

Family First? Some Thoughts on Domestic Anarchism

Sophie Bäärnhielm Pousette

And what it came down to me to do was a work of translation, showing how these tales of springtime Sundays and the philosophers translated into one another. It was necessary to invent the idiom appropriate to this translation and counter-translation, even if it meant this idiom remaining unintelligible to all those who requested the meaning of this story, the reality that explained it, and the lesson it contained for action. In fact, this idiom could only be read by those who would translate it on the basis of their own intellectual adventure.¹

Having spent the last years working on a doctoral dissertation on philosophies of language, on translation and untranslatability, it is perhaps inevitable that I interpret the request to write on my encounters with Domestic Anarchism as a challenge involving the work of translation. Approaching the task of writing about dance, performance and choreography from the ‘outside’, neither as a critic nor as a fellow practitioner, but as a spectator, it seems evident to me from the beginning that my reflections, observations and questions will be marked by the shortcomings of the vocabulary I have at my disposal; the self-referentiality of the idiom I have attained through my philosophy education. The ‘issue’ of translation thus, initially, can be summarized as the dilemma of the polar two modes of translation first theorized by Friedrich Schleiermacher; ‘[e]ither the translator leaves the writer in peace as much as possible and moves the reader toward him; or he leaves the reader in peace as much as possible and moves the writer toward him’² In this case the ‘writing’ is undertaken in different mediums (performance, dance, installation, storytelling) and the operation thus involves two subsequent acts of translation. In the first instance, I must transpose all of these segments of different modes of writing into the lingua franca of written discourse. Secondly, I am then confronted with the choice between attempting to paraphrase the language normally utilized to reflect on dance and choreography, or, rather, pulling the object of inquiry into my own register and vocabulary. A choice between two strategies which both involve a certain amount of violence; the inevitable violence of any act of translation, which since Saint

¹ Jacques Rancière, *The emancipated spectator*, Verso, London, 2011[2009], 21

² Friedrich Schleiermacher, “On the different methods of translating,” translated by Susan Bernofsky. In Venuti, Lawrence, ed. *The Translation Studies Reader* (Oxford: Taylor & Francis Group, 2021), ProQuest Ebook Central.

Jerome has been compared to conquest, or the violent taking captive of meaning.³ Yet, although it cannot be denied that '[t]he translator invades, extracts, and brings home' the simile being 'that of the open-cast mine left an empty scar in the landscape,' I cling to what George Steiner suggests in his seminal work on translational theory, *After Babel*, namely, that 'this despoliation is illusory or is a mark of false translation.'⁴ Although the 'true' translation might not be able to avoid violence altogether (that is, before the arrival of the Messianic world, which 'presupposes a language into which every text can be *wholly* translated, whether it is written in a living or a dead tongue⁵) it can hope to distribute this violence more equally, aware that the 'peace' enjoyed by one party produces the unrest of another. Serving here both as the translator and reader of *Domestic Anarchism*, I can only hope that the sheer amount of sweat (metaphorical and very real) produced in my attempt to wrestle some text out of my encounters with the work is a sign that I have moved back and forth between these extreme modes of translation in the process of writing.⁶

To a certain degree, the issue of translation also haunts the context in which I first encounter *Domestic Anarchism*, during a performance of *Bailes* at the Performing Arts Forum, France (PAF). The performance takes place in August 2025, during Summer University, a 'three-week gathering of sharing and exchanging, doing and showing' which aims to provide 'space for self-organisation where experimentation and recreation can mingle and where knowledge production can be practised with open doors, cutting across disciplines and methods of presentation.' This being my third year at SU, I have come to know that the 'cutting across disciplines' quite literally can involve the experience of having had something cut off; of loss. For the theoreticians entering the practitioners sphere this cutting involves the voluntary dispossessing of the conceptual apparatuses which normally supports our thought (which, according to my experience, is as humbling as learning how to speak a new language as an adult), and for the practitioners it is experienced as running head-first into a wall of words divorced from practices (now paraphrasing what I have been told by others).

