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THE VANISHED FACE UNDER THE DEATH PENALTY SYSTEM: SEEING THE FACE OF THE OTHER THROUGH ART

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Abstract: This paper will study the persistent public support for capital punishment in Taiwan and explore how it serves as a symbolic social ritual closely linked to the mass psychology, desires and fantasies. A few famous works of research have been cited in this paper, including Foucault's idea of biopolitics, Agamben's theory of the state of exception, Butler's theory of subject formation, and Lacanian/Žižekian theories on desire and fantasy. This paper studies the idea that capital punishment is not only a type of legal punishment but also a way to perform rituals and create a scene to meet deep-seated psychological needs. These symbolic performances reinforce social order but deterring ethical reflection. Thus, the fantasy of justice endures and engagement with the deeper causes of punitive desires is thus avoided. Building on Levinas's idea of the "face of the Other", this paper proposes performance art to intervene in ethical perception by means of embodied alterity. Performance-based artistic analysis is used to explore how the body, alterity, susceptibility and repetition can achieve consciousness states outside of oneself, disrupt normative frames, uncover complicity in punitive rituals, and develop ethically responsible encounters. Rather than substituting one fantasy (punitive justice) with another (ideal abolitionism) through art, this study proposes tense, reflective spaces that reveal the subject's inner divisions and the many, often contradictory, senses of self. Thus, fixed ideas of the self can be dismantled, and the community can be led to confront its own complicities and shared vulnerabilities. The community in this view is not guaranteed by the state or moral ideals. Rather, it is based on an acceptance of the state of lack of being and a fragile relationship with others.

Keyword: death penalty, mass psychology, performance art, alterity, desire

Introduction

Death penalty has repeatedly resurfaced as a major public issue in Taiwan following serious crimes. For example, after the 2014 Taipei Metro stabbing by Cheng Chieh, Chiu (2015) pointed out significant media manipulation in the subsequent discussion of capital punishment, and Chang (2017) indicated that societal demands for prompt execution have been continually heightened by the 2016 murder of a four-year-old girl in Neihu. Based on the annual opinion polls by the TAEDP and government surveys, public support for capital punishment has remained consistently high. However, the public debate has generally been restricted to issues of legality and morality, and deeper psychological and social factors, particularly how political instrumentalization interacts with the collective demand for retribution, have gone unexamined.

Although many people in Taiwan have discussed the issue of capital punishment from various aspects, such as legal reform, deterrence and human rights, the underlying emotional and symbolic reasons for supporting or resisting the death penalty have not been adequately addressed. Therefore, this paper will shift its research direction to focus on a ritualized socio-psychological performance. It is to be used as a punishment by society. It is a place for the staging of collective anxieties and unconscious fantasies about justice, followed by release. Based on the analysis of this performative structure, this paper will investigate how moral identification and the absence of the condemned as an

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ethical subject are systematically produced and maintained. Therefore, this study will answer the following three questions:

- What psychological mechanisms have been employed to hold people to the spectacle of punishment, such as ressentiment (Nietzsche, 1967), passionate attachment to power (Butler, 1997), and fantasy structures (Lacan, 1977; Žižek, 1989)?

- How do frames of recognition (Butler, 2009) and mechanisms of misrecognition processes shape public perceptions of victims and perpetrators, and thus promote ethical violence (Butler, 2005; Cavarero, 2000)?

- Can art, particularly performance art that focuses on alterity (Levinas, 1979) and bodily exposure, be employed to disrupt the established system of perception and thus create a space for ethical response?

Therefore, this paper will first explore the dual nature of punishment for capital crimes and, in doing so, reveal that it serves the function of organizing public desire and a legal penalty. Then, the focus shifts to how punitive discourse conceals the "face of the Other" and reduces the condemned individual to an abstract subject of guilt, danger or exclusion. Finally, it investigates the prospects of performance art in creating an unsettling environment for the audience that can force them struggle ethical tension, embodied vulnerability and the inherent instability of their own judgements.

