

**REGIEBUCH 3 (Three Pre-studies and two
related essays)**

Reinventing *Regietheater*

The Actor-Director Relation in Rehearsals

Documented Artistic Research Project (D.A.R.P.) / Dissertation

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Grundrisse der Bühnenvarianten [floorplan of the stage variations] (1926)

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the crisis of *Regie* (i.e. of the agency of directing) in a post-#MeToo landscape. It argues that the outset of this crisis lies in an expansionist gesture – rooted in the avant-gardist ambition to merge art and life – by which directors have conflated artistic mandate with managerial control; a gesture culminating in the toxic institutional cultures painfully exposed during the last decade. Starting from this point of no return, the thesis examines the question of how to acknowledge the fact of directorial power abuse *without* cutting our practices off from the potential – or even the necessity – of directorial agency as such. Its title “Reinventing *Regietheater*” thus carries the tension between a historical form of theater (generally known as “directors’ theater”) and a yet-to-be-found future expression.

Conceived as artistic research, the discrete focus of the thesis is the rehearsal space and its confines. Within the micro-scale of the latter, the crisis of *Regie* reverberates first and foremost in the non-foreseeable instances of the actor-director interaction; namely in the increasing scrutiny applied to the tool of *improvisation*. In contrast to the prevailing strategy of eroding the rehearsal space’s symbolic boundaries (in the interest of directorial accountability), the thesis conceptualizes – practically as well as theoretically – a “Space of Rehearsals” as a heteronomous zone of safe but ecstatic play. This “Space of Rehearsals” is constructed through a rehearsal method informed by the psychoanalytic concept of transference as well as the interaction framework “Wheel of Consent”.

To answer its main questions, the thesis presents a “written part” as well as a set of “online resources” containing the documentation and “re-stagings” of the practical experiments. Four “books of *Regie*” present methodological reflections, a critical genealogy of a *theater of directing* (based on the author’s symptomatic practice) as well as the central concepts. Three so-called “Pre-studies”, devised through practical work with professional actors/collaborators form the empirical basis of the thesis, sketching out different possibilities for the actor-director relation in a re-invented *Regietheater*.

In the proposition resulting from the above, directorial agency does not necessarily sit with the director. Nevertheless, the disciplinary divide between actor and director is upheld; as well as the radical asymmetry in the distribution of authorial power, albeit in temporally limited and co-curated iterations. The main argument of the thesis is thus that the artistic potential of the historical form of *Regietheater* can be salvaged without taking a revanchist or revisionist stance: the idiosyncratic directorial agency known as *Regie* has its place in consent-based rehearsal settings.

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Table of Contents / “Online Resources”

Please note that in the case of the most common references to the online resources I use the abbreviations indicated below.

Sarah’s Director (Pre-study #1); <i>pdf, 11 pages</i>	PS#1
Video Diary; <i>video, 6h13min</i>	VD
The prompted interview: Sarah’s, the actress’, edit; <i>video, 51 min</i>	
The prompted interview: Johannes’, the director’s, edit; <i>video, 1h</i>	
“A/synchronicities at Play”; <i>split screen video, 2 min</i>	
“The Sweat of Fiction - the actor-director relation in centimeters”; <i>split screen video, 11 min</i>	
Claire’s Director (Pre-study #2); <i>pdf, 15 pages</i>	PS#2
Director in the SERVE quadrant (excerpt of an improvisation); <i>video, 7 min</i>	
“A Study in Transference”; <i>split screen video essay, 32 min</i>	
Letter to Johannes; <i>pdf, 3 pages</i>	LTJ
Letter to Claire; <i>pdf, 12 pages</i>	
“The practical knowledge of the Wheel applied to rehearsals”; <i>pdf, 11 pages</i>	
Anders’ Director (Pre-study #3); <i>pdf, 32 pages</i>	PS#3
Work Demonstration: “Rehabilitating Asymmetry in the Actor-Director Relation”; <i>split screen video, 59 min</i>	WD

Accessible via Research Catalogue:

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2649533/2649531/1895>



**REGIEBUCH 3 (Three Pre-studies and two
related essays)**

Short intro to Regiebuch 3

It is very hard to write a book. Because each book is two-dimensional. I wanted this book to be characterised by a feature that does not fit under any circumstances into the two-dimensionality of a printing element. (...) But unfortunately, books are not written as spheres.

Sergei Eisenstein (1929)

Regiebuch 3 presents the three practical experiments I conducted during my thesis, interwoven with two texts that emerged in between. While *Regiebuch 2* attempted for an overarching genealogy of *a theater of directing* – organized along a subjectively installed timeline/vertebra – the compositional principle in *Regiebuch 3* is that of the *montage*.

By this I mean that – wherever possible – I refrain from providing a moderating “voice-over” which would spare the reader/the audience the work of semantically connecting the elements assembled. As Russian director Sergej Eisenstein, one of the early conceptualizers of *montage* in film, contends: “[M]ontage is (...) an idea that DERIVES from the collision between two shots that are independent of one another (the ‘dramatic’ principle).” (Eisenstein 2009 27; emphasis in original)

Each chapter in *Regiebuch 3* shall therefore stand as a shot/fragment in its own right, producing a “third meaning”, when cross-read with another. This dialectical “third” can also be an open question, as for instance the one possibly resulting from the *montage* of the “transference” chapter with the one on “consent-based rehearsal methods”. (As you will see, the problem of “How to conceive the Wheel of Consent® as a Ring of Fire?” is picked up within the practical experiment that ensues.)

Despite the autonomy of each of the chapters, their order is nevertheless not random. Instead, it reconstructs the “genetic evolution” of how the research unfolded over the last seven years (from beginning 2019 to end 2025). What came after what in my process. In re-staging

this “unfolding” for this final version of the thesis, my ambition has been to keep an indexical layer present throughout: second-guessing the impulse to update the vocabulary representative of a specific stage of the research – unless it proved to be a complete fallacy, of course.

This rather light touch in terms of my own editorial review within *Regiebuch 3* also results in minor repetitions or even contradictions regarding the other volumes. Namely the essay on transference (Chapter 5, written in 2022) has been left intact for the sake of the build-up of its argument (with only the cross-references to other chapters adjusted). “Unconsciously” it often speaks to *Regiebuch 1* and *4* which were written later.

The genealogical dramaturgy also means that certain concepts otherwise central to the thesis only come into play as *Regiebuch 3* progresses. The “Wheel of Consent as an intermediate layer in the actor-director relation”, for instance, is still absent in Pre-study #1 (Chapter 4 and PS#1, online resources). The *knowing-when* of *phronesis* is not put to use yet in regard to the transference (Chapter 5), let alone the “Space of Rehearsals”. Therefore only Chapter 7 – which was begun after Pre-study #2 (Chapter 6 and PS#2, online resources) but accomplished only after Pre-study #3 (Chapter 8 and PS#3, online resources) – operates with the full inventory of concepts.

As for the two reflective texts, I have avoided letting the discoveries occasioned from the three practical experiments to be bypassed by their theorization. Every collaboration within the so-called Pre-studies is a “concrete story” (Bornemark 2020, 86) in the sense of the format of *phronesis*, grounding the theory in the anecdotal, “subjecting theory to incident” (Gallop 2002, 15). The knowledge produced in them is not hidden but situated in between me and the three professionals I worked with: *this* is the director I can be in *this* theater based on the art of *this* actor. A fact I am emphasizing by naming the Pre-studies after the collaborators in question: *Sarah’s Director*, *Claire’s Director*, *Anders’ Director* / Pre-study #1, #2, and #3.

In speaking of Pre-studies, I allude to the tradition in painting where the tricky details of the composition are studied in isolation. Each Pre-study of the thesis at hand anticipates another one and so does even the final one. Together they sketch out different possibilities for the actor-director relation in a *reinvented Regietheater*. My hope is that in combination with the critical genealogy presented in *Regiebuch 2* they result in a contradictory, nevertheless dialectical picture; a *spherical book*, as in Eisenstein's dream of a new medium.¹⁵¹ Thus, the Pre-studies in themselves do not lay claim to actualize the full alternative of a *reinvented Regietheater*. But hopefully the montage of *Regiebuch 2* and 3 offers an idea of it; “un soupçon de mer”, as it were.¹⁵²

*

Before venturing into the five chapters assembled in this *Regiebuch*, however, I give an introductory overview to the material conditions that produced the Pre-studies and the conceptual choices that resulted from it.

¹⁵¹ In his diary entry from the 5th of August 1929, Eisenstein further expands on his discontent regarding *the two-dimensionality of a printing element* – as well as the possible form appropriate to write about his artistic method: “This demand has two aspects. First, it supposes that the bundle of these essays is not to be regarded successively. In any case, I wish that one could perceive them all at the same time, simultaneously, because they finally represent a set of sectors, which are arranged around a general, determining viewpoint, aligned to different areas. On the other hand, I want to create a spatial form that would make it possible to step from each contribution directly into another and to make apparent their interconnection. (...) Such a synchronic manner of circulation and mutual penetration of the essays can be carried out only in the form (...) of a sphere. But unfortunately, books are not written as spheres. (...) I can only hope that they will be read according to the method of mutual reversibility, a spherical method – in expectation that we will learn to write books like rotating balls.” (Eisenstein 2016, 91)

¹⁵² “Un soupçon de mer” is what the real estate adds in the cities along the *Côte d’Azur* promise: “A glimpse of the ocean” shall be visible from the tiny balcony of this thesis.

Set-up of the Pre-studies (context/concept)

The material basis for making my practical experiments “outside of the field” (i.e. outside of the market for theater professionals) is the research budget SKH grants to its doctoral candidates (400.000 SEK by the time of writing). In order to live up to the premise of “research through artistic practice”, candidates of other universities with significantly less financial resources will necessarily incorporate works in their PhD that are “co-produced” with the external funds of theater institutions or companies; which, in turn, “produces” different methodologies. Whether the budget in Stockholm will be considered big or small very much depends on the type of artistic practice to be researched: while it will be enough to finance three autonomous studies in the performing arts – as I am presenting here – my film-making peers have no choice other than to mix with the needs of their industry in order to produce their practical cases.

As it would anyways have been hard to finance three autonomous *ensemble works*, I designed my studies as one-on-one encounters from the outset. This is both a concession to the financial framework (the collaborators could be paid appropriately) *and* a conceptual choice: the one-on-one dynamics of the actor-director dyad seemed like the smallest unit to a field of observation (theater rehearsals) that exponentially complicates the more people enter it.¹⁵³

This maximum reduction of factors – for the sake of focus – necessarily comes at the price of a certain *reductionism*: neither the dynamics between acting colleagues can really be considered in the set-ups suggested here nor the ones between the director and the artistic team (costume and set designers, dramaturges, etc.). Group dynamics, that are to some extent the

¹⁵³ Beyond financial and conceptual considerations, it is also the set-up I feel most “at home” in as a professional director. I have always liked “making solos”, giving maximum attention to one artist’s journey through rehearsals.

essence of rehearsals, can thus only be explored by the means of the *para-anecdote*, i.e. in the overlap of authorial intention and anecdotal knowledge. In the fictional video diary created in *Sarah's Director* (cf. VD, online resources), for instance, the alliances between actress and director are strongly affected by the imaginary ensemble that surrounds them; a trace of the “uncanny detail” of our individual lived experience.

Another reduction certainly concerns the instances when the actor-director dyad started to triangulate with the work of the camera. The most obvious case of this being the Pre-study #2, *Claire's Director*, where the set-up makes explicit reference to a situation I had experienced on a film set (cf. chapter 6 and PS#2, online resources). By inviting artist Mary Szydlowska into the constellation with my collaborator, a strong third agency entered the conceptual framework. Mary took on the roles of cinematographer and editor, and as the “local wizard” of our workplace Brussels, also partly of a producer. It would have been absurd to *not* get involved on the levels of contents or to ignore the work of transference in the constellation of three. And indeed, we did produce and share a lot of knowledge in our symbiotic triangle. However, when communicating the study, I have often – stubbornly – represented it by focusing on the conceptual outset of the actor-director dyad. In terms of methodology, I have so far found no satisfying take on this irregularity and need to appeal to the ethos of the *Diderot Society*, where “problems may also be presented as unresolved.” (Brecht [1938] 1997, 259; my translation)

Second-order observation (the phronesis of psychoanalysis)

Given the conceptual framework of the one-on-one structure (heeded with rigor in the first and third Pre-study) the default set-up of psychoanalytic practice soon offered itself, effortlessly, as a lens. With the analogy of analysand and analyst it provided both “scientific” concepts of the dynamics at work in the actor-director relation as well as a “technical” take on

the concrete interaction; on the *rapport* between actor and director, as it were.¹⁵⁴ (*Rapport* (French for “relation”) is the technical term psychoanalysis uses to describe the “bond” between analyst and analysand.) Bearing this structural analogy in mind, one of the central methodological questions regarding the Pre-studies can be addressed: what is the validity of the account of the artistic researcher who figures in the role of “the director” in his own studies? What to make of this “accumulation of offices” and seemingly unilateral power over the narrative?

In the one-on-one set-up of psychoanalysis, too, the analyst – even though implicated in the treatment and its various transferences – simultaneously documents the process; when finally communicating it to the outside s/he represents it in the default format of the “case history”, by the means of the report, the dissection, the interpretation. Criticism of the scientific validity of the psychoanalytic methodology has thus persisted since its beginnings and, in that regard, artistic research might have a historical lesson to learn when defending a situated knowledge that is “neither a fully scientifically formalizable nor an esoterically diluted rapport between two subjects” (Tholen et al. 2001, 9; my translation)

All the while, constructive propositions from *within* the psychoanalytic school have also contested the mastery of the analyst’s account (his/her one-sided narrativization), calling for a new technique of “case history” writing. Namely Luce Irigaray’s enigmatic allusion to a case history that succeeds in a “re-staging of *both* transferences” (Irigaray 1977, 144) (the analysand’s *and* the analyst’s) has been inspiring my own ambitions, setting a standard that could eventually be met. First of all, because of welcoming genuinely theatrical means – the

¹⁵⁴ Even though Freud collects his practical reflections on the analyst-analysand relation under the title “*Technique of Psycho-Analysis*” (Freud 1915; my emphasis) I would argue that a lot of his observations touch upon phronetic knowledge. Namely regarding the emergence and management of the transference during an analysis, everything seems to be a question of “knowing *when*”, given the unique situation. More about the *phronesis of psychoanalysis* in Chapters 5 and Y.

“case history” as a “re-staging” [re-mettre en scène] – while, secondly, acknowledging the director’s entanglement in the situation.

Technically, I have tried to meet this standard of re-staging *both* transferences foremost by safeguarding the integrity of the actor’s perspective; more specifically by devising formats of documentation from the outset that limit my possibilities of intervention. *Simultaneity* and *parallelity* in particular have been helpful methods here (Claire and me sending letters to each other at the same time or Sarah and me picture-locking the individual edits of the same interview-material without mutual feedback), resulting in a kind of “two channel aesthetics” that overarches the whole research project.

The third thing

Within this structure of one-on-one encounters and two-channel documentation, the question of *how* we agreed on the “third thing” – the material we would work with – is also worth a short elaboration. When there are no outer forces imposing a certain material – the opposite of what is the rule for a director “in the field” (who is usually commissioned to stage a template of some kind) – the choice of material turns seemingly arbitrary. Moreover, in an artistic research project like mine, concerned with the *process* of rehearsals and its collaborative dynamics rather than with a certain mise-en-scène or a specific aesthetic shape, finding the material can almost feel like “an excuse”, an excuse to meet and rehearse.

Given this outset, rather than imposing a “random third thing”, I have sought to carefully let the material emerge from the context of our constellations: the professional context of my collaborators, the artefacts of our relation, the location of our study, the moment in time.

Going by that “organic” approach, a “magical network of relations” usually unfolded wherein my collaborators had agency, if they desired it.¹⁵⁵

The initial fear on my end – the reason to keep the status of the material “weak” – was to be absorbed by the aesthetic or content-based challenges a specific material poses; and to fall into professional patterns of directing (“problem-solving”) which would ultimately distract me from the focus I had as an artistic researcher, i.e. the actor-director relation. It was only during the second Pre-study that I was made fully aware (by my collaborator Claire) of the dialectical tension between the quality of a material and the quality of the collaborative dynamics. In that sense, contrary to what I thought earlier, the choice of material is not random at all, but an actual factor impacting the “object of study” in artistic research.

In the case of the work with Anders, however, a given method started to suffice as a reason to meet and rehearse. Running into the “Wheel of Consent” midway into this PhD project, I was happy to find a “material” that could in itself attend to the purely relational aspects of the rehearsal situation. From here on, the challenge was rather to turn this given method into a theater practice that could then, in turn, process another “third thing”.

*

Along those lines – while I avoided imposing personal “home territory” in the choice of the concrete template we were working on – I still deliberately made space for the studies to be “haunted” by the ghosts of strong *auteur*-directors.

¹⁵⁵ The “magical network of relations” is Mary Szydlowska’s and my common formulation. In retrospect, it is always fascinating to see how the choice of material is intuitively already aligned with the research questions / the logics of the research. How, for instance, the psychological realism we confronted in the work with *A Streetcar Named Desire* allowed for a discussion of psychodynamics and conflictual tensions in rehearsal processes.

In the case of *Sarah's Director* that would be Lars von Trier, who figures in the dispositive of the confession booth as well as in the fiction maintaining our imaginary. In the case of *Claire's Director* the young Chantal Akerman was waylaying us in the streets of her place of birth, Brussels. And with *Anders' Director* we directly confront our own “old selves” in the *gestalt* of theater makers resentfully worshipping a bygone cult of “male” transgression embodied by Christoph Schlingensief and other figureheads of the Foothills of *Regietheater*.

These “specters” of a past era (that was, in fact, only yesterday) serve as theatricalizations of a freshly repressed layer of directorial self-understanding; occasionally evading the formulations in my own writing.

Simulations (composition as analysis)

Within the three Pre-studies presented, I am exploring different possibilities for process documentation: the simultaneous letter, the prompted interview, the video essay, the work demonstration etc. With the formats being manifold, the choice that binds the three practical attempts together is that they do not happen “out in the field”. They are not documentations of “real processes”, as it were; they are definitely not field studies, but rather *simulations* of possible rehearsal processes.

I have thus avoided to use my own professional practice “out in the field” as the site of research. Rather than venturing into the disciplines of (auto-)ethnography/anthropology (where I have no formal training) this has allowed me to devise documentation formats with an artistic agency in their own right – an agency affecting the set-up, process and analysis differently from case to case.

As the discussion of the specific studies will show, the work with video as a means of documentation, for instance, has always impacted the way the actor-director relation (the object of research, so to speak) presented itself. Exploring the dynamics of consent-making in a

simulation of a film set for example (cf. Chapter 5 and PS#2, online resources), has brought about results that can hardly be abstracted from the circumstances of their documentation method.¹⁵⁶

I will concede that the pragmatic choice for video as a means of documentation has sometimes led to a double bind that seemingly explores the logics of film making as much as the ones of theater directing. This is partly due to my own artistic in-between status parallel to this PhD as a theater practitioner who only recently started operating in both mediums. Nevertheless, my longer background and biographical embeddedness in theater should justify this being research into the logics of *theater-making mostly*.

More generally speaking: by allowing the medium of documentation to affect the aesthetic set-ups I have tried to confront what could be called the *Heisenberg uncertainty principle* in artistic research. The fact that a theater process is documented under the premise of “knowledge production” naturally affects our behavior as professional collaborators. In that way, the medial apparatus to document it has to stay affect-able, too, given that, as researchers and artists, we will always be in two places at the same time.¹⁵⁷

In that sense there is no raw material, no “source data” to be found in my studies – at least none that is not already processed through a performative awareness genuine to both my

¹⁵⁶ Specific questions in that regard would be: When is consent between actor and director really established once we work with recorded images? On set or rather in the editing room? I venture deeper into the question of what kind of film-making *can* in fact be read through the lens of theater rehearsals when discussing my findings in relation to Lars von Trier’s production of *The Idiots* (1998) in Chapter Y.

¹⁵⁷ The *uncertainty principle* is a fundamental concept in quantum mechanics first introduced by German physicist Werner Heisenberg in 1927. Simply put, it formalizes the limits of accuracy when calculating the position and momentum of *quanta* outside of the macroscopic scales that humans can experience. What stuck with me from high school is that the attempt to exactly define a seemingly objective position of, let’s say, neutrons in an atom is close to impossible; because as the mere medium of observation induces light – which is both a wave and a stream of *quanta* – the very scene of observation is put in motion and energetically distorted. Cf. also Heisenberg (2015)

collaborators – trained actors, dancers, directors and artistic researchers – and myself. This condition, although alien to the classical scientific axiom of an object of study *outside* of the researcher’s realm, is long integrated in the humanities as well as the social sciences; where the performative turn has shed light on the levels of “artifice” generated by the latter’s classical tools of data collection, such as for instance the interview.¹⁵⁸ The interesting question is therefore rather how to “distill knowledge” from the precarious data offered by a simulation.

Reality within the illusion

First of all, it was slightly careless to claim earlier that the studies were not “real processes”. Because within the realm of the simulation – given its durations – my collaborators and I experienced very real dynamics that mirror our lived experience and, in fact, inform the research questions *as* lived experience. In reference to Žižek’s call for a “Third Pill” – rejecting the alternative of either living in the illusion *or* in the reality behind the illusion – I would argue that the simulation method bears the chance of uncovering the “reality *within* the illusion”; simply by operationalizing “fictions which already structure our realities” (Žižek in Fiennes (2006)).¹⁵⁹

To give an example: the discourse I use in the para-anecdotal video diary of *Sarah’s Director* (VD, online resources) is consciously improvised along directorial tropes I have experienced/made use of in my professional past. When it comes to the question of “knowledge

¹⁵⁸ For a reflection of the qualitative interview as a genuinely artistic method of staging cf. Gerner Nielsen (2021)

¹⁵⁹ The “third pill” Žižek insists on in *The Perverts Guide to Cinema* (Fiennes 2006) comes from the alternatives the movie *Matrix* (1999) presents its characters with. Taking the blue pill makes them stay in the illusion of the constructed world around them while the red pill makes them see the reality behind. Žižek insists: “I want a third pill. So what is the third pill? Definitely not some kind of transcendental pill which enables a fake, fast-food religious experience, but a pill that would enable me to perceive not the reality behind the illusion but the reality in illusion itself.”

distillation”, it would thus be meaningless to apply a classical discourse analysis to my speech: the analysis is already in the performance. The knowledge product, so to speak, is *in* the composition of the improvisation.

This is not to say that everything in the study is executed with full control, sealed against the possibility of an emergence or, even, an emergency. The fact that we move from day to day without a narrative plotted beforehand makes for unexpected turns; thereby introducing the slip in language as well as the clumsy gesture; in other words: the manifestations of the transference. In that sense the assumed division of experiment and follow up-analysis (as the dramaturgy of nature science suggests) might simply not apply in artistic research methodology. In fact, if we adapt the mindset Brecht suggests for the actor of his “theater of the scientific age” (being *in* the embodiment of the character *and* demonstrative of its construction, i.e. its “dramatic arch”), experiment and analysis are collapsed into each other: the choices of composition made in the moment will encapsulate their own analysis. Composition or even play *is*, in these cases, a form of analysis.

Structure of the Pre-studies’ presentation

Despite the abovementioned ambition to safeguard the indexical (read: anecdotal) quality of the three Pre-studies, I have nevertheless made use of a certain streamlining when organizing their material. Something I deemed necessary to simplify access to what can feel like an overwhelming amount of “data” otherwise.

Each Pre-study is therefore divided into the following sections:

CIRCUMSTANCE / FACT SHEET

This section provides the basic practical parameters. Where, when, with whom, with which material. In the interest of highlighting the “genetic evolution” of the research project,

also the respective Pre-study's first presentation date is indicated; these are the occasions of my 30%, my 50% and my 80% seminar at SKH.

SCORE

This section describes the research set-up and artistic endeavor.

INDEXICAL TRACES / RELATIONAL ARTEFACTS

This section offers some insight to the relational aspects of the collaboration itself. It also assembles various materials that emerged during the work, i.e. images, montages, texts written for or in its context. *Please note that in the interest of their “indexicality”, the scanned or screenshot documents in this section are not corrected when it comes to orthography.*

REFLECTIONS / SENSE-ABLE TRANSLATIONS / PLAY

This last section presents the artistic translation of the sedimented research findings. It provides a reflection by means of composition, be it of edited film, of text and image or of a knowledge-sharing format. Here, I invest into the idea that composition is a form of analysis genuine to artistic research; a thought I elaborate in the following section where I discuss the “concrete conditions” that produced the knowledge of this thesis.

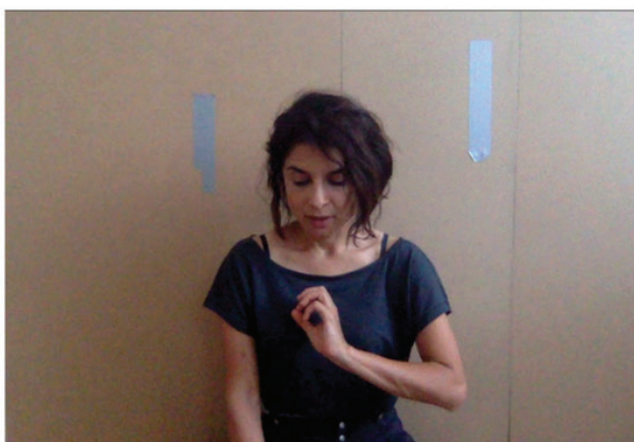
Please also note that all audio-visual material of the Pre-studies is to be found in the online resources. A QR-code as well as a link on the first page of each of them re-direct there.

