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A generative refusal: body inclusive methods with racialized women in knowledge creation

ERENE KAPTANI



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 This paper illustrates the moving body's direct engagement with discursive and material spaces, as well encounters in theatre methods used in knowledge production. Body-inclusive theatre-based methods aim to address two paradoxes. First, the racialised and gendered body in feminist epistemology is often theorised without the body being actively engaged in the methods that produce its theorisations, and therefore neither are body-inclusive methodological practices. This has an impact on feminist epistemologies as corporeal modes of existence, such as lived experiences, self-definition and agency require the presence of and an engagement with the moving body. This knowledge project offers another way of being in knowledge acquisition. It recognises that research often refuses the agency and personhood of the 'researched', and it also sets limits on epistemologies (Tuck 2009; Ng 2018; Salami 2020). There is an epistemological refusal taking place in this theatre practice: through the enactment of lived experiences with an aim to transform them; a non-binary way of making meaning of them; creativity as a process of becoming anew; and activating the agency driven human body. In this practice, racialised and migrant women explore their subjugated bodies through kinaesthetic means, namely with, from, and through their bodies. The co-creators explored the playfulness and creativity of their bodies through theatre games, living images and the creation of Physical and Forum Theatre performances (Boal 1992/2005; Lecoq *et al.* 2000) linked with the experience of having a female, racialised, migrant and othered body.

Keywords: creative refusal, moving body, racialised encounters, acts of removal, theatre methods, co-creation

Erene Kaptani, School of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, University of Greenwich, The United Kingdom. E-mail: e.kaptani@gre.ac.uk

Introduction

This paper identifies gaps and proposes embodied creative alternatives of Refusal in feminist and decolonial methodology. This practice combines Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias' (2000) corporeal pedagogy with Boal's (1992/2005) Forum Theatre. In the first the focus is on the body as an agent of creative action and in the second on reflection and social transformation. This thesis emphasises the sensuous and implicit knowledge the body carries and the importance of being immersed in this knowledge experience for all involved (O'Neill *et al.* 2002). This methodology suggests attention, through the moving body (Kaptani 2021a), rather to or on the body as a static object (Csordas 1993 in Gillies 2004). The author illustrates her contribution to personal and social knowledge both for researchers and cocreators through examples from her theatre practice with racialised young women in Arts Catalyst centre in London, as part of her PhD research in the University of Greenwich. Theatre and movement practice in research (Kaptani & Yuval-Davis 2008; Kaptani 2021b) is a practice of Refusal (Tuck & Yang 2014a; Simpson 2017; Dutta 2022; Emejulu & van der Scheer 2022) as activates the co-creators' muscles of desire where their bodies move to change oppressive situations in life, as well as in knowledge production. Co-creators refuse the current reality of oppression by saying no, while they say yes to something else (Tuck & Yang 2014a; McGranahan 2016) practised collectively in Forum Theatre embodied interventions of their lived experiences (Kaptani & Yuval-Davis 2008). This resistive knowledge project offers another way of being in knowledge acquisition. It recognises that research often refuses the agency and personhood of the 'researched', and it also sets limits on epistemologies (Grosz 1993; Tuck 2009; Ng 2018; Salami 2020; Kaptani 2022). The author argues that one of the main limits is the omission of the intersectional body as a co-creator in knowledge production, and seeks to reinstate it through theatre-based methods. The moving body in theatre-based knowledge creation is specific and lived rather than universal and contemplative. The foundations of participatory theatre processes (Kaptani 2021a) reclaim female, classed and racialised bodies as creators of knowledge, rather than as sources of negative difference. This paper proposes refusals of the mind-body binary as an ethical frame, whereby arts-based approaches that place the moving body at the centre of their ethos become part of social research.

A methodological practice of generative refusal

The author's practice is based on Lorde's (2018, 1) methodological and epistemological statement that "The Masters Tools will never Dismantle the Master's House" in company with other feminist and decolonial scholars seeking for embodied alternatives in the present time while building collective relationships for self and social determination (hooks 1994; Ng 2018; Collins 2019). This resonates with Simpson's (2017, 245) definition of a Generative Refusal "withdraw from a politics of recognition and to instead turn inward to rebuild internally, to seek reciprocal recognition through meaningful relationships in the present". Applied to research process what matters is not the extraction of data for meeting external validation systems of recognition, but the facilitation of spaces for generating and practising Refusal. As a feminist researcher and migrant artist, I intervene to facilitate a space for knowledge creation together with the co-creators, and to transfer its applications to our everyday lives (Kaptani 2021b, 2022).

This experience of research as a Generative Refusal engages racialised and migrant women in processes of self-discovery, resistance, and reparation by exploring the interfaces between themselves and the social world through their moving bodies. Moreover, this political practice takes place outside statutory, corporate, or male driven activist settings while deploying different means for self and social transformation: intimate, creative, and emergent (O'Neill *et al.* 2019; Kaptani 2022). It is a practice of Refusal, as it activates the intersectional body's imagination, longing and creative action in a knowledge space of reparation. This knowledge process is aesthetically different as explored below in the practice sessions and discussion.

The majority of qualitative methods consist of methodological practices based on words on paper, printed images, and extractive interviews related to things that can be talked about, heard or seen rather than a practice of being felt and sensed, or of physically moving (Kaptani 2021a). I have observed

working many years in academic research that even when arts methods are used, the focus is on hearing the data or analysing them through text, thus perpetuating the hierarchical binaries of mind/body, intellectual/corporeal, and theory/practice. An evolved view from the perspective of the moving body has not developed due to the limited research available on body-inclusive methods for social inquiry in the logocentric¹ domination of knowledge production (Kaptani 2022).

