

# Vulnerability Manifesto

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## Introduction

Vulnerability Manifesto is a research where I ask, what does it mean for me to use vulnerability as material for artistic work. In this research, I deal with problems that occur in the process of materialising emotions, through my interest of transforming emotions into a concrete material.

I will try to answer to a question: How can vulnerability be used as a material for performance without it becoming a representation or fake? If I claim that I do honest work without representation of vulnerability, or acting/faking, what does that mean practically?

The main topic in this research is vulnerability. Vulnerability as a word, emotion and as a material for performance. I will critically look upon my process with vulnerability, both through my own expectations, and with references from the field of contemporary dance. To do this, I have chosen Yvonne Rainer's biography *Feelings Are Facts- a life* (2013) and Anna Grip's physical practice.

As a working method, I create a physical practice that later on becomes a performance titled "my heart will go on". In this process, I deal with questions such as, what is a 21 century achievement society, and what is my position in it? I will also deal with my personal exhaustion and burnout, and use them as a tool in the process of making this research.

Vulnerability Manifesto is an empowering personal research. It's a personal revolution, and a process towards accepting sensitiveness, fear, shame and judgment. It's self-centred, yet universal.

## 1. Vulnerability

In this project, vulnerability means giving space to uncomfortable, often suppressed emotions in dance context. Because I have chosen to research vulnerability, I also need to work with shame. Within vulnerability lies the possibility to be humiliated. Especially because my interest is in vulnerability as a performative material, the risk of humiliation is present with my work constantly, not to say that it wouldn't be present in all artistic work. The fear of humiliation becomes the uncontrollable aspect I need to combine into my work in order to work with vulnerability.

For this research to become a workable process, vulnerability needs to be trusted as much as it is a risk. I use intuition and positive feelings (the moments when you feel good about yourself and about what you're doing) as parameters in detecting and testing which actions created in the studio, can be put into a performance context. Putting vulnerability on stage means taking a risk. And here, I really mean, a risk. Working with vulnerability can be vague, and already in itself it is a risk. In addition, most risks that I have taken on stage previously have been risks that are most likely to succeed, because the risk of failing has been minimised through practice and repetition. With this project, there is a real risk of failing, that can't be removed through repetition. Showing my findings to a spectator is every time a risk to be humiliated if my emotions become uncontrollable and overwhelming. I've experienced so much nervousness and sometimes overwhelming emotions when sharing my work, that there is a real risk of me passing out and my body shutting down during my presentation, or that I lose control of the situation in some other way.

Chrysa Parkinson said in one of my supervision sessions, that experience can't be controlled. In my work the uncontrollable is very present. I insist on researching more methods for surrendering into my vulnerability, and therefore in methods of making my experience of vulnerability concrete without it transforming into a fixed form. I use symbols to make my experience of vulnerability more concrete and turning it into a material that is accessible. Of

course, there are times when even my best attempts fall down flat, but accepting that, and staying honest to whatever I experience, doesn't distance me from working with vulnerability.

In the early weeks of my research I formulated a practice where part of it was to place chosen objects (a pair of pants, a shoe and a notebook) on the floor and then work towards a state where those objects were transformed into emotions (judgment, fear and joy). From there I played with having different relations to different objects, that were now different emotions.

For example, I could put on the pants that were fear, or throw them out from the studio space, and observe and use as a material those different relations to emotions that occurred. I accepted that probably a pair of pants couldn't really contain all fear I could possibly experience, but this game/score helped me to observe different emotions more concretely. There was a point where both the shoe and the pants (fear and judgment) were placed outside the studio, and (even vaguely) existing without those emotions for a moment was very informative also later in the process.

When judgment, fear and joy got materialised, I started to be able to observe different aspects of vulnerability. It was important for my project to articulate to myself, what I meant with vulnerability, and through this practice I could make links and distinctions between my understanding of vulnerability, and specific emotions. I realised, that fear and judgment as emotions were not part of vulnerability, but fear of something, or judgment towards something could be. My vulnerability was linked to my surroundings, and this practice made me realise it.

My earliest experiences of nearly overwhelming vulnerability arose when I repeated daily for two weeks a section from my score that I have named as "Slow-dance for one with criticality and care-taking." The repetitive and simple movement of slow-dancing allowed me to explore, how resting in what could be experienced and perceived as an emotional action, evoked emotions of sadness, fear and loneliness. In movement, my experience of those emotions often materialized as crying. Yet, it's not only the crying that happened during slow-dancing which made me experience vulnerability, but the knowledge that I couldn't assume

that I would cry every time, did. This highlighted when I showed the slow-dance scene to someone. There was no guarantee whether it would be only a flat awkward action without emotional content, or even more awkward scene with hysterical crying. I didn't know which one felt more uncomfortable for me to experience in performative situation. The emotional honesty, where I didn't try to push towards neither outcome, made me feel extremely vulnerable.