The study employs a complex theoretical framework through a layered analysis. Foucault (1977, 2008) and Agamben (1998, 2005) have contributed to the talk about how violence against sovereigns has become normalized in governmental structures. Butler's (1997) idea of 'passionate attachment' further extend to a critique of subject formation. Through a combination of Nietzschean ressentiment and Freudian aggression, Bulter investigates the internalization of punitive norms in the psyche. At the level of desire, Lacanian and Žižekian theories of fantasy (Lacan, 1977, 1981, 1992; Žižek, 1989, 1992, 1999) explain how punishment goes beyond a demand for justice. It is a place for social anxiety, moral identification and unconscious enjoyment to be organized, thus supporting the punitive economy.

This research claims that art opens the possibility of subjective transformation through invoking alterity and vulnerability. Levinas (1978) suggests that art makes the familiar strange by taking people out of their normal frameworks and unsettle totalizing judgments. Therefore, confronting the 'face of the Other' through alterity destabilizes the existing frame while demanding a new sense of ethical responsibility

Such meetings are also high-risk. Recognition does not necessarily lead to ethical openness. Butler (2005) believes that in the very act of recognition, one's own singularity may be erased, thus becoming 'ethical violence'. Cavarero (2000) also points out that narratives of suffering are often being appropriated to enhance the self-image of observers. Zaroulia (2018) also thinks that "controversial performances of excess" may simplify and reduce the other person to a consumable symbol. During the death penalty discussion, the condemned often transforms into symbolic object. At this time, the call for justice is merely a pretext for one's own moral certainty and will lead back to complicity with the authorities.

Performance art resists such reduction by placing the vulnerable body in its immediate environment. The built-in liveness and co-presence of the medium prevent spectators to be detached receivers. Instead, they are shown in a way that evokes a sense of alterity and interferes with narcissistic identification, thus becoming very difficult to ignore one's own vulnerability. In such encounters, the irreducibility of the Other is shown, and audiences are made aware of their participation in punitive rituals. At this time, the focus of the paper is no longer merely on how capital punishment is legally "carried out", but rather on how it is emotionally imagined, publicly narrated and socially ritualized as a state of exception for legitimate violence.

2. Staging Justice: The Death Penalty as Social Performance

2.1 Public Spectacle and Modern Ritual

Public executions in 18th- and 19th-century Europe were public demonstrations designed to inspire awe and instruct. Enlightenment critics, such as Beccaria's arguments (1764/2011), questioned the rationality of state-sanctioned killing and pointed out that the state's public use of violence to prevent murder was a paradox. Victor Hugo's "The Last Day of a Condemned Man" is also revealed how society transformed human tragedy into a theatrical spectacle. Trials became public entertainment, and capital punishment was no longer merely for punishment but an expected spectacle. Foucault (1997) argued that such an event also reformed injured sovereignty by demonstrating it publicly.

Although public executions are now rare, the symbolic force of capital punishment has not been lost. The above cases show that it is still so. Each caused public anger and was promptly ordered to be executed. The above reactions show that today the death penalty cannot be justified solely on the basis of deterrence. These reactions indicate deep-seated desires for fantasy, pleasure and collective affect. The death penalty is also a ritualized scene in which collective anxiety and state power are gathered and discharged. Therefore, a new problem has arisen: Why do modern societies, such as liberal democracies, still desire capital punishment, and why is it still regarded as a suitable punishment? What psychic structures and political fantasies provide the basis for its legitimacy?

2.2 Sovereign Spectacle, Disciplinary Power and Biopolitics

Foucault's Discipline and Punish (1977) demonstrates that, in the past, the spectacle of torture gave way to the disciplinary system of the prison. The end of public torture indicated a change in the focus of punishment from physical pain to mental and behavioral modification. Thus, visible symbolic messages were lost. The spectacle of torture became problematic when its violence exceeded that of the original crime. Sometimes, authority was inverted by depicting executioners as criminals and criminals as heroes: "there was a whole aspect of the carnival in which rules were reversed, authority mocked, and criminals became heroes" (p. 61). This was also in line with the general economic and political reforms of punishment. Power shifted from public spectacle toward institutional discipline.

Foucault's genealogy shows that power and knowledge are mutually constitutive, and thus, through disciplinary institutions such as prisons, people have been transformed into 'docile' subjects by this 'body politics'. This analysis later extends to 'biopolitics' (Foucault, 2008), Foucault proposed the concept of 'biopolitics' and believed that in contemporary society, power had moved from suppressing

death under absolute sovereignty to regulating the lives of people through various social norms. Although this framework has shown how discipline embedded punishment within modern governance, it has not provided an answer to why the death penalty continues to be a sovereign ritual.

