The Inappropriable: On Oikology, Care, and Writing Life

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Abstract
This article thinks epistemological and methodological approaches to work (and to ‘work/life balance’) that take deeply into account the choreographic and temporal shifts, the disruptions, the sideways movements of thought, that come with parenting in an economy in crisis. Obliquely rearticulating the ‘work/life balance’ dyad to better think performative productivity in terms of oikological investments, the article performs another economy of writing and care. Engaged in what I call ‘plastic critique,’ the article moves and morphs as it proceeds through readings of critical texts in the history of thinking governmentality, care of self, home, and ‘contact.’ Not only ‘performative,’ the article also thinks how to enact intimacy within the space of the page, engaging in a method of writing that offers a careful, vulnerable critical praxis. Aware of the current crisis of professional labor in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the article takes a longer view of issues of gender and emotional labor while seeking directly to speak through these challenges from a politically situated perspective: within the interstices between moments of work and play.

Keywords: care; oikonomy; homework; parenting; work/life balance; choreography; intellectual labor

Communication itself destabilizes, by either disrupting or imitating the ‘fixed form’ (of structure, poetic and social) which thus is negative space by being an ‘open’ secret.

—Leslie Scalapino, Objects in the Terrifying Tense Longing from Taking Place

Leslie Scalapino writes, “If we ourselves are objects in the terrifying tense, our writing reflects the object of oneself. It reflects back the object seen through ‘their’ eyes to ‘them.’” (66). What is it to be oneself an object like this ‘in the terrifying tense’? Certainly, one experiences terror at times, a sort of brink, kairos, the world teetering, an opening, breath, something else that emerges, time; and so to write this is to shift the structures of the writing, inevitably; otherwise the frame remains, and it is the frame we are seeking, I think, to disrupt; to make battle with; or in any case to reflect back, to see.

Arguably, there is a ‘diffractive methodology’ at play, what I also like to think of as plastic critique, after Catherine Malabou, Karen Barad; what ‘plastic
critique’ offers is a manner of working the unfolding text / writing as epigenetic formation, a plasticity that arises within friction zones, as textual moments and writings, interlocutors, friends are set into adjacency within the act of working-through. So if Barad writes, “the diffractive methodology that I propose stands in stark contrast to some of the more usual modes of scholarly engagement that aim to ‘bridge’ the humanities and natural sciences” (Barad, Meeting the Universe 93), and if she quotes Gloria E. Anzaldúa writing that “bones often do not exist prior to the flesh” (qtd. in Barad, “Diffracting Diffraction” 174), the present writing envisages such figures of thought to be co-constitutive of epigenetic entanglement.¹

This thinking, this method, springs out of concurrent concerns: longstanding conversation with dancer and choreographer Russell Maliphant around fascia, filaments that blur the boundaries between flesh and bone and skin; fascination with ways this other anatomy provokes rethinking how we ‘organize’ our work, bodies and lives as zones of enmeshment, continua, rather than as hard borders, superstructure and detail; increasing urgency and despair around the supposed work/life ‘balance’ institutions compel us excellently to perform, while ‘they’ make any actual balancing improbable, impossible, violent and debilitating; concern with writing and writing-life, as well as form-of-life, practices that emerge – I think of disciplinarity as meeting askēsis, understood with Michel Foucault and the early Stoics as ‘therapeutic’ philosophy in a way, not academic but a practice of life, ‘training’ in living, ethically and in the interrogative mode, taking self (and others) as occasions for wonder, and so as interminable also, open to the unfolding.²

I did not think I would offer a preface to this writing in this way; there is always some hope the writing can ‘speak for itself,’ as it were, but it is also perhaps preposterous to think this, as the writing tautologically only speaks, writes; when we are doing the speaking (writing), what takes place was and is act and event; it has form. “All occurs on the same level at once” (Scalapino 55), the form and the function, the frame and that which is enframed. To the extent that this is choreographic, an unfurling within thoughtful life, a set of entanglements and plasticities, I offer these notes as a kind of warning or reflection ahead of and alongside. This is not meant as explanation, rather a membranous hold, nearly frame; a situated politics of work; wish to attune to the rhythmic, ethopoietic ontogenesis that thoughtful life takes within domestic space, within the intimacy and vulnerability of writing as an act of gentle and perhaps gnomic resistance to the performativities of academic life.³

At the same time, I hope, within this intimacy, there is what Giorgio Agamben sees as the “inappropriable,” something that cannot be translated into other terms; occurs within the occurrence; he writes of intimacy as what is strictly “inappropriable” (Use of Bodies 91-93). In an ethopoietic sense, perhaps this requires that language (as intimacy, breath) becomes an act of resisting appropriation, assimilation towards formal norm. Language is not transparent, the thing
with which one works – as tool – but life, forming; a politics of vibrant life; a body politics, thus, within the quietude and cry of a speaking mode. Like all habits, writing is a manner of articulation that is choreographically entrenched; it has its patterns, ways of moving or sitting still – but with sufficient will or wish, it might be retrained: askēsis, philosophy as a practice in care, in thoughtful life, thus therapeutic, without blame, attentive to what there is to come, within dialogue, listening, hearing, querying, the terrifying object longing. Not analysis seeking the primal wound necessarily, or this, yes, fine, but within openness to that which is arising, rising, grounding. This archives a moment and it does nothing of the sort; the moment has washed away, or in the flux of emergence it leaves grit and grain: “The event (disc) is the occurrence. The form is the occurrence. / They’re at the rim washing together” (Scalopino 78).

A senior colleague said in a meeting on gender equality in the workplace some years ago that it was nobody’s business whether a colleague was a single mother or not. I can’t remember the words exactly, but this sentiment stayed with me. That this was a man saying this also felt really significant; a very tall and very solidly careered man who has since moved on. I am writing this as a ‘single mother.’ This is significant, not least at a time when submissions to academic journals from women colleagues have plummeted in the context of the COVID-19 situation, but the significance is not limited to that. What the current crisis allows is seeing flat to our faces what has always been here – the tenuousness of ‘work/life balance’ and discourse. Somehow, it takes on another urgency now; one that is right here. It’s not something that happens ‘over there’ anymore, after hours; our hours bleed and mesh.