4 PRE-STUDY #1: Sarah's Director

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<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2649533/2649531/1895>



Pre-study #1 SARAH'S Director

First presented: 11.9.2020

CIRCUMSTANCE / FACT SHEET / #1

Place: Online (Karlsruhe, Germany & Tversted, Denmark)

Time: 4 weeks in June & July 2020

Collaborator: Sarah Sandeh (actress)

Materials: "A Streetcar Named Desire" by Tennessee Williams (1947)

"Dogville Confessions" by Sami Saif (2003)

DCTP Alexander Kluge's work for television (since 1987)

SCORE

Given and imagined circumstances. (The set-up)

Today, on the 2nd of June 2020, my collaborator Sarah Sandeh and I start the first practical study of my research project.

It's a fictional rehearsal of which only the documentation will be available.

The documentation consists of daily video diary entries by my collaborator and me, assuming the roles of "actress" and "director" in alignment with our actual professions.

The format of the diary entries is loosely connected to the format of a Roman Catholic confession booth and the way it has been appropriated for the "making of" of Lars von Trier's "Dogville".

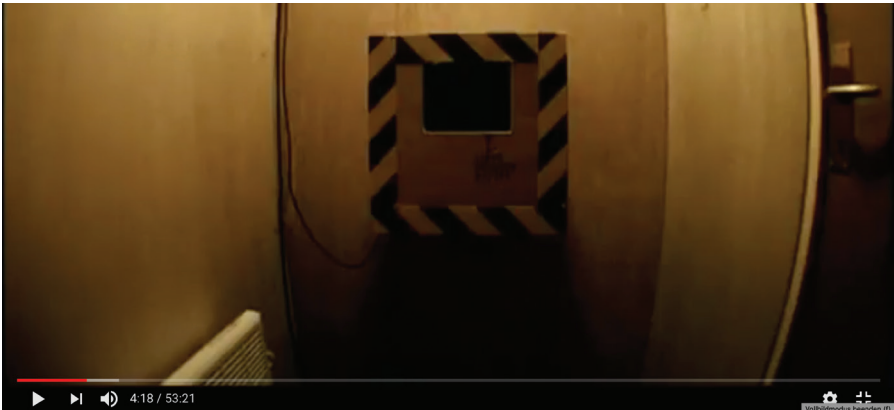
In the fiction, Sarah and I enter the booth one after the other at the end of each rehearsal day.

In the fiction, our video entries are thus private to ourselves, while in reality we have an online workflow allowing us to see each other's daily "confessions".

While our backgrounds are made to look like the same booth, in reality, we are recording in two different locations (north of Denmark, south of Germany). The program we are using to record is the photo-booth app on our computers.

The fictional world outside of the booth is a hybrid of theatre and film production circumstances. We imagine the text we are working on to be produced in a setting similar to the one of Lars von Trier's "Dogville" and "Manderlay"; that is to say: a Brechtian, anti-illusionist approach to set-design in combination with acting techniques from the tradition of realism.

The text we are working on is Tennessee William's "A Streetcar Named Desire" from 1947.



While the imagined circumstance is a filmization of the play, the process being documented is the one of a four-week rehearsal. Here, we are borrowing from a luxurious convention of old day's Hollywood movie making, where the script was rehearsed extensively before the film was shot.

Caption: Screenshot of the inside and outside of the booth in the work of Danish documentary film maker Sami Saif: "Dogville Confessions", 2003

My collaborator Sarah is casted for the part of the protagonist Blanche (which, in the world of "Dogville" and "Manderlay" would be: Grace.)

If the diary entries make it necessary to mention fictional colleagues, we use the first names of the cast of Elia Kazan's film adaptation of the play from 1951.

- | | |
|--------------|------------------|
| Stella - Kim | Pablo - Nick |
| Mitch - Karl | Eunice - Peg |
| Steve - Rudy | Stanley - Marlon |

The actor of the Young Collector is called Martin.

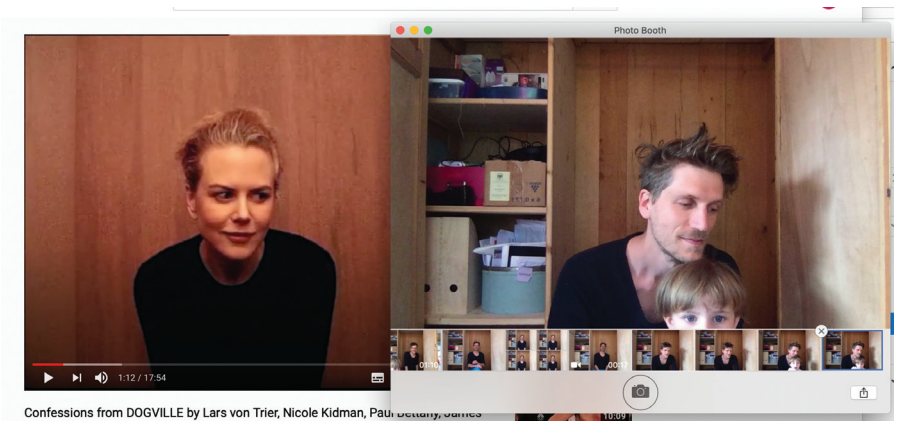
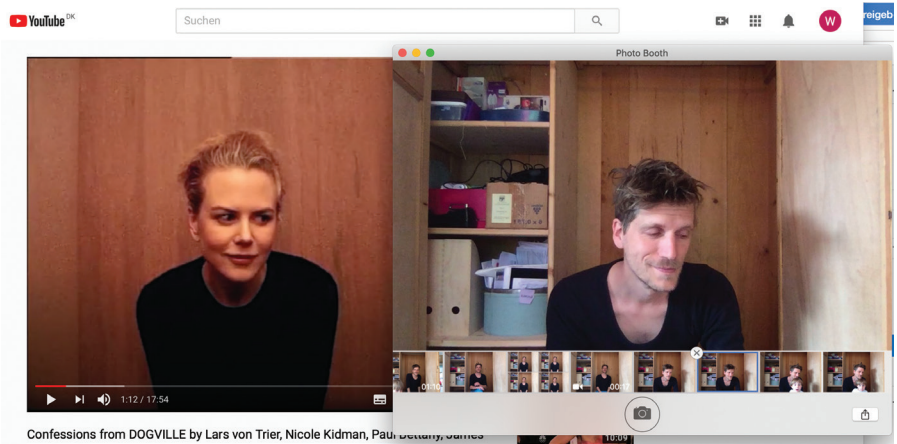
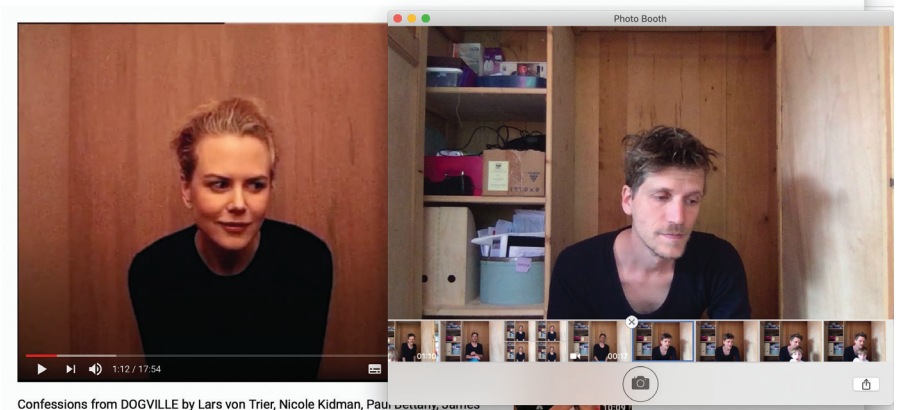
INDEXICAL TRACES/ RELATIONAL ARTEFACTS

Protocol 13.5.20 - Zoom Conversation Johannes/Sarah

- * We've agreed on a timeframe: 1.6.-1.7.
- * We allocate around 3 hours a day for making a video diary entry.
- * Sarah agreed to an hourly wage according to Level 3, following the prefect's recommendation.
- * We'll be making entries daily, except the weekends.
- * The working language will be English.
- * Johannes gives Sarah access to the Research Catalogue page, where the videos will be uploaded.
- * Johannes sets the conceptual frame. He adjusts it as necessary.
- * We're 'rehearsing' "A Streetcar Named Desire" by Tennessee Williams. Sarah has the role of Blanche DuBois.
- * The first entry to the diary is already made by Johannes and available on the research catalogue. It will not be part of the final documentation, but only be used as a starting point for Sarah's "response".

Conceptually:

- * Sarah will always identify / respond from the position of the "actress"; age and identity will vary.
- * We're looking for dilemmas. That is to say, situations where both "the director" and "the actress" is right.
- * We're both "combing" through past situations from our professional lives to find these dilemmas.
- * As makers, we will watch each other's diary entries daily. But the "director" and the "actress" in the box will not "know" of the other's "confession", whereas the makers have the overview.



Try-outs for the booth.
(Pandemic times)

To be figured out:

- * Daily workflow
- * Should there be a “Rehearsal Plan”? What scene what day ?
- * Fictional setting (Johannes defines the situation of rehearsals)
- * Informed consent form (possibility to drop out?)
- * Set design
- * Acknowledgements; Sarah co-author or participant; to be figured with uniarts
- * Feedback during the study? How is the professional contact between S. and J. formalized ?

Informed Consent

For Sarah Sandeh,

hereafter: Collaborator

Aim of PhD-project

The overall aim of the research is to examine the professional relation between actor and director in the performing arts; the project looks into alternative models of consent between those two agents by focussing on the mutual transgressions that shape the process.

Aim of practical study & Method

The overall aim of the specific study is to generate material by which the professional relation between actor and director can be analyzed. The PhD-candidate (Johannes Maria Schmit) and the collaborator (Sarah Sandeh) therefore engage in a fictional rehearsal process, using a format of video documentation as to render this relation visible.

In this set-up the PhD-candidate takes the role of „the director“ and the collaborator the role of the „actor“.

Responsible

The PhD-candidate sets the conceptual frame and adjusts it during the process, if necessary. He is the overall responsible for the study.

The PhD-Candidate also decides how to further use the generated material in the research project. Whether in transcription, as an edited video or the likes.

Risk information

The PhD-candidate has given the collaborator a clear picture of the framework and offered her the chance to ask critical questions about it; as well as to make adjustments before the start of the study.

Possible risks and benefits have been discussed and awareness has been raised on the side of the collaborator around the levels of access and availability to the documentation, that differ from regular artistic productions; the material generated will stay publically available for a very long time and cannot be altered after the publication of the PhD.

It will also not be anonymized.

Voluntariness

The Informed Consent - an interesting document on the tipping point between formality and the very content of the research; halfway between the actual work contract and a possible symbolic one.

The Collaborator has the right to withdraw her consent at any time and with immediate effect. No reason needs to be provided when leaving the study. Any material produced already may, however, still be used in the research.

Publication

The project does not deliberately ask for sensitive personal information (such as for example political or religious convictions, health issues, ethnicity etc.), but if such comes up in the artistic process it will be part of the documentation.

The documentation will be stored according to the procedures by which SKH (Stockholm University of the Arts) follow the GDPR rules (EU General Data Protection Regulation). That is during the whole process of the PhD project.

The study will be presented in relation to the PhD-project in academic and research contexts.

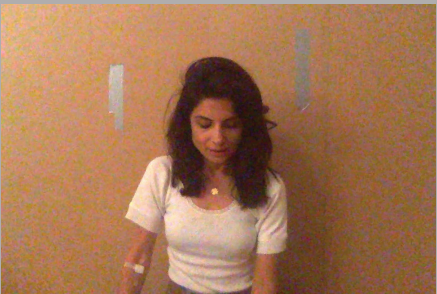
In case it should be presented in other contexts – during or after the PhD-project is over – a new consent has to be obtained from the collaborator.

Those parts of the documentation that are included in the presentation/exposition of the project will appear among other things on the Research Catalogue, and DiVA (swedish research database).

The parts of the research that the PhD-candidate chooses to present will be publically accessible and stored for long time.

Acknowledgment

In all publications the Collaborator will be acknowledged by her name and her function.



Sarah and Johannes in the fictional booth; with the video diary entry to the right presenting an indirect response to the proposition on the left. In the course and in the interest of the study, we reduce our private communication to one weekly phone date on Sundays. Interpersonal irritations are, if possible, not discussed, but processed in and through the work.

I've tried something today. Something that I don't do, usually. And that is that I tried to work with my mood. That is the mood I was in, when coming to the rehearsals. And that mood was very much based on my state of health. I've been feverish yesterday, so we couldn't rehearse. For the longest time of the day I was lying in bed, in some kind of delirium, dreaming of rehearsals of course, mostly. And what I did today was to start the rehearsals by telling a long dream I had had. There was no obvious connection between the dream and the play and I could see the ensemble getting frustrated, because I took a lot of space ... I took a lot of time ... with that dream that went ... that meandered somehow ... and it was not what it was about, it was about telling a dream and getting us on that level of communication. Then we started rehearsing and there had been these cakes delivered for the birthday scene again ... and today for the first time we got to have these cakes that will be there eventually when we come out ... and they are very beautifully done... you can see the effort that the props people have put into it ... my guess is it takes an hour to make the decoration ... and when we were rehearsing, Sarah was being ... her suggestion today for that scene was acting ... acting like a small child on her birthday party ... one can say that even a 4 year old has more patience and decency at a birthday dinner, at her birthday dinner, than Sarah was showing as Blanche today ... So she kept on eating these cakes, cutting them up so we had to use new ones every time, and she was sort of throwing her lines and throwing her pieces of cake at Marlon... and he didn't like that ... and Kim didn't like that either... I think they both felt some kind of responsibility towards the people who had made those cakes ... maybe also, in more general terms, some sustainability sensibility of a millennial that feels awkward wasting things ... maybe of an East German that feels "here goes the West German again" - Sarah in that case - just not having any idea of what resources are, and that they are limited... so that produced some strange irritation that fed into the conflict between Stanley and Blanche. I myself was of course ... There is that position that comes with the director's position that is being a judge; a judge that is supposed to judge on an aesthetic level... give sort of my judgement of what's within the law of that production or outside of it... But here it turned very much into ... I was sort of asked to judge from a moral perspective, because Kim and Marlon, they kept on looking out - while they were playing, seeing Sarah - they kept on looking at me, signaling: Is this what we're doing here ? Is this how it's supposed to be? ... And I tried very very hard to not assume that place. I ignored them or I tried to not pick up on their "cries for help" ... and I just let myself be dragged by that kind of only-child energy; which is a fate both Sarah and I share ... we're the single children of our parents. And I just went ... tried to just go and have her take the lead on that and let that be the root of the setting. And yes, that made for a bit of a strange entrance into the weekend. My hope was of course that we would go into the weekend with a good feeling, for the whole production... but it didn't happen now. We're going into the weekend with a shitty feeling, I guess... Let's see where we'll meet on Monday.



transcript stu...headlines stu...protocol_ss_j...Premises StudyMidpoint 22n...excerpts_quot...+

Q~ and the director - he was a little sick

<>Done☐ Replace

needed that to play the scene, but she also needed that to feel a level of respect - she needed to feel the more experienced colleague embracing her. And that's what happened. We let it run. It was a very long SESSION of looking at each other for a while. And when we were done, Sarah took back on her glasses. I ended the rehearsal, also given that we had reached to some point, I think we had only rehearsed 2 hours today. and we went home. that was the day.

DAY 5 / SSF

There are 4 words in this play and they are really important to me. THE KINDNESS OF STRANGERS. If you don't believe in god it's quite smart to believe in the kindness of strangers. This is not a religious play, none of them seems to be religious. so for Blanche to believe in the kindness of strangeness is beautfiul. It's a substitute for god. I really think that blanche believes that. And I don't think that the other character's do.

Today when I entered the room, I noticed that MY director, he is a little fragile and this made me KIND. And we repeated the scene, that we did on our first day; and I was sitting with my back to my audience - the audience that wasnt there. and Kim was sitting with her face to the audience. And I was just playing with my back, with my neck. It was only the view of the director that moved me. He was the only one that was there. So I could just do, what I couldn't do the day before. And I really enjoyed looking at Kim. There was a similarity between this rehearsal and

9736 words

Constellation and Purpose (University = Universalization?)

The overall purpose of the study is to create material by which the professional relation between actor and director can be analyzed.

Clearly, there is no way to universalize from the very specific constellation presented here: Sarah and I are close friends; we got to know each other in 2008, when we were hired as director and actress in the same theatre. Back then we worked together once, making a piece that we are both still fond of.

Despite the specificity of our constellation - especially when it comes to the level of pre-existent trust - there are factors that might nevertheless be extractable for the sake of their "structural truth". Namely our generational position, somewhere halfway between the aesthetic paradigm of "Regie-Theater" and an emerging cohort of theatre-makers articulating legitimate doubts around monopolized authorship / the mandate of the director.

This in-between status of ours might mirror itself in our phantasmatic rehearsals as well as in the modes of real interaction when making the „documentation“ of it. (In our present artistic dialogue, as it were.)

While there is an emerging sensitivity that aims at establishing the rehearsal situation as a safe space - where director and actor actively maintain each other's comfort zones - we are as much part of an older concept; where consent is reached by means of mutual challenges and transgressions.

Within this generational-political situatedness of our own practice, the study tries to cast light on the bigger research questions of my project: what are models of consent genuine to the actor-director relation? How do they work? Which of them are ethically sustainable? Which of them aesthetically?

The reality within the fiction. Reflection at the midpoint. 22nd of June 2020. Fragment.

Sarah and I are now half-way into our fictitious rehearsal process. Yesterday we met for a professional conversation, (instead of the usual friendship update, that we have set as a Sunday routine for the duration of the study); we talked about how things were going and what adjustments might still be made.

In our fiction, we have reached the point where Sarah, the actress assigned with the role of Blanche DuBois, grows more and more unsatisfied with the director's egalitarian ambitions during rehearsals („People get happy and gay, but the theatre collapses.“). Within the reality of the project, that moment coincides with me suggesting to Sarah, my collaborator, that she shall take the lead on creating the daily fictional settings from here on; so I would - as well - be able to react to an imaginary circumstance that wasn't fully in my control. Interestingly enough, this proposal for a more shared agency was met with a certain level of resistance from my colleague, who was arguing her case very well: why such level of devising was not serving the purpose of the “piece“.

After the initial refusal, it took us some arguing and shared thinking to pick apart the roles and constellations at play here (actor/director vs. artistic researcher/collaborator) and get to see how authorship and agency apply in those different realms. And – paradoxically? - it was by me assuming the imperative authority of - was it me as artistic researcher/ the one responsible for the project or me as director ? - that I was finally able to “convince” my collaborator to take creative control for the duration of the coming week. – (Note the compromise in terms of duration!)

I'm very happy that this moment of negotiation occurred within our fiction, as well as in the reality of our collaboration. As it is quite an accurate mirror of a certain point in time that I have often experienced during actual rehearsal processes – and rarely resolved.

Put as a question, I would describe it like this: what is it, that - at a given point - has me as a director wish for a higher level of authorship in actors than they might actually be able to or even want to provide?

Is it a sense of boredom, the experience of a bubble, where I'm only being fed my own input? A loop of missed-out transformations, with the actor's work merely being a resumé of my own ideological presumptions?

Is it a political unease? The discomfort within an economy of participation, where top-to-bottom management appears outdated.

A pacifist stance, in opposition to organizational models derived from the military?

An ethical dilemma? Steering people through a process they don't have the full picture of.

Is it laziness? The fatigue that comes with having the conditions for creativity rest on my own shoulders time and time again? - (A thought locating the strategies of (neoliberal) outsourcing and (postdramatic) devising in dangerous proximity.)

Or is it an unbearable sense of loneliness? The isolation of the director/protagonist in relation to the ensemble's/chorus' jouissance...

★

My dilemma, I guess, occurs mostly within directing practices that are “neither-nor” (My own practice, but most likely one of most directors of my own and the coming generation.) That is to say, neither truly devised works, where the result is to the highest possible degree based on how the process shaped it; nor fully masterminded (conceptual) works, where the execution attempts to avoid all possible friction with the material's genuine contribution.

...

REFLECTIONS/ SENSE-ABLE TRANSLATIONS/ PLAY

2 months after accomplishing
their fictitious rehearsal process
around "A Streetcar Named Desire",
Sarah and Johannes made an interview
to analyze the work.

They met in Stockholm,
in an actual studio,
where they would have been
conducting the study
if not for an all-encompassing pandemic
that hit in March 2020.

*

In a first attempt to compress
the vast amount of digital documentation
from the study,
Johannes had formulated a number of made up
TABLOID FRONT PAGES,
"covering" single events in the rehearsal process.

These “headlines” were then used to prompt our conversation.

During it, Sarah is aware of the overall format, but doesn't know the content of the individual prompts.

*

The original interview was 2h18 long.

It has been cut by over half its length now, with one edited version made by Sarah, and another one made by Johannes.

The editing work was done parallel and accomplished on the same day, so that Sarah and Johannes would not be aware of the choices the other makes.

There is an overlap in the selection of material, but this method ensures the integrity of the actor's and the director's different perspectives.

*

On a content level, the guiding star during the interview was the research question of Johannes' project: How does consent work in an actor-director relation ?

Showing singular perspectives in regard to that has also been the criteria for editing.

*

The visual set-up and editing style is our individual interpretation of the performative TV-interviews German filmmaker Alexander Kluge proposes in a Brechtian tradition.



Actress Deadnames Director

**Actress Produces Alienation
Within The Ensemble
To Help Director**

**Bystander Director
Exploits
Interpersonal Conflict
To Produce
Better Acting**

**Actress Threatens
To Calm Down A Little
And Be Polite
On Stage**

**Director Wastes
Ensemble's Time
By Telling A Dream
With No Connection
To The Play**

**Director Insists
On A Certain
Intonation**

**Director Brings In
An Actor
He Knows The Actress
To Be Sexually Attracted To**

**Director Forces
Iranian Actress
To Sing Iranian Song
During Table-Read**

In a general climate of retribution and deplatforming – “the time of the great purge” as playwright Carmen Aguirre called it in early 2021 – I had allowed my own ethical anxiety to compose imaginary tabloid headlines. Sarah and I use them in a constructive take on sensationalism (transmitting knowledge through sensations), as Jane Gallop suggests for her book “Feminist Accused Of Sexual Harrassment”. (1997)

In the context presented here, this set-up also reproduces the dispositive of classical theater processes: the director in the dark, the actor in exposure.

*

During the interview,
Sarah had the freedom to apply the language
of her choice.
Subtitles in English are provided.

*

The study itself as well as this analysis
are haunted by Danish director Lars von Trier.
His ghostly presence accompanies both versions
in the form of classical music:
4 pieces by Vivaldi and Pergolesi
Trier uses in “Dogville”.



And I trust this life off-stage
when being with other people.

The prompted interview.
Sarah's, the actress', edit.

"I trust this life off-stage"

The prompted interview.
Johannes', the director's, edit.

5 AMBIVALENT ACCOUNTABILITY – the Actor-Director

Relation as *Rapport*

An A4 page of helpful definitions (out of context) – to be browsed as a warm-up

“In psychoanalytic theory, transference is the human tendency to put people in the position our parents have held for us. It is a nearly universal response to people whose opinions of us have great authority (...).”ⁱ

“Transference is the repetition of infantile prototype relations, of unconscious desires in the analytic relation. Without transference, psychoanalysis is simply literary criticism, by an unimplicated, discriminating reader, lacking either affect or effect.”ⁱⁱ

“(...) the analytic work is done through verbal interpretations of the patient’s emerging unconscious transferences. The analyst takes over the role of one or other of the helpful figures of the patient’s childhood. He cashes in on the success of those who did the dirty work when the patient was an infant.”ⁱⁱⁱ

“Psychoanalysis (...) works because of the transference, because the patient transfers previous relations with others onto the psychoanalyst, reactivates the emotions, and can work them out in analysis.”^{iv}

“But the transference is not only the projection or a reprojection of history; it is also an appropriation of the other – here, now, the food the analysand partakes of to bring his/her analytic process to a successful conclusion (...).”^v

“Transference is not peculiar to psychoanalysis, but is actually the structure of all love. What distinguishes psychoanalysis from other relations is the possibility of analyzing the transference, of being aware of the emotions as a repetition, as inappropriate to context.”^{vi}

“What facilitates the recognition of the feeling as transference, as an inappropriate repetition, is the fact that the analyst is getting paid. The money proves that the analyst is only a stand-in.”^{vii}

1

What is transference? There are many definitions of the term that work almost synonymously, each of them enriching the concept from different angles. In the following I will unpack some of the ones quoted above, but mapping the field of this essay I'd like to start with a most reductive, a provocative one:

Transference is a concept feminist post-structuralist scholars use to their defense when accused of sexual harassment.

What sounds like a punchline in a highly sophisticated stand-up comedy is true for at least two outstanding cases – one more recent, the other one dating from the '90s. One of them more spectacular, the other one more interesting in its articulation.

As an article in *The New Yorker* from 2018 claims, the star scholar Avital Ronell, accused by her former graduate student in the year before, “employs the psychoanalytic term ‘transference’ to describe intense relationships with her students. She is not the first feminist post-structuralist scholar to have done so,” the article proceeds, “nor is she the first to get in trouble for it (...) [In 1993] two graduate students at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee filed sexual-harassment complaints against the scholar Jane Gallop, who was eventually found to have violated a rule against consensual amorous relationships, though the university found no evidence to support other claims.” (Gessen 2018)

By highlighting two cases in which women figure as the accused, my intention is not to shift the focus from the majority of #MeToo cases being about abusive men in power. (The emphasis is thus on *feminist post-structuralist scholar* – a label I wouldn't mind having glued onto myself.) What I believe to be of interest here, is the reaction of two academics deeply embedded in the epistemology of 20th century humanities (both are literature scholars) when

confronted with juridical logics. By introducing a concept from psychoanalysis in their defense both suggest the criteria by which to hold them accountable as stemming from a place other than the law with its bivalent/two-valued logics.