The slow-dancing scene was a breakthrough for me since I experienced it both as vulnerable and emotional, yet at same time repetitively accessible. That being said, the frame of the scene was easy to repeat, to evoke real emotions over and over again was more complex. But that got me interested in all the multilayers of that scene, and its possibilities. I have used it as reference point for all my later scenes created in the studio. I also started to question, if I experienced failure when the crying didn't happen during that scene?

It became obvious, that even crying happened in every practice during those two weeks, I couldn't choreograph it in the same way I could choreograph dance movement, neither am I not interested to do so. The slow-dance is a container for certain emotions, but it's not a guarantee for those emotions to appear. For the vulnerable action to happen, (in this case feeling strong emotions during slow-dancing alone) I need to have courage and tools to create a space that can contain my vulnerable and possibly humiliating action, also when I experience that I fail in doing so.

This has become my main problem in this project: If I can master presenting vulnerability, I will immediately stop working with it, and start working with representation of it instead. The constructed spaces can't exist as vulnerability, but they are usable as a material. (Here the slow-dance scene is one example.)

My definition of vulnerability is: A possibility of a genuine emotional action to happen in the constructed space repetitively without falling into a representation or faking. Representation and faking are shortcuts for me. It's important to distinguish feeling from acting. Not to neglect that acting wouldn't contain genuine emotions, but, in this work, I am trying to avoid

measuring success or failure with expression of feelings. This research is about my vulnerability, not a universal understanding or expression of it. In the next chapter I will share what triggered me to research this topic.

## The Why

### 2.1 The Hybrid in Achievement Society

In *The Burnout Society* (2015) book written by a German philosopher Byung-Chul Han, I encountered the term achievement society. Han writes about the term: "Twenty-first century society is no longer a disciplinary society, but rather an achievement society. Also, its inhabitants are no longer "obedience-subjects" but "achievement- subjects." (Han 2015, p.8)

In this chapter I will introduce his thoughts on the topics achievement society and burnout, as well as my relation to those terms as a starting point for this research.

Achievement society is in the process of throwing away negativity:" Unlimited *Can* is the positive modal verb of achievement society. Its plural form- the affirmation," Yes, we can"- epitomizes achievement society's positive orientations." (Han 2015, p.8-9) This excess positivity leads into depression, because the achievement-subject is in war with itself. An achievement-subject is responsible only for itself, which makes the subject according to Han into both, a threat and a victim.

My experience of being in war with myself and a constant feedback from competition achievement society that screams: "You're not good enough", made me put a name into my actions where I experienced conflicts within myself. I did this in order to critically look upon



my experience in achievement society. The concept is called:

“The Hybrid”.

I started to use the concept of the hybrid to distance myself from certain repetitive choices I made in my everyday life. Through the word hybrid, I started to reflect upon my specific decisions in actions such as working out, taking dance classes, reading philosophy, eating certain foods etcetera. I realised, that I didn't work out or ate healthy for my own pleasure, but rather because I felt that I was supposed to. I started to question, where that pressure came from, and why.

I traced that into a fear of not being good enough. The word hybrid allowed me to dig deeper into this fear.

In the online publication (*Dictionary.com* 2016) hybrid is defined in the following way:

1. The offspring of two animals or plants of different breeds, varieties, species, or genera, especially as produced through human manipulation for specific genetic characteristics. 2. A person or group of persons produced by the interaction or crossbreeding of two unlike cultures, traditions, etc. 3. Something that is powered by more than one source of power: a wind-solar hybrid to generate electricity.

Like in the online dictionary, my definition of a hybrid is a coming together of two, or more different actions, that together become more than they were alone, i.e. wind- solar hybrid that then gets energy from both sources. When I make a hybrid out of myself, I immerse actions together to become more; a better me.

As a practical example: I read Yvonne Rainer's book *Feelings Are Facts- a life* (2013) at home. At one point, I stopped reading and did push ups on my yoga mat. Then I got back up to my desk and continued to write and read. The hybrid worked here as a distraction. I wanted to read the book, but I also wanted to be in a better physical shape. The want to achieve both of those things simultaneously stopped me for finding pleasure in neither of them. The hybrid

has problems to be in the present moment, I realised that I only, constantly, want to move forward, and here forward means becoming better. I couldn't value a present moment, if it wasn't productive.

I encountered a Fit For Life Wknd (2016) advertisement in the Stockholm subways. That advertisement corresponds accurately to my hybrid practice: To fit for life, one needs to be more healthy, stronger and more beautiful.

Here the hybrid would be actions where through working out, being healthier through lifestyle choices, one reaches for a goal to be perceived as

fitter for life. The hybrid has a goal, and it has tools how to reach the goal. What becomes destructive, is that the goal is often external, unreachable and unrealistic, so the hybrid can never be fulfilled or satisfied. It can never succeed.



The hybrid that I build combines knowledge and strength, within in the field of dance. My ultimate goal is to be an unbreakable dancer machine that can do everything, a super human. I have a long and painful history with fitness, with things that fit. I need to be fit for society, fit for that small spot given to me in the morning subway, be fit for a job and, fit better than anybody else.

