

'With/for Plants': Resonances in Dance and Contemporary Performance (Ruth Geiersberger)



ABSTRACT

This article examines the intricate interplay between humans and plants within the context of contemporary dialogues surrounding the climate crisis and the evolving dynamics of human and more-than-human relationships in the Anthropocene. With a particular focus on dance and performance, the article explores how networks of plants manifest in and influence artistic expressions. It scrutinises anthropocentric perspectives embedded in both scholarly discourses and artistic practices related to plant interactions. By delving into the nuanced variations in these relationships, as expressed through the use of prepositions such as ‘about’ plants, ‘as’ plants, ‘with’ plants and ‘for’ plants, the article aims to unveil how dance and performance have grappled with dismantling the hierarchical structures and colonising practices that often define the connections between humans and plants over the course of the twentieth century and up to the present day. The discussion extends to an analysis of whether there exists a potential for degrowth and an ethical alignment encapsulated in collaborative performances, exemplified by Ruth Geiersberger’s ‘For Plants’ (2020). Additionally, the article explores the transformative potential of ‘minor performances’ in reshaping and decolonising hierarchical dynamics in the intricate tapestry of human-plant relationships. Through this examination, the article seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on fostering languages of resonance and envisioning a more harmonious coexistence in the face of environmental challenges.

KEYWORDS

dance and performance studies, critique of anthropocentrism, minor performances, politics of preposition, decolonising



uch has been said about the foundational premise informing my reflections on the topic of ‘Networks of Plants and Language of Resonance’. This premise is intricately linked to the existential crisis faced by our planet, encompassing the wealth of knowledge that natural and cultural science research has produced within the Anthropocene. Given the profound entanglement of human activities with natural processes in this Anthropocene era, the longstanding dichotomy between nature and culture that has shaped Western thinking for centuries and contributed to the crisis of the Anthropocene, is no longer tenable. It is necessary to establish an

alternative conceptual framework for our intellectual and practical endeavours, one that acknowledges the interconnections between human activities and the natural world. The challenge we face is summed up in a sentence by the philosopher Günter Anders: ‘Our actions extend further than our eyes can see’ (as quoted in Scherer 2022: 3). ‘The Anthropocene world is characterised by a surfeit of action that our understanding is struggling to keep up with’ (Ibid.).

In 2022, the Berlin *Haus der Kulturen der Welt* [*House of the Cultures of the World*] showcased the exhibition ‘Earth Indices’, exploring the collaborative potential between the natural sciences and artists to work together to create models of transformations of our thinking and acting. The objective, according to the exhibition’s programme, is to create a concerted effort to generate ‘new evidences’ and ‘new imaginaries’ in a ‘time of transition, when traditional category systems no longer work’ (Scherer 2022: 4). The prerequisite for this is the critical review and reassessment of traditions and norms of scaling – to redefine the standards of thinking and perceiving, of measuring and assessing through ‘scale critique’ (cf. Woods 2014; Clark 2010; Dürbeck and Hüpkes 2021). The point is – and the arts open up this possibility – to transform these scales, through a poetic ‘re-fabulation’ (Haraway 2016: 213) of standards that have become obsolete. This would mean a fundamental change in our cognition and behaviour. Plants serve as the basis for this new way of thinking and behaving. In light of the imminent threat to biodiversity, plants have increasingly become the focus of attention, not only in scientific studies but also in artistic creations and exhibitions.

The Dresden Hygiene Museum held a major exhibition ‘Of Plants and People’ in 2019 (cf. Meyer and Weiss 2019). The themes, exhibits and artistic-curatorial framings make clear how much the history of the relationship between humans and plants has been and continues to be shaped by anthropocentrism. Even the interpretations of recent research on plant communication and intelligence often demonstrate unintentional anthropocentric attributions, which run counter to the intended discourse. Why is it difficult for us to perceive plants as a completely different but equal form of life? Why do we inadvertently objectify plants and perceive them predominantly in their relationship to us? (Jacobs 2020).