Moreover, involving the moving body and action through participatory theatre makes the process more engaging and creates more curiosity for social inquiry for all involved, as it includes spatial, physical, and visual constitutive aspects of lived experiences, which are not given prevalence in social research through logocentric methods. At the same time, this decolonial frame offers a vantage point to address the Cartesian² split between mind and body, rational and irrational, which is produced by these exclusions. This is of importance as racialised and migrant women are being connected primarily with their bodies and then mind/reason based on colonial and male-dominated frames (Ahmed 2002; Puwar 2004; Almeida 2015; Thambinathan & Kinsella 2021). This colonial and patriarchal binary is transcended by foregrounding the body as a creator of knowledge, which is the aim of this study. One way to respond to and address this dominance is to place racialised, migrant female bodies at the centre of feminist epistemologies and construct knowledge through women's intersectional lived experiences (Haraway 1988; Jaggar 1989; Collins 1990; hooks 1994; Brah & Phoenix 2004; Yuval-Davis 2006). Lived experiences are socially embodied experiences, which are carried through the body. After all, knowledge is situated, which means that no knowledge comes from nowhere (Haraway 1988). This is an important critique that puts women's corporeality back in the domain of knowledge production, as embodied subjects who do not need to fit into the disembodied authority of universal and verified objectivity, forced upon them by male thinkers. Importantly, women as subjects of knowledge do not need to leave their bodies and emotions behind (Jaggar 1989; hooks 1994; Mol 2002; Almeida 2015). One of the main aims of feminist, as well as decolonial epistemology is to employ research practices that constitute racialised and migrant women as subjects of knowledge rather than carriers of data, thus producing knowledge based on their lived experiences, which can enable them to collectively reflect upon, analyse and propose interventions to address the issues portrayed in their experiences (Stanley 1990; Cahill 2007; Kaptani & Yuval-Davis 2008; Tuck 2009; Erel *et al.* 2017; Collins 2019; Fine & Torre 2019; O'Neill *et al.* 2019).

For this to happen decolonial and feminist research have to refuse proving whether racialised and minoritised women are able to produce rationality. Mignolo (2009), Fals-Borda (2001) and Collins (2019) state that new philosophical and epistemological practices of knowledge production are necessary beyond the established orthodoxy of the Social Sciences. This perspective echoes Grosz's (1993) refusal who claims that she is not interested in responding to patriarchal debates about what constitutes proper science, or in using corporeality as a complementary way of doing science. Rather, she envisages an epistemology that brings forth the corporeality of knowledge. This is due to her view that "knowledge is an active process that is mistaken for a cerebral product of ideas, rather than bodily impulses with desires and corporeality" (Grosz in Alcoff & Potter 1993, 208). The racialised, migrant and minoritised body, in the process of creation, becomes a site of reclamation of the capacities and powers which were bracketed out by a long history of oppression and dehumanisation (Kaptani 2021a).

These splits can be addressed through body inclusive theatre methods that offer the means to create embodied alternatives to these harmful realities (see the Image practice sections below). This resonates with decolonial and feminist scholars who ask for the black people to come back to their bodies and extend on their own terms (Fanon 1952/2008) and for racialized and migrant feminists to explore the body's stored oppressions (Ng 2018). Movement is a key aspect of this process of knowledge, and is part of Boal's (1979/1985) theatre exercises and Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias' (2000) corporeal theatre practice. As mentioned above, the body is viewed as holding no capacity of knowing unless it is analysed as a discursive site using cognitive and logocentric methods. On the contrary, corporeal pedagogy is based on the moving body's expression as a source of knowledge creation. The body creates 'phrases' and has a language to speak with (Murray 2003; Grant 2017). Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias' (2000) corporeal pedagogy focus on the body's inherent knowing and expressive properties through movement exercises, which can be harnessed to manifest the social world. Particular movement exercises and the use of masks support the body's ability to convey lived experiences. "Feelings, states and passions are expressed through gestures, attitudes and movements" (Lecoq *et al.* 2000, 75).

Moreover, agency, mobility and change, when experienced through the body, enable more empowered cognitive processes as well. The oppressed, suppressed, and muted mind can manifest through the body and speak (Perry 2012). Furthermore, Forum Theatre practices do not view the female and racialised body as something essential and fixed. On the contrary, the body in these practices is perceived as full of wit, agency, intelligence, and action. The subjugated and coerced body can create and through this creation become aware of and validate its forgotten skills. This resonates with Spivak's (1988) work 'Can the subaltern speak?' where voices of women outside the Eurocentric frame and location are either silenced, re-appropriated and misinterpreted by the logocentric, first world, male systems of measuring knowledge (Tuck & Yang 2014b). Responding to this, theatre practice offers a space for transformation to happen where the cocreators enact acts of refusal to the imposed removals of their capacities, creativity, and agency within processes of knowledge production. This practice of Refusal is generative as it creates different spaces of knowledge and ways of making meaning of lived experiences, as well repairing, and fostering self-definitions. This practice cannot be possible within logocentric Europatriarchal ways of creating knowledge as they omit the racialised female body's intelligence by not promoting a body inclusive creative method of knowledge. In this practice, acts of refusal were explored kinaesthetically.