But, I also destroy my hybrid constantly. In fact, I ate candy just few moments before I did those push ups after reading. At the same time as I feed my body with this fast and toxic energy, I get pleasure out of destroying my own hybrid- system. Eating candy doesn't make the hybrid better, it's destroying it by making my body fat and tired.

Eventually, this constant building and destroying gave me a burnout, I crashed both physically and mentally.

Han writes, that as a consequence of this paradoxical freedom of being, a society of

achievement and activity is excessively exhausted. I suddenly started to understand my own burnout not as a failure of being me, but rather as a consequence of existing in this society.

That realisation has been critical in both, my healing process, and in this research.

Vulnerability Manifesto rises from exactly that thought. I can't be an unbreakable dancer-machine, and I should find a way to not value myself through the constant failing in the attempts to deliver that impossible task. As I try to fit for this society as better, fitter and smarter woman, I suppress important emotions. My vulnerability and my capacity of being sensitive are not weaknesses, nor failure, when I choose to see them as material and information, a potential. Constantly driving towards achieving something unrealistic and external blocks me from seeing the capacity of a current moment.

Han gives a definition of burnout, closely related to how I experienced my burnout:

“Depression- which often culminates in burnout- follows from overexcited, overdriven, excessive self-reference that has assumed destructive traits.” (Han 2015, p.42)

Overdriven and excessive self-reference kept my hybrid going until it crashed. Therefore, it is important at this point to keep the hybrid close to me in order to consciously work against it. Even though this is a research on vulnerability and sensitiveness, it's informative to observe my choice making in relation to the will of constant achieving.

I am interested in what happens when I allow myself to stop trying to become better, without stopping the doing. I still have a daily push up practice, I still read and eat healthy, but I do gently protest against this achievement society, while I exist in it. Here, the hybrid works as a mirror for actions and decisions that take place in my research.

Burnout was definitely a warning sign, but also as a concrete material for information as much as any other experience. Traces of panic I still carry with me, and probably will for a long time after the acute crash that happened in the Summer 2016.

Because the crumbling down of my hybrid practice was so dramatic and extreme on an individual level, it makes this research fragile and subjective. But, I do work hard towards this

research having more content than my experience of vulnerability as a combination of emotions rising from exhaustion and burnout.

I am interested in constructing a space where my vulnerability can exist without it attempting to become a hybrid itself. Because the hybrid is a fixed goal, even when it's an impossible one, the hybrid makes all action in relation to achieving something greater.

To observe this achievement- driven habitual and harmful pattern I have to play with paradoxes, but I do work hard to avoid this project to become one. I do play with the irony of researching myself and my capacity of being “not a hybrid”. But I constantly keep in mind that, *this research is not therapy.*

## **2. Anna Grip:” You succeed where you abandon.”**

Achievement society is greatly present in the dance field. Especially in training dance, there are at least from my experience very little practices that doesn't deal with achieving a fixed goal, valued through specific aesthetic principles. Therefore here, I want to focus on one practice that doesn't see achieving as a fixed entity.

Anna Grip has a practice, that works with achieving in an interesting way, so I interviewed her about her practice. I asked her about how she formulated the practice and what are the principles behind it. I also asked her relation to the words achieving and failure.

Interview with Anna Grip 5<sup>th</sup> of December, 2016

This is how she described her practice: *The practice really is about stabilising through de-stabilising. Not holding, but oscillating. It's about influencing and being influenced, through the themes of falling, wiring and pressing. To deal with these three simultaneously and then eventually of course, it will have an aesthetic outcome.*

*There is nothing predetermined to achieve. You cannot really succeed in this practice, because*

*it's nothing to succeed with. Yet, of course there is a lot to achieve, but it's in the working. The achievement is to achieve working, to be the full potential of yourself. Singular but many. One could also be almost meditating with this work, which should not achieve anything else but itself. There is such a difference neurologically and psychologically to have the mind and focus on improving, or to have the focus on sit bones to heels connection. Therefore, I can sound very arrogant and blunt, but sometimes saying "I'm trying" makes us focus on the trying, and then we don't get in touch with the actual practicality of doing it. A lot of times the trying stands in our way. Don't try, do it. Do what you have decided you're going to do.*

*The doing (of the practice) is with constant reflection, or maybe rather, reaction. Let's say you make up your own movement pattern, or exercise. Then you go with the parameters you set for yourself and work with them in all the ways you can, as much as possible.*

*This practice is in one way so unsophisticated, because it's really "as much as you can", and then adding more and matching it with something else. Visually it can be totally not moving or not shifting place, but the action and the work is really "as much as possible." Never avoiding, which is another strategy.*

*You succeed where you abandon. It's so egoistic and self-centred it's like amazing, yet at the same time, some aim is to abandon yourself, so that the body starts rocking with pressure of the feet and with the falling. The body goes so that you follow yourself. That is an achievement, and succeeding with this work.*