According to philosopher Emanuele Coccia, plant life is different because of plants’ fundamentally different metabolism (Coccia 2019,

2016): plants possess the ability of autotrophy – they transform solar energy and heliotropic into matter and thus make ‘matter, air, sunlight into what becomes for the other living beings, living space, even world’ (Coccia 2019: 33). While all other life forms on the planet rely on building and sustain their existence through other life in their nutritional process, essentially engaging in a form of ‘universal parasitism, even cannibalism’, plants represent the ‘only gap in the autoreferentiality of the living’ (Coccia 2019: 32). By ‘the photosynthesis of the plants it came to the massive oxygen content of our atmosphere’: ‘Thanks to the plants and their life, the higher animal organisms can produce the energy necessary for survival’ (Coccia 2019: 34).

Everybody breathes! How do ‘we’ (a species that breathes) think, how do we act, how do we live when we are deprived of breath? ‘Deprived of breath’ is the title of Jean-Luc Nancy’s final lecture, published posthumously in the cultural magazine *Lettre Internationale* (Nancy 2022). The phrase ‘I can’t breathe!’, which gained iconic status as a rallying cry against racial violence, originated in response to the tragic death of George Floyd in 2021, the same year Nancy passed away, symbolically deprived of breath. This powerful slogan encapsulates the interconnected issues of the climate crisis, the COVID pandemic, and racist violence. Referring to Walter Benjamin’s writing *On the Concept of History*, Nancy states: ‘Our history was not what we thought it was’ (Nancy 2022: 8). We were shocked as we realise that ‘We are deprived of breath, and this breathlessness finds nothing to say but this: Lessons will have to be learned from what had thus happened.’ However, our outcry – according to Nancy – does not lead to the awareness of our own ignorance: ‘But this imperative, which is hammered into us everywhere, hides the fact that we are totally ignorant about the future’ (ibid.: 7).

The subject of this Special Issue, centred around the movements of resonances between humans and plants, underscores a profound concern: these movements of resonances unfold within a space whose very material existence is endangered. The atmosphere of our planet, a crucial component sustaining life, faces a threat with the perforation of its protective ozone layer. The very concept of ‘air’ (Horn and Bergthaller 2019) and the vital exchange of breath are imperiled. Thus, the foundation of (aerobic) life is threatened, along with the potential for resonance as a means of communication between different species.

The crisis of being deprived of breath, thematised by Coccia and Nancy, has several dimensions, which are intertwined: an ecological dimension (with regard to the exploitation of resources); a body-political and a legal dimension (with regard to the protection of intact life); an economic dimension (with regard to a capitalist and colonial ideology and neoliberal practice of growth and resource distribution). In addition, in terms of human life, there are the medical, social, psychological and cultural aspects of breath: vulnerability and transmissions. This has become abundantly clear during the COVID pandemic with all its political, medical and cultural interventions. One could conceptualise this as a 'Politics of Air' which encompasses the interplay of breath, resonances and porosity within the context of connections and ruptures between human bodies and their surroundings. This intriguing theme could be explored as a distinct topic in the context of eco-scenes and 'nature writing' in the Anthropocene.

The focus of my reflections in the following is on the resonances of plants and human bodies in dance performances and contemporary choreographic installations. Breathing is essential for dance, movement resonances in time and space: breathing is a resource of energy, of training practice and regeneration of dancers – and also, crucial for spectators in the shared space of the auditorium of a performance. Moreover, breathing is also increasingly deictically thematised and reflected on stage – i.e. breath becomes a shown, an audible factor – a sound of energetic exchange – in the works of contemporary dancers, as exemplified in the series of 'Verrichtungen' 'with/for plants' that Ruth Geiersberger performed in public places during the pandemic where the breath plays a vital role: for example, with the voice that Geiersberger gives the chosen plants; and in the songs that she sings.

The encounter and resonance between plants and dance as well as its inversion – the dance of plants – raises questions that could be explored, considered and illustrated from metaphorical and plant-physiological and phenomenological perspectives. My line of questioning is that of the relation/resonance of dancing and plants which involves two key considerations: it is essential to acknowledge that this perspective is inevitably shaped by humans. We all (with the exception of Ruth Geiersberger) talk 'of, about, by means of' etc. ... plants.

Are we really talking about plants? Or are we discussing them symbolically, transferring meaning and significance to them? Do we speak

with plants? If so, how? Are we speaking on their behalf or acting in their place, perhaps through acts of preservation, rescue, care, or other resilience-related strategies? What I'm getting at is that the linguistic and grammatical ways in which we categorise or speak of literature and plants – plants in literature, literature about plants and so forth – inevitably reflects a hierarchical human agency.