2.3 The State of Exception and the Production of "Bare Life"

The concept of the State of Exception (2005) and Homo Sacer (1998) proposed by Agamben help explain why sovereign power continues to be recognized in the social imagination. Although public executions almost vanish, power still influences people's consciousness through narratives of death. According to Agamben, contemporary governance is based on the production of "states of exception", not just legal norms. Paradoxically, law strengthens its authority by suspending itself for populations, determining who is considered covered by the law. Thus, the people become mere "bare life" (Agamben, 1998), a life that can be taken away but cannot be sacrificed. Modern politics is returned to a death-centric mode that both extends and complicates Foucault's concept of biopower.

Agamben (2005) shows this contradiction by mentioning the United States' U.S. Military Order of 2001[1] operated by legal exclusion. It shows the dual nature of modern biopolitics: "In the field of tension of our culture, two opposing forces act, one that institutes and makes, and the other that deactivates and depresses" (Agamben, 2005, p. 87). This structural contradiction allows power to alter the concept of life through a normalized state of exception, and capital punishment serves as a typical case of social defense concealing underlying motives for control.

2.4 Penal Populism and the Performance of Collective Emotion

In modern times, the death penalty shows the ways power is exercised, justified, and sustained. Badinter (2008) argues that executions can distract from governmental failures. And Pratt (2007) calls this "penal populism", which aims to alleviate public anxiety through a reduction in crime. Taiwan makes this dynamic particularly visible. Support for capital punishment by the public has been high, and it often increases following highly publicized violent crimes. In these moments, the media and political narratives have presented the execution not as a legal punishment, it becomes a form of emotional reparation and social reassurance.

Thus, the death penalty has functioned as a ritualized performance for collective emotion. It functions as a show to restore moral standards and state power and simultaneously hopes to suture the broken dreams of social order. Life is to be said to be bound with the sovereign power that enters the body. Although the Foucauldian and Agambenian systems provide clarification for these macro-scale operations, they fail to fully cover the subjective and psychic investment in such punitive spectacles. To understand the appeal of capital punishment, we need to turn to those theories that address desires, attachment to power, and the structures of fantasy.

[1] The USA Patriot Act issued by the U.S. Senate on October 26, 2001, already allowed the attorney general to "take into custody" any alien suspected of activities that endangered "the national security of the United States," but within seven days the alien had to be either released or charged with the violation of immigration laws or some other criminal offense. What is new about President Bush's order is that it radically erases any legal status of the individual, thus producing a legally unnamable and unclassifiable being. See Agamben, Giorgio (2005). State of Exception, translated by Kevin Attell, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, p.3.

2.5 The Psychic Economy of Spectacle

The punitive spectacle is maintained by the combination of state power and the public's desire, and the spectator is necessary for emotional catharsis (Freud, 1960; Lacan, 1992). This spectacle can be used to express the suppressed desires of the condemned 'other' and, at the same time, provide society with a form of vicarious sacrifice and emotional relief.

State-sanctioned violence can avoid resistance only when it is made to appear as “deserved punishment” rather than as violence itself. Nietzsche (1967) explains the psychic fuel for this process through ressentiment, where an envy of the criminal's transgressive jouissance drives the law-abiding to project their repressed desires under the guise of moral indignation. By witnessing the 'inferior' suffering caused by authority, the subject turns personal powerlessness into the moral superiority of 'bad conscience.' In contemporary society, this takes the form of emotional consumption of violence to build a symbolic economy of violence that reinforces state power.

Collectivist cultures in East Asia are more likely to exhibit such patterns, and social harmony and moral order take precedence. When crime is regarded as a disruption in the social order, capital punishment may be seen as a rite for symbolic purification to restore the balance of shame and honor (Jou and Hebenton, 2020). It is an approved form of expressing suppressed emotions and has strengthened the legitimacy through a collective fantasy of unity. This cycle of symbolic witnessing risks normalizing state violence and strengthening the punitive gaze. Therefore, this leads to a further question: how are these desires incorporated into the very structure of "justice"?