*In this practice, there is kind of exhaustion, but also maybe potential. I mean, if you rotate in, that's not it. It's not to rotate in, but to triggers something else and hopefully you get lost, and maybe you can abandon yourself in favour to yourself.*

For me, Anna Grip's practice has a clear political resonance as well, that goes beyond the dance field. Through my experience of doing her practice, as well as hearing about it, heavy words like "achieving" and "failure" get a softer echo. That feels important, relevant and fresh in this achievement society where subway commercials like "Fit For Life", exists. When I shared my thought of political resonance with her, she replied: *"I am flattered that you*

*mention that, because there needs to be something at stake. Not through achieving, but through changing and resisting.”*

## **The How**

### **1. Score that turned into a performative material**

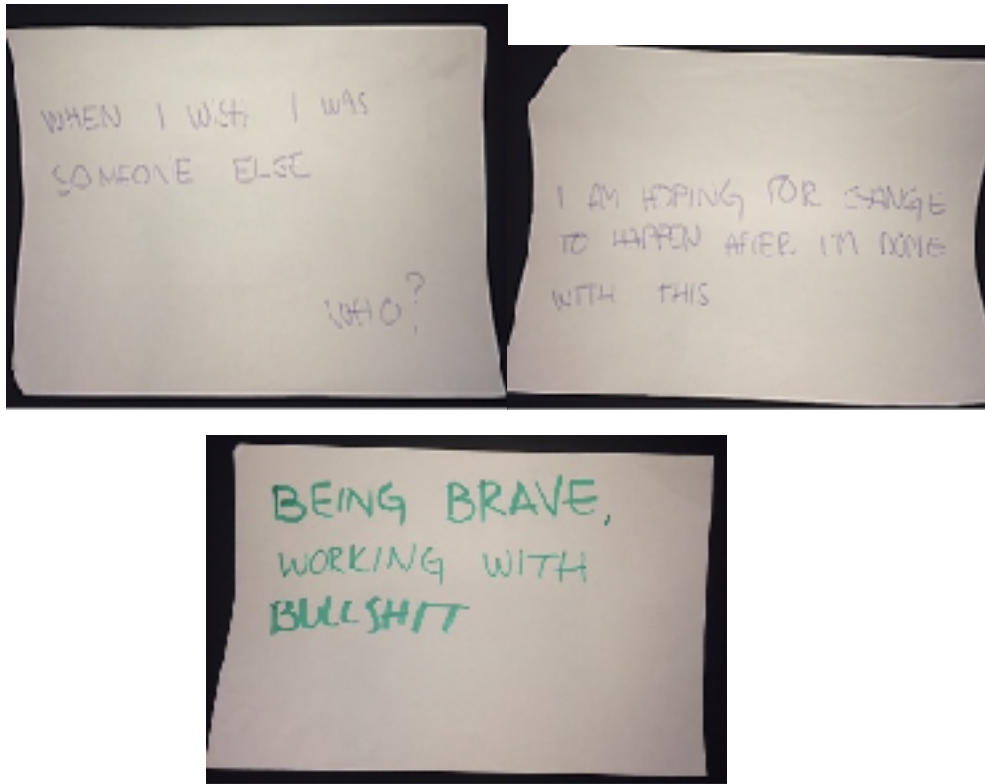
To demonstrate my emotional state and the conditions around my work in the studio, I have written down a recording I did during own studio time early in the process.

*When I enter the dance studio, I take all my classmates with me. My mother is there, my dead pet and a Facebook update from a girl I went to same pre-school with but haven't seen since. They are all present in the room, making the dust in the corners move as they breath and change position. I enter the studio with the knowledge that male dancers get jobs more easily than women do. Sometimes breathing the mouldy air inside the studio is almost painful, because I am so aware that there are very little jobs for me after I graduate from this institution. In the studio where I am doing this project, my dead elementary school teacher is staring me in the corner. My first sex partner leans on the wall, and I hear Donald Trump breathing. How could I possibly work in environment like this? And yet, I have to.*

I was surrounded by information, until the point of panic. Any external practice, idea or material felt overwhelming. Why would I have brought more information to my research work place, when I felt like all information already existing in there was overwhelming to handle?

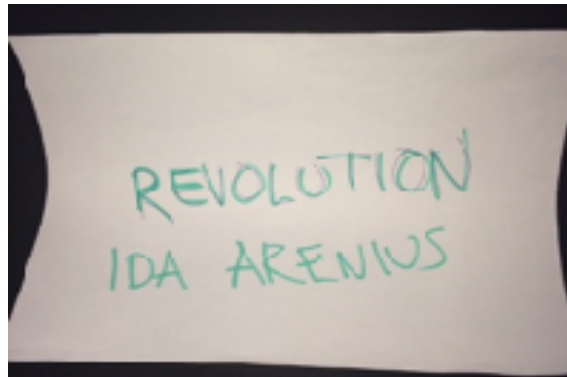
With vulnerability as an artistic material, less was more. To surrender into the situation as it was day to day, was much more difficult than trying to hide behind very active doing of

“something”. So I went for the things that were already in the studio, which was in that point, a lot of emotions. I made the emotions more concrete through translating them into some everyday objects and handwritten notes.