When I say, for instance, dance and plants or dance with plants, a reflection on this phrase becomes necessary because it pertains a form of grammatical scaling. So, what would a critique of scale look like within this framework? A scaling in speaking cannot be avoided, but it can be subject to critical comment, which we may call the 'politics of resonances and prepositions'. Connecting this idea of preposition to my topic, we delve into the relation of dance and dancers and plants ('It's the little words that make up most of the language', Preiwuß 2019: 6). In the following, I'll explore the relationships and resonances between dance and plants through four key prepositions – *about*, *as*, *with*, *for* – in the context of a linguistic, hermeneutic scale critique. I shall begin with a brief overview, drawing on examples from dance history. Then we will move to a more comprehensive exploration, particularly in relation to Ruth Geiersbergers 'Acting with/for plants' [Verrichtungen mit/für Pflanzen].

'ABOUT' PLANTS

In scientific discourse, this preposition mostly means: 'researching about' a certain object, a fact, or a context. The preposition 'about' points to the constitution of the object (cf. Rheinberger 2005; Voigt, Beiersdorf and Müller-Tamm 2021) of our scientific research – be it natural scientific, be it cultural or artistic curiosity. Researching *about* plants, their origin, their distribution, their species already entails a taxonomic act. Inquiring *about* their manifestations in art and literature usually means a clear opposition and hierarchy of the researching subject and the object of investigation, depending on procedures, methods, instruments and discourse practices of the discipline. Furthermore, in this correlation, the term 'discipline' carries a rather concrete implication, encompassing activities such as translating, asserting and exercising the discourse power to classify, interpret and assign, even when reflecting and researching

within interrelated contexts or resonances, as seen, for example, in food chains. This distinction extends to the differentiation between utilitarian and ornamental plants, the methods of cultivation – or the symbolic attribution of meaning, as exemplified by the carnation in a buttonhole or the camellia adorning one's cleavage.

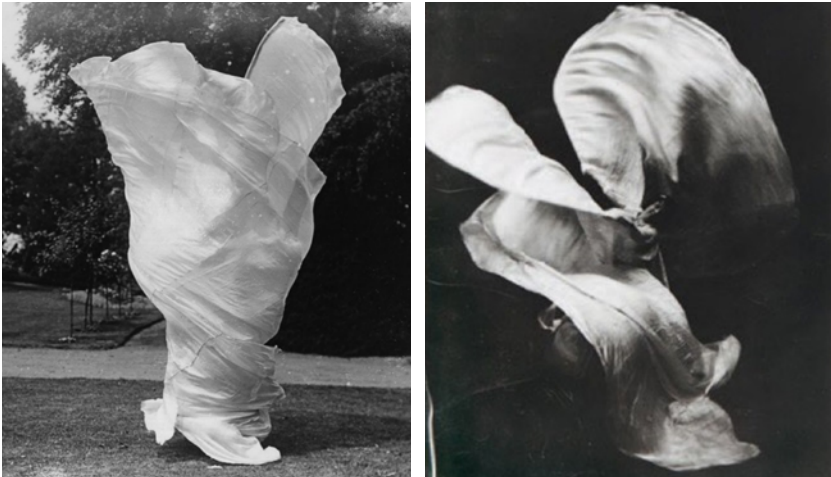
How does this notion of 'about' – as a means to articulate the relation between humans and plants – manifest itself in dance? For a long time this has been and continues to be associated predominantly with the western stage dance art, particularly evident in the concept of the role and purpose of plants, or more specifically, flowers as elements of decoration, such as the dancers' costumes and the ballet's décor in the 'Flower Waltz' in Petipa/Tchaikovsky's ballet 'The Nutcracker'; or the situating of a festival with traditional flower garlands in August Bournonville's 'Flower Festival in Genzano'; or a flower accessory with dramaturgical function – the flower basket in 'La Bayadere' (Petipa/Tschaikowsky), which holds the snake that kills the riva, and, last but not least, the opulent floral decorations every year at the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra's New Year's Concert.