The cocreators in this practice expressed and explored attachments associating Black women with aggression, a lack of feeling, and deviancy (Collins 1990; Harris-Perry 2011; Reynolds 2016; Phoenix 2022); or Muslim women with backwardness, piety or in need of saving (Mirza 2006), including Balkan women as volatile and the incomplete part of European identity (Todarova 2009). Thus, since their bodies led them to experience trouble and abuse, they had to 'separate' themselves from their corporeality (Kaptani forthcoming). A body that excluded them from participating equally in the social world, since they were born to perform ascriptions of being a black, racialised, or a migrant woman, a performativity reproduced within various oppressive rituals of exclusion (Butler 1988; Youdell 2003; Ahmed 2006; Kaptani forthcoming). There is an epistemological refusal taking place in this theatre practice: through the enactment of lived experiences with an aim to transform them; a non-binary way of making meaning of them; creativity as a process of becoming anew; and activating the agency driven human body. Racialised and migrant women explore their subjugated bodies through kinaesthetic means, namely with, from, and through their bodies. The co-creators explored the playfulness and creativity of their bodies through theatre games, living images and the creation of Physical and Forum Theatre performances (Boal 1992/2005; Lecoq *et al.* 2000; Lecoq & Bradby 2006) linked with the experience of having a female, racialised, migrant and othered body.

Furthermore, this process resisted the qualitative knowledge practices and social encounters denoted in the lived experiences of the co-creators where their mouths spoke the words but their bodies were lagging behind, thus reproducing the separation of the body from experience and knowledge. This led us to the understanding that saying the acquired and expected words while the body remains objectified will not address racialisation; neither will it lead to reparation and transformation of self or of social life. This was evidenced in the co-creators' experience of their bodies and perceptions, after the workshops, as they became more aware of their ways of moving in space as well as encountering other bodies (Kaptani forthcoming). Moreover, the co-creators experienced a transition from the reconstruction of a previously split and othered self, moving to an experience of becoming a whole and present in the space they inhabit. This enabled the co-creators to transcend binaries and a sense of negative difference, thus becoming human instead. Creation brings different fragments together in a whole, as it provides a frame that can hold things together, including opposites and contradictions (Jennings 1992). Hence, realities and notions of self can be recreated.

Racialised bodies in feminist and decolonial knowledge creation

The corporeality and emotions ascribed to racialised and minoritised women hinder them from possessing knowing capacities, as according to dominant knowledge practices these ascriptions are contrary to the production of rational judgments (Collins 1990; Grosz 1993; hooks 1994; Almeida 2015). Hence, feminist scholars have been hesitant to work with, and move beyond the body as a discursive site in order to not reinforce this objectification. At the same time, racialised bodies appear to be stuck

in a regressive and non-universal time, and thus are seen to not embody the same human qualities or valid knowledge orientations as their white counterparts (Puwar 2004; Ahmed 2006; Almeida 2015; Ngo 2019). These ascriptions support patriarchal and colonising perspectives, which offer the foundations for ideas of negative difference and exclusion and are of an ethical importance for social and research encounters. The author's body inclusive theatre practice responded to these exclusions by foregrounding the female racialised body as a reflexive actor in knowledge production (Boal 1979/1985, 1992/2005, 1995; Lecoq *et al.* 2000; Back & Puwar 2012; Erel *et al.* 2017; Kaptani 2021a). Hence, this theatre practice builds on the ethical concerns of feminist, decolonial and participatory theatre to probe the disappearance of the active, desire-driven, and resistive body, as a means of addressing the omission of minoritised female subjects' desires and interventions in knowledge production and the social world (Grosz 1993; Adjin-Tettey *et al.* 2008; Ng 2018; O'Neill *et al.* 2019). Moreover, it questioned the convictions of feminist scholars, who assert that as long as there are emancipatory perspectives, methodological approaches do not matter (Harding 1987). I argue that one cannot separate the subject matter from the form that is produced, and I seek to highlight the limitations of qualitative methods for addressing feminist and decolonial aims (Seppälä *et al.* 2021).

Feminist scholars have studied the hierarchical binaries and the objectifying operations that impact racialised and minoritised women, but they have not employed methods for including their bodies in the transformation of these objectifications, apart from drawing on discursive texts and words. In this way, the body is left lagging behind. However, racialised and minoritised women are continuously being subjected to systems of domination, which are stored in their bodies and determine the ways they can be in the world. Hence, acknowledgement of what oppression is stored in or what qualities are removed from their bodies is vital for their liberation. The disappearance of the body, which is an epistemological discourse of white male knowledge production (Grosz 1993), cannot relate to and resonate with subjugated, racialised and female bodies and there is the danger of further alienation and subjugation within existing knowledge practices (Ng 2018). Instead, there is a need to work with gendered and racialised bodies and address this subjugation. Specifically, Boal's (1979/1985) games and Image Theatre focus on the body's gestures and movements, as a means of generating knowledge and action. By doing this, an understanding regarding how systems and relations of domination are sedimented and reproduced through the body, as well as how the body can be transformed into a liberatory force, is formed. As Boal (1992 in Auslander 1994/2002, 128) states: "It is through the body and its habits that those mechanisms can be exposed". This links with Ahmed's (2006), Ngo's (2016) and Puwar's (2004) work on whiteness regarding habituated movements and reactions to non-white and migrant bodies. The latter highlights how the body both normalises and sediments gendered and racialised performances, which are neither conscious nor pre-reflexive.

