an ambiguous space in-between rigid categories

t h e
concept of assem-
blage is defined along two
dimensions. one dimension or axis de-
fines the variable roles which an assemblage’s
components may play. from a purely material role
at one extreme of the axis, to a purely expressive role
at the other extreme. these roles are variable and may
occur in mixtures. that is, a given component may play a
mixture of material and expressive roles by exercising dif-
ferent sets of capacities. the other dimension defines varia-
ble processes in which these components become involved
and that either stabilize the identity of an assemblage, by in-
creasing its degree of internal homogeneity or the degree of
sharpness of its boundaries, or destabilize it. the former are
referred to as processes of territorialization and the latter
as processes of deterritorialization. one and the same
assemblage can have components working to sta-
bilize its identity as well as components forcing
it to change or even transforming it into a
different assemblage.

long afloat on shipless oceans
 I did all my best to smile
 'til your singing eyes and fingers
 drew me loving to your isle
 and you sang:
 sail to me let me enfold you
 here I am waiting to hold you

did I dream you dreamed about me
 were you hare when I was fox
 now my foolish boat is leaning
 broken lovelorn on your rocks
 for you sing:
 touch me not come back tomorrow
 o my heart shies from the sorrow

I am puzzled as the oyster
 I am as troubled as the tide
 should I stand amid the breakers
 or should I lie with death my bride
 hear me sing:
 swim to me let me enfold you
 here I am waiting to hold you

song to the siren

The notion of “excess” energy is central to Bataille’s thinking. Bataille’s inquiry takes the superabundance of energy, beginning from the outpouring of solar energy or the surpluses produced by life’s basic chemical reactions, as the norm for organisms. In other words, an organism in Bataille’s general economy, unlike the rational actors of classical economy who are motivated by scarcity, normally has an “excess” of energy available to it. This extra energy can be used productively for the organism’s growth or it can be lavishly expended. Bataille insists that an organism’s growth or expansion always runs up against limits and becomes impossible. The wasting of this energy is “luxury”. The form and role luxury assumes in a society are characteristic of that society. “The accursed share” refers to this excess, destined for waste.

For several weeks, villages on the island of Nova Zembla have been plagued by dozens of polar bears in search of food. The situation is so serious that last weekend the authorities declared a state of emergency.

In the southern town of Belusha Goeba, where most people live, over fifty bears have been spotted since December. They sit on garbage dumps, school yards and children's playgrounds and penetrate homes and public spaces. Although polar bears often show up near people, an invasion such as that of the last days is something new. According to experts, it is climate change that has lured the animals into civilization. Polar bears normally hunt seals under the ice of the Arctic, but because of the melting polar ice they are going to land. The polar bear is regarded a protected species also in Russia, so it cannot be shot. Soldiers are deployed to chase them away.



MEMORY - In Memory Theatre the normal function of the theatre is reversed. There is no audience sitting in the seats watching a play on the stage. The solitary 'spectator' of the Theatre stands where the stage would be and looks towards the auditorium, gazing at the images on the seven times seven gates on the seven rising grades.

Most people are afraid of the dark. Literally when it comes to children, while many adults fear, above all, the darkness that is the unknown, the unseeable, the obscure. And yet the night in which distinctions and definitions cannot be readily made is the same night in which love is made, in which things merge, change, become enchanted, aroused, impregnated, possessed, released, renewed.

It is a mysterious thing, this process of creating a new work. A curious jump into the dark, committed to translating into images what is not-yet-there. All along the process of rehearsing there is no certainty of how it will look, sound, feel, nor what it will say. Step by step we discover, creating the path while we walk. That is exciting and scary at the same time. So now it is here, 8: METAMORPHOSIS, with an all-male cast. Seven performers and one drummer in a piece about the process and the unavoidability of change, embracing the in-between, staging the necessity of transformation. How do we define anew the role of men in a time that calls for decentering both of masculinity and of humanity? How is it possible that we are nature ourselves and at the same time agents for the destruction of that of which we're made of? What possible future lies ahead of us? Sometimes change goes along with destruction, but a lot of the times, it happens unremarked. Gradually.

Revisiting the work of MC Escher in preparation of this project, renewed my respect for his unstoppable curiosity and amazing precision in challenging our sense of space and logic. His dreamlike and playful proposal of transformation through several dimensions and narratives has inspired me greatly in composing this piece. The music of Henry Purcell I first heard in the 80's when Klaus Nomi scored a big pop-hit with his performance of *The Song Of The Cold Genius*. Suddenly its content is resonant with actual questions. The ice is melting, this process is irreversible, our future is uncertain.

I want to thank our great team: Frank, Felix, Rob, Christian, Arnout, Tiemo, Dominik, Sebastian, Joao, Tijmen, Gary, Igor, Minna, Julian, Jessica, Justa, Fabienne, Floor, Sanne, Mayke, Naomi, Hans Peter, Valentijn and all the other people that supported us during this creation.

Concept, direction, choreography: Nicole Beutler
 Music: Gary Shepherd, Henry Purcell
 Percussion: Frank Rosaly
 Performers and co-creators: Felix Schellekens, Dominic Kraemer, Arnout Lems, Sebastian Pickering Pedersen, Rob Polmann, Timo Tembuysen, Christian Guerematchi
 Second cast: Tijmen Teunissen, João Dinis Pinho
 Vocal arrangement, vocal répétiteur: Arnout Lems
 Dramaturgy: Igor Dobricic
 Lighting design: Minna Tiikkainen
 Scenography: Julian Maiwald
 Costumes: Jessica Helbach
 Artistic assistance: Justa ter Haar
 Dramaturgic advice: Fabienne Vegt
 Répétiteur / tour management: João Dinis Pinho
 Light: Julian Maiwald, Prem Scholte Albers, Desirée van Gelderen

Sound: Valentijn Berkhout
 Production: Floor Cremers
 Technical production: H.P. Hulscher
 Production assistants: Marijn Maurits
 Business management: Sanne Boersma
 Publicity: Mayke Klomp, Naomi Wallenburg
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Since 2009, Nicole Beutler Projects produces the work of choreographer and theatre maker Nicole Beutler (Munich, 1969). Beutler's work encourages reflection on the human condition and on the world we live in. All her works are motivated by relentless idealism and by the attempt of pushing invisible boundaries. Beutler goes beyond categories creating performances that are based on varying styles and genres: contemporary dance, urban dance, physical theatre, text theatre, visual art and in recent years she also explores opera material. Her unbounded vision on what dance and choreography could be is expressed in the pluriformity of her work. As a visual artist in the performing arts world Beutler has been creating choreographic works with a unique signature for over twenty years now. More often than not, Beutler collaborates with other artists, her longest collaboration is with composer / DJ Gary Shepherd and lighting designer Minna Tiikkainen. In 2018 Nicole Beutler was awarded the Gieskes Strijbis Podiumprijs, the largest prize in the Netherlands for quality and diversity in the performing arts.

In november 2019 we are celebrating the ten year anniversary of Nicole Beutler Projects with a festival at Frascati and International Theatre Amsterdam. NBcollection is a four-day festival including the full Bauhaus trilogy 5: ECHO, 6: THE SQUARE and 7: TRIPLE MOON and classics such as 1: SONGS and 3: THE GARDEN.

**Nicole Beutler Projects is: Nicole Beutler, Sanne Boersma,
Floor Cremers, Justa ter Haar, Mayke Klomp, Naomi
Wallenburg, H.P. Hulscher and all the performance
cast and crew.**

www.nbprojects.nl