There is also with this a measure of shame, mixed with hope. When lockdown hit, a good friend and I spent hours, as we could, imagining the new paradigm that might emerge – and still may. Something like a new order emphasizing, recognizing, not as contingent, but central, the affective economy or oikonomy, an oikonomy of care; that productivism debilitates this; that ‘home’ is complex and to be safeguarded, not the frame, perhaps, but something like a foreground. This shift would recognize the unfathomable (or all too often unfathomed) labor that goes into the everyday practice of nurturing life, learning, mopping up; holding emotional space. This agenda has been long at the forefront of activist feminist politics, however sexed, from the Precarias a la Deriva to Wages for Housework, where the goal is not to eliminate motherhood, parenthood, house or ‘home,’ but to reinscribe these into a political economy that allows for material re-enfranchisement. And there was also something more – something that did not confine this to gender, entirely. So many people were now at home, in different ways, often still very gendered,
finding themselves in the thick of another order of housework, what Sara Ahmed incisively calls *homework*: that which we are meant to bring home, that which can only take place *at* home. ‘Homework’ for Ahmed “is quite simply work you are asked to do when you are at home, usually assigned by those with authority outside the home.” She adds, “[w]hen feminism is understood as homework, it is not an assignment you have been given by a teacher, even though you have feminist teachers. If feminism is an assignment, it is a self-assignment. We give ourselves this task. […] I am suggesting feminism is homework because we have much to work out from not being at home in a world.” And further, “We have to bring feminist theory home because feminist theory has been too quickly understood as something that we do when we are away from home (as if feminist theory is what you learn when you go to school)” (7-8). Much of what is ‘home’ and ‘not home’ has shifted, for nearly everyone, in very different ways; healthcare workers are not at home, and then come home; workers cleaning in a COVID ward are not at home and then come home; those who can afford to stay home, stay home; those who shield, are home within the tyranny of invisibility, the tyranny of another order of being alone, at ‘home’; for them, for many, there is lockdown as prison, or else for those fortunate enough, as recreational space of rest and recuperation, of gardens and whatnot.

When I write that I feel shame, this is because the stakes have shifted very little. What can take place now – sort of – is acknowledgment that one is home, that home is present within one’s workspace. One cannot anymore neatly divide this, if there is a division to be made (if one’s ‘home’ is populated by other people one cares for, for example). When I cannot make a 2-4 pm Faculty TEAMS meeting because I need to pick my daughter up from ‘Crazy School 2’ at 2:50 on the nose to comply with safety regulations, and there is no measure of flexibility with this (rightly so), and there is no childcare to speak of, and her father is in a zone not involved with this now, what do I say? I’m sorry, I cannot quite make the meeting because I have to pick my daughter up; and so you scoot in for half an hour at the start, half an hour at the end, if there is not some emotional tending to do with snacks and such. Or there is a meeting at 3, and you come in half an hour late. But who do you say this to? There are forty people on the call; everyone is anonymous. At home, within the home space, there are Legos everywhere, there is a piece of Lego missing. How to listen in to that other thing? Someone on a screen while everyone else on mute is trying frantically to pick up another sort of situation. And yet, the shame comes from not quite feeling it is entirely okay that one is in this alone, this very much on one’s own. Shame that this household fell apart. I have said I could do it; I can. Is this shameful? I might have been
stronger, said no I cannot. Is there a choice? But I am lucky that I can, and it has been joyous; enormously full of love and affirmation. With lockdown also, all this becomes more complicated – the zones of contact, what Mary Louise Pratt calls “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other” (34) but also “ground rules for communication across lines of difference” (40)… I am distracted reading Pratt’s PMLA article, the address she gave to the Modern Language Association in 1991. What grabs my attention is her framing the article, the address as a mother; she opens with a full-page anecdote about her son and baseball cards, before writing / saying, “However, I was not invited here to speak as a parent, nor as an expert in literacy.” (The anecdote about the baseball cards involved finding, for the boys, a use of literacy.) “I was asked to speak as an MLA member working in the elite academy. In that capacity my contribution is undoubtedly supposed to be abstract, irrelevant, anchored outside the real world. I wouldn’t dream of disappointing anyone. I propose immediately to head back several centuries to a text that has a few points in common with baseball cards and raises thoughts about […] new visions of literacy” (33). She then proceeds to perform an extraordinary feat of virtuosic academic analysis of some Peruvian history that my eyes glaze over entirely. They jump back into focus later on in the address, where she speaks of the classroom, quotes from her fourth-grade son’s slightly humorously subversive response to an assignment (‘homework’), none of which, she points out, was picked up on by the teachers, who dutifully counted the task assigned completed and gave it a star; and rush to the conclusion, which I realize has to do with multiculturalism in the 1990s (38-39). Pratt is clearly being sly when she suggests that of course no MLA member in their right mind would invite her to speak about parenthood; the fine-line drawings of Peruvian kings illustrate something far more erudite – and indeed the anecdote that opens the talk serves on some level to draw her audience in, setting her off her pedestal (slightly) as merely another person, human, parent, thinker, teacher, while also subtly doing just the sort of humorous critique her son has done with his assignment. Does anyone pick up on this? We dutifully give her talk a star, which is to say that we cite the wonderfully productive concept – the ‘contact zone’ again and again, sidelining what she is also offering here.

Audre Lorde, in her address to the MLA in 1977, was more direct with the politics of life as such, within the academic setting; less than two months before her speech, she had been told she would have to have breast surgery, with a 60- to 80-percent chance the cancerous tumor was malignant. It turned out the growth was benign, but as she remarks, the interim period provoked for her a shocked attunement to the meaning of her life. She also quotes her daughter: “my daughter, when I told her...
of our topic and my difficulty with it, said, ‘Tell them about how you’re never really a whole person if you remain silent, because there’s always that one little piece inside you that wants to be spoken out, and if you keep ignoring it, it gets madder and madder and hotter and hotter, and if you don’t speak it out one day it will just up and punch you in the mouth from the inside’” (“Transformation” 3). I return to this very brief address again and again and again, these days – these years. Lorde writes: “In the cause of silence, each of us draws the face of her own fear – fear of contempt, of censure, or some judgment, or recognition, of challenge, of annihilation. But most of all, I think, we fear the visibility without which we cannot truly live.” She is speaking as a Black lesbian poet, “a Black woman warrior poet doing my work – come to ask you, are you doing yours?” She writes, “And of course I am afraid, because the transformation of silence into language and action is an act of self-revelation, and that always seems fraught with danger” (3). This is where her daughter comes in, and the anecdote relieves us, shows us a way forward; if you don’t speak, your anger comes out and punches you in the mouth from the inside. What does not make its way into the public sphere becomes like a tumor, becomes a growth, a violent agitation. We are all sick, exhausted, trashed, numb, debilitated; in various states of collapse. The pandemic felt to me at least, initially, like a global sick-leave.

