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## Moving not staying still in time to the zone

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## Moving Not Staying Still in Time to the Zone

Time and temporality are central to being in the zone, as the chapters in this volume testify, across a wide range of terrains and in diverse experiences: getting into the zone, means getting in time as well as in tune to the zone. Not only are there references to harmony and synchrony, but also everything comes together at a particular time, even if those in the zone are often not conscious of the passage of time, especially the measurement of clock time. Bitz is so often characterized as timeless, or out of time, or a state where time stands still, even, on those occasions, when common sense tells us, there is very little time. It seems that, even in a race like the 100m sprint, which, at the elite level of the Olympics, can last under 10 seconds (Usain Bolt's record of 9.58 seconds still stands at the time of writing), athletes report time standing still, (*Chasing Time Exhibition*, 2014-15; Chevalley and Woodward, 2015).

Time is always moving on, from A to B, but what also matters is the experience of time (Adam, 2004; 1995, 1994, 1990; Zerubavel, 1981). Time is dynamic and mobile, in that time is constantly moving forward, but time is also perceived and understood (Bergson 1991, 1977, 1967). The zone might seem to be suspended or even denied as a possibility in the condition of living beings and organic life, which is so marked by the relentless march of time. This is especially so in the case of human beings whose relentless pursuit of ever more precise measurement and management of time, is so manifest in our concern with managing clock time. The passing of time is not only a necessary condition of life, but it is also a particular concern of the contemporary social world, with its 24/7 timetables, constant movement and often futile, if increasingly constraining, endeavours to

manage time more efficiently, or more mindfully. It is not surprising that people seek respite and some peace. Part of the appeal of being in the zone is removal from the stresses of everyday life and the pressures of having to achieve along with the ever present fear of failure. Getting into the zone, however may demand high levels of competence and, in relation to peak performance, may frequently be associated with success: another incentive to get into the zone as well as a reward. In spite of contemporary obsessions with clock time and the abandonment of seasonal, organic time (Adam, 2004) and apart from the often idealized promotion of care of the self and representations which feed phantasies of rural idylls, the calm of the zone could offer benefits which might be much more equally available than only to elite, peak performers. Thus my emphasis is upon the experience of time rather than its measurement in the zone and, in particular, upon the social and cultural dimensions of temporality as a feature of bitz, in order to explore some of the shared and collective experiences and possibilities of the zone.

The duration of the experience demands freedom from everyday anxieties: you need time to experience the suspension of time. Bitz might not be a level playing field for a number of reasons. The promise of access to the zone can be denied to those who do not have the time to prepare or even to participate in activities which facilitate such possibilities, as Clinton Evers argues in the context of surfing (2010). Social inclusion and exclusion operate according to cultural norms and discursive regimes of truth which can make it impossible to even think of getting into the zone. Bitz has not been 'put into discourse' (Foucault, 1981) for some constituencies.

As the examples in this book demonstrate, not only is bitz contingent and dependent upon temporal and spatial contexts, definitions of the zone are also constitutive of the experience and of who gets into the zone. Access to the zone is subject to forces of social exclusion and inequalities which sporting activities and practices can generate and create as well as reflecting inequities and divisions in the wider social terrain. For example, in sport, the competences and skills, the time and resources required to participate fully (Woodward, 2014b) are often weighted in favour of more privileged groups of men as well as being identified with sporting masculinities within currently circulating cultural discourses. The classification of bitz as necessarily elite performance can restrict access as can its association with particular body practices.

Bitz is a contradictory space and state of being, but a focus upon time and temporality can offer some insights and some means of opening up the zone more democratically to communal and shared, as well as individual and individualized, experience. Sport, as a site where the zone receives explicit reference and which is characterized by the tensions between heroes and celebrities and the collaboration of team work, is a good place to start.

This chapter focuses on the temporal dimensions of the zone, mostly within the realm of sport. Time matters enormously in sport, for example through the organization of timed events, the keeping of ever more precisely measured records and the stages of engagement; training time, performance, recovery time and reappraisal (Chevalley and Woodward, 2015). Competitive sport especially conforms to a conceptualization of bitz as peak performance following a path of different stages as suggested by the work of Csíkszentmihályi, which has been cited on several occasions in this book.