3. The Psychic Life of Punishment: Desire, Fantasy, and the Subject

3.1 Passionate Attachment: Self-Subjugation and Bad Conscience

Based on the analysis of punishment as spectacle, this section argues that the societal "sense of justice" is often shaped by various projections of desire. Understanding desire and fantasy is therefore required to grasp the psychological foundation of capital punishment. Nietzsche's concept of ressentiment offers a particular way to view the culture of collectivism, and the moral authority of the victim is often used to justify state violence. He also proposed that "bad conscience" is a masochistic structure of internalized aggression: "All instincts that are not discharged outwardly turn inwards... that is the origin of 'bad conscience'" (Nietzsche 1967, p. 57).

Judith Butler (1997) extends this Nietzschean system by incorporating Freud's (1930) theory of the superego and holds that subjects develop a "passionate attachment" to their own subjection in order to obtain recognition from the symbolic "big Other" (Lacan, 1981). In this reading, capital punishment serves as a way to exclude people and to gain the self-perception of being "good". The bad conscience, paradoxically, is the soil for Nietzsche's concept of the "womb of all ideal and imaginative phenomena" (Butler, 1997, p. 76) and the moral constructions that validate punitive justice. Therefore, the subjects may feel a sense of pleasure through masochism by identifying with the law and confirming their own worth through the exclusion of others. Butler refers to this as one of power's "most insidious productions" (1997, p. 6), and binds subjects to their own subordination.

From this standpoint, the people have gained a double pleasure: the masochistic pleasure of submission and the affirmation of moral values. Capital punishment strengthens punitive desire and reinforces state authority. Therefore, one must ask whether the desire for punishment stems from a misrecognition for deeper psychological and political needs.

3.2 The Roles of Fantasy, Desire and Jouissance in the Spectacle of Death

Lacanian psychoanalysis can help us understand the reasons for punitive investment in psychic mechanisms. As Lacan (1977) put it, "man's desire is the desire of the Other", and it is organized by the big Other, that is, the symbolic system of norms and expectations. Fantasy functions as the psychic scene staging this relation to authority. According to the logic of punishment, the condemned is presented as a demonized figure who has to meet the demands of the big Other. Thus, executions become scenes of collective fantasy that stabilize a sense of moral order, and this phenomenon is akin to Butler's concept of the 'artifice of bad conscience', where attachment to punitive norms is mistaken for moral integrity.

Lacan's concept of jouissance can be used to describe the intensity of affect in this way. It is a form of transgressive pleasure that briefly covering the subject's lack of being. As Žižek (1989) pointed out, "there is nothing behind the fantasy; the fantasy functions precisely to hide the void or 'lack in the Other'" (p. 133) and thus maintains subjects through the intensity of jouissance by masking the absence of authority. This can be seen in Taiwan's responses to high-profile crimes, where the condemned became the object of collective projections for suture the social disintegration.

Žižek (1989, 1992) believes that the ethical act does not involve accepting to such sacrifices, but rather in refusing the allure of "fantasy" by traversing through it. Show the inherent inconsistency and lack of foundation for social authority here. Such a meeting motivates the subject to experience a "second death" (Lacan, 1992) and thus represents a collapse of foundational fantasies in the symbolic order. According to Lacan (1992, p. 139), the experience of 'extimacy' is an unfamiliar internal alterity that generates a centrifugal force and thereby disrupts the grip of punitive jouissance, making space for reorientation.

The "second death" is a deep subjective change that reveals both the lack in the Big Other and a deficit in the self-constitutive being, thus creating the conditions for an alternative ethical position. The subject bears responsibility for their own desire. By refusing both the punitive commands of the superego and the false harmony in fantasies of justice, the subject finally acknowledges the singularity of the Other rather than reducing it to a symbolic object.

3.3 Misrecognition: Ethical Violence and Alterity

Judith Butler's idea of reflexivity is important to describe the continuous process of subject formation in alterity mediated process. Because desire is contingent on others, the self lacks a fixed identity and is thus in a state of instability. It finds itself "outside of itself" in the way Butler (2004, p. 28) refers to as a "mode of dispossession." Awareness of this vulnerability reveals an uncontrollable dimension in selfhood that prompts self-questioning and a sense of responsibility for one's relationship with others. It also presents a refusal of closed identity and a more profound engagement with the lack of being. However, the process of recognition carries risks. Butler (2005) refers to "ethical violence", and

recognition erases uniqueness, Cavarero (2000) notes that observers often appropriate others' pain as a way to achieve their own narcissism. The process different from acknowledging the other's irreducible singularity.