And while in Avital Ronell's case a reference to the concept of transference really appears to be the insertion of a smoke curtain – set up to cover the factual (and spectacular) transgressions into her doctoral student's private sphere – Jane Gallop provides us with a more elaborate take on the term, a veritable methodology of transference in pedagogy.¹⁶⁰ From the perspective of a comparative literature scholar with special expertise in French psychoanalysis, Gallop had been conceptualizing transference long before the complaint against her (for example in her 1982 publication *The Daughter's Seduction*) and also kept on exploring its potential afterwards (cf. Gallop and Blau 2003). In the book that is an explicit reaction to the case (*Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment*), she re-articulates as follows:

In my formal response to the student's complaint, I used the psychoanalytic notion of "transference" to explain her relation to me. In psychoanalytic theory, transference is the human tendency to put people in the position our parents have held for us. It is a nearly universal response to people whose opinions of us have great authority, in particular doctors and teachers. Since our feelings about our parents include an especially powerful form of love, transference is undoubtedly an "amorous relation". But transference is also an inevitable part of any relationship we have to a teacher who really makes a difference. (Gallop 1998, 56)

So far for an enthusiastic take on transference (or rather: transference love) highlighting its energizing effects on knowledge production and – the transposition seems effortless – artistic collaboration.

¹⁶⁰ For a contemporary account of Gallop's teaching style cf. the article *A most dangerous method* (Talbot 1994) The context I myself heard of Jane Gallop first was in fact not through the harassment case, but through bell hooks' references in the already quoted essay collection *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (1994).

No wonder, one could argue in an instant reaction, psychoanalysis is sometimes being popularized as “the dangerous method”.¹⁶¹ Nevertheless, this exact ambition – to think the clinic as a space of ambivalence, resistant to the bivalent logics as applied in the field of law (through yes/no interrogation) or in cybernetic computing (through zeros and ones) – is what enables the analogy to the processes of art-making, that I set out to explore in this text; it allows us, despite all incommensurability, to mirror the interaction between actor and director in the *rapport* of analyst and analysand.¹⁶²

In doing so, we enter controversial territory. All the way, as my thoughts around actor-director dynamics gain specificity (in the slow pace of a PhD project) the case of Belgian choreographer Jan Fabre keeps lurking as a constant uncanny backdrop. In 2018 twenty former employees of his company Troubleyn, mostly dancers, had addressed the public with an open letter (Ómarsdóttir et al. 2018) in which they articulated accusations, that eventually led to Fabre’s 18-months suspended prison term in 2022. In the interview that incited the open letter, Fabre not only claims that sexual harassment has never been an issue in his company, but also – and this may have been the final trigger for many – that discourses such as the ones the #MeToo movement brought about (i.e. discourses that challenge the rehearsal space as a sphere

¹⁶¹ In his paper *Observations on Transference Love* (1915), Freud himself compares his work to the work of a chemist: “The lay public (...) will doubtless seize upon this discussion of transference love as another opportunity for directing the attention of the world to the serious danger of this therapeutic method. The psychoanalyst knows that he is working with highly explosive forces and that he needs to proceed with as much caution and conscientiousness as a chemist. But when have chemists ever been forbidden, because of the danger, from handling explosive substances, which are indispensable, on account of their effects?” (Freud 1915, 170–71)

¹⁶² In the context of this text *rapport* (French for: *relation*) is used as the technical term identifying the specific intersubjective exchange between analyst and analysand; the analytic relation, as it were. The fact that, within the proposed analogy, I will come to equate the actor with the analysand and the director with the analyst is in no way a statement of possible hierarchies of health. To help this important point, I have avoided, along with Lacan’s proposition (cf. Evans 2006, 10), the word “patient” wherever it didn’t figure in the original literature; to the advantage of the tongue twister “analysand”. The attribution of these roles I depart from will also get more and more flexible the further this text proceeds.

of ambivalence) are “also dangerous (...) Because you are effectively destroying and hurting the relationship – which was such a secret bond between director, choreographer, actors, dancers” (VRT Vlaamse Radio- en Televisieomroeporganisatie 2018; 1:31). As the non-academic, transgressive artist he has been celebrated as for the most of his career, Fabre does not seem to have the psychoanalytic vocabulary at hand for his pre-emptive defense – but could he have meant an active, generative transference when he talked of the “secret bond”?

Unfortunately, the “murky mysticism” that Polish cultural critic Jan Kott attributed to his compatriot Jerzy Grotowski some decades earlier¹⁶³ seems to prevail when it comes to artistic directors safeguarding the power they hold over an ensemble. And “transference”, being necessarily an unconscious process, can easily be co-opted for this line of argumentation. But even though not scientifically formalizable, its workings are not esoterically diluted either. They can be rendered conscious (with some delay) and taken active responsibility for. With some training and technique, I would argue, the workings of the transference can even be registered in the moment.

What would happen, I wonder in this text, if Gallop’s claim was put to a test, the intuition concretized: if the transference is “inevitable” in any *rapport* that “really makes a difference”, could its documentation / reconstruction serve as a way to account for the dynamics between actor and director when involved in the vulnerable process of rehearsals? Could the active engagement with the transference inspire a situated ethical stand that is in return *not* modeled after bivalent logics? And what if re-staging the transference was the outset for this *ambivalent* accountability?

¹⁶³ “What is the final meaning of Grotowski’s metaphysics, and is it possible to separate his method from his murky mysticism and apply it in a theater with other goals and a profane vision?” (Kott 1984, 143)

When I ventured into the first practical study for my PhD project, the question of how to document a rehearsal process for later analysis was primarily methodological, unconcerned with the ethics of giving an account of oneself or others. I primarily needed a framework that would reduce logistical complexity, focus in on the actor-director relation, and make space for my own as well as my collaborator's lived experience. All this seemed to be most efficiently achieved through a rehearsal *simulation*, to which the format of the 'confession booth / video diary' lent itself swiftly. (For a more detailed description of the Pre-study, cf. Chapter 4 and PS#1 in the online resources)

With the pandemic suddenly requiring an even more mediatized exchange between Sarah and me – adding a level of daily data transfers (videos) between our two workplaces – aspects of imagination and projection started to push to the forefront of the work. Imagination and projection are, of course, in and of itself an important part of the – therefore – “messy” relation between actor and director, but they became an ever more crystallized element in the absence of a material setting, a concrete cast of colleagues, an actual shared working environment.¹⁶⁴ As one of my professors pointed out on the day of the 30% seminar, where I first presented the “diary” material: the central concept in the discussion is probably the transference and how one works with it.¹⁶⁵

At the point of that reflection, I had only just accomplished the 3-weeks rehearsal simulation, and after the seminar I was still left with 6 hours of documentation of an imaginary

¹⁶⁴ As Sarah described it in the interview reflecting on the study: “I always sat down in front of that camera... I dreamt of our rehearsals... and that was us in another world, that was the real world.” (*The prompted interview*, Sarah's Edit; 44:02; cf. online resources to Pre-study #1)

¹⁶⁵ The professor in question is John-Paul Zaccarini, who, in the framework of his thesis entitled *Circoanalysis* (2013), makes productive use of the transference concept as a means to clarify the position of the performer towards the audience.

rehearsal process for – as I had promised – “later analysis”. But what kind of analysis was it going to be? And to what exact end? The transference comment stuck with me, but little did I know about a default format for documenting/re-constructing transferences at that time. (Little did I know about the classical psychoanalytic case history, as established by Freud). What was going to be the point of access through which to approach this amount of “data”? Was I going to transcribe the video diary entries and treat them as qualitative interview material, possibly coding them into a fancy software used in the social sciences, in the hope of the algorithm creating connections I could not make? Was I then going to *analyze the discourse* that Sarah and I had used – for the most parts consciously – during the simulation? None of these methods seemed to lead to surprising explorations or genuinely fit well with an *artistic* research process. Unsatisfied with my attempts, I intuited that before I could move on, the broader, underlying question had to be answered: What is the epistemological force field in which the dynamics in rehearsals become obvious? What is the best conceptual lens through which to analyze them? Or, more specifically relating to my research question at the time (“What are models of consent in the actor-director relation?”): Which setting provides possible metaphors fit to describe the specifics of consent-making in *artistic* processes?

4

Before I venture further into the *rapport* between analyst and analysand as a possible mirror to reflect the actor-director relation, it is necessary to briefly give an overall context for this ambition of mine: to “document rehearsal processes for later analysis”.

As I have elaborated in *Terracing the Territory III.*, the position of *Regie*, once calibrated against the backdrop of the ethics of participatory art, easily appears as an illegitimate power at play. Accordingly, progressive theater practices are suggesting that any position producing power differentials on a large scale – the director’s being a classical one –

will have to be kept in check. I found a helpful image to render this ambition of “*keeping in check*” tangible when tracing the etymology of the word *control* to its first appearance in Renaissance French. Deriving from Middle French “*contreroule*” (Oxford University Press 2025) it describes a simple and concrete tool for doublechecking accounts: a second roll of paper (a “counter-roll”) that can be unfolded next to the notations of the treasurer, making sure no numbers were deleted or corrected secretly. Given this contextual outset, the ambition to document rehearsal processes holds the promise of being able to trace back the instances of consent-making between actor and director and the power dynamics coded into it.

Within the regime of *contreroule* it goes without saying that the person taking on the director’s position, will have to provide *account-ability*.¹⁶⁶ In *Terracing the Territory III*, I have given a vision of how a “fully accountable director” can be imagined through the metaphor of a *machine à gouverner*: as yet another of the “real time systems with appropriate feedback mechanisms” (Pias 2016, 29), fully equipped to render the decisions taken in the course of rehearsals transparent to everyone. I have tried to paint this figure not only as an ideal agent of neoliberal New Public Management, but as one simultaneously shedding light on what could be called a “cybernetics of the left”; where notions of equity and redistribution are also processed through a fierce application of Boolean algebra and its bivalent logic (zero/one, yes/no). From here, taking the accountability metaphor to the extreme of its digital root (*account-ability*), the question arises: what model of intersubjective exchange (or *rapport*) does this metaphor actually imply, and how compatible is it with the logics of artistic processes involving directors? More specifically: is there a way to think accountability (the application

¹⁶⁶ This term has enjoyed a certain buzz within the realm of a popularized abolitionism, holding the promise of an alternative to the shortcomings of a biased jurisdiction. For a more in-depth discussion of concepts transcending juridical modes of subjectivation see Loick (2017; 2020).

of the *contreroulev*) outside of a bivalent logic? And, again, could the tracking of the transference possibly provide us with this *ambivalent* accountability?

5

A privilege of directorial processes, or in fact any artistic process, is to work with *intuitions* – things we sense but cannot account for (yet); most likely as the effect of an unconscious reaction to given circumstances or of an “intelligence speeding”.¹⁶⁷ In the paradigm of *Regietheater* and the genius-cult it feeds off, intuitions are the unquestioned prerogative of the director. (To give an easy example: no film of Tarkovsky would have been made without the valorization of the director’s intuitions.) The team, the ensemble thus takes a collective leap of faith in their execution.¹⁶⁸ With this in mind, the question of the model of intersubjective exchange underlying the bivalent accountability paradigm can be specified: can directors interacting under its premise afford an unconscious agency or not?

As has become clearer than ever by now, this exact realm of artistic domination – intuition and the leap of faith that comes with it – is also where directorial abuse of power can occur. The Fabre case painfully exemplifies how the line between artistic and intimate exploitation can be blurred under the cover of a genius assumption. One effective way to confront this dilemma is to exclude the unconscious agency of the director from the creative process, or at least to limit its reach. By implementing appropriate feedback mechanisms in rehearsals, the director thus turns into a part of the ensemble as a communicative system of its

¹⁶⁷ This is how American choreographer Ralph Lemon paraphrased *intuitions* at a PhD course of SKH in Stockholm, in fall 2019.

¹⁶⁸ A great example of this mechanism can be found in the documentary about Tarkovsky’s last film production (cf. *Directed by Andrei Tarkovsky* (Leszczykowski 1988)). The collective leap of faith the team takes in the making of *Offret [The Sacrifice]* (1986) becomes ever more visible given the cultural strangeness of a Russian director “dropped” in a Swedish context.

own right, rather adapting than imposing, liking him or herself to Deleuze's *surfer*.¹⁶⁹ In this set-up, mimicking the real time response-ability of an artificial intelligence, he or she will only make suggestions/directorial choices that can be transparently argued for in the moment. The ensemble – to which the director no longer stands in dialectical opposition – figures as a circular, self-organizing system, moving from one moment of presence to the next. In an inversion of an aphorism of one of the *auteurs* of the past its *modus operandi* could be described as: “The step drives the experience, not the leap.”¹⁷⁰

In turning towards this bivalent logic of creation (“Are you ok walking down that conceptual path? Yes/No”), the “dangerous method” of activating and managing a transference – and its asynchronicities – is replaced by a model of directing that is probably more easily mirrored in cognitive-behavioral approaches than in psychoanalysis. Of course, directorial practice as mere facilitation of collective work is not a problem in and of itself; but as the artistic *results* nowadays mostly align themselves to that very mode of production – instead of juxtaposing for example an excessive performance to a sustainable process – they tend to lead to what Claire Bishop, in her analysis of instrumentalized participatory art, has called “useful, ameliorative and ultimately modest gestures” (Bishop 2012, 23).

¹⁶⁹ “All new sports – surfing, windsurfing, hang-gliding – take the form of entering an existing wave. There is no longer an origin as starting point, but a sort of putting-into-orbit. The key thing is how to get taken up in the motion of a big wave, a column of rising air, to ‘get into something’ instead of being the origin of an effort.” (Deleuze 1995, 121) If nothing else, the image provides a refreshing de-militarization of directing’s root metaphor: moving from identifying as a *field commander* embarking on D-Day to surfing the waves of Omaha Beach.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Heiner Müller in his speech *Shakespeare eine Differenz* [Shakespeare: a Difference]: “The leap drives experience, not the step.” (Müller, 1988)

6

I hope the sections above plausibly demonstrate that the specific optics we choose for analyzing rehearsals feed back into our modes of production, i.e. that our methodic options for “later analysis” inform what we believe is possible in the moment of making. To re-phrase: as we, as theater practitioners, do not have a way to hold the unconscious agency of the director to account, we choose a work method more fit for analysis with notions derived from organizational management, information theory and jurisdiction. We choose the bivalent model of accountability. But what if there was a method to account for the unconscious – as well as the conscious – *rapport* between actor and director? A method for documenting and analyzing rehearsal processes, neither “fully formalizable nor esoterically diluted” (Tholen et al. 2001, 9; my translation); neither operating on the surface of speech acts as in digital data analysis nor drowning the responsibility of the director in the spirals of an unintelligible desire. And what if that method could – with generosity – hold both agents of the *rapport*, actors and directors, to account?

7

Over the following pages I will elaborate on how the transference could possibly provide a conceptual force field from wherein to analyze rehearsals. I will do so by mirroring my own experience as a theater maker in the psychoanalytic situation as it has been described by practitioners theorizing the workings of transference within it. More concretely speaking, I’m looking into specific reflections of Sigmund Freud, Paula Heimann, D.W. Winnicott, and Jacques Lacan.

The chronological order of the three upcoming subsections (I.-III.) is determined by the fact that the discourses at hand react to each other, but this should in no way suggest a comprehensive rendering of the concept of transference in 20th century psychoanalysis. Quite

the opposite, as I have been selecting texts only by the principle of *resonance* with directorial practice. After accomplishing this cross-reading of the transference in the *rapport* of analysand and analyst with that of actor and director, I will conclude with a discussion concerning the limits of the same analogy; as well as offer a theoretical perspective opening for further practical exploration.

I. Transference love: staying with the mess

Let's start at the top, with Freud, respectively Jane Gallop. The professor's self-justification wasn't all done where we left off earlier. After rejecting the recommendation by her university to henceforth "stop working with any student who has a transference onto me" (Gallop 1998, 56), she concludes:

At its most intense - and, I would argue, its most productive - the pedagogical relation between teacher and student is, in fact, a "consensual amorous relation." And if schools decide to prohibit not only sex but "amorous relations" between teacher and student, the "consensual amorous relation" that will be banned from our campuses might just be teaching itself. (Gallop, 57)

In this last paragraph, Gallop echoes Freud's *Observations on Transference-Love*, a paper that argues for the professional legitimacy of amorous feelings within analysis. Addressing "beginner[s] in psycho-analysis" (Freud 1915, 159), Freud uses his clinical experience to reconstruct the situations where the analysand "falls in love" with the analyst.

Freud elaborates that in case of an amorous transference, a course of action is to be taken "for which there is no model in real life" (Freud, 166). In this, one could say, *poetic* model the "patient's craving for love" shall neither be "gratified" nor "suppressed" (Freud, 166); the latter because it goes against the basic ambition of analysis (to bring to the surface), the former because it goes against the principle of reticence; but mostly because both courses

of action would deprive the analysand from the singular chance of experiencing an actual transference play out *without* real life consequences.

So instead of *ending* the treatment in the moment a transference is subjectively experienced as love, Freud's suggestion is to "stay with the mess" while letting the analyst carefully "curate" it.¹⁷¹ In Freud's conception this is achieved by bearing in mind – and constantly reiterating it – that the feelings on the analysand's end are primarily an effect of the intimate setting of analysis itself. (Freud, 168) They are not original (far from having anything to do with the analyst's qualities), but a repetition of former relations; "a repetition inappropriate to context" (Gallop 1982, 143) invited to play out in the ambivalent setting facilitated by the analyst.

In French, rehearsals are called *répétition* – and as a director I recognize the emotions occurring in the immediacy of the analyst-analysand encounter from my workplace; as well how they are channeled into the practice. Especially when operating in the genre of psychological realism (as we did in Pre-study #1) there seems to be a necessity of activating a transference within the present constellation of colleagues to feed into the actor's work.

What I take from Freud's (and Gallop's) takes on transference, is the way it brings a situation into presence and *actualizes* it into the immediacy of the present *rapport* between actor and director. Transference *love* is certainly an extreme case, but the *intensity* that a regular transference alone brings to the table of a rehearsal space can be very productive and gratifying. As Gallop writes in *The Daughter's Seduction*: "Without transference, psychoanalysis is simply

¹⁷¹ The English translation of Freud's text proposes „managing the transference” to describe the analyst's work with it. The German original verb “handhaben” could also be rendered as “handling the transference”. Both words reflect the notion of mastery, that implies the sovereignty of the analyst in regard to the unpredictable unconscious of the analysand. In this context, I'm trying out the word “curate” with its root in *curare* (healing) and will observe what it does.

literary criticism, by an unimplicated, discriminating reader, lacking either affect or effect.” (Gallop, 73), Simply put: “Psychoanalysis (...) works *because* of the transference” (Gallop, 142; my emphasis). In that way, despite all its “highly explosive forces” (Freud 1915, 170), the transference is desirable and sought after for the sake of moving forward. And on the contrary: not getting a hold of it in time is what leads the analytic process, in our case the rehearsal process, to failure.¹⁷²

In theater terms, one could add: to simultaneously look at the emotions as repetition (all the while they are being experienced) introduces a Brechtian notion of distance-evoking aesthetic strategies of the epic theatre. By reiterating the analytic setting itself as the producer of the emotions at hand, the analyst invites the analysand to “adopt the analytic attitude” (Freud, 167) – which in turn recalls the ideal Brecht holds of the actor as well as of the spectator. In that respect Freud himself has an interesting reflection regarding how much “element of spontaneity” (Freud, 162) or level of surprise the analytic, (epic) “dramaturgy” should contain. To the question *at what point* the patient should be made aware of the transference active in the space, he chips in with the following:

It has come to my knowledge that some doctors who practise analysis frequently prepare their patients for the emergence of the erotic transference or even urge them to ‘go ahead and fall in love with the doctor so that treatment may make progress’. (Freud, 161)

A proposition that Freud responds to with the words “I can hardly imagine a more senseless proceeding.”

¹⁷² In his account of the famous Dora case ([1905] 1956) Freud has to admit to failing in “getting a grip” of the transference, which – in his interpretation – leads the analysand to ending her treatment prematurely after three months.

II. Countertransference: introducing the director's body

In Freud's paper, transference love appears to be a one-way-road where only the analysand is prone to produce amorous feelings towards the analyst, while the latter maintains the technique of mastery through "neutral" interpretations. It is therefore the achievement of the following generation of psychoanalysts to fully unpack Freud's sparse conceptualization of the so-called counter-transference – highlighting the importance of the analyst's emotional response in the treatment.

Freud's intellectual shortcomings on that matter can be explained with some epistemological assumptions underlying his theory – patriarchal and heteronormative in nature – that have been duly deconstructed in the meantime. (*Pars pro toto*, cf. Donna Haraway calling out the "god trick of seeing everything from nowhere" (1988, 581).) The idea of neutrality in analysis also contains a "scientific" notion of directing as it is classically conceived and partly still taught today: the director as the uninvolved outer eye, positioned on the vantage point of the auditorium, organizing the (emotional) chaos into central perspective vision. An oculocentrist, *scopic* set-up that finds its most radical metaphor in Descartes' bull's eye experiment (cf. Descartes [1637] 2001, 91–97 and SCORE-section in Chapter 6/PS#2, online resources)¹⁷³.

Luckily, in 1950, Paula Heimann's pioneering essay "On Counter-transference" comes along to lock the analyst/director out of the dark box of their disembodied observation:

When I tried to trace the origin of this ideal of the "detached" analyst, I found that our literature does indeed contain descriptions of the analytic work which can give rise to the notion that a good analyst does not feel anything

¹⁷³ As Descartes writes after the accomplished dissection: "[H]aving thus seen this picture in the eye of a dead animal, and having considered its causes, *you cannot doubt* that an entirely similar one is formed in the eye of a live man, on the interior membrane" (Descartes, 97; my emphasis).

beyond a uniform and mild benevolence towards his patients, and that any ripple of emotional waves on this smooth surface represents a disturbance to be overcome. (Heimann 1950, 81)

But, she continues:

In my view Freud's demand that the analyst must "recognize and master" his counter-transference does not lead to the conclusion that the counter-transference is a disturbing factor and that the analyst should become unfeeling and detached, but that he must use his emotional response as a key to the patient's unconscious. (Heimann, 81)

In an exciting move, Heimann thus restitutes what we nowadays would call a *body* to the director/analyst¹⁷⁴; and in doing so, she interweaves the two unconscious agencies of analyst/analysand (actor/director) in a mutual inter-dependency: "Our basic assumption is that the analyst's unconscious understands that of his patient. This rapport on the deep level comes to the surface in the form of feelings which the analyst notices in response to his patient, in his 'counter-transference'". (Heimann, 82)

Along that line of thought, Heimann even goes as far as crediting the unconscious agency of the analysand with authorship: "[T]he analyst's counter-transference is not only part and parcel of the analytic relationship, but it is the *patient's creation*, it is a part of the patient's personality" (Heimann, 83; my emphasis). As directors, in artistic collaboration, we experience

¹⁷⁴ Cf. also the more recent attempts to articulate a phenomenological/embedded perspective on directing by Saatsi ("Notes on the Director's Body", 2022) and Hjort ("The Director's Body", 2025). While Descartes implicitly stresses the methodical importance of positioning oneself on the vantage point of the auditorium – i.e. on the "interior membrane" (Descartes, 97) of the black box where the "objective image" of the stage will appear – the feminist science project "insist[s] on the embodied nature of all vision and so reclaim[s] the sensory system that has been used to signify a leap out of the marked body and into a conquering gaze from nowhere" (Haraway, 581) Ultimately, this is an ongoing showdown between different epistemologies (should I say: denominations?) and their prioritized senses – the sense of seeing in a battle with the ones of hearing and touching – that culminates both in the breach between Lacan and his "rebel student" Irigaray (described further below) as well as in the conceptions of the contemporary director. (Cf. *Terracing the territory III*. in *Regiebuch 2*)

this moment a lot when becoming aware of the ambivalent origin of our instructions: this suggestion I'm making might as well be authored by the actor's unconscious agency.

D.W. Winnicott spins this thought even further when he speaks of situations in which the analyst not only "owes" his or her emotions to the analysand (in the sense of a countertransference s/he registers), but where they must also be made available in return. From his own clinical experience Winnicott recognizes fear, love and hate towards his analysands; three distinct emotions of which the latter is the focus in his paper "Hate in the Counter-Transference" from 1949. While "in the ordinary analysis the analyst has no difficulty with the management of his hate" (Winnicott [1949] 1994, 351), this is more difficult when dealing with psychotics. Here, "the analyst is under greater strain to keep his hate latent, and he can only do this by being thoroughly aware of it" (Winnicott, 353).

However, Winnicott's proposition not only discusses the mere registration of the countertransference as a tool for *informing* interpretation, but also the special case of its *actualization* in the analytic situation.

(...) in certain stages of certain analyses the analyst's hate is actually sought by the patient, and what is then needed is *hate that is objective*. If the patient seeks objective or justified hate he must be able to reach it, else he cannot feel he can reach objective love". (Winnicott, 353; my emphasis)

Regarding my own feelings towards actors, I certainly recognize fear, love and hate as emotions during rehearsals. And also the very specific, exceptional situation where the display of my hate has proven productive for the further collaboration is familiar to me: if, for example, an attempt to "sabotage" the work went unanswered, the relationship between the ensemble

and me (as well as the piece) often imploded. In Winnicott's words, the actor seeking my hate and not reaching it doesn't feel like s/he can reach "objective love" within the work.¹⁷⁵

The notion of an "objective counter-transference" is interesting though. Had we not just left this epistemological fallacy of Freud behind us? To understand what Winnicott means by "objective" it is helpful to understand what it is, in his view, *not*: emotions in the analyst springing from identifications that are under repression (more analysis for the analyst is needed!) as well as identifications belonging to the analyst's personal experiences and development. Instead, the "truly objective counter-transference" consists of "the analyst's love and hate in relation to the actual behaviour of the patient, based on objective observation". (Winnicott, 350)

This last line may strike us as somewhat "pre-postmodern" in the sense that – despite its acknowledgment of the interwoven, non-formalizable setting of transference and countertransference – it still makes a claim to objective, super-personal truth. And it is easy to see the potential abuse of power if a hypothetical director were to fully appropriate this position: "Cleansed of repressed identifications and personal experience, my countertransferences are pure and I therefore actualize them relentlessly during rehearsals". Yet, and as problematic as it is, without a minimum of this assumption (of an objective countertransference), there could be no directorial agency at all.

