

Breathless

“Let me tell you,” says Clarice Lispector, “I’m trying to seize the fourth dimension of this instant-now so fleeting that it’s already gone because it’s already become a new instant-now that’s also already gone.” She continues: “And if here I must use words, they must bear an almost merely bodily meaning, I’m struggling with the last vibration ... I make a sentence of words made only from instants-now. Read, therefore, my invention as pure vibration with no meaning beyond each whistling syllable.”¹

While I inhale deeply and the volume of my inner cavities fill with air, I notice my spine making space, my rib cage expanding, hip bones drifting apart, pelvic floor resisting. Then, with my exhalation, all parts sinking into their place again. I feel hollow, I feel voluminous, I push, I release.

I am standing on two legs, breathing. I hear the silent stream of air around my nostrils. Wind in the thin hair at the exit of the nostrils’ curvatures. The passing of air in and out my lungs lightly sways my arms. Tiny negotiations of weight between my two feet during the change of body air volume. Brief compression of my jaw, saliva sliding down the oesophagus, teeth touching; then release. Swallow.

I am sharing a body with another. We are bound together through a common skeletal system that is invisible. The skin is the visual carrier of our togetherness.

As my skin expands and ebbs with each breath, our skin remains still. Not even a shared sigh. I deepen my inhale, I sense how the emphasised breath disrupts the silence, turns into a landscape of sounds articulated and coloured by the texture and surface of the interior.

Is my breath touching her? Is the moving of air volume translating into our shared spine elements? Are we breathing together?

“Whereas the skin is both borderline and contact area between inside and outside, or between the I and the Other, the voice as something external acts internally and as something internal externally, at the borderline and in contact with language and the Other. Skin and voice have mucosa. The vocal folds resemble an internal mouth. Its mucosa keep the vocal cords soft and supple, or dry and hoarse.”²

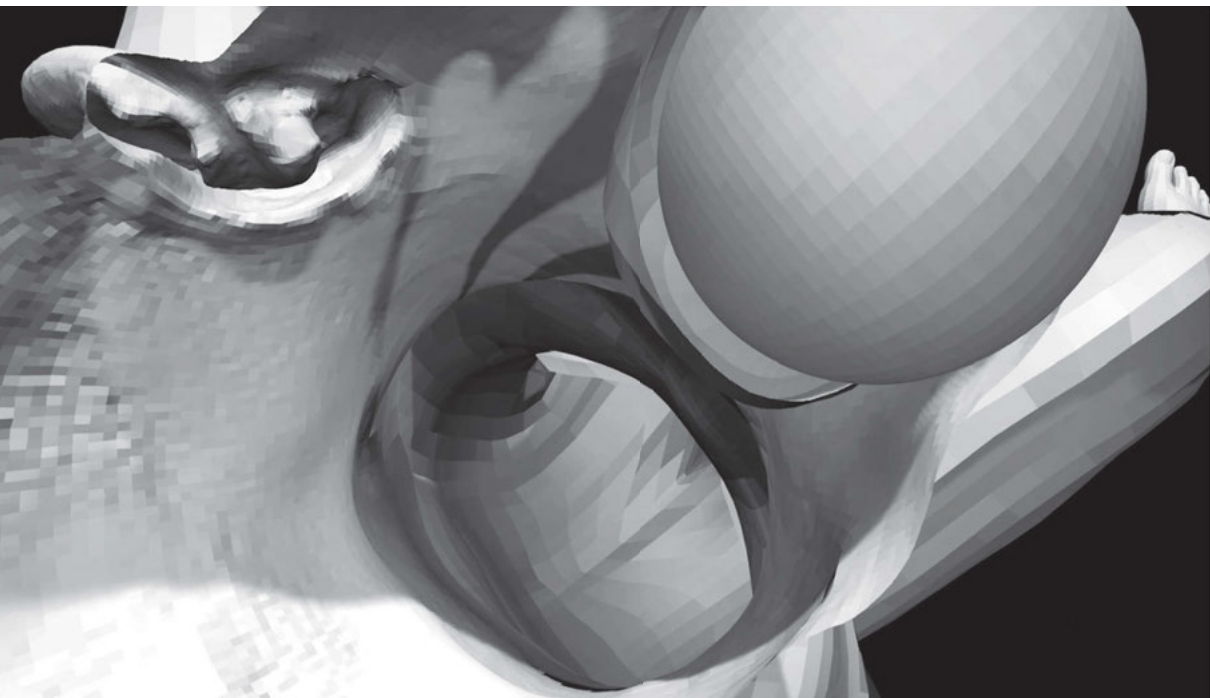


Fig. 1 *Interior view* (view of screen only, a person—not visible—moving inside one of the virtual figures. This frame shows an interior view from the approximate height of the eyes and the inner ear downwards through the torso to the bottom of the pelvis). Still from footage, Christina Jauernik.

The German word *Schleimhäute* contains the words ‘mucus’ and ‘skin’. It is described as a lining (*Auskleidung*) of several layers of tissue for body openings to the exterior, whose surfaces are moist and slippery, usually found in vertebrates and humans, such as in the oral cavity of the mouth, but also in the intestines, the respiratory tract, the sex glands and the eyelid pockets. With their slippery nature, these barriers negotiate between interior and exterior, acting as wet securing shields for viruses and bacteria. Our shared body has no openings; it is a sealed, triangulated single layer of surface of varying resolution. Head and hands have a higher number of vertices than the rest of the body. The layering occurs in the meeting of my movement with the other, the other skin carrying my

movement that no longer is mine. The notion of lining enhances the particular quality of otherness, but also of a shared physical practice. Lining as a process, as coming close through placing oneself with the other, following the curves and folds, adjusting and re-organising, furnishing: enabling each other to the unknown. Lining as covering, as coating in the ongoing negotiation of shared otherness. It is a fragile negotiation, because of the thin layer of skin separating inside and outside. Moving through these echo chambers of the shared body, it no longer seems silent.

Voicing the process of lining became an experiment during *INTRA SPACE*. Movements were recorded and the 3D



Fig. 2 *Coming Close* (Esther Balfe, Christina Jauernik during a rehearsal with two virtual figures). Still from video, hand held camera recording by Ludwig Löckinger, April 2017.

movement data then translated into frequencies. These frequencies were stored as audio files. Esther, Diane and I stand around a microphone in a sound studio, wearing headphones. We listen to the same frequencies, which are our movements. The frequencies re-enter our bodies; through breathing, sounding, vocalising, we instantly voice what enters our ears. Adding another layer of lining to the shared physical practice, our voice becomes a shared permeable, breathing, sounding body.

- 1 Clarice Lispector, *Agua Viva*, London: Penguin Classics, 2014, p. 3.
- 2 Petra Maria Meyer: 'Listen to your Skin', in: *Parole #2: Phonetic Skin*, Ed. Annette Stahmer, Cologne, Salon Verlag 2012.