My evidence and arguments are drawn from work on time and temporality in the 'real time' of the 2012 Olympics, when I immersed myself as a spectator in the moment of events in the competition (Woodward, 2013) and the subsequent experience of curating the international Olympic Museum exhibition, *Chasing Time* (2014-15), to which time and temporality were central. My other source of material comes from experience of researching, representing, for example in film, and writing about boxing, which is a sport where the concept of the zone is frequently invoked, not least by trainers, who want to deploy the capacities of bitz to persuade boxers to suspend sensitivities, fears and anxieties and get on a roll.

### **Bitz in the ring and in the gym**

The zone is a mental place where you can act more intuitively and respond better. It focuses upon losing the clutter from your mind...It removes worries and fears

The zone is something that is found in the dressing room, while you're walking in your robe, throwing punches...you just let your body and spirit take over the fight.

You don't even think about it...It's a great place to be, almost magical

Time stands still

(From Boxing Forum Archive, 2016)

Boxers rehearse many of the familiar descriptions of the zone although these observations are accompanied by suggestions of specific body practices in order to facilitate bitz. 'fight with your jaw relaxed' 'open your mouth' 'relax every bit of your body that's not punching, moving" focus on one thing, one part of your body'

In gyms trainers use the concept of flow in training to focus their fighters so that they are completely immersed in the process of boxing. Boxing is a highly disciplined sport, which demands intensive training regimes and deep commitment, especially for those who seek success in the professional sport or as competitive amateurs. Some trainers even promise 'joy and 'rapture' (Cappy's Gym, 2016). In boxing, this can mean transcending the intensity of sensations of pain and some of the trauma to which the flesh is subject in the one on one combat of the boxing ring. Accessing the zone, which is seen as enjoyable and could be a spontaneous expression of both joy and harmony, is largely seen as possible, through training and preparation in the period leading up to the fight (ibid.).

Bitz is not, of course, confined to the visible public spectacle of competitive fighting and can be part of the appeal, or the promise of the 'ordinary affects' (Stewart, 2007) which Lynne Pettinger describes in the context of working lives in this volume, or, for example, in routine sparring and training in the gym. The concept of affect, whether manifest in the ordinary or the spectacular, is useful in understanding the relational processes in play in bitz, because affect, as explained in recent work on the affective turn (for example, Clough and Halley, 2007), involves dynamic interrelationships between all the elements, including bodies, things, places and feelings and emotions, which are imbricated in the experience of the zone. The zone is distinguishable and distinctive within this assemblage of different forces and thus appears to be out of time. Bitz is sensory and time can be felt as well as measured. The everyday practices of those women and men who enjoy boxing because it makes them feel good but have no desire to compete professionally offers a different kind of 'time out', when things fall into place and it feels right (Woodward, 2014b). Sometimes it feels right and it just happens, but it all has to come together at the same time.

Spontaneity is however, problematic. Bitz may be defined as a spontaneous experience, but it is nonetheless one which may demand rigorous training regimes, as in competitive boxing, or indeed any activity which involves gaining skills and competences. It is, of course, possible to witness small children expressing the exuberance associated with bitz (Woodward, 2014b) and to share in their joy and lack of inhibition in what Donna Haraway calls the open which Jordan discusses in chapter 7. Those of us who work with animals and share our lives with them, are aware that dogs, for example, surrender to spontaneous joy in the moment, and that, as Haraway writes of her life with her Australian shepherd dog, Cayenne and the particular activity of agility training which synchronizes the movements of dog and handler. These are moments when bodies come together and those involved are not conscious of time even though this is a very distinct moment in time. Lack of consciousness of the passing of time and of its measurement, is part of the unmediated sensation of bitz, during which feeling overrides rationality. Feelings can be shared across species, as is evident in the sharing of experience between human and dog, in Haraway's case in agility training when they both know that the dog as well as the handler has had an exceptional run. This is, as Jordan argues, a community of experience. It is also one in which all participants are lost in the same moment, in a temporal community.

There are other such experiences, in sport or work or music, as the chapters in this book demonstrate, some of which involve achieving high levels of competence. This is not to underestimate the intensity of the genuinely spontaneous moment or, to in any way belie the capacity of children, and dogs, to be lost in time so elemental is their abandonment to this moment-to-real time. The novelist Yann Martel describes this phenomenon in relation to his dog, Bamboo, who can live in a moment now and

'achieve what Buddhist monks spend a life time trying to achieve'(BBC World Service, 2016). Consciousness might aid analysis of bitz but impede attainment of the state.