This can be applied to research regarding the researcher's reflexivity. While reflexivity is a vital process in eliminating bias and addressing the deficits of extractive practices via interviews, focus groups or elicitation methods, which are constructed on these modes of knowing, still does not reduce the negative effects of extractive modes of data collection. Tuck and Yang (2014a, 223) state that "Social science often works to collect stories of pain and humiliation in the lives of those being researched for commodification". This commodification permeates feminist and decolonial research as there is the risk of participants being validated because of their precious currency of pain, which is cashed in to create the data passed on to researchers or activists to fight injustice. This operation can be ethically damaging; therefore, the question of how methods engage and situate the research participants needs to be reconsidered since this can have a disempowering impact on individuals, groups, and communities, and remove their agential capacity (Tuck & Yang 2014a).

Boal (1992/2005) and Perry (2012) use image theatre to break and decolonise social rituals of oppression, including rituals of knowledge production. Orr (in Ng 2002) refers to colonisation as attachments to oppressive ideations, alienating binaries of mind and body, and habituated ways of oppressing and being oppressed. In relation to decolonising methodologies, Ng (2018, 45) refers to an epistemological restoration of the body-spirit in knowledge-based encounters. As she states, "I am now convinced that integrating body, mind, and spirit is not only disruptive to established knowledge production conventions but is a method of decolonizing – undoing – ways in which we have come to be in the world". This study addresses this colonial and patriarchal binary in knowledge production, as

it proposes the integration of body and mind by employing body-inclusive theatre practices where participants take part as desire-driven creators. Furthermore, by doing the workshops and recruitment in a feminist and decolonial arts space outside academy we felt more comfortable to address epistemic colonisation and patriarchal modes of validation hosted by the university.

This resistive knowledge practice thus offered an experience of knowledge-making as a human right for all, rather than for the benefit of a few knowledge holders, enabling the co-creators to experience themselves and the other co-creators as humans, and addressing the aims of decolonial research praxis (Maldonado-Torres 2017).

Boal's response to this would be that by making the body more expressive, one can be in control of her body, and hence, build on her capacity to perform acts of transformation in Forum Theatre rehearsals and applied them on to real life. As Boal (1979/1985, 125) states:

He [She] will be able to practise theatrical forms in which, by stages, he [she] frees himself [herself] from his condition of spectator and takes on that of actor, in which he [she] ceases to be an object and becomes a subject, is changed from witness into protagonist.

This echoes the liberatory educator Freire's (1972) concept, embraced by race and feminist educator hooks (1994), of recreating the world as subjects, and as such we have to start from our position as subjects; otherwise, we will always be objects. In this practice, following theatre games and Image work sessions, the cocreators present short scenes based on their lived experiences of exclusion. The scenes are performed and then opened up to interventions from other people in the group. The bodies of the group members who replaced that of the 'oppressed' were physically moved to take centre stage via the emotions triggered/evoked by the unjust situation portrayed in a scene. The cocreators are transformed into spectactors here as they were crossing positional 'borders' from being audience members (witnessing an action) to becoming actors (taking action) and determining (changing) the course of action in the depicted scenario, thus offering possibilities for reflection and new action.

Racialised and gendered bodies in social and knowledge encounters

This theatre process offers the missing link in an epistemological approach to understand the moving body's direct engagement with discursive and material spaces, as well encounters in qualitative methods used in knowledge production. Hence, body-inclusive theatre-based methods aim to address two paradoxes. First, the racialised and gendered body in feminist epistemology is often theorised without the body being actively engaged in the methods that produce its theorisations, and therefore neither are body-inclusive methodological practices. This has an impact on feminist epistemologies as corporeal modes of existence, such as lived experiences, self-definition and agency require the presence of and an engagement with the moving body. Engaging the uniqueness of the cocreators' bodies as a way of creating self and social knowledge, as harnessed in this research practice, is an efficient way of making meaning of the situated self in the matrix of social relations and affective arrangement of space (Kaptani & Yuval-Davis 2008).

Therefore, Tuck and Young (2014a) suggest focusing on how spaces and encounters become racialised and gendered, rather than on individual stories of damaged or heroic bodies. Their approach removes the focus from the pained body, and instead concentrates on the space; social and intersubjective practices; as well as the perspectives and feelings of people who are present in the presented encounter. In doing so, the focus moves onto subjects who do the objectification and the discourses and practices allowing that, similar to those observed in this practice. However, my practice does not remove the pained bodies but rather enables them to become creators of knowledge and action, moving beyond the spectacle of pain to self-definition, transformation, and reparation (Kaptani forthcoming). In doing so, the analysis is already circulated among the cocreators' bodies as part of the research process and is focused on understanding phenomena through their movements and spatial arrangements, before the researcher contextualises their experiences further through theoretical concepts and generates an analytical concept that can be generalised for further studies. Throughout my resistive knowledge [projects](#) an emphasis was placed on the moving body and living images as a language for expressing and understanding lived