*Notes I have had in the studio floor when working.*

I took a role of observer, all emotions and all actions were allowed in my work place. I gave authorship to exhaustion without fixing it to fit my understanding of what I expect other people to want to see from me. From the beginning, I found help from language. Words such as “research” and “presentation” helped me to avoid my habits of fixing and working outcome based.



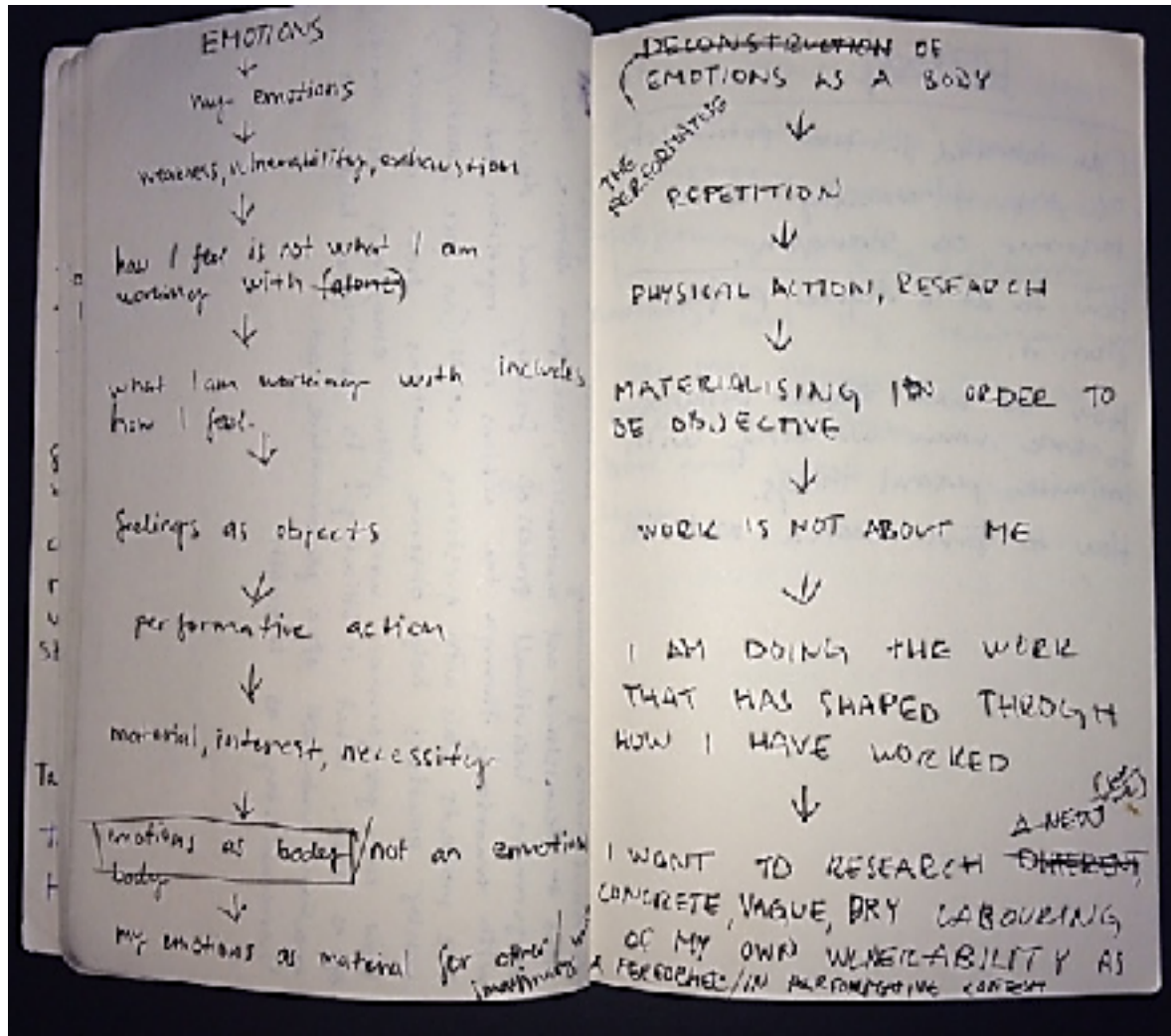
*More notes from the studio floor. These three stayed relevant throughout the process.*

When seeing other people's works in the field of dance, I roughly divide them into two categories: works that are based on an aesthetic interest, idea or an outcome, and works that are based on a practice. In relation to my working methods, my starting point was too vague to be a practice and too fragile to be called an idea driven by taste or possible outcome. From there, in the middle of October, my research question formulated more clearly: What could it mean to use vulnerability as a material for artistic work in the field of dance?