What does an affective oikonomy look like? First of all, we have to reinterrogate the language of economy, and return it to its partial roots, towards the oikological, what has to do with the management of the household; of course, this had a largely patriarchal structure in the patrician sense: the notion of a ‘head of the household’ mapped onto a ruler or king. But there is another way in which we can read this, which has to do with what Agamben points out also indicates “praxis, administrative and executive activity” (“Kingdom 35). This is complicated, because managing a household – engaging with Mrs. Beeton’s Household Management, for example, or any number of rule and instruction books and manuals and cookbooks for ladies of the home – also suggests wifely ways, the setting of a dinner plate, the practice of pickling or overseeing staff or else mopping up where there is nothing like staff in sight for miles.” In attempting to write this paragraph, I find myself winding my way back towards the megaron, the living quarters. I don’t think this is quite the time or place for theology. As Ahmed writes, there are practices of citation also; there is a politics of citation (15-17). These practices and politics are habits of mind, and they call forth real and imagined readers: just as Pratt assumes that her audience at the MLA conference in 1991 had no desire whatsoever to hear her speak as a mother (rightly or wrongly, in that case), so,
too, here I can, must, become aware that there are habits of reading and citing and that this is what we are breaking too, reconfiguring; reading everything that is not quite on the page, as in the case of Pratt. Or what is there but comes to be glossed over. The thing about being a single mother, for example, being ‘nobody’s business.’ The question here is what is this ‘business’ and whose is it? What is the business of writing, of academic teaching and reading and writing work? What falls out of the frame?

One of the books I managed to have had shipped to me in the thick of lockdown was Lora Romero’s *Home Fronts: Domesticity and its Critics in the Antebellum United States* (1997). I have been finding myself surrounding myself by this thinking on home, home space; the reference to the ‘megaron’ comes from Arendt, whom I was reading intensively long before lockdown hit (71n78). All of this whirling to the surface. Also the zones of interlocution – yesterday, on a long call with the research manager for a large project with the Russell Maliphant Dance Company, we find ourselves commiserating, bonding really, over the seeming impossibilities of caring life within work zones. That there is a sense of returning to the 1950s, that women are still doing the caring work, even in households with two high-hitting parents. That groups are springing up, Dance Mama and Parents in the Performing Arts; that none of us can work out how to do all of this at once. That it was already the case, and now all the more so – or else we can participate remotely, with cameras off, mopping up crumbs or cries in the background. What Helen was saying in this conversation was the sense that this is what we all – dancers, performing artists, managers, academics, what have you – need to be hearing and talking about. The ‘topic’ of our conversation, the research project, could not be separated from this. I had said I would work on affective economy and body politics, new anatomies for work/life, a kind of genealogy of therapeutic approaches to mind/body health, to query mind/body language, its persistence in ‘health’ and ‘wellbeing’ discourse today. That there is a history to ways our ‘bodies’ are understood for working with, that there is a long history with theories of stress and fatigue. That it is impossible, really, to think anything else. At the same time, even thinking that is too much, it becomes (as with Pratt’s anecdote) very close to home; we hang up when our kids are hungry. As we were speaking, I found the missing Lego bottoms gently stuck in some paint on a cardboard panel; my daughter was busy testing out the length of range with her bow and arrow. She found masking tape and set this carefully around the floor. Russell Maliphant himself, usually rushing around, like all of us, making work all over the world, in the studio, intensely creating or co-creating, was taking a breath, slowing down. Was there a way to think, to write this? That it is
not accidental, the conditions we find ourselves in, but that this is what there is to say, to write. Something like a questioning what it means to be within ‘health’ and ‘public health’ and what is properly therapeutic and also what is it to think sustainability within dance, a dancer’s body, also a writer’s, at a desk. This paragraph has wound all over the place; it is unwieldy. The thoughts are jumbled, tumbling, as I toggle between the book-learning on the desk and the memory of this recent call.⁸

Romero offers a searing critique of patriarchal modes of housekeeping in reading Harriet Beecher Stowe against the grain both of first-wave feminist treatments of Uncle Tom’s Cabin and her own understanding of her work. For Romero, Uncle Tom’s Cabin suggests domesticity operates “as resistance to a patriarchal educational system designed to prepare young women for the marriage market. Out of a critique addressing middle-class women’s oppression, […] Stowe assembled the materials of her abolitionism.” “[S]ocial housekeeping” in this novel “[reflects] intensifying educational and medical concern with the health and welfare of middle-class women and girls.” As Romero points out, what matters here is not the radical alterity of a system supposedly set against the grain of oppression, but a granular resistance bound up in biopolitical relations. “[A]bsorption and abstraction” simultaneously work on Stowe herself, “[structure]” her private letters on housekeeping from the late 1830s and 1840s, Romero argues, a “conflict [that] communicates the impact of the hygienist component of domestic ideology upon Stowe’s interpretation of her own hysteria. These letters suggest that Stowe believed that she had a tendency to become absorbed in the physical details of domestic work and that, in order to recover from her illness, she needed to develop a household system, a domestic economy, to abstract herself from ‘minutiæ’” (Romero 70-73).

“Working hard” for Stowe becomes obsession with details, dark spaces, closets, cupboards, within which ever more dust might be gathered, we may imagine, or sheets folded. “Details” need to be bound up in “system and order” (74; qtd. in Stowe 111, 101, 92); for Romero, “[s]ystematic household organization, symbolizing the housewife’s control over otherwise unorganized physical details, represents Stowe’s attempt to imagine household labor as something more than manual labor. Expressing a rejection of absorptive domestic vision, Stowe’s hysterical blindness answers her fear of being reduced to ‘but a mere drudge with few ideas’” (74; qtd. in Stowe 92). In fact, Romero points out, Catherine Beecher, like Stowe, “translates external multiplicity, the myriad of household details, into internal fragmentation, hysteria” (74). “[P]roperly systematic housework” would exercise the brain just as it would the “nerves of motion” (Beecher
qt�. in Romero 74; Beecher 111), achieving a balance that would lead to health and happiness. According to Beecher, Romero writes, “domestic economy maintains bodily economy by encouraging women to exercise their will over physical details. In narrowing the gap between mind and body, domestic economy enhances subjectivity and thus combats hysteria” (Romero 76).

Significantly, what I have found engaging in more ‘homework’ than usual over the past few months – at least, spending more time doing homework with my daughter (home learning), caring for her while working (or not) during afternoons that would otherwise have involved a fair bit more time away from the home – has involved an intensification of ‘wellbeing,’ a sense of subjectivity wrapped up into the co-constitutive relational matrix of now-time, one could say. A dear friend just last night (at the time of writing) sent a message to say it was a gift to be able to offer something; we had had a long conversation (as we do often), during which I had spilled out all sorts of anxiety and worry about vulnerability, about my institution, about work, about care; about the friction between a previous life of running around, flying all over the place, working too much, then the relative paradise of lockdown, during which everything slowed, and now this very discomfiting return to something that is attempting increasingly to look like normal but never reaches it quite – nor should it, I think. What struck me was how this friend was grateful, as they so often expressed, to be able to engage in the co-constitutive work, life, of care; the hearing and responding, receiving what I had to say. The sense this left me with was that, within this relational matrix, what I have elsewhere called a vibrant affiliation, there is something that so far exceeds the domestic details of work and ‘life’; that so far exceeds the dyad, or its splitting; that ‘family’ and ‘home’ run all over the place, affiliating and reaffiliating; that these pockets, or nodes, or villages, these duos and trios and pods of one or more constitute life forming, and when thoughtfully worked through, constitute ‘work’ also – not in the sense that one thought; perhaps this is the case, anyway, here, within my privileged space of emotionally thickened, I think, intellectual labor; the sense of needing to expand the scope and feel the edges, too.