³ For the relationship between translation and imperialism, see also 'Aphorism 83' in Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*. Ed. Bernard Arthur Owen Williams (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁴ George Steiner, *After Babel. Aspects of Language and Translation* (London, New York, Toronto 1975), 298.

⁵ Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, eds. R. Tiedemann and H. Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972), Band I, Teil 3, 1239.

⁶ Turns out I was rather bad at following Adriano's advice of keeping it 'fun' and playful...Perhaps this is the pathology of academic philosophy.

My memories from the first encounter with *Domestic Anarchism* are somewhat vague. Of the nine ‘materials’ I will later learn that *Bailes* is made up of, I can only vividly recollect three.⁷ Not being in the habit of viewing works of dance/performance/choreography with an intention to ‘translate’ my experience into writing, I can only assume that the moments that I remember without effort represent the points at which the work spoke to me in a manner I could comprehend prior to the labour of critical reflection. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it is a sentence that first comes to mind.

One scene. Andrea, during the stand-up material, holding a toy microphone, answering her own question, ‘Why do uncles not get reported?’, with: ‘Because: “family first”’.

A question and an answer. From that first encounter with the performance, I also remember ‘the wrestling and the dancephrase’, both of them appearing (I believe) after ‘the stand-up’. I remember them because they are illuminated by what I, either lacking a better word or because this is indeed the right word to describe it, would name ‘uncanniness’, or in a literal translation of the German word, ‘unhomeliness’. The encounter with what seems at once familiar and acutely disturbing, brought on by the juxtaposition of (implicit) sexual violence and ‘family’, a noun that (against all odds?) remains associated with unconditional love, care and safety.⁸ These phenomena should be mutually exclusive, but they aren’t. This simple observation, delivered with a deadpan face that wouldn’t be out of place in a regular stand-up, not only continues to reverberate through the reminder of the performance, but it also reflects back into the room, and in extension the site and the context in which the performance takes place. A self-organized space, aiming at ‘creating a culture of awareness, listening and speaking up’, where ‘the hope is to destroy the grounds on which violence, abuse or harm can happen.’⁹ And yet abuse does occur and harm is being done, also in this place. Like other self-organized, extra-institutional, spaces PAF cannot but reproduce the

⁷ They are listed in the blog post “New York with Malcolm-x Betts: painting, dancing & letting a new constellation find its rhythm”: ‘...the “materials” as we call them. The hyphae floor, the portraits, the ornaments, the telekinesis, the butt-heads, the stand-up, the footwork, the wrestling and the dancephrase. 9 in total.’

⁸ The remarkable capacity of the noun “family” to live in denial of its historical actualization in patriarchy can be compared to the fate of the word ‘father’. *Sex and Place Vol. IV: you asked me*, offers one (personal but illustrative) example of its present day connotations: “Father”. Substance abuse, alcoholism, neglect, debt, delusion. That’s what the word means right?

⁹ <https://www.pa-f.net/node/25132>

violence which governs its outside.¹⁰ A subtle reminder that we cannot escape violence NOW, in this instant, solely by exiting the existing institutions. It hangs on wherever we go, like a stubborn cold. This is why prefigurative practices will always also seem premature (that's arguably the very point of them), whether they then take the form of polyamory or para-academic research.¹¹