Using vulnerability as a material for artistic work meant using uncomfortable emotions as material for work. I had an expectation from the beginning of the process that I needed to do so, and also to add, dealing with emotions was very emotional. This led me believing that I was dealing with vulnerability.



The difference between vulnerability and uncomfortable emotions like fear, shame and judgment, is problematic. As I see it, both needs to exist simultaneously, but if I work only with emotions, vulnerability disappears.



Notebook page from the very early in the process. Looking at it afterwards, I see the interest of using emotions as material as well as the doubt that this research topic is too egoistic and self-centred.

Eventually I formulated a score. The score combined physical exercises push ups and sit ups, followed by placing different objects (through repetition they turned out to be a shoe, pants and jacket that became different feelings) and notes (the ones above) on the studio floor. Also, writing and talking/recording my talks in the studio, was part of the score. I felt that this way I had enough space to explore vulnerability and my understanding of it through set structures. Each action was timed, e.g. push ups lasted for 10 minutes, as well as the talking and recording. Placing the objects on the floor needed more time, because I wanted to be free to

observe and also play with the objects, if it felt comfortable. Sometimes I ended up destroying the notes I had written, sometimes I made small dances. I played music if it felt like a good idea (often it did).

I repeated this score until it didn't inform me enough anymore (or maybe to say that I got bored with it) and until I was driven repetitively into same actions, which I later on recognised as emotional symbols and clichés. But because the scenes were created through repeating that score, and because I didn't relate to my score as performative or productive in any way, I couldn't observe the actions created there as material. Therefore, I didn't value or criticise the material produced through the score until I showed it to my supervision group for the first time.

## **2. Cliché and Fresh Drama**

When I showed parts of my practice for my supervisor Chrysa Parkinson, and my classmates Maia Means, Marco Behal, Sara Kauppila and Cathryn Humphreys I recognised that I dealt with clichéd expression, and the word cliché was used for the first time in my project.

Parkinson was referring to my slow-dance scene that I described earlier in the chapter "Vulnerability". In the supervision session (where I showed this scene and one other to my supervision group), I started out my back towards the spectators, and as I slowly turned around (slow-dancing) to face them, I was crying. Parkinson pointed out that what made that scene emotional and unexpected, was the surprise of me actually feeling the emotion of a such a cliché action.

Through that comment, it started to clarify for me how I was using clichés and why. I looked for other people who also dealt with clichés. Yvonne Rainer writes in her book *Feelings are Facts- a life* (2013) that for her dealing with feelings was such a new effort in her career, that she needed to find literary criticism for what felt for her clichéd and stereotypic expression.

She writes in her book, that she found justification and support from Leo Bersani's observations about cliché:

“Cliché is, in a sense, the purest art of intelligibility; it tempts us with the possibility of enclosing life within beautifully inalterable formulas, of obscuring the arbitrary nature of imagination with the appearance of necessity.” (Rainer 2013 p.402)

Cliché as the purest art of intelligibility corresponds to my relation to cliché in this research, and I see the usage of clichés as a necessity in my work. Clichés are used, because they are recognised universally. I realised that I used clichés as container for precisely for what they often don't represent any more- genuine emotions. Clichés usually are a representation of a dramatic event done in predictable way, and therefore can be experienced as ridiculous or flat.

In her book Rainer quotes a critique she faced in the 1960s: “Why are Judson dancers so dead-set on just being themselves?” (Rainer 2013 p.397) She continues: “We refused to transform ourselves into dramatic or mythical personages ... replaced illusionism with nonreferential forms and monumentality with human scale, so postmodern dance would replace fictional character and technical virtuosity with “neutral doing” task like activity, and human- rather than heroic- scale.” (p.398)

Here, the human-rather than heroic is something I relate to when working with vulnerability. Vulnerability in my work is a personal shared experience, performed through universal clichéd actions, which makes my understanding of vulnerability somewhat both objective and personal.

Vulnerability as a material for performance is problematic, because staging vulnerability is a paradox. Therefore, I do fight against my attempts to be dramatic, but I do have to allow all the drama to exist in the room, when I have put it there.

In 2016 it does feel fresh to talk about post-modern “neutral doing” within contemporary dance/performance, even Rainer writes about it already in the 1960s. In 2016 in the contemporary dance field in Europe, I see a trend of combining pop-culture with contemporary performances. I often experience performances that work with pop-culture references in contemporary dance context, as fresh. I don't mean that all performances that do so, come across as fresh, but, the performances that I see as fresh, incorporate clichés in a

conscious way into contemporary art and transform flat pop-culture actions into more complex art experiences.