Boxing illustrates well the temporal structure of sport and has its own distinctive temporal features as well as aspects of selection and recruitment, training, performance and recovery time, which are shared with other sports. The centrality of bodies introduces a more explicit intrusion of time into preparation which often includes weight reduction to comply with the weight categories, sometimes undertaken at very short notice by pugilists before the weigh-in. Boxing has a fixed number of rounds; 12 for professional men's boxing, which are timed 3 minutes each; the expression 'going the distance' comes from lasting all 12 rounds. Women's and amateur boxing have different number of rounds. A round is relatively short, although it is very intense. The clock time of 3 minutes may be relatively brief, but the experience can be an eternity or, as is more likely in the zone, they do not even notice time passing. Boxers still describe their experience of disregarding injury and keeping going, not through resignation or even courage, but through being 'out of time' (Woodward, 2007) and as being in the zone. It is hard to see this as a matter of being in tune with oneself or in some sort of state of harmony and grace. The French version of the zone as *un état de grâce* might translate as a state of calm unlikely to be experienced in boxing, but it carries associations of serenity and harmony which are also characteristics of the zone, whatever the body practices which make the experience possible. Bodies matter in boxing, both in relation to the weight categories which are part of the governance of the sport and, especially, because of its enfolded practices, which are characterized by one on one combat and the tensions between the broken and the beautiful body in which the senses of spectators are closely enmeshed, not least through powerful identifications with the pugilists in the ring. The actuality of boxing, of being there in the gym or at the

ring, is also strongly sensual. You can smell the sweat and hear the thuds of glove on flesh, of bodies hitting the canvas and the cries for a KO, when those watching are transported by the narrative of the event. The harmony of the zone in boxing derives from the lack of consciousness of time passing or of any division between body and mind in phenomenological account of embodiment which boxers often translate as feeling it 'in their blood' (Wacquant, 2004).

Boxing illustrates some of the connections between the zone as a transformative and transcendental experience for individuals and the injunctions of trainers and coaches to 'get into the zone' in order to improve performance and win the fight. One aspect of bitz which clearly has appeal for ambitious trainers is the possibilities it offers for overcoming sensations of pain and moving not only 'beyond discourse' (Massumi, 2002) but beyond the body, whilst still being very much in the body and ultimately subject to its senses and sensations and, in particular, its material capacities to inflict pain on an opponent whilst endeavouring to avoid injury oneself.

The zone in the field of sport is multifaceted and subject to contradictory interpretations, ranging from the exhortations of trainers to get their athletes into the zone to maximize performance to the harmonious experiences of the en fleshed activities which might not be anywhere near elite standards but are nonetheless exhilarating and characterized by the timeless joy of Bitz, and the feeling of 'getting it right'.

The zone is the subject of training texts and manuals across a range of sports (Gallwey 1986 (1974), 2009) which draw heavily on the psychological literature, especially Csikszentmihalyi's enormously influential work, as is evident across this volume. The zone is also a social and democratic space, the joy of which can be shared; bitz may be

neither exclusively individual nor the preserve of the elite and supremely competent, even in sport.

### **Pleasure**

Being out of time in the expressive, intense space of the zone can also be pleasurable and present possibilities of being, not only in tune with oneself and one's body but also sharing the experience collectively. Temporality and pleasure are interconnected in the social and enfolded experience of sport. Sport has strong associations with play (Guttmann, 2012), which make sporting practices available as sources of pleasure to participants who do not operate at elite levels or engage competitively, whatever the strength of the global, sport, media, commerce nexus and the powerful motivators of profit led global capital. There are the simple physical pleasures of moving and feeling, such as those Mary Wollstonecraft (2001[1792]) argued were the sine qua non of women's liberation. She claimed that women could never be truly independent and participate fully in public life until girls and women had the freedom to engage in unrestricted physical activity on a par with boys and young men; simply being free to run and jump and climb.