¹⁷⁵ In artistic terms "objective hate" could maybe be translated as the rigor – Artaud's synonym for "cruelty" in *The Theater and its Double* – a work carries from within. ("One can very well imagine a pure cruelty, without bodily laceration. (...) From the point of view of the mind, cruelty signifies rigor, implacable intention and decision, irreversible and absolute determination." (Artaud [1938] 1958, 101)) Winnicott's "objective love" would then – in artistic terms – be experienced as an intrinsic logic the piece has to follow in order to do what it intends; despite personal experience and repressed identifications of its director.

III. Lacan: the director as subject supposed to desire

There are various modulations of the concept of transference in Lacan's thinking over time, all accompanied by its continuous re-positioning in regard to other central concepts, such as the *subject supposed to know* (Lacan [1964] 1998). The most interesting modulation of this concept when it comes to analyzing rehearsals may lie in Lacan's re-positioning of the transference as a *dialectical structure*. In doing so the emotions that were until then thought to *be* the transference (in themselves) start to carry less information in regard to their content value (e.g. love, fear, and hate); but are becoming indispensable indicators of an actual *rapport*, revealing the very fact of transference.

With this shift of focus the idea of transference-as-repetition. i.e. as a re-enactment of *former* relations, also loses some importance, and the attention can be turned to its specific structure in the present moment of the analytic situation. Thereby, the detailed work of psychoanalytic interpretation, which seems hard to take on in the rehearsal space anyway ("Who from your past am I representing in this situation?"), is replaced by an analysis of the identifications obvious to everyone "present".¹⁷⁶

With this structural, *here and now*-oriented approach, the division between transference and countertransference ultimately becomes obsolete. As Lacanian psychoanalyst Dylan Evans lays out for us:

In the 1960s Lacan becomes very critical of the term countertransference. He argues that it connotes a symmetrical relationship between the analyst and the analysand, whereas the transference is anything but a symmetrical relationship. When speaking of the analyst's position it is both

¹⁷⁶ The quotation marks intend to stress the specific logics of transferences within artistic constellations where fiction plays a part. In the Pre-studies with Sarah and Claire, for example, we were surrounded by an imaginary cast that was purely the result of our mutual transferences: Stanley, Mitch and Blanche (from *A Streetcar Named Desire*) as well as the Chantal Akerman/Julie of *Je, tu, il, elle* were all representing various configurations of our actor-director *rapport*. I elaborate on this point in *Regiebuch* 4.

misleading and unnecessary to use the term countertransference; it is sufficient to speak of the different ways in which the analyst and analysand are implicated in the transference. (Evans 2006, 31)

Asymmetry as a structural condition for a working transference is another interesting element of the Lacanian clinic. It stands in a somewhat direct opposition to the notion of a fully articulated director, as I have pictured it above in regard to the cybernetic promise of a real-time accountability. On the contrary,

[the] task of the analyst throughout the treatment is to make it impossible for the analysand to be sure that he knows what the analyst wants from him; (...) In this way the analyst's supposed desire becomes the driving force of the analytic process, since it keeps the analysand working, trying to discover what the analyst wants from him; (...) By presenting the analysand with an enigmatic desire, the analyst occupies the position of the Other, of whom the subject asks *Che vuoi?* ('What do you want from me?'), with the result that the subject's fundamental fantasy emerges in the transference. (Evans, 40)

It is of course hard to imagine a director maintaining the same level of enigmatic silence as an analyst can afford by convention. But the supposition of knowledge and desire¹⁷⁷ on the director's end is nevertheless a driving force for the actor's creative activity.

What is important here is how this supposition is not necessarily met by *actual* knowledge or desire but is a posture the analyst embodies for the sake of activating the transference (that then, in return, will offer material to work with.) Even in the case of initial mistrust, "sooner or later some *chance gesture of the analyst* is taken by the analysand as a sign of some secret intention, some hidden knowledge. At this point the analyst has come to embody the subject supposed to know; the transference is established." (Evans, 199; my emphasis)

¹⁷⁷ Lacan speaks of the *desire of the analyst* (a desire *supposed* within the analyst as well as an actual desire proper to the analyst) as yet another engine of the analysand's speech (cf. Lacan [1966] 2006, 724). Theater practitioners will recognize the effort being put into figuring out sexual orientations of people "whose opinion of us have great authority", as Gallop paraphrases the director or curator in the performing arts, when speaking of "doctors *and* teachers". (Gallop 1998, 56). And the drop of tension it can produce once 'the truth is out' (cf. Gallop, 86).

Lacanian sometimes ironically admit to only having two tools in their therapeutic tool kit, i.e. *puns* and *cuts*. Both are part of what Lacan conceptualizes as *punctuation*¹⁷⁸, referring to the possibility of rendering the speech of the analysand back in a way that produces an alternate meaning or by simply cutting it off in an unexpected place. A practice finding its full expression in the unpredictable length of a classical Lacanian session.

This mastery over time is a power the director traditionally holds in rehearsals, be it by initiating it, ending before the “official” ending time or be it in the cut of an ongoing improvisation. Especially the latter of the two operations is prone to have the actor wonder: “Why did s/he cut us off here?”, “Did my actions not satisfy?”, “Why did s/he become aware of time all of a sudden?” A set of questions ultimately leading up to the all-comprising “What do you want from me?” – *Che vuoi?*

Thus – however skillfully his/her desire is concealed from the actor – by convention the director still has to provide the punctuation of the “cut” (literally by uttering the very word on the film set) and thereby assume the position of the *subject supposed to know / to desire* – ultimately establishing the possibility of a transference. In that sense, even the director who attempts to reduce his or her agency to the maximum (which would be only saying “start” and “stop”) will still set the *dialectical structure* of the *rapport* in motion.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ A classical Lacanian *pun* (based on a *double entendre*) would be this one: *Analysand*: “Tu es ma mère. (You are my mother.)” *Analyst*: “Tuer ma mère. (Killing my mother.)” (cf. Evans, 159–60)

¹⁷⁹ This very mechanism might offer an explanation to a phenomenon that came to my knowledge during an exchange amongst directing professors in 2021 (Alexandria Nova Network meeting, Stockholm, October 2021). Across the broad variety of programs, it seems that directing students currently have a very hard time *ending* improvisations that they initiate with their actor-student colleagues. Thereby dragging them out into seemingly endless sessions... Besides it possibly being a beginner’s mistake, this could have to do with the effects of the punctuation we have just established: held against the backdrop of values such as co-creation, collective authorship etc. (that the directing students usually embrace), this most minimal gesture of directorial agency – the cut – always re-establishes the asymmetry of the relation. In other words, by interrupting an improvisation the students are ‘running the risk’ of ‘accidentally’ being turned into a *subject supposed to know/to desire* and in return having to curate a transference, i.e. to deal with the 20th century baggage of the ‘dangerous method’.

Concluding this chronological, yet sporadic account of the transference concept and its Lacanian rendition will allow us to briefly discuss the effectiveness of the suggested analogy. To what extent can we speak of the actor-director relation as *rapport*? How meaningful is it to compare the transference in the psychoanalytic setting with the transference taking place during rehearsals? Which specific takes on it are productive in this regard? – Briefly put: what are the limits of this analogy?

To clarify, I would first of all like to stress that it is not the full-scale psychoanalytic project that I wish to align to the realm of theater making. Attempts in that direction have been made already, mostly in the avant-gardes of the past century, many of whom accepted the premises of psychoanalysis without reservation.¹⁸⁰ As I do acknowledge an irrevocable drift away from the baggage of that tradition, my focus is *specifically* on the transference and its potential to analyze our processes.

Of course, there are a whole lot of psychoanalytic notions attached that cannot simply be left at the door, when working with this concept. (The most prominent one maybe the *unconscious* itself; a notion that – if the trend for self-management and cybernetic optimization progresses at the current speed – might strike us as totally ridiculous in 30 years from here.) However, when looking for an alternative, i.e. an ambivalent accountability, the *transference-as-a-dialectical-structure* seems best suited to competing with the bivalent logics of juridical and cybernetic discourses; that is most likely because in Lacanian terms, unconscious agency is also a coding activity, with the difference that it cannot be represented in Boolean algebra.

¹⁸⁰ I have already talked about the Grotowski of *The Constant Prince* (1965) and Freud's *constancy principle* ([1895] 1966, 297); on which generations of psychoanalytically informed directors are building in the neo-avantgardes of the 60s and 70s. In *Regiebuch 4* I take a closer look at Lars von Trier assuming the "chair of the analyst" in his work with the cast of *The Idiots* (1998). For an early 20th century embrace of the psychoanalytic paradigm I might refer to the surrealist movement (exemplarily cf. Pierre 1990).

Another instance where the specific Lacanian take on psychoanalysis proves most compatible with the logics of art-making is when contrasting the purposes of rehearsals and treatment. To state the obvious: one is therapeutic and finds its goal in the relief of the patient, while the other is bound to a future artistic presentation, that is, at best, believed to have a cathartic effect. Or, put even more simply: rehearsals find their goal in theater, analysis finds its goal in healing.

This last assumption can be challenged though. As Evans condenses for us: “[What Lacan calls the *end of analysis*] is not the disappearance of the symptom, nor the cure of an underlying disease (e.g. neurosis), since analysis is *not essentially a therapeutic process* but a search for truth, and the truth is not always beneficial (...)” (Evans, 55; my emphasis). This re-definition sheds a new light on our analogy, insofar as the “search for [psychoanalytic] truth” aligns more easily (or elegantly?) with the purpose of art-making. If both analysis and rehearsals are engaged in this quest – at the risk of the findings being “not always beneficial” – the work within the actor-director relation may in fact be commensurate to the *rapport* of analyst and analysand again.

9

All the while, I am well aware that the contemporary mental health paradigm has long left the technique of classical psychoanalysis behind. Lacan nowadays seems merely of interest in the cultural field, respectively the field of cultural studies, while cognitive-behavioral approaches are the hard currency in clinical management, returning mental health drop-outs to the job market at speeds unheard of. In that framework, the concepts of transference as well as

of the *subject supposed to know* appear as extra bulky luggage, let alone a possible ‘search for truth’.¹⁸¹

Regardless of this, I understand the possible dissatisfaction of concluding an account of the notion of transference with the Lacanian take. Viable critiques of Lacan’s abstractions have been put forth, with the most interesting ones applying his own terminology. Still the question remains: how to go beyond Lacanian discourse without bypassing it on the fast track of cognitive behavioral measures returning us to cybernetic premises and bivalent logics? Is there a formulation springing *from* the Lacanian take on transference that can inform the project of accounting for the actor-director *rapport* in an ambivalent accountability?

10

The most interesting revision – again from the point of resonance with directorial practices – is certainly offered by Lacan’s famous rebel student Luce Irigaray, who was expelled from his school – after the publication of her “heretic” *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1974) – but kept on contributing to feminist theory *from within* psychoanalysis. Specifically her proposition to highlight perception modes alternative to the piercing gaze of what she calls the “*économie scopique* dominante” [dominant *scopic* economy] (Irigaray 1977, 144) – in order to insert the body of the analyst into the transference differently – calls for a more thorough practical exploration.¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ Employment periods are an explicit criterion in the evaluation of the efficacy of, for instance, MBT/*Mentalization-Based Treatment* (cf. Bateman and Fonagy 2008). This shift in priorities is of course also a mirror of the power differential between the research infrastructures of the Anglo-American world and continental Europe. Cf. also Gallop (1982, 139): “According to certain French psychoanalysts, particularly Lacan, English and American psychoanalysis has repressed the unconscious out of psychoanalysis.”

¹⁸² In terms of challenging the specific mediality of the “*économie scopique*” of cinema, cf. also Mia Engberg’s doctoral thesis *Darkness as Material* (Engberg 2023).

In terms of an ambivalent way of accounting for our artistic processes, Irigaray's critique of the classical case history with its object-subject divide into patient and analyst, phenomenon and interpretation inspires the try-outs with my current collaborators; mostly by stirring the ambition to safeguard the integrity of both the actor's and the director's account, limiting an all too quick mediation between them. It is also in this context of her critique of analytic mastery that her word of the "re-staging [of] *both* transferences" appears – a formula almost, not elaborated further in the passage, but maintained as intuition¹⁸³ – that seems so genuinely suited to an *artistic* research process. As an invitation to account for the transference by theatral means, i.e. by means of composition.

Taking this metaphor of the mise-en-scène literally ["remettant en scène les *deux* transferts"] (Irigaray, 144) –in fact, taking it completely out of the context of psychoanalysis and back into the field it was borrowed from – we can see the abundance of tools we have at hand, both as actors and directors, to *stage/re-stage* our transference.

¹⁸³ The full quote in the English translation reads like this: "If I wrote up a case history ... I would not do it as it has always been done: by the "report", the dissection, the interpretation of only the analysand's transference, but by restaging *both* transferences [remettant en scène les *deux* transferts]." (Irigaray quoted in Gallop 1982, 102)

6 PRE-STUDY #2: Claire’s Director

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Reflections / Sense-able translations / Play..... xxviii



<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2649533/2649531/1895>



Pre-study #2 CLAIRE'S Director

First presented: 7.10.2022

CIRCUMSTANCE / FACT SHEET / #2

Place: Brussels, Belgium

Time: 2 weeks in November 2021

Collaborators: Claire Vivianne Sobottke (Performauthor)

Mary Szydłowska (Camera and Montage)

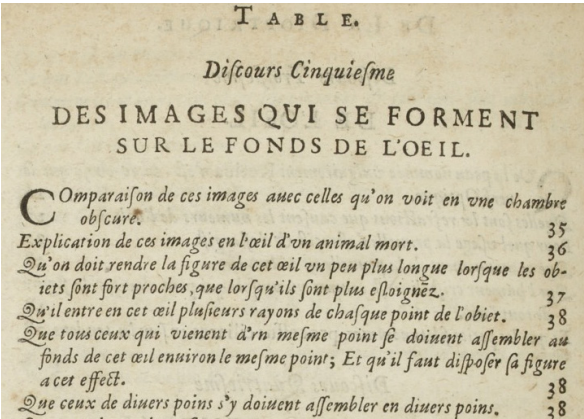
Materials: *The Wheel of Consent* by Betty Martin,

"Je, tu, il, elle" by Chantal Akerman (1974)

SCORE

In an attempt to radicalize the sensorial division between actor and director – the split between touch and seeing that structures their relation – the set-up of “Pre-study #2” referred to a situation I had first experienced during a film shoot in 2019.

Because of time pressure on set and in order to “get the things we needed”, I would frequently be encouraged by the producer to “live direct” the final take. This meant telling the director of photography and the actors *what* to do *when*, based on what I saw on my monitor.



T A B L E.

Discours Cinquième

DES IMAGES QUI SE FORMENT
SUR LE FONDS DE L'OEIL.

C	Comparaison de ces images avec celles qu'on voit en une chambre obscure.	35
	Explication de ces images en l'œil d'un animal mort.	36
	Qu'on doit rendre la figure de cet œil un peu plus longue lorsque les objets sont fort proches, que lorsqu'ils sont plus esloignez.	37
	Qu'il entre en cet œil plusieurs rayons de chaque point de l'objet.	38
	Que tous ceux qui viennent d'un mesme point se doivent assembler au fonds de cet œil environ le mesme point; Et qu'il faut disposer sa figure a cet effect.	38
	Que ceux de diuers points s'y doivent assembler en diuers points.	38

Fifth Discourse: “Of the Images That Form on the Back of the Eye”
Detail from the Table of Contents in René Descartes’ “Discourse on Method, Optics, Geometry, and Meteorology” (1637)

In these situations, I had to be maximally efficient with my instructions, insofar as my voice could be heard on the recording; and the risk of cutting into the original sound, especially into dialogue, would create problems during the editing process.

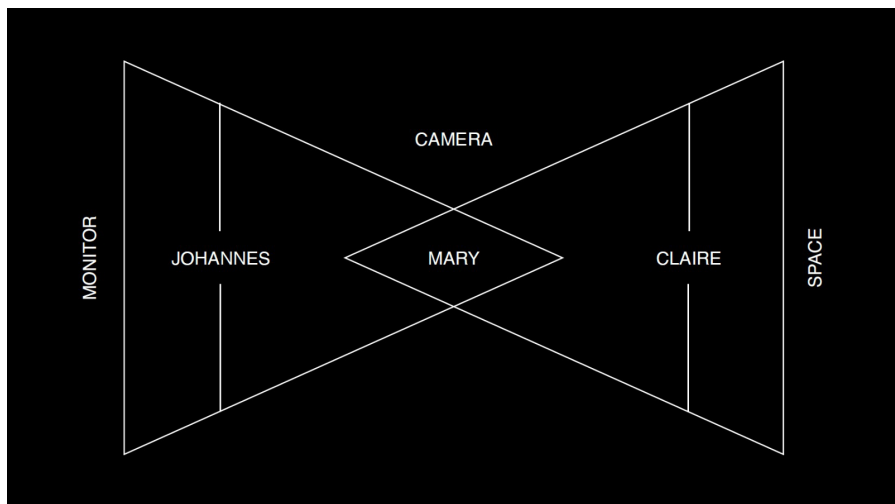
However stressful, I enjoyed these moments of live-directing a lot, as they were inserting me into the dance of actor and camera in a concrete way. Working with film for the first time, I experienced them as a theatral rehearsal situation with heightened stakes; defamiliarized – *verfremdet*, as it were – by the presence of the camera.

When I finally saw the raw material in the editing room – with my voice not yet edited out – it felt very much like the *documentation of a relation in rehearsals* that could be used for the purpose of the artistic research at hand.

*

Wanting to re-visit this specific “*économie scopique*” (Irigaray 1977, 144)) of a film shoot, I thus re-created the described set-up for the Pre-study in its most condensed form. Actor, director of photography, director; or, in terms of the technical *dispositives* at work: space, camera, monitor.

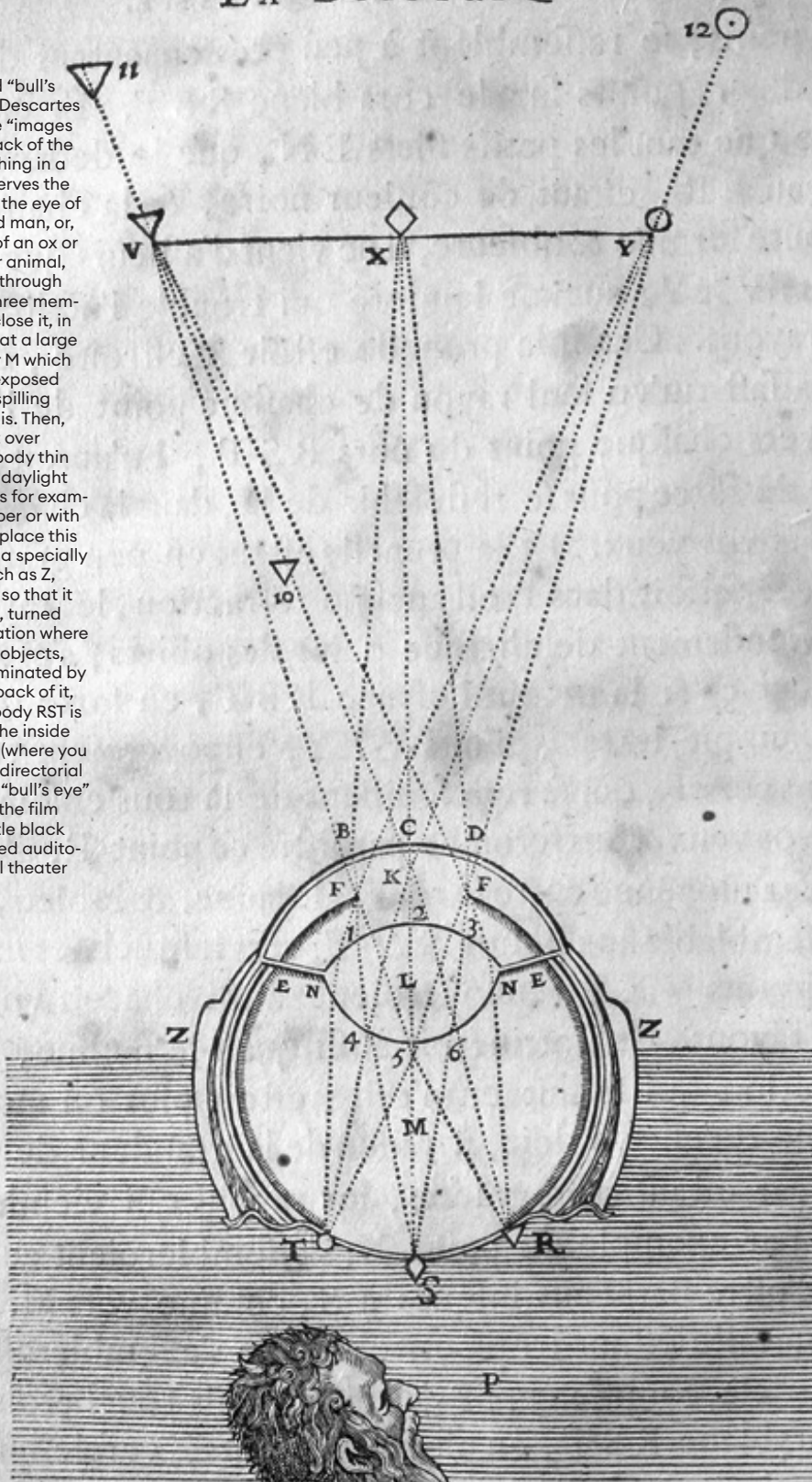
An equation represented in this sketch, light-heartedly alluding to Lacan’s optical schemas:



My ambition here was to put the Wheel of Consent’s “*économie des flux*” [economy of flows] (Irigaray 1977, 144, again) - as based on contact, proximity and tactility - in the most extreme continuum with a dis-embodied ocular practice. To tickle the director in Descartes’s black box, as it were - and to make him express his supposed desire.

Riffing on Lacan’s schemas of the *Eye and the Gaze* presented in Seminar XI (1964)
Design: Mary Szydlowska
after a sketch by Johannes M. Schmit

With his so-called “bull’s eye experiment”, Descartes demonstrates the “images forming on the back of the eye”. While crouching in a black box he observes the world: “(...) taking the eye of a newly deceased man, or, for want of that, of an ox or some other larger animal, you carefully cut through to the back the three membranes which enclose it, in such a manner that a large part of the humor M which is there remains exposed without any of it spilling out because of this. Then, having covered it over with some white body thin enough to let the daylight pass through it, as for example a piece of paper or with an eggshell, RST, place this eye in the hole of a specially made window such as Z, in such a manner so that it has its front, BCD, turned toward some location where there are various objects, such as V,X,Y, illuminated by the sun; and the back of it, where the white body RST is located, toward the inside of the chamber P (where you will be)” – From a directorial point of view, the “bull’s eye” is the monitor on the film shoot, and the little black box is the darkened auditorium in a classical theater rehearsal set-up.





The film set where I first experienced the radicalized partition of the senses within the actor-director relation. In the photo, the director of photography, the production designer and me, are discussing whether the cup in her hands should be in the upcoming shot or not. The grave expression on our exhausted faces reminded me of a photo of 25-year-old Rainer Maria Rilke in Russia; the famous poet who formulated an ontology of artistic creation rooted in the idiosyncrasy of *Einsamkeit* [solitude]. The little montage proposes the director as an "impossible poet": a *solitary figure*, operating in the most collaborative setting imaginable, i.e. a film shoot. (From left to right: Minh Duc Pham, Smina Bluth, Maja Avnat, Svea Immel)

INDEXICAL TRACES/ RELATIONAL ARTEFACTS

For this second Pre-study, I invited dancer, choreographer and actress Claire Vivianne Sobottke as my collaborator.

When we started speaking, I was eager to pick up the “transference” track I discovered after the work with Sarah.

However, my first idea to initiate Claire’s and my collaboration – by spending a week together reading psychoanalytic theory on transference – never happened. (With life circumstances being only one of the reasons.)

Meeting a little later in Berlin – the reading week was meant to take place online – Claire and I re-constructed, in a shared effort, the resistance she had felt towards entering into the collaboration through theory.

(In this regard it is important to mention that Claire is not opposed to theory *per se*; but the specific *psychoanalytic* theory, with its patriarchal lineage/baggage, did not extend a good enough invitation.)

Pre-study #2





Montage of "A Clinical Lesson at the Salpêtrière" (1887) by André Brouillet. The "patriarchal lineage of psychoanalysis" looking at itself; with the "hysterical woman" slipping away in the fold.

In our conversation, my collaborator-to-be also stressed that for her the question of how director and actor reach consent cannot be abstracted to the discrete limit of a moment in rehearsals. As a *performa-
thor* (see her letter and text below for an explanation of the concept), the process of consenting already starts with *jointly setting the frame* of the future undertaking.