That perhaps this is what so many discovered with a shock, with slowing down; what makes going ‘back’ impossible, nearly. What makes trying to articulate the gap between these zones of discourse and practice so pressing, difficult, fearsome. So if Beecher and Stowe were alike concerned with gaining control over the proliferating details of household work by creating systems that allowed for mental absorption (“brain-work” [Beecher 111; qtd. in Romero 74]), what the current moment offers maybe is a manner of attending to care as constitutive of maternal being (or pa-
ternal being) away from the strictures of perpetual performativity. If the management systems of our universities and other places of work compel constant presenteeism, hyperproductivity, and hypertrophic mechanisms of surveillance and control – what Jean-François Lyotard foresaw in 1979 (around the time of Lorde’s address) as the “legitimation of research on account of its performativity,” i.e., its capacity to demonstrate an increase in the administrability of proof, and therefore of truth-value, or rightness (the more something can be determined as provable through administrative means, the more accurate or useful it is as research, the more legitimate it becomes because its value can be performed, administered) – then perhaps now shoves us gently into the backstage space, where there can be nothing proved; the intimate as inappropriable. This does not mean work becomes this, but perhaps we remember what else there is to live. Nicholas Luhmann, Lyotard argues, understood that postindustrial societies replace normativity by performativity – the performativity of procedures. The more something can be shown (demonstrated) as applicable or provable by means that can be administered, the more value the work gains. Normativity is not even the measure, but administrative performance (Lyotard 76).10 The problem is when we derive our own sense of ‘value’ this way. A sort of ecstatic commingling of empty reward systems and what appears as obstacle, sometimes; I am not suggesting this always to have been the case, only noting an increasingly pressurized, capitalized-upon trend – what Nikolas Rose has recognized as the imperative to find ‘self-fulfillment’ in the workplace, as commandeered by occupational therapists in the interwar period.11 This emerges to the detriment of our sources of happiness within the megaron, the comparatively darkened space of home, the walk in the park, what have you.

I was completing my ‘Performance Development Review’ just the other day, an annual exercise in performativity measurement; we were told this year would be ‘light touch’ on account of COVID-19, but I am never too sure. As above, where ‘contact zones’ become zones of no contact, zones of impasse, so, too, the university does not really do ‘touch’ in a light way. We are all already threatened of furlough, or early retirement, or cut programs, or failing faculties, and pay-freezes are in effect; what would ‘light touch’ mean in this context? Still, implicitly trusting my colleague doing this exercise with or for me in this case, I found myself rattling off the hundred thousand things I had somewhat miraculously managed to accomplish (to perform, to do) this year, and finding myself suddenly at ‘Individual Development Plan’ announcing that my aspiration was to ‘work less.’ This was in a section titled ‘Development Goal,’ and sub-headed, ‘What do I want/need to learn?’ Well, genuinely, I want and
need to learn to work less. What the institution can do to support this is to stand by the ‘axioms’ that are announced, which go on about wellbeing and service and this and that; making the world a better place. I shuddered, a day after, panicked, thinking, ‘What have I done?’ Thankfully, none of this would go on any record yet – though I had written brashly that I would exercise ‘fearless speech,’ that this was part of my ‘aim’ and such in life, to be fearless (like Lorde, like Foucault, whose thinking about frank or fearless speech, *parrhēsia*, I have written about and spoken about intensively over the past few years). That this was one of the ways I might support and mentor junior colleagues, students, caught in the same cogs of hyperperformativity. And here I was chickening out. This was partially what had provoked the call to the hearing-friend alluded to earlier. So I rewrote the section, displaying all the grand things I would do – the research strands, the institution-building, and stopped just short of articulating this in my email to this colleague, feeling shame that I had stepped back from my promise boldly to speak about and to practice a healthier and saner sort of ‘work/life balance,’ that this was a matter of equality and diversity and rights.

What the form confronted me with was the granularity of resistance: the way that we might well imagine a better world emerging, this economy or oikology of care, this greater attention to the ways that our lives are governed, filled, with people needing love and attention, a hand with their own *homework*; and the foreboding sense that the ‘institution’ was not ready to deploy what it said it would, to practice what it ever so brashly preaches. Perhaps we are all in this boat, finding it is imperative, and difficult, to move on.

I began to write a ‘Manifesto for an Economy of Care’ some time ago, when lockdown hit, thinking through some of the conversations with this friend; we had thought we might do something of the sort, this was to be a start. It seems perhaps worthwhile reproducing this here:

**Manifesto for an Economy of Care**

1. The current pandemic is not a matter of virology only, but an entire social and political and economic system that is falling apart. What the virus shows is that we do not have enough support for the vulnerable; that all of this support structure has been cut.
2. It is not sufficient merely to shore up national healthcare systems, but entirely to rethink the way we live our social, political, and economic lives. This means that health has to be understood as the bedrock of our lives, and not as something that can be tacked on after.
3. We mean by ‘health’ not just the vitality of the neurobiological system, but an entire system of emotion and affect also: anxiety,
fear, are all part of the ‘health’ systems of our lives. They affect our immunity, and they affect our ability to thrive.

4. ‘Work’ has been taken as central to the economic productivity – the productivism – of the capitalist paradigm, at the expense of ‘private’ life. We are calling for a shift towards an economic culture that protects the family home, however it may be construed: of same-sex, opposite-sex, multi-generational, single, or whatever sort.

5. ‘Private’ life is vital and necessary for allowing thoughtful, caring life. This means …

I trailed off at point ‘5,’ likely because of an interruption, I can’t recall. And indeed the point is that life is fragmented, full of the sort of fragmentation and absorption and abstraction that Romero, and Stowe, and Beecher, point towards.