Because of the immediate association between the failure of the institution of the family to serve as a shelter from a hostile world, and the shortcomings of extra-institutional 'sanctuaries' such as the one in which we are located, I refrain from drawing the conclusion that the question and the answer could seem to want to provoke, namely: insofar as 'family' enables domination and abuse to persist, it must be abolished together with those other institutions that perpetuate violence, above all the nation-state. And since I am prevented from asserting that this is indeed the message the makers of the piece seek to convey, my subsequent reflections on the piece itself in relation to the philosophical-political debate on family abolition must take into consideration those phrases and idioms which are less transparent to me, delivered not in propositional utterances but in movements, installations and storytelling. Far from providing an exhaustive answer, 'family first' turns out to be itself the question and object of inquiry; a riddle demanding to be solved rather than an apriori definition of an unquestionable evil. This is the riddle that *Bailes* invites me to engage in, or, rather, posits as the enigma from which the piece unfolds, through a series of successive attempts to engage with this riddle, condensed into the nine materials developed in collaboration and co-habitation with friends, lovers and colleagues during several years. All of which might, if we stick with the vocabulary I borrow from Rancière, be seen as successive translations of the riddle into new idioms, or 'jargons', to use the word of *Domestic Anarchism*, '[t]he effect of [which] cannot be anticipated.'¹² *Bailes* might be read as a catalogue, or inventory, of translation and counter-translation, but also as a questioning of to what extent the anticipation, or prefiguration, of other social relations and modes of

¹⁰ See also the blog, 'Moving to the countryside and setting up a commune felt like hell, we did not want to replace the nuclear family with a chosen family, when *family* as an isolating function was the problem'

¹¹ The hurt and involuntary harm involved in practicing love and care otherwise than the couple unit is all over and everywhere in *Sex and Place*, erotic booklets written and printed as part of *Domestic Anarchism*.

¹² Rancière, *The emancipated spectator*, 22; 'With this work we bring permeable timelines and relations. Processes in continuous shaping- extended from elsewhere-six trio & one sextet constellation with each their own jargon. Two proposals, *bailes* and *zona de juego*, is how we move with our studies.' Stated in the zine that accompanies the iteration at MDT.

production involves a more radical operation than ‘translation’, in its extended sense, seems to offer. This question is manifested in one main point of disagreement among theorists concerned with family abolition, namely, whether to try to redeem or to dismiss the vocabulary associated with the family. A vocabulary which has served emancipatory purposes, not least in Black radical tradition (as underlined by Patricia Hill Collins, among others) but also a vocabulary which, as Sophie Lewis points out, seems impossible to fully divorce from its bloody (in a double sense) history.¹³ If we pursue the path of absolute dismissal (what Lewis argues for), it raises the further question of how language can be made to speak that which we are incapable of imagining. How to produce the conditions under which an idiom might appear which we cannot anticipate, and which thus remains unrestrained by our lack of fantasy, and our capitalist socialization?

To a certain degree, the very name, ‘Domestic Anarchism’, simultaneously bespeaks the impossibility of such an endeavour, and demonstrates that it is indeed possible to make language speak against itself. What appears as a ‘simple’ contradiction in terms – the awkward and forced combination of two mutually exclusive positions, ‘domesticity’ and ‘anarchism’ – aptly summarizes the absolute contradiction that conditions the production of artistic work in a capitalist society, epitomized by ‘projective temporality’, or the ‘the project becoming the ultimate horizon of creation.’¹⁴ The entry into this specific temporality is addressed in the blog as the work of ‘translating ... research into more public art practices’, but I cannot help but wonder whether it does not rather represent a constitutive *untranslatability* that haunts the transitions from practices to project to the ‘finished’ piece, performed in the black box. That the rendering visible of this ‘constitutive untranslatability’ – which is another way of stating that any ‘translation’ that is forced through must violate both source idiom and target idiom – might in fact represent one the great accomplishments of the *Domestic Anarchism* becomes more apparent the second, and third time, I encounter

¹³ Lewis, *Abolish the family*, 86; Patricia Hill Collins, “It’s All In the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Nation.” *Hypatia* 13, no. 3 (1998): 62–82.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.1998.tb01370.x>.

¹⁴ Bojana Kunst, *Artist at work, proximity of art and capitalism* (Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2015), 157. It should be mentioned that the intellectual labour involved in writing this reflection is conditioned by its own project temporality. I have been able to spend more time thinking, writing and deleting my thoughts on *Domestic Anarchism* than would be financially viable for a long-term freelance existence solely because I enjoy the privilege of a PhD employment at a Swedish university. Until the project ends (with me, hopefully, submitting the PhD dissertation in two and a half years’ time) I can distribute my working time more or less as I desire. Of course, this also means that whatever PhD research time has been ‘lost’ now will claim its due further on, when the thesis must materialize. This is the relative autonomy afforded by the PhD employment.