Till and Vitouch (2012) have found that films on capital punishment generate strong emotional reactions, potentially change values. Ellsworth and Gross (1994) have also shown that, to some extent, the support for capital punishment is driven by emotions rather than reason. Such reactions are not empathy but rather "emotional appropriation of the Other", which serves as a release mechanism for existing projections without introspection. Such narcissism is rooted in dyadic relations, and as Butler (2004) points out, the Other has been reduced to a mere reflection of one's own identity. To be free from narcissistic appropriation, recognition transformation is the key. The ethical engagement demands the recognition of the other's inherent individuality and resisting to reduce this person to a familiar model. In this rupture, recognition moves beyond projection and opens toward responsibility.

3.4 Pathways to Others

Based on the preceding sociological and psychoanalytic theories, capital punishment is a stage for presenting collective fantasies. From a dramaturgical perspective, justice is a performance. Thus, subjects strive for "frame integrity" to gain recognition from the symbolic order, but they may have to step back inauthentic performances (Hancock & Garner, 2011). Capital punishment is thus a ritualistic performance that, as Alexander (2004) puts it, maintains social order through "emotional identification". The successful rituals present power as reasonable justice, but they turn the condemned "others" into symbolic vessels for projection and achieve stability through their annihilation.

Butler, Lacan and Žižek do not provide the same account of desire, but their arguments meet at one point. They show how fantasy is organized in terms of a lack of being, how jouissance supports the subject, and how punitive desire is linked to a "bad conscience" that is paradoxically the source of moral ideals. Thus, the spectacle is an "economy of desire" that meets the unconscious desires and fantasies of the populace through misrecognition, thereby strengthening the psychic investment in capital punishment.

Therefore, these thinkers point to the two paths outside of this misrecognition. The first, proposed by Lacan and Žižek, is "traversing the fantasy" to confront the lack in the big Other itself, and this can induce a transformative "second death". Butler's second way is to take on a moral responsibility through contact with the face of the Other and facing one's own "dispossession". Although they operate via different registers, both are forms of psychoanalytic and socio-ethical mechanisms. Both indicate that an important meeting with others disturbs one's sense of self-sufficiency and prompts a deep-seated reflection on one's own wishes, "Why do I want this for myself?"

Trace the propagation path of social rituals and psychic mechanisms in supporting punitive desire and thus determine a way out of this cycle of fantasy. More than theoretical criticism is needed; experiential practices that can disturb the conventional order and create alternative experiences of the Other are therefore required. Therefore, the following chapter will address the ethical demand of the

Other through performance art, and in this way, embodiment and vulnerability may transform the discussion from abstract critique to the possibility of a lived encounter.

4. Seeing the Face of the other through Art

4.1 The Ethical Call of the Other's Face and the Mediation of Frames

This section will explore how to create an ethical encounter with the "face of the Other" that is disturbing to the subject because it reveals the subject's dispossession (echoing the Lacanian/Žižekian concept of the "second death"). Judith Butler's ideas of recognition provide a framework for this discussion and propose two necessary conditions for it. The "frames of recognition" (2009) that determine whose lives are grievable, together with bodily "susceptibility" (2015), the openness to being harmed.

Emmanuel Levinas (1979) places the ethical foundation in his idea of the 'face' as a call that resists totalizing assimilation, reveals vulnerability, and issues the primary command not to kill. Based on the above, Butler (2009) shows that socio-cultural "frames" mediate this ethical response by distinguishing between lives considered grievable and those perceived as threats. This explains why figures such as death row inmates are often objectified.

However, Levinas's ethical summons is often critiqued as overly idealized. Butler (2005), reflecting on Levinas, highlights this ambivalence through the tension of being "frightened for his own life, but anxious he might have to kill."(pp. 136–137). This tension between the fear of harm and the dread of causing violence signals the beginning of transformative reflection. But such framing risks what Butler describes as "ethical violence," by erasing the Other's singularity. It also emphasizes the role of cultural producers in mediating lives for public consumption.