★

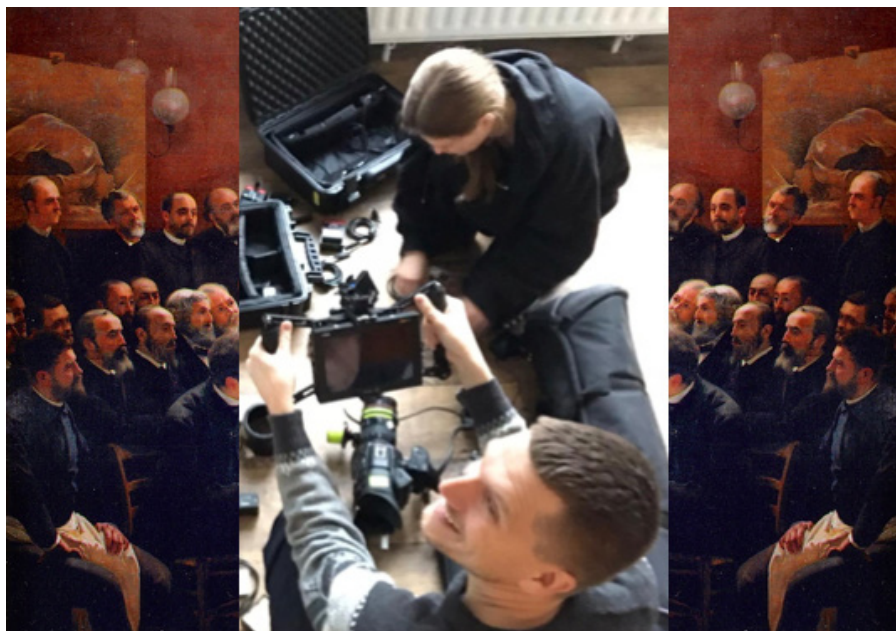
In response to my interest in the transference and its actualization in the actor-director relation, Claire suggested two methods for us to explore: one was the “Wheel of Consent” as developed by American intimacy trainer Betty Martin, and the other, “Emotional CPR (eCPR)”, which can be traced back to an initiative by community psychiatrist Daniel Fisher.

Both methods/practices come from a therapeutic realm, that is to say: a context of which the goals do not necessarily align with artistic ambitions (aiming for example for “imbalance”, “fetishization” or “becoming the symptom”). And while the try-outs with “eCPR” in fact did not lead beyond the scope of the therapeutic – i.e. *attending exclusively to the relational situation* within rehearsals – the “Wheel of Consent” proved to have potential for being – simultaneously! – a means of artistic creation through play.

★

The other factor Claire made me aware of – in terms of artistic research methodology – was the extent to which the choice of material *will* affect our relation as collaborators; in the sense that the relation between actor and director that unfolds during our rehearsal simulation cannot be abstracted from the aesthetic resonance the specific material we work with will produce.

In Claire’s spoken words: “Don’t underestimate the importance of an exciting material for the quality of the relation.” (Rehearsal on the 26.11.2021)



In our case, this “third thing” that was going to mediate our encounter was Chantal Akerman’s debut film, “Je, tu, il, elle” from 1974. Claire had suggested I watch it after our meeting in Berlin; and with Brussels slowly crystallizing as the pragmatic location of our work, it became obvious that Akerman’s “turf” was going to align generously with our ambition.

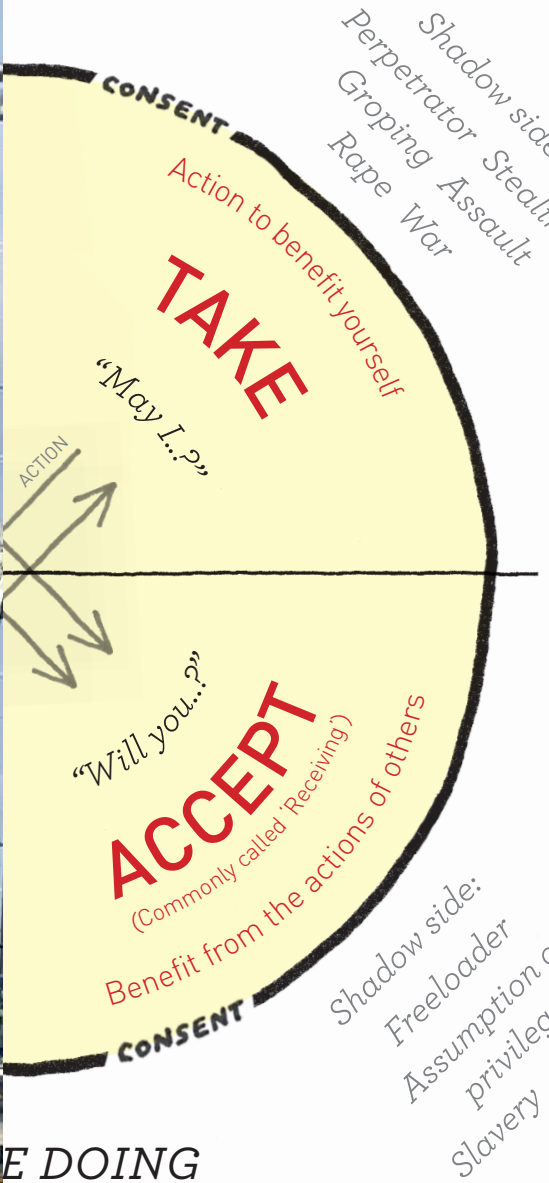
Montage: Claire taking a photo of Mary Szydlowska preparing the camera while the artistic researcher familiarizes himself with the director’s monitor.

On a cold November day in 2021, Claire and I thus started out with a tour on the local Ferris wheel; overlooking the city while gliding gently through the quadrants of SERVE, ACCEPT, TAKE and ALLOW, that we had yet to understand in their inter-relatedness.



A montage of the Ferris wheel in Brussels and the RECEIVING half of the Wheel of Consent.

DOING



DOING

who is doing and who it's for. Those two
t presents its own challenges, lessons

After a first try out of Betty Martin's practice of "Waking Up the Hands" (touching a chosen object for your own pleasure), we read out two letters that we had written to each other independently; formulations of our expectations and projections regarding our collaboration.

We read *prima vista*, that is to say, I read Claire's letter out to her, and she read mine out to me.

The letters are artefacts of our relation as well as of our relations to others. Anders, for example, who is mentioned in the beginning of Claire's letter, is a common friend and colleague. (As a result, the fact that Anders and I became collaborators in my Pre-study #3 is based on Claire's curatorial intuition.)

The two letters work very much like a two-channel video; even though they cannot be played back simultaneously, their ignorance of each other's content produces the desired montage effect. Similar to Sarah's and my independent interview-edits, they theatricalize the limits of my authorial reach as an artistic researcher; thereby aligning with the overall methodological ambition of "re-staging *both* transferences".

You have invited me to deconstruct the role of the director with you.

speculative suspicions (full of fear and trauma)

I want to tell you about our common friend Anders, the beachbum. Anders has , just like you , started a PHD recently in a wealthy Scandinavian country. His questionnaire circles around the idea of parasites. Recently he wrote me, asking if I could imagine to collaborate with him in the context of this research. One of his main desires in this endeavour was to 'give up control', he wrote. He has been professor, thus in leading positions in the academic context for some years now.

I responded to him by saying quite some things and then also mentioned that I think a good way of giving up control in a collaborative context with me, would be that I direct him. After working with him many years ago in a project investigating the mechanisms of Hysteria, I found it healthy to imagine a shift of roles. No answer to that proposition from Anders .

Anders has worked as performer before. He has been directed by Markus Öhrn as part of an exclusively male team. Maybe it is necessary to say that I appreciated the work. In this process I remember a lot of questions came up about authorship, for Anders. To whom does a work belong ? Who will be recognized for making it ? And who will profit from the support that an artist can receive after producing a so called successful work.

Anders was never directed by a woman. He has never been part of a project or context initiated by a woman or female defining x-multiplicity.

You told me recently that you enjoy it to work reflected by, put in motion through - the feminine gaze . Has it ever happened ? If not: How come? Why have you never played & performed & worked in service of a woman?

How do you relate to inviting women to take the role of performers in a research, in which you're busy undoing the classical roles: director – interpreter / genius – muse / rational – emotional / controlled – chaotic etc.

To -Give up control- what does it mean in the context surrounding Anders ? What would that mean to you ? What could it mean in the relation ship between men and women ? What could it mean in the context of our work relationship, of our friendship ? Mine and Anders? Yours and mine ? How does patriarchy fuck around with our curiosity for each other in our creative work ?

How are men trying to give up their positions of being in control ? Is a new awareness reflected in men critically investigating century – old - systems in universities all over the world, while being paid more or less well?

Now that you are trying to deconstruct the role of the director in your PHD in Stockholm are you not making it about that same old director once again? - Meaning, are you not dedicating time and space once again, giving importance once more, to a very specific dusty old apparatus , which we could as well leave aside ? And is an academic attempt to deconstruct something ever threatening to anything?

And then also: Why not make it about the work itself ?

Why not stop retelling each other who we are, reaffirming our history?

Why not make a great movie instead?

Why not try sth new ?

(I guess academia doesn't accept researchers who wanna make great movies)

(Though recently Antonia Baer told me that she received funding to make a work simply by describing a dream that she had dreamt)

(Do i despise academia ?)

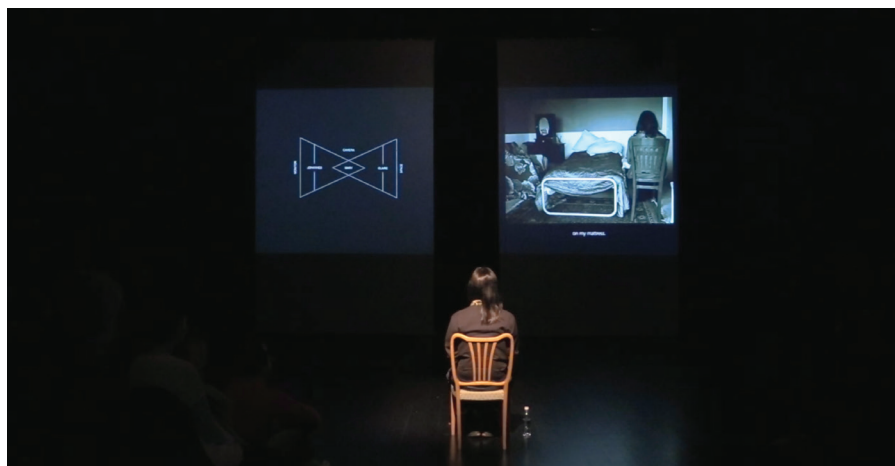
(Do i think they are all cowards)

First page of Claire's letter.
For the full length version,
see the online resources.

Lieke Claes, Lieke Claes, chère Claire,
 here comes my letter to you about
 our upcoming workshop/collaboration.
 I will start by saying that it is a big ~~pleasure~~^{pleasure}
 to prepare this with you. The voice walks
 we send back and forth, the places
 you chose to record them from, the
 depth of reflection — it all tastes like
 really good bread, with both our bacteria
 in the dough. It's such a pleasure in
 the sense, that it already gives a
 sense of what I'm after / what I actually
 mean / what I might mean with TRANS-
 FERENCE: this notion of energetic
 connectedness of two agents; in the
 case of rehearsals director/actor, in

First page of Johannes' letter.
 For the full length version,
 see the online resources.

REFLECTIONS/ SENSE-ABLE TRANSLATIONS/ PLAY



Score for the Voice Over during the projection
of the two-channel film "A Study in Transference"

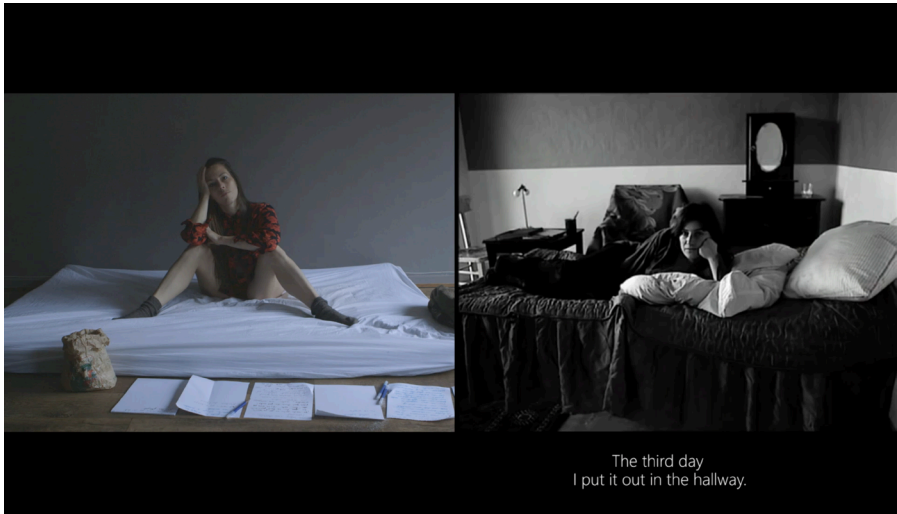
Live performance of the score
on the 7th of October 2022 at
SKH, Stockholm

Stills from Chantal Akerman's
movie "Je, tu, il, elle" (1974) by
courtesy of "Collections CINE-
MATEK - © Fondation Chantal
Akerman"

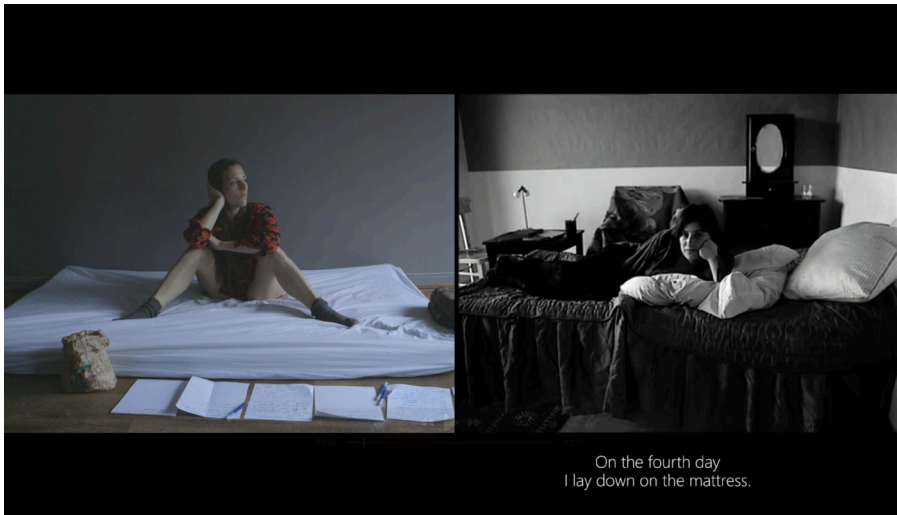
To see the entire two-channel
film, please send
a brief statement of your re-
search interest
to registrator@uniarts.se.

je
tu
il elle
a study in transference

SET UP: BRUSSELS, NOVEMBER 2021



1st spoken Text/
start when Claire turns
her head, looks to Chantal



In November 2021 Claire, Mary and I spend two weeks working in an apartment in Brussels.

Chantal/JULIE: Vide la pièce est grande je trouve.

The project is to explore the present possibilities of the actor-director relation while responding artistically to Chantal Akerman's first feature-length film.

Specifically, to its first 32 minutes, where the main character is trapped in the same location.

We start our work by a visit to the Cinémathèque in Brussels, where we browse through the original script.

With this shared basis, we split up into our different areas of expertise, as we begin shooting. For Mary, that is the camera lens, for Claire, her practice as a dancer and actress.

Le matelot, je l'ai changé de place le cinquième jour.

For me, retreating behind the wireless monitor of the director, the study will turn out to be a quest on how to situate myself in a seemingly self-sufficient universe.

The universe I mean is the universe of what Claire calls the "performauthor".

THE PERFORMAUTHOR

A performer who performs in and simultaneously directs their work.

Someone who makes things by being in them.

As she writes to me in a letter before we begin:
"[A performauthor is] someone who is inside and outside, knowing and not knowing, being seen and seeing. Someone sexual and vulnerable, sensual and thinking, listening and singing, touching while being touched, moving while creating an image."

2nd spoken Text
during Chantal's
rearranging of mattress

*Je l'ai soulevé en suite
j'ai placé le bout contre la fenêtre
contre le mur ensuite*



The original material offers an exploration of loneliness and intimacy with oneself. It seems like Chantal Akerman is explicitly performing for the camera, trusting the cinematic frame to produce the fictional layer by itself.

At our visit at the Cinémathèque we find out that an actress had actually been cast for the main part. But Akerman decided to replace her (with herself), appalled by the perfection of her acting.

In our study, we undo this fusion of director and actor again, of performer and author; and we ask ourselves: What does the exploration of loneliness and intimacy with oneself become under the gaze of someone else?

Furthermore: What if that other is a man?

We consciously work with this most volatile, emblematic moment.

A male director instructing a female performer in her loneliness and intimacy.



Claire: How are you feeling over there? In the other room?

Johannes: Ehm... I am doing good. I found a water pipe... a warm water pipe that is heating my ... ass. It's good... How are you feeling?

Claire: I feel a bit strange, I think... Because I actually don't see you and... I also don't know what to talk about.

3rd spoken Text
during writing

In the letter I write to Claire (before we begin), I explain that I'm interested in exploring the psychoanalytic notion of transference.

To stay in touch during rehearsals by the means of a sort of psychodynamic hotline.

Claire: Do you think you can really imagine... like ... how do you imagine it to sit here?

Johannes: I imagine it strange because ... clearly Mary is the stronger presence in the space right now.



Je me suis couchée et je lui ai écrit couchée le sixième jour.

Transferences may occur between all agents within an artistic process, including the fictional, absent agents, such as Chantal Akerman in our case.

For transferences to really kick in and create an intense bond between an actor and a director for example, the relation has to be asymmetric. Therefore, the Lacanian analyst keeps his or her desire in the dark; provoking the analysand to speak out their fundamental fantasy.

As an answer to the question: What do you want from me?

IN OUR STUDY WE WORK
WITH SPEECH
IN AN ATTEMPT TO STAGE
OUR TRANSFERENCES
IN REAL TIME

WRITING A LOVE LETTER
WHILST EATING SUGAR NAKED

4th spoken text



J'ai recommencé à écrire des jours après.

Start to speak right after:

In the psychoanalytic setting (that we're comparing rehearsals to), transference is actively sought. It's of great value.

Because if the analyst fails to adjust to its workings on time, the analysand might end the treatment prematurely.

For lack of effect or affect.



Claire starts writing.
*Continue when she pushes
 her hair back:*

In practice, there is also the special case of a transference that is subjectively experienced as love or falling-in-love – by either the analysand or the analyst. Freudian orthodoxy reminds us that this so-called “transference love” is not original – but an effect of the intimacy of the analytic setting itself.

Des jours après, j’ai lu tout ce que je lui avais écrit.

Claire’s image disappears

In case “transference love” occurs, there is thus no reason to stop the analysis.

With the full realization of the effect of intimacy in mind, analyst and analysand (actor and director) will continue their work.

5th spoken text
 during exercise
 “Je me suis écouté respirer”

Mary: *Ok.*

Johannes: *Ok.*



Transferences are unconscious. So the ambition to voice them in real time is doomed for failure...

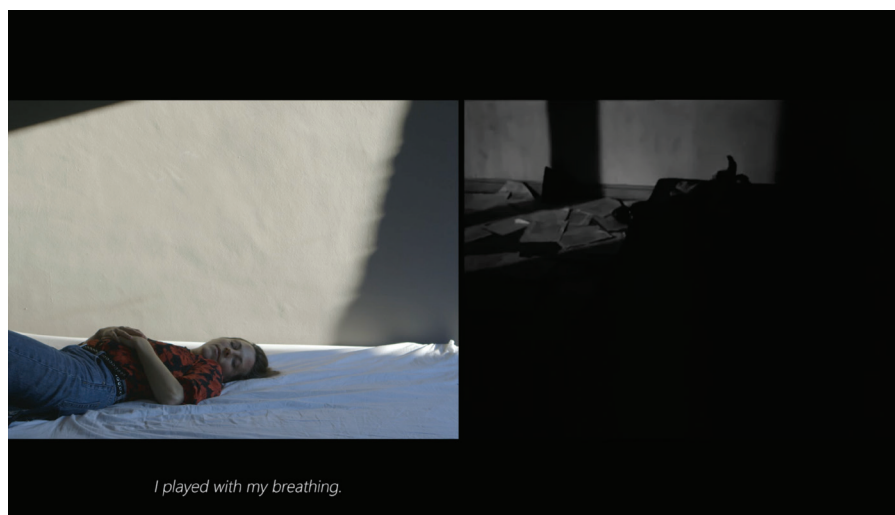
Claire's knee moving:

Claire's laughter.

... but one can always try, of course.

*Et puis j'ai oublié de jouer ce jeu et j'ai attendu.
J'ai su que j'étais là pendant 28 jours.*

Johannes: *J'ai joué avec ma respiration.*



In an attempt to activate our own transference - besides relating to Akerman's movie - we worked with the so-called Wheel of Consent. A model that explores the various dynamics of SERVING and ACCEPTING, TAKING and ALLOWING in relational settings.

Chantal gets up.

Johannes: *I did the same thing, but lying on my belly.*

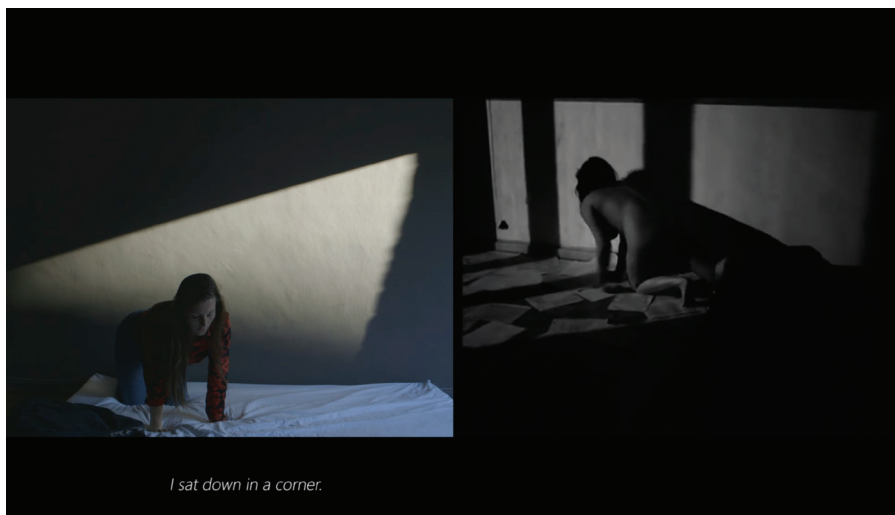
The idea in the Wheel is that in any given intimate interaction you come to an agreement beforehand regarding two questions:

Sound of washbasin

Who is doing ? And: Who is it for?

In this particular exercise, Claire is doing actions “for me”. The default setting of the actor-director relation, as is often assumed...

Johannes: *Je me suis assis dans un coin.*



... but only one possibility within the range of the Wheel.

6th spoken Text
during grimassing Count-
down 21,23 after cut



In retrospect, I am not sure if the frameworks combined in our study fed into each other.



Mostly because of their opposite temporal logics.



The Wheel of Consent asks for a desire to be voiced *before* the action.



While the desire active in a transference is only documented *afterwards*.

Usually in the re-staging, that is the classical psychoanalytic case history.

Johannes: *"This is fantastic!
Your head is completely out of the picture."*

For me, as a director, it gets boring rather fast: to get exactly what I ask for.

In fact, we could all feel the difficulty of being truthful to our desire – before the transference was activated..

In the course of our work, we therefore digressed from the Wheel. Formulating exercises where Giving and Receiving are in a more complicated relation.

7th spoken text (last one)



Claire's image disappears
at the same time:

IN THIS EXERCISE
THE PERFORMAUTHOR
ANALYSES THE DESIRE
THE DIRECTOR TRIES TO EXPRESS;
AS A RE-STAGING FROM INSIDE
AND OUTSIDE.





Camera & montage: Mary Szydlowska
Performauthor: Claire Vivianne Sobottke
Artistic Researcher: Johannes Maria Schmit

7 PROPOSITION FOR A CONSENT-BASED REHEARSAL METHOD

For the following chapter, I take inspiration in the twofold structure Swedish writer and performer Tova Gerge suggests when discussing consent in her artistic field. For her critical contribution with the Swedish title ‘En praktisk och en opraktisk text om samtycke’ [A practical and an unpractical text on consent] (Gerge 2024) she proposes two graphically distinct columns: the one to the left presenting “a useful text on consent in contemporary dance” and the one to the right discussing “why consent and usefulness are not enough” (Gerge 2025). Even though I will be writing this chapter in one column, the tension of a “two-channeled” thought process persists here, too. On the one hand I am conveying an applicable proposition to integrate the actor-director relation into a consent-based method for rehearsals; and on the other I am encouraging a critical reflection of the premises of “consent culture” and its ideological shortcomings in the arts. Unlike Gerge’s two-columned essay, I will try to present my argument in a sequence: starting out with the unpractical critique, before moving on to the practical proposal.

*

In the field of the performing arts, the category of “consent” has been dealt to us as crucial ever since the pushback against the “expansionist” conception of directing described in chapter B (i.e. a *Regie* operating outside of the limits of the rehearsal space by conflating artistic and administrative power). Its consistent application holds the promise of leveling out real life power differentials that leak into the deregulated *hetero-topia* of the rehearsal space; replacing it with a *u-topia* of the Foucauldian iteration: as “a fantastic, untroubled region (...) based on fables and discourse” (Foucault [1966] 1994, xviii). After the popularization of the #MeToo movement in 2017, the lack of formalized methods of “consenting” from within the actor-director relation opened the field to the interventions of the *manualizing class* (cf. chapter C,

“*Phronesis* in the administered university”). In the theater institutions, experts oftentimes unfamiliar with the logics of artistic creation (i.e. the needs of the Space of Rehearsals) have thus been invited to insert their “tools” and “techniques”; institutionalizing systems of checks and balances for the redistribution of agency between actor and director¹⁸⁴.