Domestic Anarchism, inside the art institution. The first iteration, at Moderna Dansteatern in Stockholm, is coloured by the fact that Adriano has broken their leg and that the makers and performers during the 3 weeks residency leading up to the performance thus cannot ‘follow the principle of working slow and doing it whilst being present with Penelope’, but must ‘renegotiate urgencies and ambitions.’¹⁵ With all likelihood (I can only come with a qualified guess, being an external eye) these renegotiations, which, as Adriano and Andrea acknowledge, involve compromising the methods of working developed under several years of collaboration and co-habitations, in order to be able to ‘realise the show’ at all, conditions any institutional collaboration. Insofar as this is an accurate description, one might also suggest that the extraordinary circumstance of this particular case merely provides an opportunity to publicly address something that holds true with or without broken legs. It seems inevitable that the professional and more/other than-professional relationships within ‘the village of local friends [that] stepped into the scene’ suffered from the heightening of this dilemma in this case (which no doubt also involved a lot of physical pain for Adriano), but the work itself likely benefitted from it. The fact that ‘the show must go on’, notwithstanding that this demand for an uninterrupted production towards a performance demanded that *Domestic Anarchism* bracketed its core concern, points towards the value of Marina Vishmidt’s suggestion that institutional critique must be replaced with infrastructural critique, i.e. ‘an engagement with the thoroughly intertwined objective (historical, socio-economic) and subjective (including affect and artistic subjectivization) conditions necessary for the institution and its critique to exist, reproduce themselves, and posit themselves as an immanent horizon as well as transcendental condition.’¹⁶ With *Domestic Anarchism* institutional critique has become a family affair (or why not a ‘village affair’? An additional spin on the acknowledgment that ‘it takes a village’¹⁷). This critique of the institution of the family, financed by the state institution on the condition of collaborations (co-productions) with recognized art institutions, can, arguably, only appear because of a *voluntary*, self-imposed, domestication; such as marking out on a map where the pamphlets containing sexually explicit content are located in the *zona de juego* so as not to expose any children to

¹⁵ Stated in the zine that accompanies the iteration at MDT.

¹⁶ Marina Vishmidt, *Between Not Everything and Not Nothing: Cuts Towards Infrastructural Critique*. In: *Former West: Art and the Contemporary After 1989*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2017: 265-269, 267.

¹⁷ ‘It is said that it takes a village, and that blood is stickier than water. Both might be true.’ The opening of the introduction of the zine that accompanies the iteration at MDT.

it, and submitting to the deadline, broken legs or not.¹⁸ The piece and the installations must gesture towards that which cannot be made present/represented within the art institution, and which simultaneously is the object of critique, both for the artwork ‘in general’ and *Domestic Anarchism* in particular; the relationship between social reproduction and artistic production, or ‘life’ and ‘art’. How to combine a critique of the institution that structures social reproduction with a critique of the regimes of representation that guarantees legibility within the art institution, as well as the modes of production that characterize institutional collaborations? The need for a balancing act between ‘reproduction and abolition’ (to borrow Vishmidt’s apt formulation), explains why the political content of *Domestic Anarchism* partially must be sought out in the ways in which it must violate its own longing (for other modes of re/production) in order to exist at all.