When I set out to work with the Russell Maliphant Dance Company on anatomy, and fascia, and health, and dancers’ lives, and training, I did so because I was interested to think how we might reimagine the structure of the ‘body’ as a living tissue, a histological continuum, something that does not separate between flesh and ligament and bone. This is one of the insights of ‘fascia’ theory, understandings that have been widespread among practitioners of Rolfing and other body-mind or physical therapists for decades, and are only in the past decade becoming more widely accepted within the medical world.12 What this other body model (this other bodily economy) offers is a non-hierarchical set of living entanglements, at the level of the tendrils that make us up; if we do not separate what might be a substructure from a superstructure or from skin, I thought – and think – then perhaps we might deploy this as a working structure or system, or anti-system for rethinking how we organize our lives, to the extent that bodies become metaphors for, or models for, social and political groupuscules. Thus, if the manual therapist and the hand surgeon and the dancers and the teacher and the research manager are all within a histological continuum, then this is another kind of authoritative body, another mode of generating knowing and sense. This has to be reflected in the form of the essay, the writing, the manner of articulation, so that we do not have quite the same hierarchies of citation. Perhaps this is another politics of citation; an anti-methodology; or it is a methodology attuned to a fundamental reorganization of time and space and sense (plastic critique). I am not saying that this ‘works’ necessarily, but it offers an occasion to query what we see as normative and performative; what we see as sustainable, also. This is where it matters that I am writing this during lockdown, that there is only so much I can put my hands on; that this is not a reason to stop thinking or writing; that there is nevertheless
still something that emerges from this; that it is terrifying to offer writing within a dressed-down mode. That like Lorde, via her daughter, all I can do for now is trust – trust that the words may be received. That this grows beyond; the plasticity is also a graft, a mesh.

In my conversation with Helen Laws about dance and training, two things came up just as we were hanging up to attend to our children’s meals: one, it occurred to me, had to do with sustainability. If the point of Russell’s training was to find ways to engage in a healthful dancing body by doing this Rolfing work, in other words realigning the dancer’s motion away from performativity and towards something that offers an entirely other order of flow, then surely this is also a politics of kinesthetic sustainability; there is something about ways that we work (in dance, at a desk, in a street) such as to promote or to hinder a kind of quiet growth. What the current performative paradigm requires of us is – as the PDR form implicitly compelled – constant development, goals, teleology – a regime of ‘more.’ To be quietly subversive in suggesting (heretically!) one might aim to ‘work less’ was to take the form, rather (falsely) naively, at its word; the form does not ask one if one will work less, but always, it is assumed, how one may work better – and more. For a dancer to be trained in such a way as to achieve energetic ‘optimization’ means that there is not an excess of effort but rather something that sits within her center of gravity, allows her to move not only with the appearance of effortlessness but with an actual sort of awesome grace. What Russell’s dancers do is liquease; they appear nearly surreally to turn to water, to melt; they are often cloaked in admittedly masterful lighting and such, contributing further to the impression of extra-human fluidity. But even without these technological clothings, the gestures that they engage in come from something like a real and grounded centering; what this means is that they are simultaneously engaging in the aesthetics of torque, what Hillel Schwartz sees as constitutive of modernity – a kind of lithe and flowing spinning motion, like a pirouette or a corkscrew, or a Grecian discus thrower. And yet with this grounding, there is a quiet sadness, also, nearly a kind of arrival towards simplicity, towards what does not need to be adorned. This can be construed, and some will have construed it this way, as a nearly superficial aestheticism, a sort of beauty without proper content – beautiful movement for its own sake. But what does that hasty judgment reveal? That there should have to be ‘content,’ narrative, for the sake of politics; that fluidity without grit is devoid of political power.

What the particular kind of askēsis or training Russell Maliphant’s dancers (and he himself, and his partner and long-time collaborator Dana Fouras) evince is an approach to ‘dancing’ that does not take performa-
tivity or sociality as a goal or mode or method, but rather understands ‘dance’ as the outward manifestation (we could say) of a practice that seeks to achieve balance within intracorporeal form. What this means is that the ‘dancing’ is a function of (or emerges alongside) working with emotional anatomy, for example holding patterns at the level of the chest or the gut or the back, tied up with feelings of rage or of grief, for example; and that the ‘dance’ is an exercise in allowing these patterns to be moved through. This is very different from therapeutic exercise, where the dancing is meant to create social bond, for example; and yet, there is something profoundly ‘therapeutic’ about this approach. What is the ‘therapy’ here? And why is this not at all a habitual sort of therapeutic exercise, like Dance for Parkinson’s or like what might be prescribed by a physiotherapist?

I am trying to get at something like ‘holism,’ and to be mindful of the complicated genealogy this term implies. There is a very long history of thinking ‘mind/body integration,’ or structural integration, in the words of Ida Rolf; or again structural hygiene (to come back eerily close to Stowe and her panicked concern with domestic hygiene and order), in the words of Mabel Elsworth Todd in The Thinking Body: A Study of the Balancing Forces of Dynamic Man (1937). For Todd, “[r]elaxation is the crying need of our age, but what it is and how to attain it are still unanswered questions. One must learn to recognize it and to deal with it in the stride of life.” Her book, originally prepared as a syllabus for students at Teachers College, Columbia University, first published in 1929 as The Balancing Forces in the Human Being, “explains ways of thinking about [relaxation] which will introduce new methods in dealing with it. This text presents the fact that bodily balance in accord with the principles of mechanics is a poignant means for conservation of nervous energy” (Todd xiii-xiv). Todd saw her work as following the principle that ‘form follows function’ and, significantly, that the exercises and approaches to bodily dynamics her offerings suggest would allow for a greater freedom of movement. This was essential at a time (not insignificantly, in the thick of the last Great Depression) when fatigue was paramount, when work cost effort that impinged on breathing, balance, posture, because of poor ways of understanding how to balance tension and strain (Todd 41-42). Writing in the preface to her book, occupational physiotherapist E.G. Brackett suggests that this method offers “therapy for the working body,” a way of rearticulating the fundamental principles of bodily life far beyond the habitual practices of physiotherapy at the time (Brackett xvii-xviii). Todd herself suggests that working conditions went far beyond straining the physical system but also the mechanisms of attention that render us ‘listless,’ restless and tense:
The type of postural maladjustments which consume energy and fatigue us most are those connected with our daily activities as we sit at a desk or sewing-table, at a typewriter or a microscope—activities employing small movements of the eyes and hands and necessitating many small decisions and judgments, and constant attention. Attention means tension, a readiness to move with no movement taking place, which spells fatigue [...]. This is doubly the case when to attention we add worry as to the outcome of our work, or anxiety for the future. Even when the anxiety is quite apart from the work in question, or when we are not sitting at a small, constraining task, our emotional undercurrent will express itself in some postural pattern. Emotion constantly finds expression in bodily position; if not in the furrowed brow or set mouth, then in limited breathing, in tight-held neck muscles, or in the slumped body of discouragement and listlessness. (44)