But what is supposed to strengthen the ensemble in its asymmetrical positioning in relation to the theater director is in reality oftentimes a devaluation of the phronetic competence and disciplinary knowledge of both. The rehearsal practices of postdramatic theater forms, for instance – especially in their feminist iteration – have long since experimented with adjusting their processes to the speed of the authoring collective; finding more theater-specific formats of consenting in which responsibility for moving forward is shared and no one likely to be overruled by the director or a majority within the group.¹⁸⁵ But even earlier adaptations of rehearsal practices to progressive aesthetics – such as the so-called “inductive method of rehearsal” perfected by Brecht and the Berliner Ensemble in the 1940s¹⁸⁶ – are designed to prevent the actors from being overrun by hidden directorial agendas. As I will argue the ahistorical insertion of protocols, “tools and techniques” into the actor-director relation –

¹⁸⁴ As already touched upon in Chapters B and 5, the *contreroules* meant to contain unbound directorial agency these days are instituted in theaters as formalized complaint procedures, codes of conduct, regular check-ins of the ensemble with each other and the theater’s leadership, intimacy coordination, sensitivity trainings etc. All these functions usually require experts from the professional-managerial class.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. exemplarily Matzke (2014). Even though not explicitly focused on the work of the performance collective *She She Pop* (that Matzke is a part of), her scholarly interest in the variety of rehearsal set-ups takes its starting point in the work of the group. (cf. Matzke, 310)

¹⁸⁶ The method in question suggests that the director refrains from laying out a pre-conceived directorial vision (which would be the equivalent to a theory in a *deductive* approach). Instead of a table read where motivations and backgrounds of the characters are discussed and anticipated, the actors are placed on stage in a preliminary *Grundarrangement*; a “blocking” that gives a first hypothesis about the social relations at stake. From there, the situation is collectively analyzed “in the moment”; with the director functioning as a “*Spielleiter*” [game leader] (cf. Barnett 2025; “inductive rehearsal”). Even though the term “inductive rehearsal” cannot be found in Brecht’s writing, it is an appropriate description given the author’s use of the respective method in other contexts. Cf. also Brecht’s poem *Über induktive Liebe* [On inductive Love] (1938) and how it relates to the propositions of a consent-based approach in the realm of touch.

ignorant of those already existent emancipatory practices – therefore runs the risk of having reductive and paralyzing effects, instead of dynamic or galvanizing ones.

IC as an exemplary case and what is required instead

At the time of writing, demands to regulate aspects of the actor-director relation by means of intimacy coordination (IC) have been proliferating rapidly. From April 1, 2025, Sweden's two main collective bargaining agreements for theatre – *The Institutional Theatre Agreement* and *The Private Stage Agreement* – officially list “intimacy coordinator” as “artistic staff” (Svensk Scenkonst et al. 2025). The agreements require employers to consult with directors, choreographers, and performers about appointing one whenever productions include intimate scenes or “if it is reasonable *for other reasons*” (Svensk Scenkonst et al. 2025, 5; my emphasis and translation). Meanwhile, theater directors in European countries where such formal requirements are not yet installed have internalized the call in an anticipatory fashion and started demanding intimacy coordinators to be hired into their team (cf. Wøldiche 2024). Given this strong overall ambition to standardize their presence in the rehearsal space, the very proposition of *intimacy coordination* deserves a short discussion as an exemplary case.

As a method historically emerged in a similar vein as stunt coordination/fight choreography in the movie industry (cf. Fairfield 2019), IC naturally has a strong interest and, presumably, a lot of competence in dealing with the unforeseeable, the *im-provisus*. A stunt on a film set is a potential life-and-death situation and it is therefore essential to put everything that can be controlled under control. The analogy from which IC legitimizes itself is that a scene featuring bodily intimacy holds the potential of sexual transgression and consequently of a traumatization of the actors involved; therefore, the detail of the intimate action needs to be

anticipated, thoroughly choreographed and executed in the exact agreed manner. In the words of American theater scholar and intimacy choreographer¹⁸⁷ Amanda Rose Villareal:

The work of an intimacy choreographer is to uphold ethical interactions by using consent-based practices, to empower performers with the agency to assert their personal boundaries, to level power imbalances in rehearsal and performance spaces, and to craft choreography for performed intimacy – all with an informed and culturally competent approach that supports both performers and the production. (Villarreal 2022, 7)

There are surely no grounds for taking issue with this concept, and given the pressure of highly industrialized modes of production (in film, but also in some theater contexts) the default presence of an intimacy coordinator is undoubtedly useful. Also from an aesthetic point of view IC can work well, especially when it comes to film: everybody who has been working with the medium knows its mechanistic aspects; a scene can feel “stiff” on set and suddenly come to life in the editing room.

However, the mechanistic epistemology¹⁸⁸ underlying both stunt and intimacy coordination has wider consequences, when applied to contemporary theater. Paradoxically, it does not seem to limit itself to the instances where skin, bone and other physical materials collide or touch, but implies an overall politics almost exclusively derived from the ideals implicit to the social turn. (“Ethical interaction”, “empowerment”, “agency” and the “level[ing]

¹⁸⁷ As the field is only at the beginning of its own “fieldification” (Fairfield 2019, 67) the titles differ. As for now, there are “intimacy coordinators”, “intimacy choreographers” and “intimacy directors”.

¹⁸⁸ For a more thorough discussion of the “mechanistic” conception of the human in the lineage of Hobbes and Descartes and its de-humanizing effects cf. Federici (2004,133–61). “In Descartes, body and nature are identified, for both are made of the same particles and act in obedience with the physical laws set in motion by God’s will. Thus, not only is the Cartesian body pauperized and expropriated from magical virtue; in the great ontological divide which Descartes institutes between the essence of humanity and its accidental conditions, the body is divorced from the person, it is literally dehumanized. (...) In Descartes, the reduction of the body to mechanical matter allows for the development of mechanisms of self-management that make the body the subject of the will.” (Federici, 140) It is in this sense that one can speak of “dehumanizing” protocols in intimacy coordination’s partition of the body into static zones that can be and others that cannot be interacted with.

out of power imbalances”, as suggested by Villarreal (2002, 7) above.) These political premises are rarely discussed explicitly (let alone, critically) but are taken for granted as unspoken assumptions when resurfacing as the ethically charged vocabulary of relational aesthetics.¹⁸⁹ Once introduced into the rehearsal space, the “culturally competent approach” (Villarreal, 7) of IC therefore implies a *meta*-physics of anticipation and homeostasis that hopes to establish social justice by the means of “real time systems with appropriate feedback mechanism” (Pias 2016, 21). A cybernetic epistemology that, as I have discussed in *Terracing the Territory III.*, has difficulties accounting for and responding to the longing for a safe, but ecstatic “leap” within the realm of *im-provisus*.

In the context of mere aesthetics, an interdisciplinary application of IC – unattuned to the diversity of rehearsal methods – furthermore requires forms of theater, such as psychological realism, which were long left behind by the emancipatory postdramatic traditions (cf. Barnett 2006; Pollesch 2012). Seen in the light of this double retrograde grafting – from the U.S. onto Europe, and from film onto theater – IC might have as little to do with today’s continental performing arts aesthetics as have the fencing scenes in “Romeo and Juliet”. Read against the backdrop of the ambition of this thesis, this new line of business – other than responding to a very legitimate need – has therefore only short-termed chances to remedy the crisis of trust between actor and director; let alone to curate the asymmetry needed between them for a reinvented theater of *Regie*.

¹⁸⁹ In conversation with an intimacy coordinator from the field of film who is lobbying for IC as a standard method in the institutions of the German performing arts, I eventually had to explain the meaning of the word “postdramatic”, which – for some reason – he kept on understanding as “*posttraumatic* theater”. Also cf. “Culture Change Hub” – the telling title of the institution currently providing the more extensive out of two educations for intimacy coordinators in Germany (three workshops over three days and 17 online sessions)

What is required instead...

In the following I elaborate on what I believe to be “required instead”. I would like to stress that for me the dialogue with enthusiasts of *intimacy coordination* does not end here but is being further enriched the more the field differentiates. Still operating in the “unpractical part” of this text, I take the liberty to critically reflect on the epistemological premises of consent-based interaction frameworks, without necessarily having the “best” or “better practice” up my sleeve.

But what is required instead is an expansive and adaptive method attuned to open processes; inviting our phronetic competence as makers when consciously jumping, *falling* – and landing together. As a first step, my contribution therefore aims at building the expertise of consenting amongst ourselves, as theater makers, (instead of outsourcing the responsibility to the manualizing class); as well as to adapt it to the specific needs of our working methods. Much more than a “tool kit” to merely regulate the relational aspects of a rehearsal – let alone pure physical intimacy – I am looking at “consenting” as a method of artistic creation *in itself*. As a way to embrace the emergent *im-provisus* of the rehearsal within the dynamics of actor and director. And as a way to mutually install and curate the asymmetry of the actor-director relation within a theater of *Regie*.

In the following I will unpack what needs to be considered when formulating this alternative. The main shift away from IC’s epistemological premises is an invitation of desire’s *instability* into the Space of Rehearsals. Accordingly, “desire” is, in my proposition, conceived as “social, emergent and responsive” (Angel 2021, 38); and in that sense not merely “intimate”. Just as any “libidinal” expression, it is conceived as instable and difficult to anticipate; but once subl(im)ated into the heterotopic “public sphere” of the Space of Rehearsals, it paradoxically allows us to take responsibility for it.

Consent and transference

Consenting is complicated. Even when bracketing the coercive effects of real-life power differentials corrupting our negotiations (as I do here¹⁹⁰) the mere fact of transference in the actor-director relation is “safeguarding” the complexity of the operation (cf. Chapter 5). The documentarist and Lacanian scholar Agnieszka Piotrowska takes things to the extreme when arguing that no consent given by someone involved in an active transference is worth anything (cf. Piotrowska 2018). The postulate here is that the agency of our unconscious sabotages our self-expression, thereby making our “Yes” untrustworthy (Piotrowska 2014).

Here we find a critique of consenting understood as a merely cognitive, fully conscious procedure that has been spun further by British writer Katherine Angel, when pointing to the shortcomings of so-called “confidence culture”¹⁹¹:

When did we buy the idea that we know what we want, whether in sex or elsewhere? The rhetoric of consent too often implies that desire is something that lies in wait, fully formed within us, ready for us to extract. (...) We don’t always know what we want and we are not always able to express our desires clearly. This is in part due to violence, misogyny and shame that make desire’s discovery difficult, and its expression fraught. But it is also in the nature of desire to be social, emergent and responsive – to context, to our histories and to the desires and behaviours of others. (Angel 2021, 38-39)

Transference is the technical concept borrowed from psychoanalysis that I have suggested for describing this *emergent and responsive* desire in rehearsals. A desire emerging from the interdependent, inherently social constellation of director and actor, respectively the

¹⁹⁰ For a broader discussion of explicitly feminist critiques of the category of consent in regard to material inequality cf. Halley (2016) and Loick (2020).

¹⁹¹ A term describing a pseudo-empowering attitude “which holds that it is not primarily patriarchy, capitalism or entrenched institutional sexism that holds women back, but rather their own, individual lack of confidence – a lack framed as an entirely personal matter.” (Angel 2021, 16)

ensemble. Transferences are – in this regard – necessary artistic energies fueling the process of creation. Despite their explosive nature, it is difficult to imagine a rehearsal space that can do without them entirely. On the contrary: as a sphere of play, the Space of Rehearsals can be conceptualized – alongside the psychoanalytic cabinet – as one of the only spaces in which transferences can be *experienced* without real life consequences. A proposition for a consent-based rehearsal method therefore must account for the agency of the transference in the actor-director relation. Paradoxically, for a successful consenting process, it must invite desire into the space, rather than keeping it at bay. Furthermore, instead of *coordinating* it – as if it was pre-existent – it has to stay reactive to its mercurial, emergent nature.

Out of the various methods of consenting I have familiarized myself with there is really only one that lives up to this task. A *practice and a model* that synthesizes various embodied knowledges as well as interaction frameworks surfacing in the 20th century and thereby stands a chance to respond to rehearsal methods informed by the emancipatory theater traditions described above. In the following section, I will therefore explain why I found the so-called “Wheel of Consent” superior to other methods of consenting in regard to the Space of Rehearsals sought after in this thesis.

Before moving on, I should however stress that while I am influenced and inspired by the “Wheel”, I have not studied directly with its developer, Betty Martin, or the “School of Consent”, co-founded by her in 2018. The most profound and encompassing teaching of the embodied practice – as well as the concepts that derive from it – is therefore to be found in the courses offered by the school (cf. The School of Consent) as well as in Martin’s writing (Martin and Dalzen 2021). What I propose here, is primarily the Wheel’s “transposition” into the actor-director relation in rehearsals.

Genealogy of the Wheel of Consent

“I’m one of those lucky people who grew up in the touch-y feel-y hippie years.”
Betty Martin (2023)

The genealogy of the “Wheel” is not easily retraceable from the available sources. Many of the accounts are “hagiographic” in that they were written as reports by colleagues who had little historical distance. Or they are self-reported information.

On her homepage, the person commonly referred to as its “developer” – American chiropractor and “self-propelled erotic adventurer” Betty Martin – gives an idea of the many influences she synthesizes in the “Wheel”. Besides a broad variety of experiences in bodywork, “first in therapeutics – Chiropractic, Educational Kinesiology, Reiki, Neuro-Emotional Integration – and later in body-based erotic education” (cf. “About Me”), she also references her exploration of postmodern dance practices, such as Authentic Movement or *contact improvisation* (Martin and Dalzen 2021, 198). With the latter being especially informative with regard to her notion of “play”.

As one of her decisive influences Martin names the Body Electric School (cf. Cullinane and Love 2022), an institution established in the San Francisco Bay Area in the Mid 1980s health crisis. According to its self-description, founder Joseph Kramer “developed the erotic massage practices that are central to the School’s work in response to the ravages of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the wave of fear that was sweeping the gay community.” (Body Electric School) Kramer – as a drop-out of the Jesuits still abiding to the order’s motto: “To Be a Person for Others” – used the Body Electric School to provide an environment for “gay men to connect sexually in a *safe and ecstatic* manner in the era of AIDS” (Kramer 2002; my emphasis). In 1992, Kramer was joined by sex-positive porn activist and later performance-art legend Annie Sprinkle, who expanded the curriculum to Taoist Erotic massage classes for

women, too¹⁹². In Kramer's and Sprinkle's teaching the separation between "giving" and "receiving" – so central to the practice of the Wheel – is already inherent (even though not yet explicitly formulated in its counter-intuitive iteration, where active touch can also be "receiving".) It was also in the early 90s that educator and activist Harry Faddis joined the Body Electric School as an instructor and invented the "3-minute game" (cf. Faddis and Body Electric School (Oakland 2000); a set of two performative questions that form the foundation to the dynamics modelled in the Wheel today. As Martin recalls in an interview:

Well, I was on a personal journey in my own erotic awakening in my mid-40s, and I went to a bunch of workshops, mostly with the Body Electric School, and at one of them we played a game called the Three Minute Game. (...) [T]he Three Minute Game is a game for two people, and you take turns asking each other these two questions. One question is, what do you want me to do to you for three minutes? I can think of some fun things I might like you [the interviewer] to do to me for three minutes, thank you. And the other question is, what do you want to do to me for three minutes? It's a very different question, creates kind of the opposite dynamic, but likewise I can think of some fun things I might want to do to you for three minutes. (Kuhn 2024)

My own first indirect encounter with the propositions of the "Wheel" must have been about 20 years ago as a participant to a so-called "Cuddle Party" in Berlin. As the non-profit charitable organization of the same name describes the format, a "Cuddle Party is a playful social event designed for adults to explore communication, boundaries and affection" (*What Is a Cuddle Party?*)¹⁹³ Back then I was attending it with the hidden agenda to cast one of its

¹⁹² Both Kramer (2002) and Sprinkle (in 2005) obtained their PhDs from the "Institute for Advanced Study of Human Sexuality" in San Francisco; a private unaccredited for-profit graduate school that was founded in 1976 and had to close in 2018. While the homepage of the Institute is no longer online, the internet archive offers an exhilarating throwback into this "Californian episode" within research (cf. "The Institute for Advanced Study of Human Sexuality" 2011). Far from academic *schadenfreude* – given two "Doctors of Human Sexuality" whose "alma mater" is no more – we must well consider the possibility that the field of institutionalized artistic research, which makes this very doctorate possible, may one day be shut down and archived just as well.

¹⁹³ Betty Martin was one of the Board Members of the organization and trains and certifies new facilitators. (cf. *Board of Directors | Cuddle Party INC.*)

facilitators for a theater evening designed along the lines of Christoph Schlingensief's "Talk 2000" (cf. Schlingensief 1997). "Talk 2000" was a TV format regularly recorded in the cantina of the *Volksbühne* with the aim of bringing together the most diverse group of people and propelling their constellation into irrevocable turbulence. In contrast to the regular talk shows of the 1990s, Schlingensief's moderation (if you can call it that at all given the literal meaning of *moderatio* being "temperance") was in no way psychologizing but – in the Brechtian tradition – always demonstrated the socio-political contradictions the guests and the host found themselves entangled in. All the while, "Talk 2000" was always more than playful, thereby "treat[ing] of the theater as a place of entertainment (...) try[ing] to discover which form of entertainment suits us best." (Brecht [1949] 1964, 180)

For our epigonal attempt in 2005 my colleagues and I had already assembled the party leaders of the so-called APPD (Anarchistische Pogo Partei Deutschland), a rainbow-colored clown from Latin America, the *Reichskanzler* of the 2nd German Reich (Wolfgang Ebel) and another conspiracy theorist from Europe's largest association of hackers (Chaos Computer Club e.V.). There was also a chicken running around in the role of yet another "invited speaker" addressed by the name of "H5N1" – the virus subtype of the bird flu that was a major scare in the media of the time. The idea was that after the escalation (that this explosive mix of people cramped into a small room would necessarily lead to) the facilitators of "Kuschelparty Berlin" [cuddle party Berlin] would enter the room, calm it down and ultimately get the guests to cuddle with each other. This plan never amounted to more than a concept; of course, because the facilitators would very likely have refused the proposition, but primarily because of our overwhelmingly beautiful experience at the cuddle party itself. (We ended up not even asking.)

"Safe and ecstatic"

Thinking back 20 years, I still recall the awkwardness of the introduction round, the performative training we got in saying "no", the various protocols of an exactly timed physical

encounter, but also – very clearly – the *bliss of touch* I received, knowing that it was “for me”. (I might, in fact, never forget the collective “bask in the afterglow”¹⁹⁴ we shared as an ensemble of cuddlers after the blindfolded cuddling circle at the end.) While the Cuddle Parties have never transgressed from the therapeutic realm into the arts, the Wheel of Consent has made a veritable breakthrough in the dance scenes of various European capitals within the last decade (cf. Gerge 2025, 52). It is also there – in Berlin’s dance environment – that my collaborator Claire picked it up and introduced it into the research. When it became clear that the working place for our Pre-study was going to be Brussels, we had little trouble finding someone who could introduce the “Wheel” to us in the Belgian capital, as there, too, there are many dancers and performers who familiarized themselves with its basic workings.¹⁹⁵

Rather than seeking the reason for the current momentum in a sophisticated marketing strategy, I would argue that the nerve it strikes can be traced back to the circumstances from which the “Body Electric School” emerged in the San Francisco Bay Area. In the face of an epidemic that required an extreme level of alertness and communication between people engaging in intimate exchanges, the work of Joseph Kramer and his colleagues nevertheless drew on a conception of the erotic as expansive and ultimately liberating. The “touch-y feel-y hippie years” of the 1960s and 70s that Martin refers to are still part of the DNA of the “Wheel” today; just as much as the mindful integration of the anxious protocols of the health crisis caused by HIV in the 1980s and into the 1990s. In their combination they help us to navigate

¹⁹⁴ A wording we find in Annie Sprinkle’s workshops from the 1990s (cf. Sprinkle 1992)

¹⁹⁵ While the “School of Consent” currently works to solidify the professional training of facilitators by means of educational formats of various lengths attuned to different levels of expertise, the “Wheel” is out there rolling already; accessible for everyone through Martin’s generous online resources, it is doing its work as a model and a practice, ahead of its possible institutional consolidation.

the present moment “where we, for good reasons, have become attentive to each other’s physical integrity, fragility, and boundaries” (Gerge 2025, 48).

The “Wheel” has the great advantage of having developed its strategies for creating consent against the backdrop of this genealogy, rather than as an acute and reactive remediation of a series of spectacular power abuses. Thanks to the lifespan of its developer, the Wheel’s epistemological premises are neither informed by well-meaning but oftentimes retributive strategies to contain unchecked power nor by the consent rhetorics of confidence culture. Instead, they align with a much older, expansive understanding of desire, aiming for a “safe and ecstatic” (Kramer 2002) encounter between two creative partners.

The Wheel of Consent’s container as a Space of Rehearsals

In the following final section of the unpractical part of this text, I will take a closer look at the conceptual premises of the “Wheel” and how they relate to the concept of the Space of Rehearsals promoted in this thesis. Here, a special focus is given to the “Wheel” as a protocol conducive of what I will come to describe as the *maieutics* of desire; as well as of the practical knowledge form of *phronesis* introduced in the introductory material (Chapter C). I.e. Aristotle’s “practical wisdom” salvaged by Swedish philosopher Jonna Bornemark to problematize professional-managerial or cybernetic interventions into the professional judgement of the people working “on the ground”. By transposing the embodied practice of the Wheel into the *improvisational* interaction between actor and director this situation-specific knowledge form is regained in the rehearsal space.

*

As described above the dynamics within the Wheel are deduced from the two questions of the 3-minute game: What would you want me to do to you for three minutes? And: What would you want to do to me for three minutes? In a conversation with Betty Martin, Harry Faddis mentions the poem that inspired the game during his work with the groups (of mostly gay men) enrolled at the Body Electric School. (*Harry Faddis Conversation* 2015; 1:48) It is called “The Breeze at Dawn” and is attributed to the Persian poet Rumi.

The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you.
Don't go back to sleep.

You must ask for what you really want.
Don't go back to sleep.

People are going back and forth across the doorsill
where the two worlds touch.

The door is round and open.
Don't go back to sleep.

(translated by Barks 2004, 36)

According to Faddis, specifically the line “You must ask for what you really want” proved useful as the guiding principle when answering the two prompting questions of the game. Taken out of context, this imperative could easily be read as a predecessor of the above-mentioned “confidence culture”, where “knowing what you want” is taken for granted and equated with safety. The “breeze at dawn”, however, clearly invites a subconscious agency and

makes room for the articulation of a desire unintelligible to ourselves. This is important insofar as it distinguishes the communication organized by the “Wheel” from, yes – *communication* as defined by cybernetics (cf. *Terracing the Territory III.*). Even though we are encouraged to speak our desire as clearly as possible and without hinting (no “mind-reading” is required on the receiver’s end), the ultimate goal of its articulation is not a “cleansed signal”. The Wheel is therefore not proposing a relentless optimization of human relations where bivalent signals (Yes/No, Zero/One) – cleared from subconscious bruise – are unambiguously communicated. Instead, the door we step through by entering its Space of Rehearsals is “round and open”¹⁹⁶, reactive to the instable and emergent desire within an active transference.

The possibility of such fragile articulation is safeguarded by various installments that highlight the “heterotopic”, out-of-the-usual quality of the exchanges within the “Wheel”. These installments are in their totality referred to by Martin as the “container” of the practice (Martin and Dalzen, 60). Besides the most obvious component of this container, i.e. an agreed-upon time frame, one of its key elements is the embodied fact of the person “asking for what they really want” *leaning* (against a wall or the back of a chair). This provides a very basic indication to the surroundings – but mostly to oneself – that the prompting questions are meant to be responded to from the positions of one’s own point of gravity. (And it is probably the deeper function of the nowadays clichéd “director’s chair”, providing the person supposed to “ask for what they really want” with a transportable place to sit and lean during the shoot.)

¹⁹⁶ In this reading, the “Wheel of Consent” can be conceived as a “Ring of Fire”, which has been the ambition of Pre-study #3 (cf. Chapter 8).



*Figure 8: The nouvelle vague (in the body of French director Francois Truffaut) running around on set instead of leaning into the Hollywood studio chair. (Screenshots of *La Nuit américaine*, 1973; © Warner Bros.)*

Clarifications: indulgere genio

Another installment is the division between “clarifications” and “negotiations” formalized within this container. As the two functions of dialogue are separate in time and follow each other in a non-interchangeable sequence, the first part can be fully dedicated to a *maieutics* of the most direct and truthful articulation of the desire in question. The partner asking “clarifying questions” thus turns into a Socratic counterpart, using a form of dialogue that the philosopher (according to Plato) transposed by using the practical knowledge his mother held; as the “solid and very famous midwife” (Plato 1881, 111) she was. Accordingly, *maieutike* from which the word *maieutics* – the so-called socratic method – derives, literally means “the art of midwifery” (In turn, *Hebammenkunst* is the translation of *maieutics* to German). Because of the mode of asking within the format of *maieutics* the desire of the *leaning person* becomes fully unfolded (“birthed”) before it enters into negotiation with the partner’s needs and limits. Given the consent-based setting it thus allows for highly *intuitive* propositions – in the sense of “the first thing I see” – that are nevertheless not pursued one-directionally.

In the Space of Rehearsals formatted by the Wheel, the *leaning person* – be it the actor or the director – is therefore prompted like someone whose *genius* is about to receive a gift. Following Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben (2007), the Roman demonology presents the *genius* as a divine entity that is assigned to us at the moment of our birth (*everybody* has a *genius*!) and that we are bound to for the rest of our lives. The original ancient concept thus implies that one *has* rather than *is* a *genius*; and in this vein, birthday gifts, for instance, are always offerings to the divine demon of its recipients. If they are good, they “hit their nerve” or – in the words of my collaborator Claire – their “existential kink”.