The third iteration of the *Domestic Anarchism* I encounter, at Dansehallerne in Copenhagen, begins with what appears as a verbalization of this insight, now named ‘the gap’. Somewhat paradoxically (or not), this inaugural confession is followed by the most polished, or ‘integrated’, iteration of *Bailes* I have yet seen; a constellation whose parts flow seamlessly into one another. Any frictions, glitches or hesitations that have accompanied the other showings have moved out of the dynamic between the three performers on stage, and now persist solely in the almost bizarre contrast between the soft colours, lines and textures of *zona de juego*, the moving artwork that is the costume of the performers and the venue itself, a former boiler room for beer production. Indeed, when I enter the massive hall my first impression of *zona de juego* in the far corner is that of student encampment, including a communal cooking site and the painting on the walls (the reversed colour book, giant clitorises painted on the windows). The visual confrontation between a building that screams Institution with capital I and the childish expressivity of the installation almost produce too literal an illustration of the stakes involved, something that hasn’t been an issue at PAF and MDT, different venues in many ways but equally ‘intimate’ and accommodating. More ready to make *Domestic Anarchism* at ‘home’. And yet it is as if the stark contrast between the room itself and its temporary ‘occupants’ draws a chalk circle around *bailes*, simultaneously making me see the contours of the piece more vividly and making it seem less of a challenge to the venue itself. It seems more ‘contained’ than before, more aware of its identity as a

¹⁸ ‘... two years and four funding dossiers including co-production agreements later, we got funding for ‘Domestic Anarchism’. See the blog post ‘Modes of (re)production, childcare and international artistic collaboration’

guest (performance). Like any polite guest, it makes sure to not overstep the boundaries of its host.¹⁹ In conversation afterwards it is mentioned that the working process leading up to this iteration has made space for ‘more choreography’, reminding me of a semi-recent call for dance to cease allowing itself to be ‘domesticated by choreography’ and realize itself as a critique of representation, ‘taking on the task of generating opportunities that lie beyond language’.²⁰ My experience of this iteration of *bailes* (smooth, without friction) seems to confirm that choreography indeed represents the path of least resistance; which, as we know, leads to a crossroad where art and politics go their separate ways.²¹ (In other words: let’s DANCE *against* choreography!) This is also a position which the written material of *Domestic Anarchism* sometimes veers towards (speaking about dance as ‘as a messy art which can help us sense and make sense’), but never fully coincides with.²² The desire that animates *Domestic Anarchism*, that is: the desire not to make ‘the reproduction of a closed family unit the script of our lives’ never degenerates into a critique of the script per se.²³ This seems absolutely crucial. Returning for a moment to the realm of philosophy ‘proper’, and turning to the work of French philosopher Catherine Malabou, whose recent work is mentioned as a source of inspiration for the project, one might draw a parallel between this distinction and Malabou’s observation that the failure of philosophers to bridge the abyss separating anarchy from anarchism stem from the tendency to reduce the latter to dis-order, an absence of order, rather than order-without-domination.²⁴ This distinction between dis-order and order-without-domination is suggestively put into dialogue with Jacques Derrida’s observation that the French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss’s equation of the phenomena of writing with the emergence of social domination/violence fails to acknowledge that the ‘violent’ distancing involved in acts of representation in fact not only conditions writing, “graphie” in the narrow sense’, but rather must be seen as always *already* at work. *Arche-writing* is the name given to this ‘opening of the first exteriority in general, the

¹⁹ At the outset of the artist talk that takes place after the first performance at Dansehallerne I see it is mentioned that we can continue the conversation for however long we wish, that is, we of course have to evacuate the building before the night alarm kicks in. Because we are in fact guests and not really occupants, we make sure to obey this restraint. A reminder that anything that exceeds the boundaries of the performance ‘proper’ is living on borrowed time.

²⁰ Mårten Spångberg, “Post-dance, An Advocacy,” in Alice Chauchat, Danjel Andersson, Mette Edvardsen, & Mårten Spångberg, *Post-dance* (Stockholm: MDT, 2017), 373.

²¹ Something that is acknowledged when the tension between methodology and choreography is addressed in conversation with Adriano and Andrea at their home in Bruxelles, 22/4-2026.