experiences of othering and their impact on racialised and minoritised women's sense of self and others. When the co-creators' racialised and othered bodies were immersed in the creative capacities of actors in reflection (spectators), an awareness of how they related to their bodies and inhabited spaces emerged. In particular, the oppressive and suppressive ways the co-creators related to their bodies and inhabited spaces were revealed. They created images, including bodies closed, controlled, non-extended and lagging, and subsequently reflected on them. By moving their bodies in theatre games, movement exercises and image dynamisation, the co-creators started to reflect on how the body moves in relation to the gendered and racialised power parameters of space, as well as how the spatial and social parameters reproduce racialised bodies' movements through asymmetries of power. Fanon's (1952/2008) concept of epidermalisation refers to Black people's embodied experiences where there is an imposed and internalised mode of existence by white colonial history expressed through the body's movement and implicit knowledge of the space it inhabits (Song 2017). Vera-Gray (2017) applies this to female's bodily experience in public space where the male gaze is internalised as a surveillance operation by women's bodily-self (Bartky 1990). The female body inhabits and anticipates the world, whether the male intrusion is present or not in the space. Boal's (in Boal & Epstein 1990, 2) view on this is that: "The cops (*namely oppressive forces, my addition*) are in our heads (*bodies also, my addition*), but the headquarters of these cops are in the reality. It is necessary to locate both the cops and their headquarter instance". Furthermore, the female bodily-self becomes both the source of the intrusion and its prevention, thus forming the way the world is habituated. As Vera-Gray (2017, 25) asserts: "Here female embodiment is lived as split and contradictory", a point that will also be further explored in the co-creators racialised female body habituations in the section below on dynamization of images. The female body's intentionality is blocked; therefore, the body and self are in conflict rather than in tune with their unified desires, and space is experienced as offering the potential for freedom but also as a constraint. This is an affective experience of being in the world, both for the racialised and female body. Moreover, migrant bodies experience an everyday bordering, from their experiences in institutional places and practices, to their mundane interactions (Noble 2005; Yuval-Davis *et al.* 2018; Lems 2020; Lafazani 2021). The functions of bordering that block movement do not only remain within the border control and institutional spaces but rather permeate everyday life through gestures, statements, gazes, and spatial arrangements (Noble 2005, 2008; Lafazani 2021). Ahmed (2000), in 'Strange Encounters' refers to emotions being attached to racialised and migrant bodies and shaping them as alien bodies, recreating relationships of exclusion as their bodies come too close to places and people they should not have been in contact with. Within this context, gendered and racialised bodies emerge in space and are affected by the often pre-established mechanics of space (Thrift 2004). Furthermore, spaces are built through histories and practices of inclusion and exclusion (Noble 2005; Lobo 2014; Anderson 2015; Nayak 2017). Therefore, affective intensities are not immaterial, as the forces creating intensities in these encounters are socio-political and structure the space. As a consequence, bodies respond to these spatial expectations and by working with a moving body methodology these forces can become visible.

Much more attention has already been paid to what is inscribed upon the body, rather than questions such as: What can bodies do? How do they move within encounters in public spaces? What kind of affects do these movements produce? These questions are of particular interest for this methodological practice, which examines racialised women's performances and accompanying reflections related to their experiences of gendered and racialised encounters in public spaces. In this practice, the co-creators' bodies are agents of action and knowledge creation. Within this context, the Boalian theatre influenced scholar, Auslander (1994/2002, 128) states: "The first step of this method, therefore, is to free the body, our most basic connection with material life, from the social distortions imposed upon it by oppressive ideological discourses". The second step is to see how these stored and influence our affective experience of encounters and the third to mobilize those bodies for new moves, affects, self and social realisations. After all meaning is not produced only by consciousness but by an engaged 'body subject' (Merleau-Ponty 1962). The body can produce reflection on the enacted oppressions and future alternatives (Boal 1992/2005) by intervening in transforming hegemonic performances of exclusion enacted in the lived experiences of the spectators.

These reflections connect to Boal's (1992/2005) aims, as he sought to work with the body to reveal its subjugation to oppressive social codes and rituals through its muscular atrophy, as well as its movements of resistance. Theatre spaces achieve access to these registers via their innate practices. Through habitual forms and actions that adhere to expected cultural conducts of subordination, the body loses its physical intelligence and only parts of it are used for particular social functions (Yarrow 2012). Boal (1995) refers to this as 'the mechanisation of body', and his response is to employ theatre exercises where the body can bend and extend, as well as execute different movements in the space. These exercises enable the body to sense the presence of and changes in feelings, perceptions and ways of being. By experiencing and viewing one's body differently, one is offered more possibilities to create embodied images of representing the physical and spatial elements of real situations. Boal (1995) also refers to another process: 'Metaxis'. This concept highlights that the spectator's body has the capability to be in two autonomous worlds at the same time: the image of reality she presents and the reality of the image she immerses in. When the body of the creator starts to move and acts in the reality of the image she has created, then the image becomes real, as it is always enacted in the present time. Developing the expression of these embodied experiences and processes through body-inclusive interventions in Boal's (1992/2005) Forum Theatre, a new subject can emerge, as she creates her own script in response to the image of the situation she is in. Bodies are agential and productive in a way that cannot be fully captured by normative discourses (Noland 2009).

Moreover, images are important as they depict the visual, physical, spatial, and interpersonal aspects of everyday encounters in space, which they may not yet formulated consciously and thus cannot be expressed verbally. In addition, verbal communication does not feel 'safe' for people who do not have linguistic confidence, or they feel that they do not own the spaces they inhabit (Kaptani 2021a), or do not want to take the risk of confronting cultural and group normativities (Vacchelli 2021). Images enable spectators to re/present, 'show' and communicate their lived experiences, as well as to be recognised by those who look at and share the images. The body-image creates the energy needed for the articulation of words, feelings, and ideas. It is used as a technique for group members to reflect on and interpret the different meanings of the image. The images in Theatre of the Oppressed constitute a language through the body that 'speaks' the co-creators' un/conscious and unverballed thoughts.