Mega sporting events like the Olympics can generate shared pleasures, which include the transcendent possibilities of the zone and which the closing ceremony of the 2012 London games attempted to capture through recreating some of the affects and intensities, for spectators and the collectivity as well as for athletes, of peak performances. The pleasures of bitz are sensuous and sentient, but nonetheless difficult to represent. Spectacles and displays constitute one of the tropes of representation, as well as being in themselves pleasurable and offering a means of making sense of the collective promise of the pleasures of bitz.

Pleasure in sport relates to the experiences of participants and of spectators and arises, and is expressed, by overcoming consciousness of time and entering a state, which seems to be timeless. Thus the experience of spectators might be part of an assemblage of body practices, pain as well as pleasure, peak performance, past knowledge and future dreams, feelings and emotions as well as the material environment. Pleasure is also part of the imaginary of futures, which, in sport incorporates pleasure, dreaming and imagining what is yet to come and provide some alternative approaches to futurity, beyond setting targets or making predictions. The future might offer pleasurable experiences, including *bitz*, to those hitherto denied access. As Elizabeth Grosz argues, the future can be understood in different ways, one of which she claims could address the inequalities of the past and present and suggest a more democratic future, which could incorporate more egalitarian social relations. The challenge to a reinstatement of unequal times in social relationships and, especially in sexual politics can be called 'women's time' (Grosz, 1995; 2005).

A gendered version of futurity was much heralded as a legacy of the 2012 Olympics, the development of which might already be very evident in 2012 (Woodward, 2014a). Commentators and pundits frequently mentioned the actualities of gender equality and described the 2012 Olympics being women's time. Pleasure is also, as Foucault demonstrates, aligned to bodies and to power (Foucault, 1981), which makes sport such a useful site for research and a context in which enfolded sensations that are constitutive of pleasure, become possible

I use an example below which is taken from my 'real time' research on the 2012 Olympics (Woodward, 2013) which illustrates some aspects of what might be social and shared as well as individual about *bitz*. Before going into the case study I want to

explain how I am using the idea of real time and what this conceptualization of temporality might contribute to making sense of bitz.

I use the concept of real time to capture the methodological approach adopted in my 2012 research, but in this chapter, real time has resonance for understanding the zone too.

### **Real Time**

The coming together of past present and future in the now which I describe as the position I was in as a situated researcher recording material as it happened and, which I suggest are aspects of bitz, is constitutive of real time. The present has particular resonance in sport; live sport offers greater excitement than the recorded version, because of the entanglement of sentient enfolded selves, on and off the field of play in the total experience of 'being there' (Woodward, 2015). I use the term 'real time' methodologically not to lay claim to truth or to authenticity, but rather as a means of capturing the intensity of the moment which condenses the past, with its memories which inform the present and the hope and promise of the future. In sport this has particular meanings when the present is always informed by past records, successes and failures and dreams of future successes. Athletes and spectators embark on the event for itself, but also very aware of what has happened in the past, how this informs the present and, especially hopes of being faster, higher, stronger (translated from the words of the Olympic motto, *citius, altius, fortius*). Time too is comparative. The dimensions of temporality which the conceptualization of real time seeks to embrace also have particular resonance for time in the zone; real time is now, but now inevitably draws upon what is past and is projected into the future, with all that futurity promises and threatens. Athletes can be haunted by fear of failure, such as a false start, and followers too can approach the event being only too conscious of any past failures

and underachievement of their team. The zone has to be now, when times merge in the real time of the present.

What is written now is only meaningful in relation to the past, in sporting terms for example records are only broken because they exceed earlier recorded achievements. Now becomes then and what is written now is communicated in the future. The dynamic, changing field of sport, especially competitive global sport, with its obsessions with measured time and records, means that real time combines past, present and future with the sensory, enfolded processes and forces which are implicated in the experience of being immersed in the real time of the zone.