The relationship with plants as shown here is a clear demonstration of a relationship 'about' plants. We turn them into ornamental embellishments by using their blossoms to furnish a place, symbolise a social situation or elevate a celebration. The beauty of plants amplifies the grandeur of human self-celebration. However, the adornment (the ornat) is intricately linked with a sacrifice, for it entwines with the inevitable withering and dying of the plants. Even in this context of a relationship defined by 'about', one could still detect a resonance in the sign of the ephemeral. The ephemeral of a feast, of a dance and of the floral decoration allude symbolically to the mortality of the very individual who orchestrates this intricate relationship. Goethe expressed this in an epigram:

Jupiter, why am I not everlasting? questioned beauty.
 Answered the God: I have made beauty to come and to go.
 Love was present, and flowers, and youth, and the dew, and they heard it.
 All left, weeping, the hall Jupiter's, weeping and fair.' (Goethe 1878: 319)

'AS' PLANTS

The preposition 'about' delineates a distinct hierarchical and colonising relationship between subject and object, humans and plants. However, when we examine the preposition 'as', we find a more nuanced interaction no longer confined in this binary structure. The linguistic preposition 'as a plant' points to a process, a movement a transformation. The 'as' is an indicator of becoming – that is, of the process of a metamorphosis. It is the wide field of the metaphorical. Even within a seemingly light-hearted jest, as in the awkward gallantry of 'the flower of the flower', the preposition 'as' emerges as a catalyst for transformation. It presents the notion of the woman being equated with a flower – an age-old, clichéd gender stereotype which serves to underscore a significant point. The relationship between humans and plants (as well as with all species) as signified by the preposition 'as' is one of transference, of the possibility to 'become different'. The myths as well as art and literature, such as Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Otto Runge's paintings, show the myriad ways of a relationship defined by transformation, a relationship



FIGURES 1 AND 2.

Lily Dance, Gelatin silver prints, circa 1900 (Théodore Rivière, 1896).

between two equal subjects expressed through the preposition ‘as’. How does such a relationship look in dance?

Within cults and rituals, the transformative power of ‘as’ is evident, signifying processes of appropriation, change and profound alteration, as seen in fertility rites. Though transformations involving animals are more common, in the history of Western artistic dance, the ‘as’ as a model of relationship and resonance between dancer and plant has emerged relatively late. A prototypical and model-forming performance of a dance as a plant was created around the turn of the century 1900 by the American dancer Loïe Fuller. She performed it in Europe in vaudeville and theatres – in Paris, Berlin, Vienna – and at the same time fundamentally changed the aesthetics of dance. One of her most important dances was titled: ‘La danse du Lys [Lily Dance]’.

The photographs show what this ‘as’ means for the art of movement: the dancer appears as a plant. This transformative ‘as’ reveals itself through a concealment of the subject and their corporeality within the flowing silk fabric. What becomes visible is the dancer’s body undergoing a remarkable metamorphosis, evolving into a dynamic, performative, plastic-mobile spatial sculpture, perpetually shaped by the fluidity of the silk formations. It is an artificial-artistic transformation of the dancer’s body into a play of light and folds. The immense success of this dance by Loïe Fuller stands in a historical and aesthetic context that can be described as plant resonances, namely the epoch of Art Nouveau, or Art Deco. This period, known for its artistic, architectural, design- and fashion-related characteristics, was strongly influenced by a profound connection to the otherworldly beauty of botanical forms, the plant-like, the floral forms. One may call it the age of plant-heliotropic awakening in the sign of *spring*, the *spring* of a ‘ver sacrum’. There has been sufficient study on the manifestations, the political, social, technical and economic ambivalences in connection with this ‘as’. I would only point out the parallels and resonances of art with natural science/botany and a new way of seeing the vegetal world through the technique of photography, as seen in Ernst Haeckel’s research ‘Art Forms of Nature’ (Breidbach and Eibl-Eibesfeldt 2004) and the photographs of Karl Blossfeldt (Mattenklott et al. 1997) which brilliantly reveal the intricate design, the material and phenomenal structure of plants. These images portray plants just as objects, but showcase their function as models, and in a sense, as instructive ‘mentors’ for architecture and technology.



FIGURES 3 AND 4.

Karl Blossfeldt: *Acer pensylvanicum* and *Fraxinus excelsior*, from 'Urformen der Kunst [Art Forms in Nature]', 1928. Public domain.