Generative refusal in research process through theatre practice

One of the games to start the research process is the 'Zip-Zap-Boing'. Standing in a circle one passes a sparkle by sending a clapping to the person next to her and so forth. This sparkle is called Zip and goes around the circle till Zap is added as a clapping across the circle and finally a Boing offering the chance for the person who receives a Zip or a Zap to refuse it and send it back. Boing is a refusal that isn't subtractive but a generative one. It generates different expressions and feelings including laughter, joy, guilt, and embarrassment, as well as activating another energy in the group circle. It creates an acceptance of the change of rhythm, a surprise, agency, and curiosity. This game initiates an awareness of the directions of communication between different bodies in a space. All these emotions and interactions initiate a body inclusive communication by transforming the Europatriarchal physical space of conducting research where everybody is sited and the researcher asks the questions and the 'other' (usually classed, gendered and racialised) answers. To apply Dutta's (2022, 3) phrase, "The decolonial imperative is to do away with the table altogether!" and invite other means of expression and action. Namely, to actively transform the physical and interpersonal space of research encounters.

This Generative Refusal continues with Image and Forum Theatre where the body is explored as a source of reflexive action. The person who acts is able to see herself in action (Boal 1979/1985). In the theatre workshops, participants transform into spectators (*ibid.*) by fully entering into an image of reality created by them in the research space. This does not only occur at an intellectual level but also at a physical one, as in the workshop space spectators activate their bodies by creating and intervening in the theatre images of their lived experiences to change the course of oppression and its outcomes. In this image through processes of image analysis they become aware of how their racialised and migrant bodies inhabit public spaces and what inscriptions are attached onto them. In Image Theatre

technique, the person whose experience is being processed 'sculpts' bodies in various postures and gestural expressions. In this context, bodies are placed at different proximities in the space to create an image of a real situation (Boal 1979/1985). Image Theatre as a method uses the body to generate insights concerning power relations and to encourage reflections through the group's different readings and interpretations.

During the workshops, we explored and reflected upon the movements, gestures, and arrangements of space in the exercises, images and Forum Theatre, verbally, as well as kinaesthetically. Building on inventive and creative approaches to analysing data, this study employed the analytical image exercises of Boal (1995). An image or a scene was created based on a lived experience while different image-based techniques were employed for their analysis. These included the slow movement of the co-creators' bodies; offering a focus on the different relations forming in space; creating additional images to portray how the people in the initial image were feeling or thinking; repetition of a movement and/or sentence by each character; and improvising character monologues regarding their feelings, thoughts, and desires (see analytical image techniques Boal, 1995, 113–116). These analytical processes were accompanied by group and individual direct verbal reflections on the images and their enactments. These reflections revealed a connection between their intersectional lived experiences presented in the workshop and the underpinning theoretical concepts and social discourses of racialisation explaining what took place in these encounters shared by all cocreators including the researcher.

The dynamization of images

It became evident through watching the enacted images of real experiences in the workshops, followed by the co-creators' reflections, that their bodies are produced in space through repeated *acts of removal* (Kaptani forthcoming). This became the analytical and conceptual frame for looking at these experiences as will be explored by the author in forthcoming publication. Briefly, the analytical concept of *acts of removal* links with Ahmed's (2000, 15) main argument that: "It is the very acts and gestures whereby subjects differentiate between others (for example between familiar and strange others) that constitute the permeability of both social and bodily space". *Acts of removal* are defined as gestures and actions which reproduce the body out of place. These processes of removal are emphasised as acts because they include, but are not reducible to actions. Acts are relational, emplaced, based on un/conscious decisions and a directed orientation, as well as requiring others apart from the self to become the removed objects, while forming the actors' subjectivities and self-definitions (Ahmed 2000; Isin 2008).

This analytical concept emerged from the image of Takira, a British racialised young woman's experience of a party encounter where the statement and gestures of a white male in the white space of the party, who stated that "there isn't such a thing as ethnicity, we are all people", was processed in the knowledge space of the research. The group and myself co-created an image of this encounter by placing our bodies in relation to each other in the space, and we started moving in slow motion. As a result of these movements, the co-creator who shared the experience was pushed against the wall and into the peripheries of space. One of the co-creators in the space of the image did not move at all to block the movement of the other aggressors, indicating the complicity in this removal. In the creation of Takira's image of the party encounter, the bodies moving towards her became the forces of white universalism, and she experienced its aggressive impact as her body was pushed against the wall, entrapped. In the second dynamisation, the bodies were stalking her as a source of internalised negation, since these discourses were now under her skin, and creating a sense of alienation in how she should experience herself. These created an awareness of the split and consolidated the experience of racialised and migrant 'bodies in conflict' in the spaces they inhabit, an important research finding that can be used to inform inclusion practices in institutions, public spaces, as well as group and intimate personal relationships (Kaptani forthcoming). The image workshops accompanied with mapping of spaces and movement exercise of embodying the four elements of fire, water, air, and earth then place them into the maps (Lecoq *et al.* 2000). Takira (the co-creator whose experience was) describes her experience in the particular space of the party:

Uncomfortable place is a tornado, uncontrollable, being uncertain, being blown, in an internal conflict, and fire, uncertainty of next step, do we do the fire? Do we stay? Questioning. I had to get out of the space, the air was suffocating, claustrophobic, wanted to respond but not knowing how to. (Takira, 24 March, 2019, Workshop 4).