²² See the blog post “Cevennes with Emma Daniel: dancing outside, relationships & sharing childcare”

²³ See the blog post “Maternity leave, miscarriage, abortion & social class”

²⁴ Malabou, Catherine, and Carolyn Shread. *Stop Thief!* 1st ed. (Polity, 2023), 23
<https://www.perlego.com/book/4279513>.

enigmatic relationship of the living to its other and of an inside to an outside'.²⁵ This is why the violence of writing, and of representation, or what Derrida himself refers to as '[t]he problematic of writing', cannot be avoided through a return to a time before, and after, writing, but solely through disseminating the relationship between practices of writing and domination and domestication, an alliance epitomized by the noun 'archive' as a description for 'a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the archons, those who commanded.'²⁶ The operation of dissemination is a gesture which in truth 'anarchivizes', insofar as the problem of writing is 'opened by putting into question the value *arkhē*' as command, yet Derrida never speaks of this dissemination as acts of *an-arche-writing*. Why? Somewhat regretfully, Malabou admits that this choice seems to stem from his ultimate incapacity to picture an 'anarchist order' – equivalent to a complete undoing of the compound *arche* (as command)-writing – that doesn't simply reproduce the phantasmatic *re/turn* to a time *before* or *beyond* domination.²⁷ Yet, she insists, encouraging Derrida's language to speak up against his own hesitance, '[m]ore surely than through the virtue of a negative prefix, the meeting of the "archē" and writing explodes in a word'.²⁸

'Domestic anarchism' could be said to stage an equally explosive encounter. Returning to what I suggested above, about the work serving as a sort of inventory of translations and counter-translations, one might also describe it as an archive of practices of an-archivizing. Instead of abolishing choreography (the script that commands) *Domestic Anarchism* utilizes it to perform a critique of the domesticating script associated with the institution of the family; a critique which refuses to regress into wishful thinking. Returning to my first meeting with *Bailes*, and the strong memory of the 'material' that concludes it, with the three dancers/performers, repeating the same dance-phrase over and over again (possibly the first time that the untrained eye, or unaccustomed audience, would be able to identify any 'real dance' at all), it simultaneously serves as a reminder that all movement is determined by choreography, either positively or negatively. After the stand-up, the dance phrase initially appears to me as a soothing balm, carrying a promise of the redemption of the familiar script (whether this be interpreted as the 'unproblematic' relationship between choreography and

²⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Of grammatology*, translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Corrected ed Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 70.

²⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Archive fever: a Freudian impression*, translated by Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 2.

²⁷ Malabou, *Stop Thief!*, 110.

²⁸ Malabou, *Stop Thief!*, 94.

dance or the group piece as a metaphor for the family); a reconciliation that has been reached through the constellation of parts that precedes it, including the telekinesis, a rather literal – perhaps overly literal – illustration that intimacy always carries within itself the seed of a desire to dominate, as well as the desire to be dominated (in the last iteration of *bailes* I view, this double-bind is verbalized at the very beginning, where the creators address the lure of the ‘small scale communism’, the couple, or being one-in-two against the world). ‘Navigating the thin line between care and control’ to use the words of *Sex and Place Vol. 1*, or practicing power as ‘capacity to relate [rather than] capacity to dominate’ to use the words of *Sex and Place Vol. 4*.²⁹ Yet these instances where ‘translation’ between the ‘materials’ and the accompanying writing seems possible, and unproblematic, are broken up by segments that simply do not allow for such easy conclusions, points of opacity that destabilize the seeming intelligibility of the constellation as a whole. Perhaps one can describe them as nodes of resistance, or ‘untranslatables’; moments which capture the makers’ desire ‘to allow the aesthetic forms to have autonomy, and not let them represent the concepts’.³⁰ Unlike the hubris implied in the performative call for an abolition of choreography *tout court* (analogous to a return to a time before writing, and violence, the retreat into the sanctuary of unmediated self-presence) these insertions of units of unintelligibility in-between sections of legible script – movements and gestures that allow for and even invites deciphering – leaks into the surrounding scores, making me retroactively question whatever interpretation they first gave rise to. They undo the writing that precedes and succeeds it. This brings to mind Carolyn Shred’s suggestion, in her translator’s preface to Malabou’s *Stop Thief: Anarchism and Philosophy*, that ‘translation’ can be seen as a writing against representation, or ‘anarchism in action.’³¹ At another place, Shred observes that this mode of translation might as well be referred to as a ‘clitoridian translation’, where ‘the translator combs through the text, stroking it over and over in an act of love and care to find its gioia in a new language.’³² The foot-work, where the dancers transmit tiny clitoris sculptures between each other using only their feet (and, in the last iteration, naked from the waist down) is arguably one such moment of gioia, joy. Drawing on the Medieval French and Italian meaning of ‘translation’, as literally ‘displacement of material objects’, these ‘translations’ of clitorises, repeated