What Todd sees with astonishing clarity is the choreography of our working lives, ways that tension with regard to the future, readiness to movement without movement taking place, “attention [that] means tension,” all contribute to furrowing our brows and setting our mouths – to ageing and wearing us down, just as we find ourselves breathing more shallowly, finding ourselves slumped. José Esteban Muñoz has suggested in his article “Feeling Brown, Feeling Down: Latina Affect, the Performativity of Race, and the Depressive Position” that ‘[d]epression has become one of the dominant affective positions addressed within the cultural field of contemporary global capitalism.” Yet depression has to be ‘fine-tuned’: there is something he describes as “‘brown feeling’ [that] chronicles a certain ethics of the self that is utilized and deployed by people of color and other minoritarian subjects who don’t feel quite right within protocols of normative affect and comportment” (675-676). Further wrapping this thinking in with what he calls the performativity of race, Muñoz argues that racial performativity is a doing, specifically a kind of doing within a context of increasingly corporate multiculturalism; so if there is no clear “epistemological core of what race is,” there is an imperative to think “what race does”; “to look at race as a per forma
tive enterprise” (678-679). Here Muñoz draws from the concept of performa
tivity offered by J.L. Austin in his famous How to Do Things with Words (1962), and I am reminded simultaneously – as I have been throughout writing this article, and repeatedly over the past weeks – of Black Lives Matter activist Shamell Bell, who writes of herself as “a mother, commu
nity organizer, and choreographer” (“Provocateurs”). She is far from being alone in choosing some of these epithets, but I was struck at the time of reading by the decision to foreground motherhood within an activist and academic self-characterization, a professional profile (“Dr. Shamell Bell”). What would Pratt make of this? There is vitality, epistemological power, and political force in care for others; this is politics, and it is a way
of knowing one’s own situatedness within matrices of power, privilege, and intimate, inappropriable caring relations.

For John T. Hamilton, ‘security’ signals anxiousness, or rather the ‘age of security’ – of securitization – comes with immense precarization and indeed, as he offers, “[i]f security promises to make us carefree, how can we avoid becoming careless? How could any measure of security be possible without vigilance, anticipation, and concern, without making calculations or weighing risks? How can one ever be without care without care?” (Hamilton 3-7). ‘Care’ suggests concern, anxiety, a bit of worry; as in the Roman myth of Cura, ‘care’ is a tending-towards, a worrying-for, what Adriana Cavarero calls, we could add, a maternal inclination, a refusal to engage in the choreographics of rectitude, the straight line, upright, autonomous position. Not everyone is a parent, or a carer. Granted. But the fact that so many of us are, and hide this within the privacy of our homes – often for good reason – means also that we are caught up in a perpetual regime of productivist performativity, a manner of being always within a ‘doing’ ‘more,’ no matter what it is that we are already at work doing, at home; no matter what is already filling an eight-hour day. What we ‘do’ regardless is more, severely internalized, shown, pushing, ramming, straining, loving this perhaps, finding ways to be within the world as a person speaking, as a writer, because this is good, this is what we wish for, though it breaks us, though we aim to transcend the daily grind, to do double shifts, or triple, not to see these as shifts, even, just life, inevitable, working, now, because this is the cost of this freedom to work while bearing life, while nurturing; this is the productivist paradigm, no matter what that ‘more’ is in the end, so the energy is towards a forwards-motion, automatic nearly, habituated: more administration, more teaching, more production of research, more hours logging into meetings, etc., etc. The list is infinite, and this is just what academic cultures exploit when so many of us come into this with a basic sense of love – love for thinking life, teaching, reaching genuinely, transgressing (I think of bell hooks).

So if Mabel Elsworth Todd was trying to train – or retrain – bodies towards efficiency, her goal was not (as efficiency discourse today suggests) in order to allow us to produce more, to work longer hours, to sit at a desk without strain, but rather to release us from the sort of tyranny that restlessness without actual movement entails. When Maliphant’s dancers perform a sort of fluid effortlessness, what is awesome in this is the suspension of just the sort of tension that we hold in our necks, our jaws. To watch this does not relieve it; but to understand practice as everyday training in form-of-life, to understand askēsis as an exercise in training, rather than in the disciplinarization of a body towards beautiful form, this may help us go a very small way towards understanding the
manner or mode, the method of working as constitutive or co-constitutive of our ‘health’ or *therapeia*, living within unfolding. What this means is that we are ‘working’ not towards or for but as an exercise in energetic deployment as such; this is less expenditure than enjoyment. This means there is not a ‘towards’ or a ‘for’ in the work but a kind of implicit good, and this is not something that someone else can own or direct; yet we forget this. We allow our conduct to be conducted – this is the granular regime of power (or biopower, or in Sylvia Wynter’s terms, the bioeconomic mode) Foucault alludes to (‘[306] Le sujet et le pouvoir’ 1056). That the choreography of our bodies within and without institutional (and ‘home’) environments constitutes the exercise of a power of securitization without care, a perpetual stoking the anxious filaments that keep us enthralled, while feeling or fearing that we are not quite getting how to make this work; that somehow control is ever more at play; that homework has come right into the home; that the home space (the home front) has become colonized, inhabited from without. How do we regain a hold?

This friend I alluded to earlier suggests that in therapeutic contexts very little acknowledged within standard therapeutic discourse, attachment comes from grief; and over-attachment to institutional (power) structures comes also from grief mechanisms. In the panic to stock up on water (US), toilet paper (UK and US) and other commodities in the context of the early pandemic moment, a Kleinian attachment to the breast suggested fear that there would not be enough, that care would not be forthcoming, that there would be no security, no freedom from want; what this means is that within a situation of ‘panic,’ what we fear is not that something bad will happen (we will get sick and die, for example) but that there will be nothing, no one to hold us; what we appear to crave is this holding. The institution stands in for this, when the rest of our world comes to be stripped of that holding feeling; but then we discover that the institution holds nothing at all. It is an empty shell. There are colleagues, students, walking around the halls, but the machinery itself has no memory and no ‘heart.’ I am coming into messy terrain here with attachment and attention and grief; I feel myself ventriloquizing what had been a really impassioned set of conversations, attempting to account for this here, with thanks. The feeling of losing ground that comes from admitting one’s attachments (single parenting while working, for example) reveals just this sort of terrifying space of speechlessness, not being able to articulate what is otherwise lived as a very banal and real and incontrovertible fact of life, something that should, could, be holdable, and held; vibrant affiliations, affiliations that snap. *Objects in the terrifying tense.*
If the present article has attempted to articulate something of a set of offerings towards another oikology of care, what I hope to have offered also is a manner of thinking choreographically about the ways that institutions compel us to perform, not only because we are unable to move, constrained to producing ever more, and so tight-jawed and stiff-necked, and not only because we attempt to conform to virtuosic modes of performative academicism (citational praxes that demonstrate richness of resource), but also because within all this there are core relational attachments and ties which come to be severed when we are out ‘in the world.’ Following Ahmed, if our ‘homework’ is self-imposed, not only what is imposed for doing at home from the outside, then perhaps now is a moment to think how more simply and banally to articulate without shame the fact of being, for example, a carer; and for those in power to receive this not as a disability to be worked around but as a good – as an epistemology and a manner of being engaged in the social, political, and educational life of a connected and emerging world. My eyes are beginning to blur. I have had to write this within a sitting, nearly, on first draft, because the interruptions otherwise are too great. This makes for a certain sort of awkwardness in the prose; but also perhaps attentiveness to the practice of ‘writing, life’, something I began to diarize, but the days stretch on and on; and there is not an end to that; the present work offers an excrescence, a node, elastic I hope. This is articulation of plastic critique as a way of engaging the tender ligaments and the microvacuoles, the enmeshments of work, life, within form; epigenetic emergence of thinking ways we come to and towards our objects of critique from within sites of thought, oikologies rent through with the power and affective dynamics of institutional cultures and para-institutional frames; the walls perhaps are crumbling; but we have not yet relearned, I think, to write.