Leo, another cocreator's experience as a Black British Caribbean young woman in a Higher Education institution was also expressed through the movement of elements. Her journey to a particular class was emotionally difficult, embodying contradictory feelings of air and fire, and expressing a sense of disorientation and ambivalence. Furthermore, her image creation of some of the white and middle-class students' use of spaces, postures, gazes, and facial expressions, which stemmed from their privileged cultural habitus, explained her insecurity in relation to her right to belong. Leo's body was regulated through her classmates' tacit microaggressions, which reproduced her previous educational experiences of powerlessness, shame, forced compliance and loss of integrity (Puwar 2004; Mirza 2006; Sue *et al.* 2008; Reay *et al.* 2010; Rollock 2012; Reynolds 2013). The physicalisation of the classmates' habitus and the spatiality of their bodies revealed particular orientations of privilege, which were initially neither perceived/registered as such by their white bodies nor by the co-creator, whose experience was shared in the research workshop prior to the kinaesthetic analysis. The knowledge of these privileges was formed in the process of the moving image when the bodies placed in the image were given particular gestures and statements. While in motion, they blocked the racialised body from being part of the classroom space and process, or from being in close proximity with the teacher. Moreover, their bodies were placed with a full future orientation, thus demarcating a forwardness in space and towards the teacher by extending their hands, proposing ideas and reinforcing their capacities while seated comfortably and with a strong backbone. Leo placed herself opposite them, legs wide open, slid on the chair, dropped her shoulders, and allowed her body to spill over the chair in a seemingly loose manner. Her way of sitting echoes Youdell's (2003) research where Black bodies' gait and movements are part of a youth subculture identity formation that is seemingly against the identity of a desirable learner in white institutions. This opposition derives from the racialised discourse of Black students' deviance in educational establishments. The classmates were initially placed in the centre and contained on the chair. They then began to move vertically or to take up space by circling the chair, leaning forward, or flocking together. They were zooming into Leo's body without any respite of sounds or words. Gestures of hostility and regulation became visible. They enjoyed their presence by holding their position on the chair while orientating towards each other and the lecturer. A forwardness, readiness, presence, expansion, and extension of their bodies was evident, as they confidently became the carriers of knowledge. This was evident when one of the students left his chair, raised his hand and reached out to the teacher with the exclamation: "I have an idea!". (Leo, 6 April, 2019, Workshop 6).

How all these performances of habitus made Leo feel was manifested in the movement session in the Image when the classmates flocked together as one body. She grabbed the chair to protect herself by placing her body behind it, and using it like a shield, with the aim of protecting herself from the flocking advancements or disparagements of her classmates' bodies. We observed a moment when she lifted the chair and was going to throw it at them. Instead, she decided to withdraw and curl behind it, a movement between anger and pulling back. These movements represent some of the reactions of excluded racialised bodies, as they go into fight or flight mode, either keeping quiet and invisible by withdrawing themselves or resisting through confrontations and thus being named either as disengaged or as 'angry women' (Youdell 2003; Rollock 2012; Reynolds 2016).

In both of the co-creators' experiences, these exclusionary discourses and habitus were expressed through patterns of encounters and habituated movements, which arranged the "geometries of power" in places where bodies are "thrown together" to respond to racialised and gendered "terms of engagement" (Massey 2005, 164–166). This has not only an impact on their movement in space but on their self-aspirations, leading to a diminished sense of self (Nayak 2007). Within this context, psychosocial removals produce a body out of place. This is manifested through an experience of a split where self-doubts and past negative experiences of othering prevent one from being in the present, as explained by Takira in her discussion of her mental doubts in places she inhabits. This connects with the emotional removal that is expressed in terms of being cut off, withdrawn or

ambivalent in Leo's experience. The bodies of Takira and Leo were pushed out and pulled away in the moving images they created and explored. Overall, the group performed and articulated a sense of disorientation, emotional strain, and directed negation as their main embodied experiences.

In the workshops, we mapped spaces where their bodies felt uncomfortable, and illustrated these feelings through the four elements of fire, air, earth, and water. These moving images make visible the tacit, bodily, and felt knowledge that corresponds to microaggressions, which most of the time are not detected through the verbal descriptions of qualitative methods, as they are corporeally habituated (Alcoff 2006; Rollock 2012). At the same time, the question of who has ownership of and a sense of belonging in space is shaped by these gestural acts of removal. Knowledge of them enhances Puwar's (2004) discursive notion of space invaders where some bodies' belonging in the space is undermined. This finding confirms that racialised and othered people's experiences, when they are voiced, cannot be doubted as they already operate in Northwest European, white, patriarchal, Christian hierarchical spaces.