Liminality which Paul Stenner explores in his critique of bitz in this volume is also a characteristic of real time and the analysis of temporality which is offered in this chapter. Time is relational and real time occupies a liminal space which is not in the middle between past and future but, as Victor Turner argues, both before and after (Turner, 1967, 1974). Real time in the zone provides creative opportunities outside the restrictions of linear time. The passage through time in the zone, even if according to conventional measurement of linear time, means you are out of time in a space without limits. This was represented through endeavouring to provide visitors to the *Chasing Time* exhibition at the Olympic Museum (2014-5) with the experience of moving through night and day and the seasons of organic time into interrelated but undifferentiated spaces. For example, visitors were offered a variety of sensory experiences, from entering the space of seasonal time in which they could look up at the changing sky, through the laboratory of measured time and given opportunities to judge the passage of time in different contexts and different sports. Music and performance art, ranging from Ligeti's 1962 composition for 100 metronomes to Mel Brimfield's 4'33" (the Prepared Pianola for Roger Bannister's 4 " mile, named after

John Cage's silent 4'33" composition) immersed visitors in different sensory experiences as well as offering different attempts to represent time. Visitors were invited to occupy different spaces to experience the differences between clock time and organic seasonal time and through lighting, sound and visual effects of film to think about the possibilities of the zone.

### **Seeing the Zone: Spectatorship**

In the project which I undertook during the Olympics in 2012, my aim was to interrogate some of the interrelationships between time and sport and to explore what sport, in this case, the mega events of the Olympic Games, could offer to an understanding of temporality.

By revisiting the example, which follows, I aim to explore a particular aspect of collective experience of the zone by thinking about how spectatorship might be implicated in the process. During the London Olympics, I recorded my responses to particular events as they happened (Woodward, 2013). In this case I watched the 2,000m women's pairs, Helen Glover and Heather Stanning of team GB on the television on August 1st 2012 and wrote my reactions on my iPad, as it happened.

Glover and Stanning went into the lead early in the race, rowing in perfect harmony, amidst a frenzy of excitement from commentators and spectators as it was felt that this could be Team GB's first gold medal of the 2012 games

...bodies, oars, boat, water and motion are in harmony and completely synchronised... They seem to be floating quite unaware of their surroundings in which cries of gold medals, records and quantifiable achievements pour forth. There is an elision of all elements in something more than an assemblage... merging in slow motion, even though Glover

and Stanning are going very fast, much faster than anyone else...embodied harmony of the two women so in time who are...caught up in the movement and the process and appear to be going beyond it, beyond discourse and beyond representation even though I am watching, transfixed.

These feelings persisted even when the race was finished.

At the end the two women's bodies are entangled in exhaustion and only slowly separate and become two separate embodied athletes... two entangled bodies lost in time. This time it is going on for ever and I am caught up in the timelessness of the moment too. They keep on touching, being together and being a team, being one and being two in time (Woodward, 2013:69)

What characterizes this as bitz? The somewhat limited vocabulary of commentators for the expression of their euphoria at Team GB winning the first gold medal of the 2012 games ('amazing', 'incredible' were adjectives repeated by commentators and athletes at every possible opportunity throughout the Olympics) was clearly evident. I was however, acutely aware of the paucity of my own vocabulary of effective adjectives to communicate this qualities of such a moment, which seemed to be beyond discourse. This could of course be because, to paraphrase psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's arguments about patriarchal, phallogocentric language, the language of sport speaks us. It becomes difficult to speak outside these discursive regimes of excess, but, whatever the limitations of language, bitz offers complex challenges which are creative and

productive socially, politically and culturally. Invocations of the zone condense these meanings and do give voice to these moments.

A concept which does have resonance in this context is Luce Irigaray's feminist version of *jouissance* (Irigaray, 1984, 1991) as that uncompromising and unconscious state of joyous interconnection and deep, embodied pleasure, for example between mother and child, which is outside and beyond patriarchal language suggests one possibility, as does the French version of the zone as un 'état de grâce, which in spite, or maybe because, of its religious connotations does capture the calm and harmony of the timelessness of bitz.

What seems striking to me, rather as in the case of Haraway's notion of the open (Haraway, 2008), is that Glover and Stanning are in the zone. At the time I was too, but perhaps I was merely witness? If the act of witnessing offers a dimension of representing and accounting for bitz, it does have methodological value and can provide one route into exploring and researching the zone. I have reservations about claiming the simultaneous experience for myself as a spectator however, because the achievement was theirs; competitive elite sport gives medals to super athletes, but I should also note that it is only in retrospect that I am equivocating. At the time, in the real time of the event, I was there.