Amanda Apetrea's and Halla Ólafsdóttir's performance "Beauty and The Beast" (I saw it at MDT in Stockholm 2015) is a perfect example of this fresh drama. In online publication of the performance in Vimeo, published by Halla Ólafsdóttir (2013), the performance has been described followingly: "Forget Madonna, Prince, Elvis, Beyoncé, Whitney and Britney. Halla and Amanda never needed their last names and now they take on the greatest mononyms in dance history and blow you away." (Original source unknown.)

The performance plays with pop and rock culture clichés and expand them into a contemporary dance piece. As spectator point of view, this performance was for me one of a kind, extremely fresh and contemporary. I could both make sense of what they did on stage because of the pop clichés, but simultaneously, I had no clue of what I was watching.

I use "Beauty and The Beast" here as a reference to a performance where drama and clichés can be extremely fresh within the field of contemporary dance when they are worked further, and therefore evoke both surprise and emotions in the spectator.

Cliché and fresh drama are hiding places for me. I have chosen very clichéd music from pop culture, not because I think it's awesome, but because it gives me comfort. Where the performance "Beauty and The Beast" created fresh drama through taking clichés into a next, even more monumental level, I work the opposite way.

As an example: I play Celine Dion's "My Heart Will Go On" with a harmonica as part of my presentation. When I do that, I make myself vulnerable and ridiculous. I do not attempt to make the original song sound better, but I do offer a contrast between the gigantic emotional song and with sad, sometimes weak and off-key harmonica playing. I play harmonica on top of the original song, and that makes the aim of this scene transparent and obvious: To play the song as well as I can, even when I am out of breath and shaky, and my skill level is next to non-existing. This scene is the only one in my presentation, where I actively try to control my nervousness in order to accomplish the action I have set myself to do.

Through the comments I have received when I have showed this scene to others, I would summarise that the spectator can either laugh at me, because it's obvious that I do fail in

making the original song sound better, or support me and engage with my struggle in attempt to play the song as well as I possibly can. I offer both options, without pushing towards neither.

## **The When**

### **1. Practice → Presentation → Performance**

My presentation is put together with three main physical actions. Action where I do push-ups and sit-ups in slow motion, a slow-dance scene and a scene where I play “My Heart Will Go On” by Celine Dion with harmonica. I call those the main actions because they formulated through repeating the score, and all those three actions turned into scenes where I honestly believe that I am working with vulnerability the best way I can right now.

As those actions started to set and I was confident enough to change the word score into a vulnerability practice, it became excessively important how I talked about my practical presentation.

I wanted to stay true to the actions as they formulated without letting the chronological order of doing them necessarily create a narrative. In between the three main actions I experience different kind of vulnerability. Those moments in between are only for me to reload for the

next action, yet, I do it in front of a spectator. People who has seen my presentation (work in progress) have given me feedback that they do see narrative links especially with the slow-motion exercises and slow-dance scene. I don't mind the narrative, I just don't want to give it more attention than what it has by itself.

I noticed that in the last weeks of this research, I have started to call the physical part of my presentation a performance. It feels exiting to do so. From where I started with this project, I have moved from score into a practice, and from there into a presentation. Now in the very last weeks of the process, I am in a point where I have a performance with the title "my heart will go on".

In the beginning of this chapter I mentioned three main physical actions. I also have a fourth act, a scene where I read aphorisms from teabags. Not all the aphorisms are from the teabags though, some of them are little sentences I have written down during this process. In this scene, I sit and read those teabags/my own notes out loud in a random order. This action is mainly for me to fulfill a desire to use language and to calm down enough so that I am able to perform the slow-dance scene.

When my work transformed from practice into a performance, some physical changes happened. To explain those changes, I will describe my experience of performing alone (now when my structure has set and I my performance is "ready") as well as my experience of performing when I have spectators in the room with me. These experiences are from doing and showing my work in week 50, three weeks before the public/evaluation showing.

When I do my performance alone, it feels comfortable. I feel good inside the structure; all the choices are clear for me and I can rest in the doing itself. My body recognises my experience of vulnerability, and it doesn't react so strongly to it as it did approx. five weeks ago. I don't get afraid of it anymore. I feel calm while I am nervous, and a run through is a pleasant experience. My performance is about 20 minutes long, and doing it alone, I do reach a meditative, fragile and very emotional state, which I want to nourish and take care of. I lose a track of time and my consciousness shifts between observing physical actions and feeling emotions. I feel joy and I am proud of myself. My experience of vulnerability as a

performative material has become something that I am proud of. I don't doubt, I don't question while I do, whether I should do something else, or change something. I experience a lot, and that recognition gives me pride and joy during the performance. When I do my work alone, I feel like there is not anything else I should or could do with my vulnerability.

All the emotions intensify when there are other people in the room. I can shift from feeling uncomfortable and embarrassed into feeling connected and satisfied, often almost simultaneously. Physically, my hands start to shake, which e.g. makes it a lot more difficult to play the harmonica. My chest turns red, my head feels warm and the extremities of my body become cold and sometimes numb. This sensation makes me feel hazy and dizzy. My heartrate is fast, and sometimes that makes me hyperventilate. When I cry it's more aggressive and more intense. When I read, my voice shakes and my mouth is dry. Everything feels to take a long time. Sometimes I doubt everything I do (while doing), and I want to stop and run away. Sometimes I even feel sorry for the spectators that they are there to witness my vulnerability and my physical nervousness.