²⁹ We can utilize Spinoza (via Deleuze) in order to make this distinction (as proposed in *Sex and Place*), but in this case I do think the philosophical supplement becomes somewhat tautological, and *Bailes* does it better than the Latin terminology.

³⁰ In conversation with Adriano and Andrea at their home in Bruxelles, 22/4-2026.

³¹ Carolyn Shred, “Translator’s Preface,” in Malabou, *Stop Thief!*

³² Carolyn Shred, “Translator’s Preface,” in Malabou, *Pleasure Erased*,

‘clitoridian translations’, come close to something that I, inspired by Eva Geulen’s critical discussion of the gendered metaphors of reproduction in Walter Benjamin’s thought on literary production and translation, would like to see as privileged instances of ‘masturbatory’ sabotage, analogous to ‘literary production [which] produces without producing and thus without reproducing the familiar patterns of production, organic or capitalist.’³³ The anti-production of non-sense continues (or begins) in the 7 fables that *Domestic Anarchism*, *bailes* and *zona de juego* ‘are loosely organised along, each emerging from the collaborations that forms the process of *Domestic Anarchism*’.³⁴ We seem to be confronted with a disjuncture between ‘fabulation’ as an open-ended process and/or method, and the fables as the produce/outcome, utilized in the final piece as a means to provide a ‘narrative context’ to the discrete units, a certain ‘logic of composition’³⁵. In its traditional sense the fable, like the parable, contains a moral teaching; it utilizes narrative to communicate this teaching. Fabulation, on the other hand (whether Saidya Hartman’s critical fabulation, or Donna Haraway’s speculative fabulation), could be said to represent a means for engaging in collective unlearning through narration; it appears thus as a sort of inverted version of the fable, or, perhaps, a fable which has been robbed of its moral teaching. An anti-didactic fable, if we could imagine such a thing (which seems to resonate with the makers wish to ‘make sense of a solidarity beyond the family without preaching this solidarity’). Another instance of the content engaging in a critique of its own form. Although the fables abide by the rules of grammar and syntax (more or less), they are fundamentally illegible – a linguistic equivalent of the clitoridian foot-work and ‘the butt-heads’. If this is the key to the ‘logic of composition’ of *Domestic Anarchism* as a whole, it seemingly comes with a demand that we first enter into what Malabou refers to as ‘[a] clitoridian zone of the logos.’³⁶

Concluding these thoughts, I feel tempted to quote *Sex and Place Vol. 4*, admitting that ‘I’m not sure how this translates into an actual scenario.’ But, (as noted by Rancière), ‘[t]he poetic

³³ Karlheinz Stierle, “Translatio Studii and Renaissance: From Vertical to Horizontal Translation,” in *The Translatability of Cultures: Figurations of the Space Between*, ed. Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 56; Eva Geulen, “Toward a Genealogy of Gender in Walter Benjamin’s Writings,” *The German Quarterly*, Vol. 69, No. 2 (1996), pp. 161-180, 165.

³⁴ Stated in the zine that accompanies the iteration at MDT.

³⁵ In the blog post “Cevennes with Emma Daniel: dancing outside, relationships & sharing childcare” Adriano asks: ‘What logic of composition does the work need?’ Assuming that the finished work represents an attempt to answer this question, I am tempted to quote Adorno’s definition of the logic of the essay form (which draws from ‘the logic of music, that stringent and yet aconceptual art of transition’): ‘It is not unlogical; it obeys logical criteria insofar as the totality of its propositions must fit together coherently’. Adorno, *The Essay as Form*, 22.