In the intersection of an epoch's signature, combining scientific, pictorial and philosophical-phenomenological perspectives, the 'as' in Loïe Fuller's 'Lily Dance' appears as a luminous depiction of an endless play of metamorphoses in which the dancer, the light and the flower grow, change, draw to each other and become one and different. Loïe Fuller's 'Lily Dance' breaks new ground in the history of dance. While other attempts by dancers like Niddy Impekoven remain caught in a childlike, playful, almost helplessly imitative gesture, Fuller succeeds in staging the transformation as such. The concept of 'becoming', specifically the process of becoming different, embodies a dance form of 'metaphora continua'. The dance does not reside solely in the comparative form of 'as', which often finds its culmination in the mimicry, in the guise of 'as

if'. Instead, it thrives in grace, a meta-physical transference and transformation, turning the materiality of body into fluid motion.

It was probably this fascination with a dance and a language of 'as', arising only from movement, that prompted Mallarmé to write his famous essay on Loïe Fuller. Needless to emphasise that this play of transformation, this movement of a 'towards', of 'becoming' a floral figuration, gave rise to a new aesthetic dimension of artistic dance. The Modern dance begins precisely here (see Eike Wittrock's reading of dance, plant movement, and media technology, 2016).

Let's continue to focus on the preposition 'as', but shift our observation to the end of the twentieth century. With the advent of modernity, the avant-garde and the concept of 'becoming', the relationship between humans and plants has been expressed as a process of metamorphosis which also influences plant existence such as metabolism and the conversion of solar energy into plant matter: the 'as', the *metaphora continua* of metamorphosis, loses its figurative essence within the figure itself. This transformation becomes clear in dance performances following the Second World War, for instance Pina Bausch's dance-theatre piece 'Nelken' ('Carnations'). This piece already bears a flower in its title, but it is no longer about 'becoming as' a flower. Instead, the figure of the flower is fractured in many ways – the images, metaphors, and symbolic contexts of the carnation intersect and collide – until they ultimately manifest as a form of resistance against the act of appropriation. Also, the stage is covered with artificial carnations. Traditionally, a sea of flowers alludes to happiness; but the summer meadow, where couples meet and ask for love, is riddled with irritations and disturbances. The field of flowers here suggests conflict scenarios and exposes the stage itself as a place of ambivalent and deceptive feelings. The contradictions between the social realm of unity, of resonances of emotional and bodily movement on the one hand, and the abrupt intrusion of violence on the other hand can no longer find their resolution in the 'as' – in the potential resonance with flowers. Ultimately, the field of carnations succumbs to destruction, trampled down by the feet of the dancers.

In the process of conveying the preposition 'as', a disruption of imagery occurs, a catachresis. It is a transformation that no longer presents the transfiguration of the dancer into a flower as a self-contained concept, as seen in the works of Loïe Fuller, but that highlights and reflects

the artificiality inherent in the interplay of nature and culture, or culture and nature in the context of human-plant relationships.

'WITH' PLANTS

The preposition 'with' signals participation, togetherness, co-existence, co-operation and also consensus – an interplay, and perhaps even equality, or at the very least, a flat hierarchy in the 'we'. Donna Haraway (2003) speaks of co-companionship between human and nonhuman species. The 'with' symbolises the utopia of 'syn -': the act of synchronising separate beings through movement and in sympathy. In the discourse and in diverse practices, workshops and cooperative projects of contemporary dance, 'with' – the 'co-' of complicity (Ziemer 2016) as well as compassion – plays a significant role. The emphasis on a dynamic relationality, an 'in relation', a 'being-with' of a 'singular-plural' – to borrow from Jean-Luc Nancy (2000) – and the expansion of networking and interweaving structures for the practice of dancing/moving together, all serve to broaden the concept of choreography into what is known as 'expanded choreography'. This expanded notion encompasses a different realm, one that also includes the relationship with plants, their growth, cultivation and even poaching. An example of this is the creation of a landscape/garden fragment on the grounds of the Tanzfabrik Berlin with a variety of plant species. Dancer and choreographer Jared Gradinger planted this area as 'The Impossible Forest' in 2016 as part of a collaborative project: 'with plants'. Over the time it underwent numerous changes and was allowed to evolve on its own. Today it has transformed into a mature green island within the passageway of the Uferstudios Berlin.