This example well illustrates the more transcendent properties of being in the zone and, in particular the temporal dimensions of the experience. This moment might be less about the embodied, athletic performance itself and more about its enfleshed aftermath, legacy and the recovery from such total exertion, which so starkly contrasts with the hyperbole of the lead-up to the race and the excited, and excitable, volubility of the commentary. The calm of recovery also contrasts with the exertion of preparation and what must surely come in the post-performance

analysis. The languorous unraveling of the bodies in the boat seems to be taking place in slow motion, in body movements which are the opposite of the massive efforts of the competition and extend the timing of the event.

Slo-mo techniques are frequently deployed to convey the transcendence of an experience which might be expressive of the zone. One powerful example, which has become iconic is that used in the film *Chariots of Fire* (1981) about the 1924 Olympics and the lives of runners Harold Abrahams and Eric Liddell, especially in the training sessions filmed on the West Sands at St Andrews in Scotland, accompanied by the emotive crescendos of composer Vangelis's synthesizer and piano soundtrack. This musical accompaniment, along with slow motion camera work has become a key signifier of transcendent experiences, especially when located in so beautiful a place. Whilst this signifier might have become somewhat over used it demonstrates the centrality of time to attempts to represent bitz. It is a fine line between excess, hyperbole and exaggerated discourses of transcendence and the intense calm actuality of the state of being in the zone. Time, though relentless in its passage and constantly moving, is multi-faceted in the experience, especially of the characteristic suspension of time in the zone, with its harmonious inflections. Synchrony and the feeling of everything coalescing into the moment make the ordinary affects of bitz more possible. The zone might even counter the excesses of sporting hyperbole. Bitz is a moment in time which also brings together past and future in the present. Thus as an expression of the moment bitz offers a new way of thinking about time and temporality outside the future as a set of targets and objectives or as a time to predict. Neither is it a utopian future because utopia seems to be now. Futurity is both within the present and beyond it.

## **Flesh**

In the above rowing example the nature and quality of the enfleshed encounter is what makes the event distinctive; this goes beyond the body practices and strategies of sport which are what makes bodies central to sport and sport so exciting. Spectatorship too is embodied, just as performance is. Senses, emotions, feelings and consciousness are all affected in the dynamic process of seeing and looking. As Bergson argued, 'If our body is the matter to which consciousness applies itself it is coextensive with our consciousness, it comprises all we perceive' (1977:258)

Although I have included the terms bodies and embodied, I would like to highlight the distinctive features of flesh and enfleshed as making possible the retention of some notion of agency which might have differential weighting according to the context in which the performance or activity takes place. Bodies and their practices and properties are central to an understanding of time. The primacy of flesh is also relevant to the temporality of bitz because bodies in sport have the promise of futurity, of achieving more, as well the restrictions of damage and impairment. This goes beyond individual bodies too and offers scope for collective experience, which can include the situated researcher in the process of immersion in the experience and in producing knowledge. Thus embracing the diverse elements and situations in which bodies are located seems to be a useful and creative way of understanding how temporality as going beyond discourse which suggests alternative routes into focusing upon temporality in the zone. Nonetheless we have to be attentive to the ways in which bodies are implicated in the process.

I propose the use of flesh and the idea of enfleshed selves who may share the experience because of the communal properties of flesh as well as its changing capacities. Flesh implies a crossing of boundaries which the body or even bodies cannot always accommodate. Flesh is a shared quality. Flesh is constitutive of lived, situated bodies but has a dynamism which in

the work of Merleau-Ponty includes the idea of becoming which carries temporal meanings (1968) because this is never a finished product but is always work in progress implicated in the temporal processes of becoming. By using the notion of flesh it is also possible to incorporate the material properties of bodies into collective experiences which suggests both collective experience of the zone and the inclusion of spectators as well as practitioners and performers.

The above example, taken from the 2012 Olympics is about experience, but it is not limited to experiential accounts especially since, as I have suggested, the hyperbole of commentary and even of language may fail to capture the whole experience. The methodological engagement with real time which is cited above does however require accounts of experience, however limited. The methodological approaches to real time which are adopted in this book are experiential and concerned with processes of perception. These processes raise questions about things in the world and the ideas in the mind and the relationships between spectators who look and what they look at.