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Notes
1. I am grateful to Tony Slater for hours of conversation around care, holding, institutions, and grief; to Daniela Perazzo-Domm for reading an early version, and to my daughter, always. Thank you also to the Russell Maliphant Dance Company, and to Russell Maliphant in particular, for stimulating so many of the questions here and inviting the space to write; Helen Laws was an interlocutor at the point this began to form as language on the page. My thanks go additionally to the Choreography and Corporeality working group of the International Federation for Theatre Research for first hearing me work through the notion of plastic critique in Belgrade; and to Annouchka Bayley and JJ Chan for taking a further interest in this for a forthcoming edited work on diffraction. My head of department, the committed Woolf scholar and leader extraordinaire, Anna Snaith, has steered our department with incomparable humanity through the last wave, as lockdown and school closure left many of us scrambling; I am immensely grateful to her and to all of
my colleagues at King’s for outrageous collegiality, humour, and generosity; thanks, too, in advance, to the only just-formed Lockdown Parents group for solidarity and care. So many colleagues and friends have been living variations of this, in so many hundreds of thousands of ways, whether with children or no; I hope these words will do something towards articulating a very small and perhaps ever-morphing sliver of that, in the midst. Thank you, finally, to my anonymous readers for their buoyant and thoughtful support. I hope the conversations will continue long after we have all returned to some other ‘norm.’ This is an ‘essay’ in every possible sense – a partial work, a partial perspective, what I elsewhere write of as a ‘partial object,’ something that emerges from a pain at the nape of the neck, as it shoots downwards and grips one; to write that out, this ceiling, this wall; as a beginning, not accounting at all for all the ways ‘home’ is often so full of terror, so full of danger and fear, without hope; that the ‘home’ I write of here is this one, just this; but that this moment, perhaps, offers an occasion to think the singularity, the granularity, of position, the way ‘theory’ is also a writing from the imponderable and perhaps inappropriable perspective as it falls outside all the categories we habitually know. That therefore what is at stake is a breaking down of the ‘category’ – with Fred Moten, a thinking, after Duke Ellington, the “‘beyond category’” (25) – and at the same time, even this becomes categorical; so the writing does its floundering, as the language attempts to slip through and with something of a present tense.

2. See esp. Catherine Malabou in La plasticité au soir de l’écriture. Dialectique, destruction, déconstruction (2005), and Avant demain: épigenèse et rationalité (2014). Malabou sets out (and subtly performs) a philosophy of epigenetic writing that posits an ever-moving ‘epicentre’ that shifts the ground or ‘grounds’ of the work just as this work evolves, transforms; rather than suggest a transcendental subject or object of thought and a grounds for its articulation, this concept of thought unfolding within language and world (what I further call plastic critique, in response to what she calls lecture plastique [La plasticité 97]) suggests a choreographic procedure according to which temporality is inextricably implicated in the onward-motion of idea, and critique. In the case of the present article, as in Malabou’s work, this is manifest as an evolution of the thinking within the act of its emergence, so that the ground is simultaneously present, open and held. But where I differ slightly from Malabou is in my insistence on the choreographic plasticity of the present moment as a ground (and grounds) within which motion is already held as a tension or torsion, a perpetual imbalance and rebalancing; and so the ‘body’ of writing is rendered even more present to the page as a force for shaping epigenetically the plasticity of the thoughtful word, of thoughtful and present life; every epicentre is also a contortion, grounding and disbalancing language and ‘self.’ I aim to think how the form of writing is also a form-of-life or, more accurately, an act of life-forming. On form-of-life, see also Giorgio Agamben, esp. “A Life Inseparable from Its Form,” in The Use of Bodies (2015). Agamben’s reading of oikeiosis is pertinent, as “the appropriation or familiarization of the self to the self,” a sort of “doctrine of use-of-oneself” (49), what one could see as the familiarization of one’s own use-of-oneself for the purposes of ergon, a kind of energetic expenditure he notes which may be indexed onto the use of one’s body away from (slightly distinct from) energeia, or being-at-work (15, 21). This ergon (typically, in his philological reading, the slave’s work) is distinct from seeing work as ‘self-fulfillment’ – a move in occupational psychology in the interwar period such as Nikolas Rose understands nefariously engulfed workers’ sense of self into that of their employers (something we are prey to still today frequently [see Nikolas Rose, Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self, pp. 61-75, and again 113-115, where he points out that earlier models emphasising contentment in the workplace were replaced by far more insidious and organizationally “heartless” imperatives towards wellbeing and “positive” mental health as managerial, “human resource” strategies of institutional effectiveness]). Thus, for Agamben, use-of-self is a kind of practice that can sit alongside care-of-self in
Foucault’s sense (Agamben *Use of Bodies* 31-33). Where care-of-self (or care-of-oneself) implicates a kind of using this ‘self’ towards care, then we are tasked, it seems to me, with the challenge and opportunity of finding just how to ‘use’ – carefully – the ‘self’ with which we deepen our (self-)knowledge and understanding, away from imperatives towards ‘self-fulfillment.’ This is very different from conceptualising *form-of-life* (life-forming) as a ‘human resource’ problem (in terms of work-hours to manage, etc.), but re-articulating the energetic affordances these hours represent as a genuine form of ‘betterment’ and care without instrumentality, i.e., as a form of intellectual intimacy that currently has no (institutional) ‘place.’ This means that although we have to fight for more recognition of labor forms not accounted for in present regimes of productivist accountability (see more in Note 5 below), there is also scope, I think, for rearticulating the potentially epigenetic emergence of a manner towards or a disposition towards critique that takes this *oikeiosis* as an occasion for forging a subject of writing (a body of writing, and critique) attentive to what this work does. This approach shifts the frame or lens closer in towards the writing table, the desk, so we are not blind to all of this present life. On performativity and the ‘new spirit of capitalism,’ see also e.g., Florence Jany-Catrice, *La performance totale: nouvel esprit du capitalisme?* (2012).