Gradinger aptly calls it a 'co-creation with nature' – a 'with' that is dedicated to the 'non-human and unseen'. This prompts the question: can this still be called dance? In what way does a social choreography, akin to what Joseph Beuys referred to as a 'social sculpture', and a novel concept of the choreography centered on resonance and movement manifest itself within this unique collaboration between plants and humans? Within this 'with' that binds the two species, an exceptionally gradual process unfolds, spanning years and encompassing the entire lifecycle from growth to withering to wild growth. This protracted dance

demands a distinctive perspective, one that involves different materiality and ecological awareness, not to mention a novel sense of temporality. It unveils an alternative scale and an entirely fresh way of scaling relationships. All of this operates subtly, involving all those who happen to linger, pass through and take part as participants.

Grading's situational choreographic composition creates a 'with' that suspends the boundaries between dancers and non-dancers, between art and nature. The political dimension of this 'with-plant' work embodies a *longue-durée* perspective. It doesn't take the form of traditional manifesto, but rather exists in the background, beyond the stage's spotlight. It operates in the realm of the unspectacular, the everyday-public. It sees itself as a confrontation and appeal to urgent ecological questions. However, it does so through the means of a choreographic transmission, setting it apart from those activist pamphlets that promote the rights of plants in urban space as an action of liberation: 'How to become an Eco-Guerillera. A guide to gardening disobedience (in 7 steps)' (Habermalz, n.d.). The appeal culminates in the call: 'Join the Eco-Underground!' with the 'revolutionary message' to be scattered, disseminated like seeds – 'Fight the Geraniums, Peace to the Weeds'.

'FOR' PLANTS

In yet another way from that of Grading with his 'Impossible Forest' in the grounds of Uferstudios Berlin performer Ruth Geiersberger works 'with' and 'for' plants. And this brings us once again to the shift of prepositions – from 'With' plants to 'For plants'! The 'for' actually indicates a change, a turn in the way of the relation (respectively the production and interpretation) of the relations. The participative 'with' already assumes a connectedness, a 'we' and thus a community. However, there is a nuanced power relationship associated with the preposition 'with' – the problematic of 'the sameness' and appropriation. This subtle power of 'with' is implied in the shift from 'with' to 'for'. The 'with' is unconditionally inclusive, without the need to address the realities of diversity: those who are not 'with' are often 'ex'/'cluded'. The problematic aspect of the trend towards the participatory, the 'together' in performance concepts and dance discourses, lies precisely here (cf. Esposito 2004; Eikels 2013; Marchart 2019). The preposition 'for', on the other hand, takes a step



FIGURE 5.

Ruth Geiersberger: *mit Pflanzen Phase IIa*, Bordeauxplatz Munich (GER), 2020.
 Photography: Helge Classen, <http://www.mitpflanzen.de>, with thanks to the artist.

back, indicating ‘for’ as a movement ‘towards’, as a gesture of gift. The preposition ‘for’ does not pretend equality, like the participatory inclusion of ‘with’. Rather, it acts in the sign of a diversity that must always first be agreed upon, perceived and respected in the encounter. The ‘for’ ... establishes a relationship that pays respect to the other, to the otherness of the other. It is precisely this change from ‘with’ to ‘for’ that characterises Ruth Geiersberger’s multi-part project, developed over several years. Created in the spring of 2020, when the COVID pandemic had just begun, and corresponding hygiene and political measures of the lockdown were altering the private and public space of social encounters, Geiersberger developed the series of short performances, called ‘Verrichtungen’ with, later changed to ‘Verrichtungen’ *for* plants, thus creating a space of resonance for the plants.

She speaks of a complicity in the artistic collaboration of all those involved in the performances: musicians, performers, singers/dancers. They show scenes improvised with minimal setting, performed only once



FIGURE 6.

Ruth Geiersberger: *mit Pflanzen Phase IIa*, Bordeauxplatz Munich (GER), 2020.
 Photography: Helge Classen. Source: <http://www.mitpflanzen.de>, with thanks to the artist.

and documented in video. These are small performances on Bordeaux Square in Munich/Haidhausen. Plants are the addressees! They are the audience and the witnesses of these performances. The city traffic, the passers-by, the urban movements appear peripherally; they belong to the ambience, appear as everyday incidental sounds (for example the streetcar). 'For plants'....: through this act of addressing, the plants cease to be mere objects, but become our counterpart – fundamentally different, simultaneously close and distant, familiar and unfamiliar.