In this research, the different bodily images and their activation in the living images of reality manifested the adjustments that racialised and gendered bodies have to perform in their muscles and energy fields as a result of patriarchal and white encounters in their bodily space. While they were trained to become the ideal clients of patriarchal and racialised spaces, as they could say the right words in the social spaces they inhabited, and in their encounters as students, professionals, lovers, and friends, they still felt that their bodies were lagging behind and being coerced. In addition, their bodies, rhythms, and desires were not part of the spatial geometries of power (Phoenix 2009). This highlighted that the same spaces are experienced differently depending on the ways in which bodies are situated and perceived within the discursive power dynamics, when physically actualised. In the aesthetic space of the research, they had the potential to let their guards down and to enjoy different rhythms, as subjects of movement and not as objects of removal, which they could then transfer into their everyday lives. At the same time, while the body-inclusive space of knowledge creation was a potential space for action, these bodies felt 'uncomfortable' as they were not used to practices of expansion, or letting go, spontaneous movement, trusting others, trusting the body as a site of agency and expression, letting themselves be seen by others, universalising their story, or letting themselves play. Insights were gained on ways of relating to and experiencing their bodies in everyday encounters, where their bodies became immersed in the new encounters of being and relating through games, movement exercises, images, and scene interventions. The co-creators acknowledged that their bodies were a site of oppression, stagnation and extraction and were not aware of how to move them differently before they discovered both the new pre-reflexive and reflexive capacities of their bodies.

Moreover, what was witnessed was the non-binary theorisation of knowledge formation.

It allowed me to have more space to actually receive this experience, participate and connect with the other people in the room. It's been really nice to have somebody (artist/researcher) to facilitate the movement as well. It has been so relevant to life, to everyday life. It is not often you have the opportunity and the time to reflect on things, such as race through the body. It is a totally different experience and different insight. I love dance and sports. Don't get me wrong. I love moving. But it does not go to the core, this is what I'm saying. This has been my experience of dealing with issues with the body. Dancing with the issues as opposed to just dancing and the issues are over there. To bring the two together is so fulfilling. Wholeness is what I think I am looking for with that word. (Leo, 24 April, 2019, Reflective session)

Namely, the body was reflected upon as a source of self- and social knowledge, as seen in the images, but was also produced through the active involvement and analysis of knowledge. This study evidenced that co-creative methods enabled a process of theorising with research participants. Therefore, such methods should be adopted and explored broadly in social research and pedagogy.

Risks of creative practice in academic research

While this practice activates collective agency and creation when applied within academic parameters there is a risk of extraction and commodification (Tuck 2009). A different academic practice for research and dissemination also needs to be explored and trialled, as while participants become co-

creators in the data collection phase, they run the risk of being objectified in the oral or visual presentation of research. This requires an innovative research design where more resources and opportunities are provided to facilitate the dissemination phase and to continue the body-inclusive, transformative, and reparative work of the research. Hence, a view of research methods as a process and lived experience with longer temporality and spatiality in the research process will enhance this application. In this context, there is a need for more reflexive insights or publications to explore opportunities and challenges for integration between arts and academic practices from the artist's situated view. By attending to these issues, future research practice can address the relationship between these two practices.

Conclusion

This paper showed how knowledge produced through body inclusive theatre methods can be beneficial for feminist and decolonial research as these methods challenge extractive forms of research while transforming researchers and researched to cocreators of knowledge. Moreover, these methods expand the capacities of social research by creating a reparative lived experience. Racialized women expand their self-determination and awareness against the insidious attachments of negative difference on their racialized and migrant bodies. They illustrate the tacit, visceral, spatial, and non-verbal encounters of microaggression enacted in white patriarchal and neo-colonial spaces.

It showed that in feminist and decolonial research methods, investigations should combine knowledge and reparation. It is important when working with racialised and minoritised people to include them as co-creators. This can happen when racialised and non-racialised bodies are visible and take part holistically in producing knowledge together. This cannot happen if methods continue to be seen as merely tools, rather than as reparative, agential, and holistic/non-binary processes. Anything less than that will not fulfil the aims of feminist and decolonial knowledge production. In this process, practice and theory informed and mutually influenced one another. The practice sought to incorporate body-inclusive methods, as the body is a specific and unique aspect of creative praxis. In this way, the body becomes an act of refusal to the universal exclusion of racialised bodies in hegemonic knowledge production. This resonates with one of the co-creators' insights: "The creation of a new research method like this, is how we are going to observe ourselves through our body and our mind, because they are connected, and if anyone thinks it's disconnected, I think it's doing a great injustice to the way that we are operating as human beings." (Lerife, 15 April 2019). The reflexive and agential capacities of racialised and migrant bodies, in the potential knowledge and action space of body-inclusive theatre, can repair damages and affirm intelligence by experiencing our bodies as desire-driven and whole.

Notes

¹ Logocentric practice is based on the binaries of mind and body, rational and irrational. A typically unconscious interpretive bias which privileges linguistic communication over the revealingly named 'nonverbal' forms of communication and expression, and over unverballed feelings; logocentrism privileges both the eye and the ear over other sensory [modalities](#).

² Descartes' (1637–1641) philosophy, which promotes a dualism of mind and body. In Descartes' conception, the body is a physical and mechanical object, and therefore cannot contribute to knowledge of the world it inhabits, unless it is used as an unanimated object for examination by the mind. "It is certain that I am really distinct from my body and exist without it" (Descartes in Grosz 1994, 6). The mind can control and make meaning of the self and social world, in contrast to the body, which has no part to play in meaning-making. The separateness of mind and body, where the mind articulates a human ability, and the body is a merely material object, created the belief that only the mind can be a reliable and value-free source, hence ensuring validity and objectivity in the production of scientific knowledge. This belief has deeply penetrated the social sciences. Furthermore, it has created an asymmetry between mind and body, as it dismisses anything to do with corporeality; hence, the mind is not corporeal (Jaggar 1989; Grosz 1993).

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