4. On *ethopoiesis* and *gnōmē*, see also Foucault *Dire vrai*, pp. 122, 125, 127n6.

5. The devastating effects of COVID-19 for women’s research were patent within weeks of lockdown around the world. Whereas submissions from women academics were ‘negligible’ in some cases, across journals in fields ranging from Astrophysics and Comparative Political Studies to Philosophy of Science, and draft papers down 50%, submissions by men were up 50% in the same period. The longer-term effects will be even more devastating in what was already a severely uneven playing field. As thoroughly documented, ‘work/work’ balance is already deeply skewed, with a vastly disproportionate number of women taking on service tasks less rewarded in academic promotion, andShouldering a far greater burden of ongoing emotional labor within and without the ‘academic family’ home, from checking in with students and colleagues to teaching preparation and delivery, and supporting family members and vulnerable or elderly neighbors and friends. The daily grind of ‘housekeeping’ even within a shared academic household chronically overburdens women with tasks that preclude longer stretches of quiet focus necessary for sustained writing and research. See Flaherty; Kitchener; Fazackerley. See also Viglione; Matthews. Although “compensatory measures” are called for, among others by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation (Matthews), the entrenched culture of shadow work performed by women may make this a very slow to be implemented goal, not least in a context where universities are faced with deficits disproportionately put back onto women and Black and minority ethnic colleagues at the lowest ends of the pay scales. What the present article seeks to address is the broader culture shift that COVID-19 could help to catalyze as ‘hidden labor’ is not only recognized and compensated for somehow, but so that whole epistemological methods might also be reassessed – further recognizing and esteeming shadow care-work as a fundamentally and intrinsically ‘valuable’ contribution to the global intellectual and affective oikonomies. On care work and the impossibility to write, see also especially Adams.

6. Since writing this, I have cringed at this one phrase; it has haunted me. I am aware how naïve this was, how much of the ‘first wave’; how much harder everything has become, and how normalised. And yet, I don’t want to lose this – this sense from the start that we were pausing, breathing, discovering our families, another order of time. This is nothing like a sick leave, not in the sense of recovery; it could have been, but the pressures of work, performativity, have meant we have had to leave all this aside. Those who are most vulnerable have remained so, and those fortunate enough to ‘work from home’
have done that too, of course with caveats; loss is felt everywhere. I am aware that as this goes to press, and onward after, there may be third waves, even fourth ones, but still this sentiment was delicately, briefly, there, a sense that after burnout, came the plague. And so, if there is any value to the act of writing not just as record but as critique – as an act of consolation and of care, and with this, of humor, maybe, even if it is slightly despained, and of war – then perhaps this difficult, jarring phrase remains. I have felt the need to write this here, though, in shame, and as plea for forgiveness; or as archive.

7. The examples abound. I was given a copy of Ruth Berolzheimer, ed., *Prudence Penny. Binding of the American Woman’s Cook Book* (1956) by my otherwise fairly staunchly feminist mother as a gift when I got married – this was nearly a joke, half-serious, a thing she had sought out, after we found a copy one day browsing, while travelling somewhere, I don’t recall. I also picked up, quite incidentally, for some performance work, the above-cited *Mrs Beeton’s Book of Household Management, a specially enlarged first edition facsimile* (originally published in 1859-61). ‘Home Economics’ courses in the UK continued at high school (GCSE) level until 2016, when the subject was discontinued (superseded among others by Food Technology); these emphasized aspects of cooking and food preparation, hygiene, sewing, childcare, design, and hospitality.

8. Helen Laws and the author, in conversation, telephone, 1 July 2020. ‘Health’ here is intended, with the Stocis, also to encompass a spiritual practice, *therapeia*, not just what we understand may be administered through pharmaceutical and other means. The intention is to loosen and expand the sense of ‘health’ so that it radically exceeds the boundaries of administrable proof, of measurable disorders and whatnot; on this, see, for example, Pierre Hadot, *Exercises spirituels et philosophie antique* (2002), pp. 22-24. Foucault is also engaged in thinking ‘health’ in terms of a *tēchnē* or arts of living, a spiritual practice, after Hadot, wrapped among others in care of self (*epimeleia heautou*) and knowledge of self (*gnōthi seauton*). See, e.g., Foucault, *L’herméneutique du sujet: Cours au Collège de France, 1981-1982*, pp. 10, 49; Foucault *Qu’est-ce que la critique? suivi de La culture de soi* (2015); Foucault *Dire vrai*, pp. 93-97. See also Gotman, “On Medicine.”


11. See Note 2 above.


14. Ida Rolf developed her system of structural integration, now known as ‘Rolfing,’ in the 1940s. On structural hygiene, also developed in relation to “physics, mechanics, anatomy and physiology,” see esp. Todd, xiii.


17. See also Foucault, *Sécurité, Territoire, Population. Cours au Collège de France, 1977-1978*; Foucault is very clear on the intimate relationship between governmentality and the ‘economy’ of power, established not through relations of one on another, but in terms of what he calls the act of conducting conducts (“*conduire des conduites*”) and managing probability, according to an “economy of power relations” in the theoretical and practical sense; bureaucratization in the modern nation-state offers one way to conceptualize this ‘rationalization’ of power as a problem of management, including the management of processes of subjectivity and subjectivation (a genealogy he sees going back to practices of care of self in Greco-Roman therapeutic philosophy and medicine, as well as transforming with early medieval pastoral power in the church); Foucault, ‘Le sujet et le pouvoir’ 1043ff. See also esp. ‘[239] La “gouvernementalité”’ in Foucault DE II 635-657 and esp. 651ff on governmentality and family, specifically on governmental economics understood increasingly from the eighteenth century in terms of a management of the family (“l’économie entendue comme gestion de la famille”). It would be the subject of another article.
to analyze Foucault’s articulation of the government of children and family homes as a practice of intersubjective discursivization and disciplinarization; my interest here is in drawing his work on practices of self through self-writing via the Stoics into the practical terrain or practical theorization of these borderlines by inhabiting the difficult zone of indistinction or of incipient differentiation so as discursively, stylistically to ‘problematize’ the tender and awkward edifices of self and other, politics and institutionality – within everyday regimes of the ‘government of the living.’ Foucault’s lecture series “On The Government of Self and Others” and “On The Government of the Living” carried him through the late 1970s and early 1980s as he was working out the imbricated concerns between governmentality and practices of truthful speech as well as self-examination in what he discerned as a shift from painful, riskful truth performed primarily in dialogical modes (*parrēsia*) to confessional practice. See, for example on this, a succinct account in “[289] Du gouvernement des vivants” in *DE II* 944-948. Sylvia Wynter articulates the racist implications of the bioeconomic mode for example in Wynter and McKittrick.

18. See Note 5 above.
19. See Stewart.

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