The initial 'Verrichtungen' already elucidates the handling of the found plants in their natural environment. Geiersberger presents a serenade 'for' plants. Simultaneously, she 'moves' the plant, addressing it with 'for'; carefully placing it on a small cart, she relocates the plant, giving it a mobility and the ability to shift locations precisely in the context of immobility imposed by the COVID regulations. The freedom of

movement, which was extremely restricted for humans, was deliberately conferred on the plant.

‘For plants’: here unfolds a passage, a brief transit from one point to another – a gift of trans-position. In this act, a reciprocity is reflected, a dynamic that starkly contrasts with the immobility imposed on human populations during the pandemic, particularly for those living alone, seemingly sentenced to a standstill much like plants. It is precisely at this juncture that a playful moment emerges in the performance; a reciprocal resonance: a song and a change of place ‘for’ the forget-me-not – symbolic flower – echoing a Bavarian folk song as it gracefully shifts its position.

This ‘For Plants’ is not only a play on the preposition as a gift, or a resonant relationship between humans and plants – an expression of respect for the otherness of the ‘plant’ species, as outlined by Coccia, quoted at the beginning of my text. I would *also* interpret it as a constellation of ecological awareness and a stride towards de-colonisation. Why?

In her mini-performance ‘For Plants’ Geiersberger updates her concept of ‘Verrichtungen’ as a movement ‘towards’ the small, the inconspicuous, the being-there of plants. She consciously moves in the local and the regional context – in the space of neighbourhood. She treats plants as neighbours and companions, embracing their presence, particularly when she relocates them, takes them out of their usual territory, and sends them on new journeys. In this moment, the focus is not solely on plants as an abstract concept or the overarching theme of extinction. Instead, it shows the nuanced approach towards ‘for’, underscored by a profundity and strength in the seemingly ordinary moments. In a variation of Deleuze/Guattari’s theses ‘Toward a Minor Literature’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1976), one might characterise the minoritarian as a movement found in the performance ‘For Plants’. Geiersberger’s plant performance embodies the characteristics of the minoritarian, specifically the ‘deterritorialization and coupling of the individual to the immediately political’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1976: 27), evident in its ever-new variations. Her performances unveil a play of metamorphosis that transcends a mere ‘as if’ appropriation or the act of becoming a plant. Instead, they establish a relationship that, echoing Deleuze/Guattari, ‘embraces the greatest possible difference’ (Ibid.: n32), communicated through a nuanced and almost Brechtian gesture of alienation. Certainly, there is a greater playfulness, an element

of improvisation inherent in the unexpected turns and the connections forged in the performance 'For Plants'. It is never about appropriation, but rather a rediscovery of the local context. The deterritorialisation achieved through the shift to dialect and the local language precisely aligns with the unfolding of power in the minoritarian – *moving away* from universal assertions of validity. This performance masterfully captures the essence of the minoritarian, as exemplified by Deleuze/Guattari in their analysis of Kafka's relationship to Yiddish: 'Living in one's own language like a stranger' (Ibid.: 38). Through the minoritarian lens of the performance 'For Plants', a performative dimension is unveiled that touches upon the broader questions of ecology and the climate crisis. The respectful engagement with the intricacies of the seemingly insignificant, the exploration of a (plant-)relationship through the gesture of the 'for' alludes to the position invoked by climate protectors and activists. It echoes their fervent call to curtail the relentless expansion movement of growth (Brand 2022) through methods such as dismantling, convivial techniques and embracing a post-growth of 'de-growth' (Vetter 2022).

Yet, the political essence within Geiersberger's 'Verrichtungen Für Pflanzen' is not a superficial representation of the scale critique, but resides rather in how it subtly conceals and reveals itself in the minoritarian. The poetic range of these performances, characterised by their displacements and transpositions, manifests as minoritarian, as a gift of care in micro-movements. And it is precisely in this – as Ecoscene – the performance avoids a demonstrative activist approach or a romantic-highlighting depiction. Instead, it delicately alludes to the threatened interweaving of a nature-culture shared by humans and plants in a common public space.

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