4.2 Susceptibility and Alterity of the Body in Performance Art: A Medium for Encounter

Based on the concept of "frames of recognition", Butler's idea of susceptibility refers to the body's receptivity to being affected by the Other. It is central to understanding performance art's ethical potential. The body is the main site of this vulnerability (Butler, 2009), and thus an embodied encounter is required for ethical relationship. Performance art puts the artist's body at the forefront as a site of critique for power. This body is also, as Butler (2005) points out through Cavarero, inherently "exposed and singular", shaped by norms yet never fully conforming to them. At the same time, it expresses individual life and concretizes social relations and exists in a contradictory state of separation and connection to others. The body becomes a liminal site of ongoing co-construction.

Fundamentally speaking, this concept of the body refers to the audience. Because of their physical presence and in-built vulnerability, they have a sense of susceptibility which is a dialogical process. Exposure causes the audiences to feel self-consciousness, and closeness to the performer makes them lose the sense of being passive. Therefore, audiences are forced to become active participants. This demand for the priority of embodied life can prevent performance art from being reduced to abstract notions of questions such as capital punishment. By disrupting the conceptual framework, it can make spectators experience the alterity of others more intimately and thus be in a state of tension and unease upon recognizing their own participation. The unsettling moments are often occasions for self-reflection and expose the hidden dimensions kept out of view. Therefore, one may begin to consider the cause of their desire for violence or punitive response in a deeper way.

Therefore, performance art does not just a representation. It is a lived practice that presents susceptibility and alterity as the conditions for ethical encounter. Live co-presence disrupts passive consumption and offers new forms for perceiving the Other, desire and punishment.

4.3 Art as Counter-Ritual: Performance, Alterity and Ethical Interruption

Thus, performance art can offer a methodological pathway to unsettle the long-held fantasies of punishment and start an ethical encounter. Levinas (1978) pointed out that art makes the familiar strange and, through alterity, discloses the shared vulnerability and transgresses normative boundaries. Performance art gives importance to the body-in-presence as a place for otherness and exposure. Fischer-Lichte (2008) has shown that in a live encounter, the performers and the audience automatically generate meaning through an "autopoietic feedback loop" and are thus subjectively altered. Thus, alterity is continually presented and enacted as what Butler (2004) refers to as "dispossession", disturbing the self's security and creating a common space of vulnerability.

If the death penalty is a ritual of expulsion for the other, then performance art can be a counter-ritual. The cultural performance aim for social resonance through "fusion" (Alexander, 2004), and Butler's (1999) theory of performativity also indicates that social norms are maintained by contingent, stylized repetition. However, she also thinks that "iterability" does not always reproduce identically (Butler, 2009, p. 130). Since repetition is never exactly the same, alterity can appear as a disruptive force. By placing the vulnerable body at the center and presenting non-normative Others, performance art has put the audience in front of a performative choice regarding the "social scripts" (Alexander, 2004) of punishment: whether to reinforce the frame/script or to recognize the Other's alterity. This choice is a kind of self-examination of one's own desires and disturbs the economy of desire that keeps subjects bound by punitive rituals. It is not intended to solve the tension but to sustain it, and let the unknown to remain in view.

4.4 Case Study: The Bodily Encounter in Marina Abramović's Rhythm 0

Marina Abramović's Rhythm 0 (1974) is not about capital punishment but explores the collective violence in punitive spectacle to an extent. By turning her body into a passive object, she reduced herself to the form of Agamben's "bare life" (1998, 2005) and thus resembled a ritual sacrifice for the condemned. The audience's aggression became a site for collective projections of ressentiment. From a Žižekian perspective, these actions are not mere aggression but rather a kind of surrender to the "temptation of sacrifice", and they assume meaning under the imagined sanction of the big Other. This arguably served as a mini society for punishing violent behaviors. According to documented accounts, the violations Abramović endured led to intervention by the gallery staff.

The ending of the work caused a frame rupture. When Abramović returned to being an active subject by walking towards the audience, the unavoidable presence of an active, looking person broke through the passive frame, causing people to feel awkward and leave the space in a hurry. This instant moment shakes them out of the frame and into a state "outside of themselves," creating a rupture that compels critical self-reflection on their actions. This confrontation with her irreducible alterity prompted a reflective questioning of the 'false' or contextually induced desires that audiences had acted upon. It generates an ethical tension that often suppressed by state punishment through

dehumanization. Feedback from participants' confusion further indicates retrospective questioning of the desires expressed during the performance.