But I never feel completely out of control. The structure is there, and whatever I do, I try to accept myself as I am in the present moment, as well as accept that I constantly fail when I try to do so. I use conscious breathing to calm myself down, when I feel too overwhelmed. Also, to look at spectators in the eyes helps me to continue.

I succeed, when all these emotions and physical signs of being nervous appear. I invited them, I wanted them, they all are my vulnerability. I attempt to do my performance with acceptance towards all those things.

The structure and the content of my performance has stayed quite fixed now over a month. From where I called it a practice, my relation towards the content (now when it is a performance) has changed. Surprisingly, the content of my performance has not been influenced by this change. I started to question, what actually has changed? If the material has not changed at all from when I called my work a practice, why do I then now call it a

performance? And why does this terminology feel so relevant?

When my work was a practice, I worked with my understanding of vulnerability. I was exploring and defining through that material, what it meant for me to research vulnerability as material for performance. But when I labelled the scenes and the situation with spectators into a performance, I shifted from researching vulnerability as a material, into presenting my vulnerable material. The content didn't change because it couldn't, it already was my understanding of vulnerability as a material. At the point when I was brave enough to call my project a performance, it did intensify my experience of my material.

Calling my practical presentation a performance is also an affirmation that I succeed in my wish to use vulnerability as a material for performance.

## **5. Conclusion**

Through this research, I have started to understand the complexity of vulnerability that I experience. Now in the end of this project, when my vulnerability is more concrete and graspable for me, it has become also openly present in my everyday life. On an emotional level, I conclude, that even I am more openly vulnerable now, I am less scared and judgmental towards myself. That realisation has been very welcomed. "I am hoping a change to happen after I am done with this." This grammatically weirdly written note that I have carried with me throughout this project (one of the six ones I have attached in this essay) suddenly makes me smile. There has been a change.

The hybrid has been a big part of this research, and through it I have been able to distinguish these gigantic words from each other: emotions, actions, accomplishing and failure. I tend to mix emotions and actions constantly into emotional actions (I also do so in my performance). Through this research, I have realised that looking at those separately, has made me reach



material I haven't been able to access before.

Making a distinction between actions as such, and emotions as separate entity, I have expanded my understanding of achieving as well as failing and their meaning as concepts. As I understand it now, emotions as such can't be evaluated, if they are genuine. Through this observation, I have been able to take distance towards my lifestyle in general, as well as my relation to becoming a dancer. If I can stop valuing my experiences through improvements, and shift into highlighting the importance of emotional experiences, this process probably stays with me also long after I have sent this essay forward.

I started this research by asking, what does it mean to use vulnerability as a material for performance. As I see it now in the end of this process, vulnerability as a material means total exposure and honesty towards myself and my surrounding. It means letting go of hopes and wishes for any possible outcome.

My vulnerability has changed through this process. Realising and accepting that, has been demanding throughout this project. How do I research something, that is never experienced the same way twice? Through observing and exposing those doubts to myself, as well as other people I have shared my process with (Josefine Wikström, Chrysa Parkinson, Maia Means, Sara Kauppila, Tiia Kasurinen and many others) I experience that I have worked with vulnerability as material. Allowing the uncertainty and embarrassment of emotional exposure to be present in all parts within this process has been a challenge, but bearable since I dared to talk about it with others. Even this process has been lonely, I haven't done it alone.

I claim that vulnerability can't be fixed into a set material, but the surrounding materials/ objects/emotions/spaces can render vulnerability out repetitively.

My performance is vulnerable for me in the level that I can bear it at this point in my life. I still hide behind different shortcuts, I have made choices where I have chosen not the most brutal and honest way, but something that I can (hopefully) handle, often from the help of dry sense of humour.

I am vulnerable, I am exhausted, I am nervous, I am shaky, my voice is weak, my legs feel heavy and I feel extremely emotional, yet also proud, when I invite people to observe my performance. I am grateful that my performance makes me feel those things, I believe that because those genuine tactile physical responses in my body are real and visible, my performance feels honest.

I am both proud and ashamed. Both emotions existing as equal material incorporated in Vulnerability Manifesto.

**Vulnerability Manifesto by Ida Arenius**

**No expression for the sake of expression**

**Letting go of grasping for what I once have had**

**Exposure without being dramatic**

**Nothing is bigger than what it is**

**Vulnerability is an emotional risk of being humiliated**  
**Vulnerability is courage not to hide behind faking and producing**  
**Vulnerability is acceptance towards the situation as it is**  
**Vulnerability is in constant negotiation between losing control and being in control**  
**Vulnerability Manifesto is:**  
**In acceptance and in peace with all the things it cannot be, or predict**

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