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, especially his work in the unfinished, *Visibility and Invisibility* (1968) develops an ontology of flesh which includes the concept of becoming enfleshed and is useful in considering the possibilities of thinking about the enfleshed experience of time in the zone. Much of his work and developments of his approach, including Simone de Beauvoir's critique of bodies as themselves *situations* as well as being *situated* (1949) focuses upon the interrelationships between mind and body and between subjects and objects. Bitz offers fluidity and mobility, even if time seems to stand still; a challenge to poet Andrew Marvel's expression for the unremitting march of time as 'time's winged chariot', as well as providing a means of understanding how different elements of time fit together. The idea of becoming enfleshed puts material bodies into time and

accommodates changing and different ways of being embodied in the world and, importantly, the dynamic embodied dimensions of bitz.

Merleau-Ponty, (1968) developed his understanding of the relationship between subject and object in radical ways, which differ from some of his more well known work on the phenomenology of perception (1962; 1963). Perception is central to my argument, which is based upon different experiences of the rhythms of time (Zerubavel, 1981) and the relationship between what is seen and understood and the objects of perception. Merleau-Ponty's later work is much closer to Bergson's work on the interrelationship between subject and object and between perception and the inner world of ideas and the world of objects and materials, which is useful in exploring the relationship between spectators and performers. Looking and understanding is also embodied and part of the process of becoming enfleshed. Merleau-Ponty describes the two way relationship between of those who see and what is seen, which what is visible and between the toucher and the object which is touched thus transgressing the boundaries between the senses and between subject and object. He uses the idea of flesh, not so much as something substantive or as identity, but rather as separation or divergence (*écart*). Flesh in this sense is not some privileged, material, animate category but can be understood as the most elementary level of being. Flesh is what makes the subject different and separate from itself. Flesh can be re-directed both inward into the invisible realm of ideas and outward to the world, just as bitz involves interconnections between inner worlds and outer social worlds, condensed into the moment of experience in real time. The dynamic of these processes move the real time of now into the future since through dual orientations both inward and outward applies to the dual orientation between present and future times.

Bitz is marked by temporal rhythms and diverse dynamic relationships, which involve perception, such as those between the person who sees and what is seen, between flesh and

the context of experience and between inner worlds of feelings and emotions and cultural and social worlds, which are marked by divisions and inequalities. Not only is bitz temporal but also these moments of peak performance and intensity bring together intersecting elements of subjects, objects, flesh and cultural, social forces.

### **Conclusion: Out of Time and into the Zone**

Time features widely in accounts of the zone, especially temporality as a social and cultural concept and way of understanding accounts of time, and even timelessness. I have suggested in this chapter that a focus upon temporality can contribute to the theoretical framework of bitz and to its methodologies. For example, the approach I have taken demonstrates the centrality of the interrelationship between social and cultural forces and subjective, embodied perception. Time connects inner and outer worlds and is always implicated in shared capacities and commonalities. Time like the zone is social and cultural and subject to diverse, embodied experience. Addressing the connections between subjects and objects and thinking about perception also offers a way of engaging with researching the zone

Bitz offers very different patterns and rhythms of time, which, although difficult to define, let alone to isolate and fix, can be productively addressed through a focus upon the liminal space of real time, which is both imbricated in the past and the future, but is also recognizable as now.

Although the experience may be described as transcendental, implying something disembodied, the zone always involves bodies in time, even if the experience is one of timelessness. Far from being disembodied bitz invokes the senses and is recognizable to those who experience this state.

There may be a suspension of feeling, of the pains, if not the pleasures, of the flesh. Pain may seem to be absent, as in the case of the injured boxer who comes back for more and does not

seem to be aware of the suffering of a clearly bruised and battered body. The zone is, however, experienced by the enfleshed self and by enfleshed selves who are connected to each other and to the location of the experience and the things which inhabit that space.

Although there is always a tension between the impositions of trainers and managers who may use bitz as a mode of control and to enhance performance, the unpredictability and creativity of the zone makes it a democratic space which could challenge the limitations of social exclusion and promote equality as well as equality of opportunity. In seeking to provide greater understanding of bitz, it becomes possible to open up this space as one through which political resistance to social exclusion and repression can also be expressed. The imaginary of the zone offers collective as well as individual opportunities for well being and freedom, even if its duration is relatively limited, whatever the claims of timelessness which characterize accounts of bitz.

The zone is always mobile, however static the sensation of time being suspended may appear. Bitz offers some new understandings of time as social and as becoming. Bitz puts new imaginaries into discourse.

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