A Latin phrase perfectly expresses the secret relationship each person must maintain with his own *Genius: indulgere genio*. One must consent to *Genius* and abandon oneself to him; one must grant him everything he asks for,

for his exigencies are our exigencies, his happiness our happiness. Even if his – our! – requirements seem unreasonable and capricious, it is best to accept them without argument. (Agamben 2007, 10)

Agamben's further explanation also gives a sense of the "fetishistic", meanwhile not necessarily "sexual" nature of the desires that the prompted *genius* dictates:

If in order to write you need – he needs! – a certain light-yellow paper, a certain special pen, a certain dim light shining from the left, it is useless to tell yourself that just any pen will do, that any paper, that any light will suffice. (Agamben, 10)

Intuition (understood as *experience actualizing* in the split of a second or *intelligence speeding*) may be a synonymous, contemporary concept. But it is important to stress, that – unlike the shift of meaning suggested by the bourgeois adaptation from *having a* to *being a* genius – it is exactly *not* the artist's unreducible individuality that has agency here. As Agamben points out instead, *genius* accompanies us as an "impersonal, preindividual element". (Agamben, 11)

Given the proposition to *indulgere genio* the desires articulated within the container of the Wheel can, however, hardly be communitized; they do not have to be made common-sense, and they do not have to survive a vote. In other words, they may remain idiosyncratic. At the same time they do not have to be heeded unconditionally by the partner either. Because in the "negotiations" of the container they are brought into play with his/her "limits" and "boundaries".

Negotiations: situational limits as the flipsides of desire

Unlike regular consent rhetorics who tend to conflate the two, the orthodoxy of the Wheel suggests a productive distinction here. While "boundaries" are unchangeable (defining the edges of our "domain" (Martin and Dalzen, 356), the "limits" are reactive to the situation within the container. That means, they depend on contextual factors like "with you", "here" and "now"; and thereby ultimately attune the actor-director relation to the practical knowledge

form of *phronesis*. As elaborated in Chapter C, *phronesis* is the Aristotelian knowledge form concerned with the uniqueness of a given situation. Rather than adhering to the “know(ing) how” of *techne*, *phronesis* invites the “knowing when” as a necessary element for the professional judgement within a specific situation. Because of this capacity, *phronesis* can attend to the mercurial, instable nature of desire invited by the Wheel.

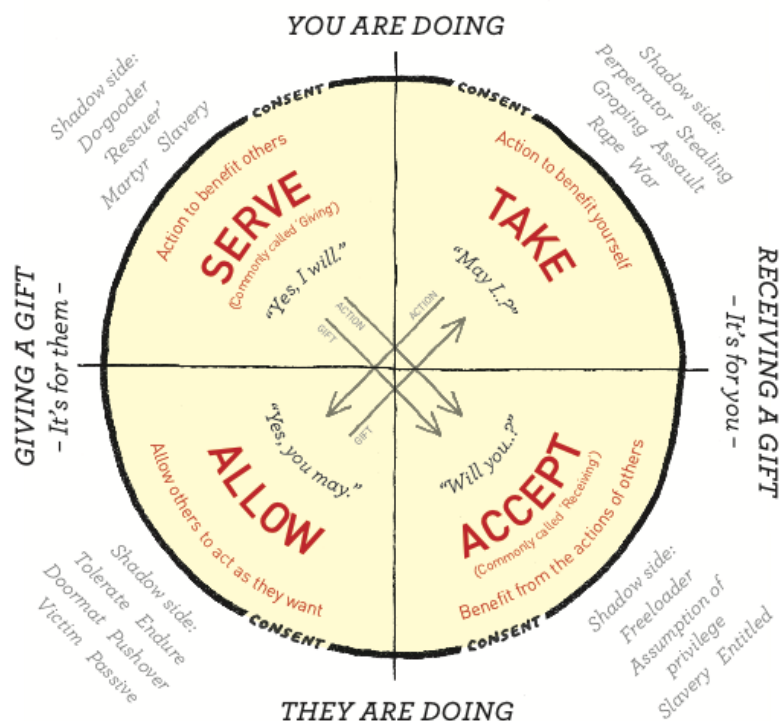
Rather than “safe words”, the Wheel uses situational “limits” to harvest the potential of a given situation. Their articulation is therefore not a means of (self-)defense based on a presumption of scarcity given one’s own resources. Limits are not “limitations” – as in “something you are unable to do, a condition of limited ability” (Martin and Dalzen, 310) – but provide a situational knowledge that plays on a similar plane as the articulated desire of Agamben’s *genius*. One must accept the limits – of oneself and others – without argument. Or as one of the phrases widely quoted in the Wheel of Consent context puts it: “‘No.’ is a full sentence.”

To sum up: desire and limits open the Space of Rehearsals to the situation-specific knowledge of *phronesis*. By mediating this insertion, the Wheel’s container helps to re-establish the shared responsibility actor and director hold for it. Instead of outsourcing the rehearsal space’s safety to the management of a manualizing class (cf. Bornemark 2020, 89), the dynamic possibilities of the Wheel are used for more than a mere regulation of the social relations within rehearsals. With its ultimate goal being “play” it can be applied *simultaneously* as a means of artistic creation.

Reflections on the Wheel of Consent as a practical method of rehearsing

From here, I move on to a reflection of the more meticulous application – the “transposition”, as it were – of the Wheel of Consent onto the actor-director relation in our practical experiments. In doing so, I use the quite advanced “technical terminology” from Martin’s universe, applying the Wheel *as a model* or interaction framework (rather than a practice). For the reader unfamiliar with the Wheel on the one hand, but familiar with the processes of theater-making on the other this “leap” will – in the best case – spark the interest in the embodied practice. As a possible bridge or intermediate read, the online resources offer an insight to how we concretely worked with the *Wheel as a practice* in rehearsals. A pdf entitled “The practical knowledge of the Wheel applied to rehearsals” demonstrates the transposition we made in Pre-study #2; while the “work demo” of Pre-study #3 gives an even more structured outline of how we moved from a practice based on *touch* to one of *seeing* and *speaking* (cf. WD, online resources and chapter 8). Also, the two-channel video work in Pre-study #2 – “A study in transference” – is informative with regard to the method insofar as the raw material for it consists exclusively of “3-minute games” transposed into film takes. It is, as it were, “shot on the Wheel of Consent”.

THE WHEEL OF CONSENT



In any instance of touch, there are two factors: who is doing and who it's for. Those two factors combine in four ways (quadrants). Each quadrant presents its own challenges, lessons and joys.

The circle represents consent (your agreement). Inside the circle there is a gift given and a gift received. Outside the circle (without consent) the same action becomes stealing, abusing, etc.

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You are welcome to share, including this diagram, with attribution (leave this paragraph in).

Figure 9: The graph of the Wheel of Consent in its entirety. (Copyright and usage on the bottom)

The Wheel of Consent and the default set-up of the actor-director relation

The historically grown “default set-up” of *Regietheater* seems to position the director in the RECEIVING half of the Wheel, i.e. as someone doing an *action to benefit him/herself* (TAKE) or as someone *benefiting from the action of others* (ACCEPT). On a macroscale this is rather obvious given the attention the director will get by the time of the premiere, or during

the exploitation phase of the film/product. In her letter, Claire for example points out the way her contribution – the contribution of the ensemble, so to speak – risks being subsumed under the director’s name due to the conventions of crediting works; a misalignment oftentimes starting with the terminology used to describe her function in the work contract (cf. LTJ, online resources).

But also on the microscale, when looking at the situation within the discrete limit of a moment in rehearsals (as my Pre-studies suggest to do) this seems to be the case. The “Thank you” by which the director will cut off an improvisation for example installs him/her as the recipient of a gift, *performatively* (re-)positioning him/her in the RECEIVING half throughout the process. On the German-speaking film set, the director conventionally ends a take by saying “Danke, aus” [thank you, off] – thereby symbolically “cashing in” the actorial work accomplished in the take; again, most likely from the position of the TAKE quadrant, *doing an action to benefit him/herself*.

With our practical explorations, however, I hope to have shown that the Wheel does not suggest a pre-set for the disciplines of actor and director when it comes to their positions within its two halves of RECEIVING and GIVING. They can both start out and operate from any quadrant. Despite the history of one-sided attention and directorial entitlement, we can therefore resist the temptation to place the halves or the quadrants of the Wheel in a moral hierarchy, once the director gets involved. In other words, there is no notion of compensation or retributive justice coded into the concrete interactions of the Wheel (cf. also Martin’s analogous reflection on *Gender and the Quadrants/Taking and Gender* (Martin and Dalzen 2021, 66, 300)). As actors and directors, we will have preferences in regard to our position within the two dynamics, most likely bound to our desire structures that had us interested in the respective disciplines in the first place; but we start from the concreteness of the encounter every time we play a 3 minute-game. *Ad hoc*.

In a similar vein, the Wheel as a rehearsal method is not meant to establish a place of equilibrium within the asymmetric relation between actor and director (consent is not “consensus” as for instance the German translation as “Konsens-Rad” erroneously suggests). Clarifications and negotiations are not supposed to lead to the normalization of a formulated desire, or to a moderation in terms of symmetrically shared pleasure. The ethics of the Wheel are located on another plane: namely in the fact, that everybody involved knows *who is doing* & *who it is for* – and that these positions are interchangeable. As Martin puts it regarding the ACCEPT quadrant: when formulating your request to the person SERVING, “go for wonderful. (...) Stop trying to ‘give’ your giver a good experience.” (cf. Martin 2025) Or in a broader sense: “When it’s for you, be selfish. When it’s for them, be generous.”

But even in the case of the actor starting out in the SERVE quadrant – again, what I call the default set-up of *Regietheater* as a historical form – we can witness a de-naturalization of the conventional rehearsal situation. A shift in power dynamics, as it were, due to the insertion of the Wheel. Insofar as the responsibility of initiating always lies with the ones in the GIVING half, a rehearsal is conceivable that would not begin *until* the actor asks the decisive question: “How would you like to direct me?” Thereby undercutting the mastery over time and timing the director usually assumes when entering a rehearsal space (cf. the last section of WD in the online resources: *Transposition #3: Disciplines*).

The Wheel as a de-naturalizing, intermediate layer

When working with the Wheel as a model it is essential to repeatedly point at the most obvious (but somehow easily overlooked) line in the graph by which it is represented: the circumference of the circle, that gives the quadrants their final dimension, as a result of the concrete *maieutics of desire* between actor and director.

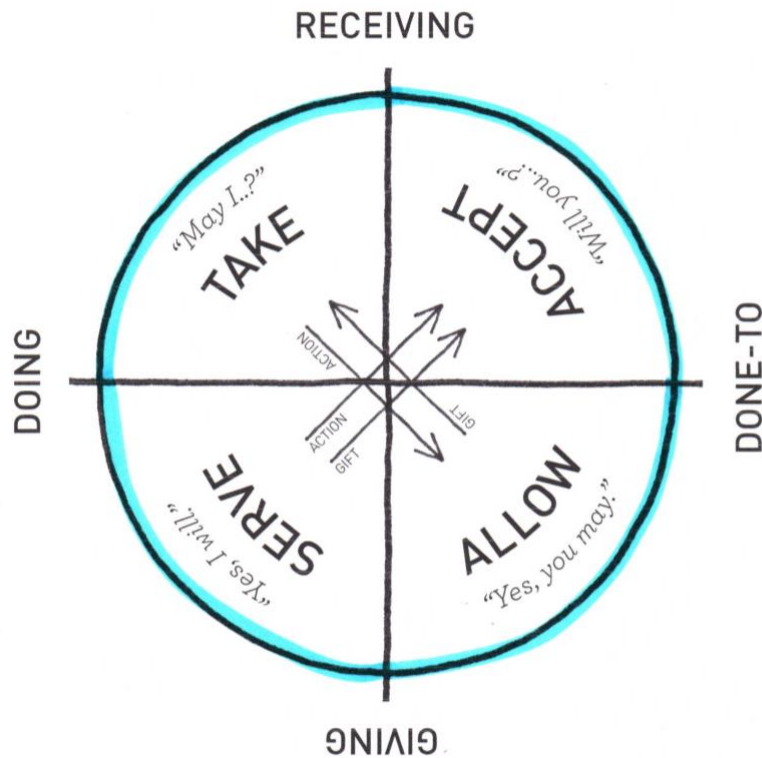


Figure 10: The Wheel of Consent with the highlighted consent circle. (Courtesy of Betty Martin)

While the depiction as a model “on paper” suggests the circle as a static entity (stable in size), its final diameter is in fact the result of the slow and careful work of consenting. Its size varies based on the agreement found and it might therefore be useful to sometimes picture the Wheel in an organic metaphor, for instance as a muscle. As Martin puts it in her annotation (below the original graph): “The circle represents consent (your agreement). Inside the circle there is a gift given and a gift received. Outside the circle (without consent) the same action becomes stealing, abusing etc.”

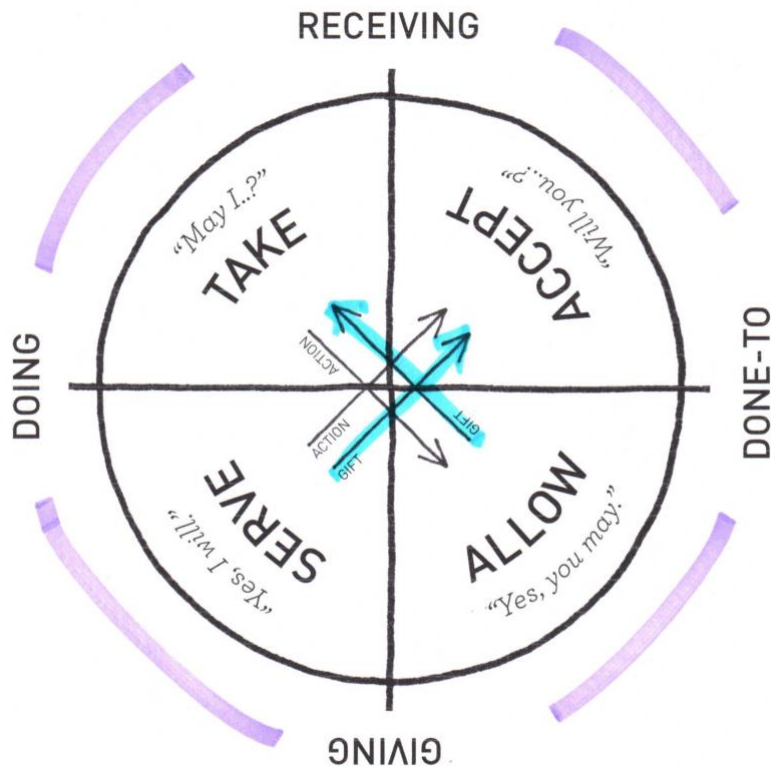


Figure 11: The Wheel of Consent with the gift given and received (inside the circle) as well as the shadow sides of the quadrants (marked in purple). (Courtesy of Betty Martin)

With highlighting the consent-circle an outside appears, that is in turn highly informative regarding the quadrants' inside. The Wheel of Consent orthodoxy calls this outside the "shadow sides". Each quadrant has their own shadow side attributed to it. (The shadow of TAKE is "stealing, groping" etc.; the shadow of ALLOW: "endure, push over" etc.; the shadow of SERVE: "martyr, slavery" etc.; the shadow of ACCEPT: "entitlement, assumption of privilege" etc.) The act of consenting by the means of the Wheel thus holds a promise for a *reinvented Regietheater's* rehearsal method that can hardly be overestimated; a promise that is particularly radical to a current generation of directors. There is a way to TAKE without *stealing*, a way to ACCEPT without *assuming privilege or entitlement*. Consequently, there

may be a way to ALLOW without *enduring* or being *pushed over*, to SERVE without reducing oneself/or being reduced to a *martyr* or *slave*.

The Wheel's shadow sides turn even more operational when contrasted with the positive "values" that are attributed to each quadrant. Generosity for SERVE, Integrity for TAKE, Surrender for ALLOW, Gratitude for ACCEPT. These values can be of help when assuming the position within the dynamic one agrees to work in. As a director, I can for instance use the value attributed to the TAKE quadrant as "integrity towards my desire". My desire might be what I want to see or sense when directing the actor in the space. Knowing that we have agreed upon the dynamic in which I am *doing an action for my benefit*, I act with integrity by trying to live up to it. As Martin writes about the TAKE quadrant, whom she considers the "keystone of the Wheel" (Martin and Dalzen, 290): "this is hard for almost everyone, and often feels odd, elusive or scary" (Martin 2025). Cf. also WD in the online resources: *Transposition #1: BEYOND TOUCH*.

Methods of devising read through the Wheel

As many of the directors socialized in the Foothills and navigating the post-#MeToo landscape today I have my "natural issues" with the RECEIVING half, i.e. the quadrants of TAKE and ACCEPT. The risks of slipping into their shadow sides – both *groping* and *entitlement* are associated with the *directorial expansionism* described in Chapter B – seem too high. The *Wheel as a (bodily) practice* offers possibilities to reconfigure this neurotic avoidance; or, if nothing else, to at least find a deeper understanding of the pleasure the GIVING half provides. Personally, I found out for instance – on the level of touch – how much of my pleasure (transposed into: joy of directing) derives from being "good" at SERVING. Setting aside what I would prefer and make space for the choice of my counterpart, the actor. Contribute to his/her creative process, as best as I can. In other words, indulge in being the *facilitating director* that I critically scrutinized in *Terracing the Territory III*.

All the while, with the help of the *Wheel as an (analytic) model*, we can formulate an audacious speculation – hopefully historicizing the present moment: in an attempt to stay at a safe distance from the RECEIVING half within their artistic practice (or more precisely: from the shadow sides related to TAKE and ACCEPT), particularly male directors nowadays mostly operate from the ALLOW quadrant. They do so in applying the methods of devised theater, symbolically initiating the interaction with the actor by asking: “How would you like to touch me?”; or in transposition: “What do you want the audience to feel or experience with this work?”

From the touch-based exercises I know the extravagant situation that can occur in the dynamics of TAKE and ALLOW (and that I believe to be the secret hope driving this directorial positioning): Because very often the action that the partner in the TAKE quadrant proposes – in response to the question “How would you like to touch me?” – is in fact pleasurable to the person in the ALLOW quadrant as well. It can for instance feed into the desire to be objectified or “treated as a thing” for a discrete moment in time; with the positive value of *surrender* coming to its full effect.

Suddenly, a paradoxical win-win-situation occurs: the person in the TAKE quadrant *doing an action to benefit themselves* is benefitting the person in the ALLOW quadrant *at the same time*. Transposed into the logics of rehearsals this means: the authorial lead the actor may assume aligns with the unspoken directorial desire. Within the classical hierarchies of the theater institution the director nevertheless appears to be giving a gift, *allowing others to act as they want* (cf. also *Terracing the Territory II.*, *The facile and ritualistic subversion*). Of course, this situation of a win-win – of a successful devising process, as it were – does not always occur. Moreover, what may appear as a generous “giving of space” sometimes points to directorial lenience or a fear of conflict rather than directorial desire. In that regard it is well

worthwhile also for directors to become aware of the shadow sides of ALLOW (*tolerate, endure, pushover*).

Live directing within the Wheel conceived as Space of Rehearsals

There is another interesting special case within the touch-based practice that has an even clearer equivalent when “transposed” to the rehearsal situation. Primarily because, for once, it involves *speech during touch*. The so-called “Bossy Massage” exercise sets out to train a mode of playing with directness. While still embedded in the SERVE/ACCEPT dynamic the requests normally formulated as questions (“May I...?”) are now rendered as imperatives instead. The Bossy Massage is therefore a rare occasion where speech is actively invited *during* a three-minute game, as opposed to the clarifications and negotiations normally carried out beforehand. Furthermore, the speech functions one-directionally, with only the receiving person speaking.

The “ethical basis” of these one-directional imperatives lies in the agreement that the actions carried out by the person SERVING are to benefit the person in the ACCEPT quadrant; and that if their execution does not meet the initial desire, the request has to be rendered more precisely. With the Bossy Massage, also the mercurial quality of desire can be accounted for by asking for new things whenever they cross your mind. Within this set-up, the speech of the person receiving the touch will necessarily turn two-fold. Specifically, the value of the ACCEPT quadrant appears to split simultaneously into its opposite. So while keeping *gratitude* in mind – towards someone else doing the best they can (in SERVE/*generosity*) – the impulses for new imperatives have to spring from a situational *ingratitude*. (“This is not how I imagined it.”)

In many ways, the speech within the Bossy Massage can therefore be likened to the director’s improvising speech in rehearsals; emerging in the flickering movement between getting what you ask for and *not* getting what you ask for. Embedded in the Wheel of Consent’s logics, however, this exchange between actor and director no longer appears as a “naturalized”

situation; it contains a mutual awareness of a gift being given and received, an active work with the positive values of *generosity* and *(in-)gratitude* as well as with the shadow sides. In other words, it contains *distance*.

Needless to say, also in the Bossy Massage positions/quadrants can be exchanged, with everyone maintaining their original discipline. (It's quite an experience actually to see an actor on stage in the Bossy Massage mode relentlessly telling the director where the instructions are not doing what s/he wants them to do.) To complete the picture, I should add that speech is not a hundred percent one-directional in the described set-up. The Wheel of Consent puts emphasis on the fact that you should be able to "trust the No" of your partner, especially when playing with directness/imperatives. (This trust of the "No" is in fact the pre-condition for formulating your desire unconditionally, also in the regular protocol of asking.)

In practice, especially in acting contexts where the emphasis always goes to saying "Yes" (in order to avoid a so-called "blockage" of the situation), this is hard to maintain. In general, the pressure of production will often imply an affirmative stance, which ultimately makes it hard to trust both "Yes" and "No". In the de-naturalized set-up of rehearsing with the Wheel however, the "No" can also be "forced". Actor and director can agree that – if it doesn't come "naturally" – it will have to come randomly; at least once within the duration of a 3-minute game.

With this backdrop in mind, the film-set-situation described as the inspiration for the work with Claire (cf. SCORE in chapter 6 and PS#2, online resources) can be re-visited applying the Wheel of Consent's terminology. Me live-directing during the final take would then have to be read as embedded in the agreement of the Bossy Massage derived from the SERVE-ACCEPT dynamic. When the actors deemed my imperatives nonsensical or useless for what they were pursuing at that moment, they took action in a different way, thereby non-verbally articulating a "No".

Far from sabotaging directorial authority though, the actor thereby simply places us in the other of the two dynamics, possibly with me in the ALLOW and them in the TAKE quadrant. From here on we re-configure, understanding jointly when we swap dynamics again, this time maybe with me, the director, in SERVE. For the time being, this masterful movement within the Wheel constitutes for me the ideal dance of a *Regie* oscillating between actor and director. A dance opening the Space of Rehearsals to its main goal: safe and ecstatic, fierce play.

8 PRE-STUDY #3: Anders' Director

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Pre-study #3 ANDERS' Director

First presented: 3.12.2023

CIRCUMSTANCE / FACT SHEET / #3

Place: Norsesund, Sweden & Tversted, Denmark

Time: 1 week in February 2023, 3 weeks in September & October 2023

Collaborator: Anders Carlsson (actor and director)

Materials: *The Wheel of Consent* by Betty Martin

"Alcohol and drug policy for staff and students at the
Stockholm University of the Arts (SKH)"

Various Codes of Conduct

SCORE

At the start of our collaboration, Anders and I were still looking for an external “material” as the focal point of encounter; similar to what had been “A Street-car Named Desire” and Chantal Akerman’s “Je, tu, il, elle” in the Pre-studies before. This time though, nothing seemed to “impose itself” and our interest kept on gravitating to our very relation as “actor” and “director”.

After the first workshop (in February 2022) I therefore understood that, this time, “The Wheel of Consent” could in fact be our sole “material” point of focus. As a sort of “text” highlighting our disciplinary constellation.

Critical of the tendency to “manualize” consenting in a cognitive-behavioral matrix, I invited Anders to look for ways of welcoming the agency of the unconscious within the dynamics of the Wheel. For possibilities to “soak it”, so to speak, in the juice of transference. We provisionally entitled a direction of inquiry: “The Wheel of Consent as a Ring of Fire”.

Anders’ familiarity with “Gestalt therapy” in his stage work (based on the teaching of Finnish actor Marcus Groth) seemed to offer technical possibilities in that regard. The hope was to detect the affective expression of the transference in the encounter of actor and director; and possibly even “manage it” by means of an embodiment in the real-time situation that is the rehearsal.

I had already seen Anders apply this skill – of tracking the *gestalt* and using it as a springboard for embodiment – in his encounter with audiences. It provided him with the freedom to masterfully play with timing and syntax of his performance while actively curating the transference at work in the live-set-up of a theater show.

In that regard, the performative position of “the host” seemed to offer him a specific agency. During our first workshop we were therefore still looking for an opportunity in which Anders could “host” a real social situation; and we agreed this should be the seminar I was going to present our research in.

*

Ultimately the Pre-study resulted in a “Work Demonstration” during which Anders and I walk our audiences through the steps we deemed necessary to systematically transpose a therapeutic practice (The Wheel of Consent) into a method for theater rehearsals. We do so by facilitating the audiences’ own embodied experience as well as *demonstrating* critical set-ups in which Anders and I assert the disciplinary roles of “actor” and “director”.

We have presented this work demo (which carries the title: “Rehabilitating Asymmetry in the Actor-Director Relation”) as a small “knowledge product” in different live contexts so far. In the online resources, you will also find a version

specifically adapted to the medium of video in which it is presented. The demo is meant to be a starting point for further elaborations by its recipients, a documentation that can serve as a model of practice.