Abramović's body became a site to explore the boundaries of violence and highlighted the ethical issues in group violence. The performance also motivated some audiences to reflect on intervention. By encountering the vulnerable face of the Other, some may have experienced a psychological crisis that led to what Butler (2005) terms 'ethical agency', and trigger other responses included acts of protection. Although it did not invoke frames (Butler, 2009) of criminality, Rhythm 0 suspended social norms and made spectators co-constitutive of the ethical situation. Therefore, the performance does not just exhibit violence. Instead, it creates an environment where the audience is forced to face their own sense of responsibility and choose between participation and detachment, initiative and hesitation, etc. It can be said that face-to-face performance art also questions the idea of bodily integrity and social ethics, thereby prompting us to think about violence in ritualized processes. Thus, the conflicts in performance art are manifestations of 'otherness' that deviate from the norm and provide a medium for ethical reflection.

4.5 Crossing the Fantasy

Although this paper mainly analyzes the fantasies that support the idea of capital punishment, all-encompassing research should also expand this critique to include abolitionist discourse. Although the global movement for abolition is morally necessary, it may also have its own fantasies, ideas of restorative justice or absolute moral purity. These narratives are likely to risk reproducing fantasy structures. According to Lacan's theory, the goal is not to exit the symbolic order, which we can never truly escape. Rather, it is to "move through the fantasy". This involves recognizing the structuring force of fantasy and reorienting desire in relation to the fundamental lack it conceals.

This paper proposes a path for encounters with art, specifically suggesting practices that mobilize radical heterogeneity. The aim is not to replace punitive justice with an idealized abolitionist vision, but to harness art's capacity to create a tense, reflective space. Within these spaces, individuals have to confront, their internal anxieties regarding violence, lack of being, and conflict. Interrupting spectacles that combine outrage and identification to create collective pleasure, art thus disrupts the defensive consolidation of the community through fantasy. This leads toward a recognition that subjects remain constitutively bound through a shared lack that marks being itself. This reveals that community is sustained not by unifying fantasies or sovereign guarantors, but by recognizing shared vulnerability and interdependence.

5. Conclusion

The argument created the death penalty as a ritualised social performance sustained by collective fantasy. Research indicates that the reduction of the individual to a symbol of projection by sovereign power is linked to unconscious attachments, ressentiment and desires for moral order. The people here are the subjects of their own formation, not simply passive objects of power. This study identifies performance art as a transformative method for destabilizing punitive desires, thereby enabling a more ethical engagement to rethink about the fantasy structure. The core argument is that ethical transformation begins from the unsettling tension of the encounter with the Other. By bringing the body's vulnerability and alterity to the fore, performance art shakes up normal frames and prompts subjects into a state of tension. Thus, they come to recognition of shared vulnerability and life's inherent precarity.

Abramović's *Rhythm 0* is an embodied artistic practice that explores the uneasy relationships, such as desire, alterity and the tension of choice. It showed how desires appear in unexpected forms through daily performativity, how the sense of alterity changes from a sense of threat to one of ethical relations, and how the tension of choice produces a sense of ethical agency. At the same time, the audience left and the reflection afterwards symbolized these shifts. The above are consistent with the theories of "dispossession" and the "second death" and show how art can create a moment of rupture in the established fantasy logic. Although Rhythm 0 does not explicitly discuss the death penalty, it shows how society has dealt with the desire for punishment in terms of the mind and ethics. Its relevance extends to the basic process of subject formation. That is, oneself is continuously being reconfigured in relation to others and constantly returning to reassess its position and identity.

The theoretical system the study had established here may also be applicable to other socially contentious issue that involve deep-seated fantasies about identity and justice. It is not to replace one type of fantasy with another, but rather to understand the structure of fantasy. The ethical and artistic challenge is to move beyond self-gazing and recognize the "other" as an individual with the face. Justice may be founded not on a fantasy of absolute order, but on an ongoing acknowledgment of how fantasy and desire shape society. This requires us to recognize our own complicities and vulnerabilities within punitive systems, the irreducible alterity of the Other, and the fundamental lack at the core of both the self and the community. Only by staying with the intricate logics of fantasy and desire can the work of reconfiguring the self and its ethical relation to others begin.

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