³⁶ Malabou, *Pleasure Erased*, 115.

labour of translation is at the heart of all learning.³⁷ It certainly could be argued that *Domestic Anarchism* suffers from the same shortcoming that Vishmidt accuses institutional critique of, that is, pointing without grabbing, or settling with ‘the horizon of disclosure’, when what is needed is to move on to building institutions *otherwise*, which involves infrastructures that can support and accommodate other modes of reproduction. As she notes

Infrastructure might be that which repeats, but this repetition is not without difference: it can monotonously produce the same differences (such as infrastructures that reproduce social inequalities), but it can also be a means of ensuring the reproduction of a wholly different form of social life over time.³⁸

Approaching the end of *Domestic Anarchism* as a state funded project concerned with a critique of the family, it could be said that it has not so much managed to stake out the path ‘between abolition and reproduction’, as it has pointed towards the many reasons why we might fail to do so. And yet, insofar as *Domestic Anarchism* by default defies the temporality of the ‘project’, to the extent that the artistic investigation it has been occupied with fully coincides with the life of its participants/investigators, it does not have the option of halting at the negative, at the mere ‘pointing’. In the constant repetition of failure resides the opportunity to fail *better*, which in this case would amount to a repetition that produces something utterly different. A glitch in the script, a new idiom, emerging from the unintelligible. As *Domestic Anarchism* illustrates, the institution of the family, and the realm of social reproduction, might be the most promising site in which to pursue these practices of counter-translation, practicing ‘anarchism in action’.

Sources

Adorno, Theodor W. Notes to literature, edited by Rolf Tiedemann, translated by Shierry Weber Nicholsen and introduction by Paul A. Kottman. Columbia University Press, New York, 2019.

³⁷ Rancière, *The emancipated spectator*, 10

³⁸ Between Not Everything and Not Nothing: Cuts Toward Infrastructural Critique, 267.

Benjamin, Walter. *Gesammelte Schriften*, eds. R. Tiedemann and H. Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972), Band I, Teil 3.

Chauchat, Alice, Andersson, Danjel, Edvardsen, Mette & Spångberg, Mårten. *Post-dance*. Stockholm: MDT, 2017.

Derrida, Jacques. *Of grammatology*. Translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Corrected ed. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

Derrida, Jacques. *Archive fever: a Freudian impression*, translated by Eric Prenowitz. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Geulen, Eva. "Toward a Genealogy of Gender in Walter Benjamin's Writings," *The German Quarterly*, Vol. 69, No. 2 (1996), pp. 161-180.

Kunst, Bojana. *Artist at work, proximity of art and capitalism* (Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2015)

Lewis, Sophie, *Abolish the family: a manifesto for care and liberation*, Verso, London, 2022.

Malabou, Catherine, and Carolyn Shread. *Stop Thief!* 1st ed. (Polity, 2023), 23
<https://www.perlego.com/book>

Malabou, Catherine, and Carolyn Shread. (2022) 2022. *Pleasure Erased*. 1st ed. Polity.
<https://www.perlego.com/book/3547194>.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Gay Science : With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*. Ed. Bernard Arthur Owen Williams (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Rancière, Jacques, *The emancipated spectator*, Verso, London, 2011[2009].

Schleiermacher, Friedrich. "On the different methods of translating". Translated by Susan Bernofsky. In Venuti, Lawrence, ed. *The Translation Studies Reader* (Oxford: Taylor & Francis Group, 2021), ProQuest Ebook Central.

Steiner, George. *After Babel. Aspects of Language and Translation*. London, New York, Toronto 1975.

Stierle, Karlheinz. "Translatio Studii and Renaissance: From Vertical to Horizontal Translation," in *The Translatability of Cultures: Figurations of the Space Between*, ed. Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996)

Vishmidt, Marina Between Not Everything and Not Nothing: Cuta Towards Infrastructural Critique. In: *Former West: Art and the Contemporary After 1989*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2017: 265-269.