*

In the PLAY section below, I am proffering – together with a shortened transcript of the “work demo” in question – its anecdotal backside as well; it is based on the material we explored when imagining a real-life hosting situation for Anders, i.e. before we made the “constructive turn” to a mere knowledge-sharing format.

The texts that were supposed to drive this “hosting” situation were:

Firstly, the “Alcohol and Drug Policy for staff and students at Stockholm University of the Arts (SKH)”, as one of the first communications I received from my department after having been hired as a doctoral candidate in 2019.

Secondly, the “Code of Conduct” of a theater festival where Anders and his group *Institutet* used to be regular guests, celebrated for their transgressive interventions.

The montage of these texts sparked the anecdotal memory of a German director who had his assistant serve him aquavit in a coffee cup during morning rehearsals. A strategy to hide his alcohol consumption from the ensemble and especially from his wife, who was cast in the main role. A “psycho-physical action” – drinking aquavit from a coffee cup – we used as a gestural starting point.

*

As we were rehearsing, my intention was to film Anders' and my interaction, but something went wrong technically, which had the camera take a series of photos instead of recording a video.

The photos taken in fixed intervals of some seconds, in turn, reminded me of the Brechtian "modelbooks" that I had first encountered during my director's training. A somewhat forgotten form of theater documentation, mostly insofar as they are intended as models of practice rather than as an archive.

As British theater scholar David Barnett explains on his homepage www.brechtinpractice.net, Brecht's modelbooks "used photographs that mostly framed the whole stage in order to show both the actors' positions and their gestural relationships to one another." Their function was "not merely to record that [Brecht's productions] had taken place, but to help theatre makers understand how they were made and what they were trying to achieve."

Barnett also presents an argument for the modelbooks' medial superiority over video documentation – even for today's theater:

- "1. A photograph can pick out key moments in a scene.
- 2. When taken together, the photographs can represent the way that a scene changes over time, from point to point.
- 3. Photographs don't attempt to give a sense of what it was 'really' like to have been in the theatre, something that video often attempts, but often fails to achieve."

*

Looking at the randomly taken photos from our rehearsal as part of a Brechtian modelbook, I suddenly found a staging at work; a staging of the *gestural relationship* Anders and I have to each other in the very moment of improvisation.

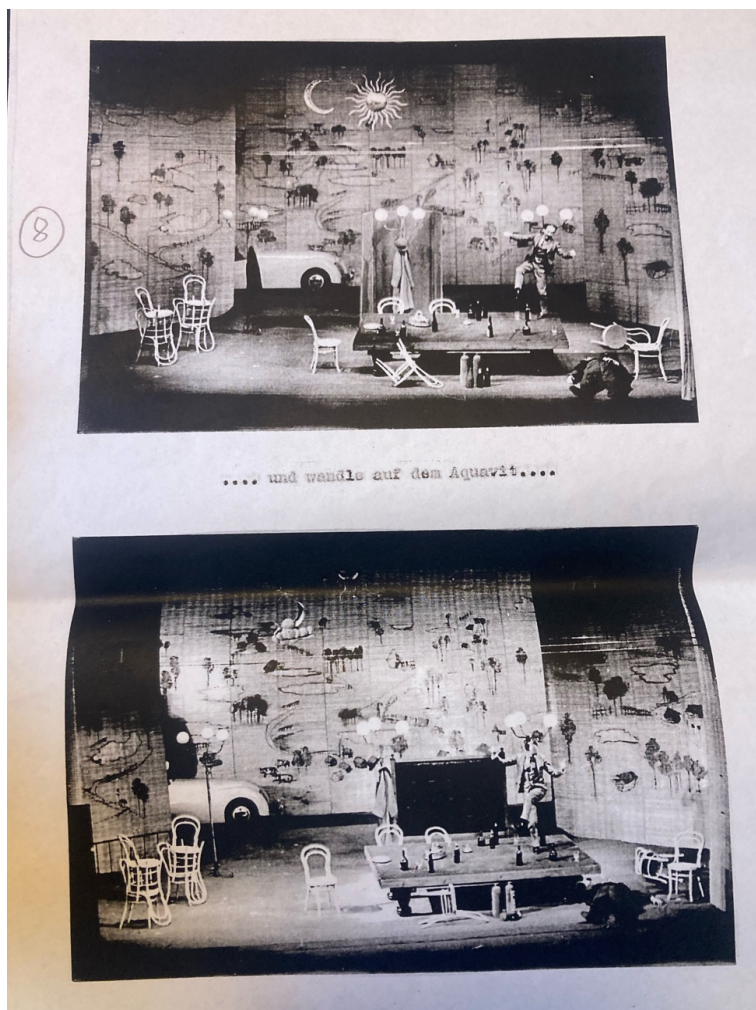
Maybe even a "re-staging of both transferences" at work in the *gestalt* of this specific actor-director dyad. Definitely of its quite long history, now confronted with an invisible third, i.e. the anticipated audience of a research community.

*

In that context, namely the gesture of dropping pants in performative situations, adapted from the emblematic figures of the foothills – Christoph Schlingensiefel in my case – imposes itself as an uncanny detail.

As we later found out through discussions, both Anders and I had at first missed out on the cultural turning point, where this gesture turned from transgressive-but-welcomed to inappropriate; from subverting our gendered authority to allegedly asserting it.

In various ways we have since been made aware of the gesture's problematics, given our positionality; and in our shared rehearsal we obviously try to attune to the new sensibility, working with this only recently installed super-ego position. Both in terms of its internalization (through our own shame) as well as through childish defiance to the outside.



Page from Brecht's modelbook "Mr. Puntila and his Servant Matti".
East-Berlin, 1952.

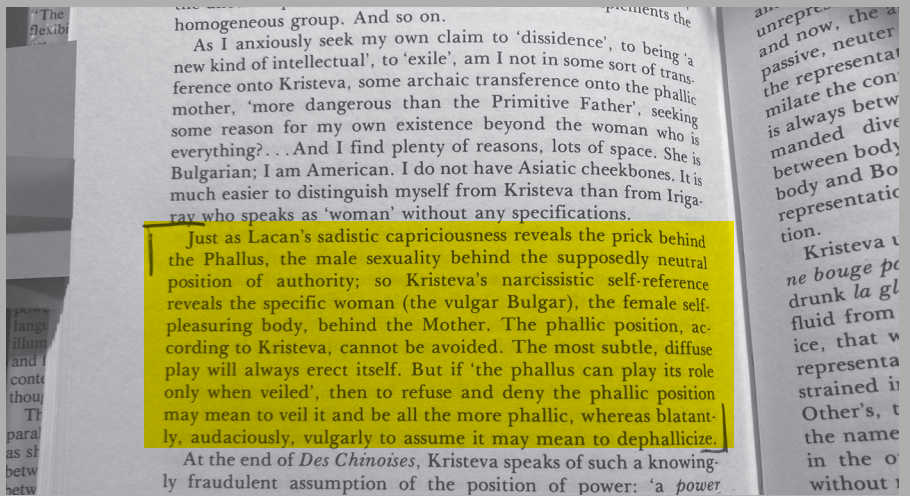
INDEXICAL TRACES/ RELATIONAL ARTEFACTS

father is the phallus—in the form of a penis (her penis, his penis) or a baby—but the gift is phallic, making up for her 'lack' which is a phallic lack. The 'phallic' gift becomes a 'fallacious' gift. There is some insistent link between phallic reasoning, theories of the phallus, and fallacious reasoning. Somehow to try to think the phallus is to wind up with fallacy.

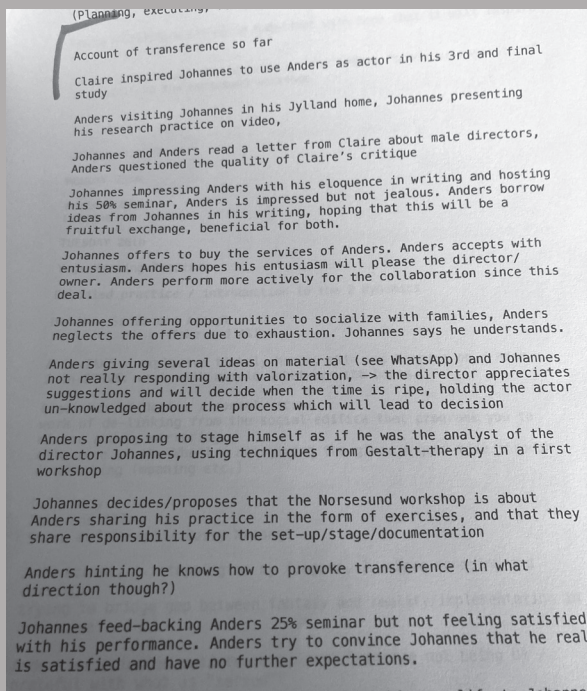
Irigaray asks in her accusation: 'your often contradictory and embroiled statements on the status of the phallus in relation to the real organ or the real sex, do they not have also as their cause ... to maintain veiled from your gaze and that of others how it stands with the sex organ of your Father in psychoanalysis' (*Misère*, p. 886). The analysts do not want to clear up, to reveal the status of the phallus. According to Lacan, the phallus 'can play its role only when veiled'.⁷ To clear all this up is to reveal/unveil the Father's 'Phallus' as a mere 'penis', as one signifier among others, prey to the contingencies of the letter, of the materiality of signification, alienated from the referent. Lacanian analysts protect Lacanian discourse from being just another 'contingent translation'. The stake is the Father's Phallus. To confuse and thus veil the status of the father's 'phallus' is to endow him with a 'Phallus' which he then might give to any daughter, to any analyst.

The daughter, in this case Lemoine-Luccioni, awaits the phallic gift, the fallacious gift. In the sentence quoted earlier she

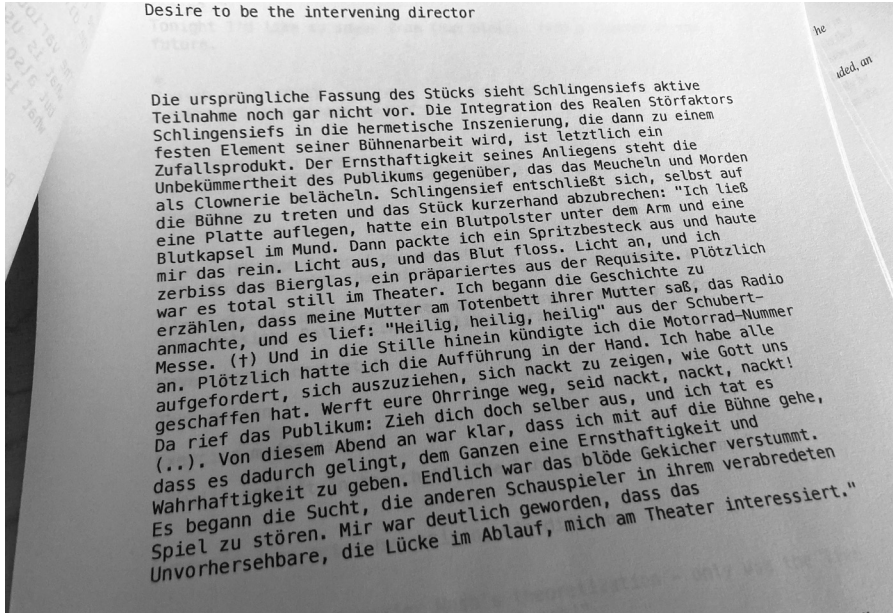
Jane Gallop "Daughter's seduction" page 99



Jane Gallop "Daughter's seduction" page 120



Before the first workshop.
Account by Anders Carlsson.



The "Ur-Szene" in which Schlingensiefel ruins his own mise-en-scène by stripping during the sixth performance; described by himself in "Schlingensiefel! Notruf für Deutschland" (Lochte und Schulz 1998, 26-27). For translation cf. the footnote in *Regiebuch 2, Terracing the Territory II*: "the emblematic figure".

RE_DICK_ULIZATION: THE STATUS OF THE PHALLUS IN THE ETHICAL TURN

Apocrypha / Fragment.

A shortcut to tracing the transition from the foothills of *Regie-Theater* to the present day can be found when observing the change in the value placed on exposed male genitalia on stage. Taking the last step in the critical genealogy of directorial agency at hand, I shall briefly attend to this emblematic detail - the actor's flaccid penis - while doing my structural best to not exploit "it" as a mere provocation/obscene intervention, served on the plate of scholarly research. --- (Let's try:)

As we've seen earlier, one of the "20 commandments of Tyskland" asserts:

THOU SHALT RIDICULE THYSELVES.

After our first workshop in February, I picked up the work on the *Terracing the Territory* chapters. This is a small fragment of text that was supposed to provide a transition between the *Foothills* and the *Great Plains*, but which I ultimately could not fit into the proposed topography. It is first and foremost a reflection on Christoph M. Schlingensiefel, who died in 2010 as one of the last male directors seemingly in control of his own public "castration".

This rule applies especially to the cis-male actors/performers/directors of the foothills era. The “Ur-Szene” described above (Schlingensief’s spontaneous intervention in the sixth show of his theater debut) has as many predecessors as successors. Entire shows have been based on the sight of naked male genitalia dangling across German stages (think of Jürgen Gosch’s masterful *Macbeth*), and in particular the hyper-masculinist Volksbühne actors have pulled down their pants whenever they reached the boiling point of their subjectivity. “Again and again”, writes the contemporaneous critic Robin Detje, “we catch them literally with their pants down” (Detje 2005: 16) in “a Chaplin or Keaton-inspired brand of slapstick based on emasculation and self-humiliation.” (Korte 2023: 328)

Paradoxically, this gesture was usually understood as a self-diminishing exposure, even as a twisted form of castration; with the gap between the symbolically charged phallus and the loose organic penis inviting collective laughter. Ridiculization (in the theatrical sub-genre of *Regie-Theater*) could thus effortlessly be transposed into *re_dick_ulization*.

In the context of the present day’s heightened sensibility towards the performative iteration of power and its potentially re-traumatizing effects, the gesture of dropping one’s pants has become difficult to consider in the light of an emancipatory potential. The gap between phallus and penis no longer evokes comic relief, but alarm: the loosely hanging penis is potentially erect and the actor propelling it over the stages of German state theaters parades the physical power of a perpetrator. Ever since, the “re-” in “*re_dick_ulization*” rather associates with “re-ification” (of patriarchal dominance).

The actor’s or the male director’s – implied biologism only adds to our discomfort, ultimately provoking our *ressentiment*: not all human beings have a penis to swing around. Doing so, in consequence, alludes to a triumphant gesture championing sexual asymmetry and cis-essentialism. Not to talk about the implicit hetero-norm repressing the homosexual or female desire that traverses the scene. From a queer vantage point, the only reason why a straight man would enjoy being naked in public is because he asserts males as being “ugly by nature”.

In a progressive reading, the actor’s exposed penis is thus no longer an object of obscene amusement but rather a site of shame regarding a chauvinist legacy.



Stills from doctoral project of Trygve Allister Diesen: “Being the director – maintaining your vision while swimming with sharks”. A six-part video essay completed in 2011.



Perhaps you already know the work of PhD candidate Outi Condit in Helsinki, it has some common aspects with your project, especially ideas of instant real-time steering of the actor.

<http://www.outicondit.com/?portfolio=remote-control-human>

actor in SERVE quadrant:

to let yourself be talked through, to submit yourself to a medium of sorts, is to excavate the vessel from its content

remotely controlled like a drone?

steered by a crazy bus driver high on cybernetic phantasmas?

how is the bus driver steering?

is he using the voodoo powers of TRE-trembling to maneuver his actor with his jumping wobbling penis as his remote-control device?

is he using headphones on the actor, giving him live instructions of what to say and what to do? (we have seen this has been an interesting apparatus on stage, but why not stay more traditional?)

let's stick to the basics of actor-director relationship: one (director) pre-scripts the other one's (actor) performance (a performance that as rehearsal happens now, but as a public event only at a later point in time)

pre-scripting, or to play with the etymology of the most generic of theatre notions: "improvisation". The prefix "im" indicates a subversion, an act of negation, and "provideo" is the ability to foreclose the future, to control what is going to happen, or at least steering the performative actualization through directives along the way as it unfolds

a script or a score or any other kind of pre-scripting of the living presence of performance is always text, but perhaps different kinds of texts

Anders' study notes ahead of our second workshop in September 23. Over the summer, I had gotten further with the articulation of the "Wheel of Consent as a method of rehearsals", based on reflecting the work of PRE-STUDY #2. Below, Anders responds to the first draft of my try-outs, sometimes quoting the text directly.

the temporality of directors' input -> actors' output is a linear dramaturgy, but there is no immediacy here since a medium is involved

the actor is not only a channel, but a channel with a parasite, a disturbing noise on the telephone-line between director and audience

according to Michel Serres, communication happens at the expense of a third excluded, an un-invited guest: the parasite

but I would say that art happens when the excluded third is included and invited

apart from being a medium, the actor is also a material thing, a body

the material aspect is already a parasite, a disturbance to immediacy of communication

the actor is situated in-between text and reception (or director and audience) and this in-betweenness is not a completely smooth passing of a message, the particularities of the medium itself adds flavors to the message, suggesting that the actor inhabits a position to infect intentionality in new directions - an "im" to "provideo"

the "im" is not only an embodied/situated/performative HOW, in the logic of: "I will do/say what you ask for, but in ways you didn't expect"

it's rather "I will do what you ask for, but you will not know if I did it because you asked me or because I enjoy it"

director in SERVE quadrant

Johannes: "I found out for instance – on the level of touch – how much of my pleasure (read: joy of directing) derives from being good at SERVING. Setting aside what I prefer and making space for the choice of my counterpart. Contributing to his/her creative process, as best I can. In other words, indulge in being a facilitating director."

the pleasure of SERVING tends to be sensitive to how the serving is received and if it's enjoyed by the other part, and it can be hard to know for sure

is it acting, of both actor and director, which disguises the true nature of the transference love?

the object of desire is not known in the present, only possibly and in retrospect can we gain insights about transference

is it possible to register, track, disclose, unveil processes of transference in a live performance?

Johannes: "The LIVE-DIRECTING method is a way / a promise for me to come out of the dark, to try to be obvious in my desire. I'm not saying that my instructions will be clear, intelligible signals/messages; they will sure be full of subconscious bruise, but I have hopes that my transference will also be documented."

compare to what sometimes is called counter-transference in psychoanalysis: it happens in situations where the analyst cannot help but play out immediate desires, the problem is that these disrupt and threaten to destroy the healing process if not handled with precision and care in the analyst's own analysis with a more experienced therapist. If handled well, counter-transference can be a great asset for the process. But the thing is that things can only be sorted in retrospect, and transparency cannot really be attained in a now, as long as the relation is based on asymmetry. The asymmetry allows one to be spontaneous and the other to keep impulses inside.



As a way to stay critical towards the ideological premises and shortcomings of “consent culture” I have continuously engaged with the writings of Katherine Angel, namely with her 2021 publication “Tomorrow Sex Will Be Good Again”. In the document Anders is quoting from below, I played a language game of *Verfremdung*, reframing her findings within the actor-director constellation.

FROM KATHERINE ANGEL
- PLAY AROUND DOC
(by Johannes)

When did we buy the idea that we know what we want, whether in sex or elsewhere? The rhetoric of consent too often implies that an artistic vision desire is something that lies in wait, fully formed within us, ready for us to extract. Yet our visions desires emerge in interaction; we don't always know what we want; sometimes we discover things we didn't know we wanted; sometimes we discover what we want only in the doing. This – that we don't always know and can't always say what we want – must be folded into the ethics of rehearsals sex rather than swept aside as an inconvenience. p.38f

We don't always know what we want and we are not always able to express our desires clearly. This is in part due to violence, misogyny and shame that make desire's discovery difficult, and its expression fraught. But it is also in the nature of desire to be social, emergent and responsive – to context, to our histories and to the desires and behaviours of others.

We are social creatures; and our desires have always emerged, from day one, in relation to those who care, or do not care, for us. Desire never exists in isolation. This is also what makes rehearsals ~~sex~~ potentially exciting, rich and meaningful. How do we make this fact galvanizing rather than paralyzing? p.39

above speaks for the necessity for actors-directors to learn how to steer transference as a resource for mutual creativity and joy in their relation

an established macro or micro consent may possibly establish the necessary trust to begin working, but can a consent harbor/contain/hold the complexity of transference processes, which to an important extent are unconscious to both parties and only retroactively possible to detect, map, sort-out or attribute?

with Emma Bigé, the dance-philosopher and choreographer, Im-provideo contains the negation of the ability to foresee what will happen, an antidote against what she calls "canned thought" but what could also be called "canned performativity"

the point is that Im-provideo is the gesture/action/cut which creates an exposure of a situation to process, open-endedness, différance, alterity, futurity, otherness, transformation, growing, decay, etc. I guess it's a kind of "bouillon" of segmented experience from my years with "Institutet", with being a professor and now with being a researcher: A basic and distinguishing movement of performing arts (and particularly acting) is to insist and push the acknowledgement of embodied materiality. We are eating, shitting, fucking and dying animals

(...)

Johannes warning about "sheer combinatorics":

"In the orthodoxy of the Wheel, there can be no dynamic between the TAKE and the ACCEPT quadrant for instance, as both parties involved would be inhabiting the RECEIVING half of the Wheel simultaneously.

In a similar logic, SERVE and TAKE do not combine, as both parties would find themselves in the DOING half simultaneously, with no one there to be done to."

- Hey hunny, let's take a walk on the wild side, let's go into
SERVE and TAKE mode... or would you prefer to play
TAKE and ACCEPT with me? Let's get toxic, let's be wild!

A SORT OF INTERIM GUT FEELING SUMMED UP

- it would be interesting for me to investigate both the unholy
connections between quadrants which cannot live up to
standards of consent

- the shadow territories of consent, can they be accessed with
deliberation or only without transparency?

- not knowing what kind of director-actor-audience apparatus
we will construct, and taking for granted that it should
have a kind of material as a focal point or objective... my
imagination tends to return to written text, that there is a
kind of "given" for both director and audience, but that the
opening is about the HOW of the moment, a moment which
is open for the agency of director, actor, audience and other
kinds of factors

tbc in conversation <3

REFLECTIONS/ SENSE-ABLE TRANSLATIONS/ PLAY



Work Demonstration: excerpt of the transcript of the video version



AQUAVIT IN THE CUP:
Rehearsing the COC (Code of Conduct) with Anders Carlsson.

A Brechtian modelbook on the staging of the transference between actor and director.

My name is Johannes Maria Schmit and
we're doing this in the context
of my research project
that is an overall project investigating
actor-director configurations.

This is the result of
the third PRE-STUDY I've made.
The idea of a PRE-STUDY
is that it can be applied in a theater of the future.
We share our knowledge by demonstrating a practice.

And let me just introduce my collaborator:



, who is a PhD candidate in Gothenburg
at the Academy of Music and Drama.

We have been working for four weeks
in a laboratory setting with a specific model
called the Wheel of Consent.
The Wheel of Consent is a therapeutic practice
that draws on the practical knowledge
of various disciplines of body workers.
It has been synthesized
by a chiropractor called Betty Martin.
In her own words,
she is also a "self-propelled erotic adventurer".
The objective of our four weeks Pre-study
was to experiment with how
this therapeutic model could be made
– or with Johannes' choice of terms –
"transposed" into a rehearsal method.

And we will go step by step,
from this therapeutic focus on touch –
touching the hand as a beginning –



Actor: Dear Fellow Researchers,



My name is Anders Carlsson, and I am a PhD candidate.
My area of research is acting and I am your host here tonight.

to an expanded realm
of artistic doings of other kinds.
And the purpose is
and has been to refigure and rehabilitate
this asymmetric and presumably problematic
relationship between director and actor.
The therapeutic model
has helped us to de-naturalize or make unfamiliar
this relationship,
as it has been sedimented
through our professional experiences.
We had to unlearn and learn this relation anew in a way.

In my overall project,
I insist on this disciplinary division
between actor and director.
And that is a little bit of a negative response
to what I call "transdisciplinary quick fixes".
Where there is an assumed exchangeability
of those two positions –
that is always put forth as a way to rid
our professions of asymmetries and also antagonisms.

So for this Pre-study I assume the role of the director
and Anders the role of the actor.
And we postulated this relation
between those two roles
as asymmetric.

What we will demonstrate
is how the Wheel can be transposed
to inform a way of working in the theater;
moving from a practice that is based on touch
to a practice that includes also seeing and speaking –
with an increasing degree of complexity.



Initially I would like to discuss some general structures of this event.



Some of you are here as supervisors, some of you are here as staff.
Some of you are here as other researchers.

Demonstration #1



What we want to show you now
is the embodied practice of the Wheel,
the way it has been originally designed.

We will explore the two dynamics that the Wheel offers.

They are always based on two questions.
They answer two questions.
And the first of them being ...
And the second being ...

Who is doing ?

Who is it for ?



The relaxed leaning back
is to tell my body that “it’s for me”
and, that it’s pleasure and not work.
As Betty Martin says: I am following the pleasure.
The first dynamic of the two is initiated by the question:
how would you like me to touch your hand
for the next three minutes?

I heard this question, and I check in with myself.



However, the policies I will speak about now, apply to all of you.



Employees and students ... employees and students at Stockholm University of the Arts, SKH, are expected...

I know that this is for me.
 I set aside what I'm only okay with,
 and I go for the most wonderful thing
 that comes to mind.
 Once I can feel a wish emerging,
 I try to be as direct and specific as I can.
 So I try to avoid hinting or using "maybes"
 or "whatever you want to give".
 And I formulate it as a question. "Will you...?"

the request



And I take in this request or wish,
 and I check in on my end.
 I honor my limits.
 They could be situational,
 for instance, "here", "now/today" "while being filmed".

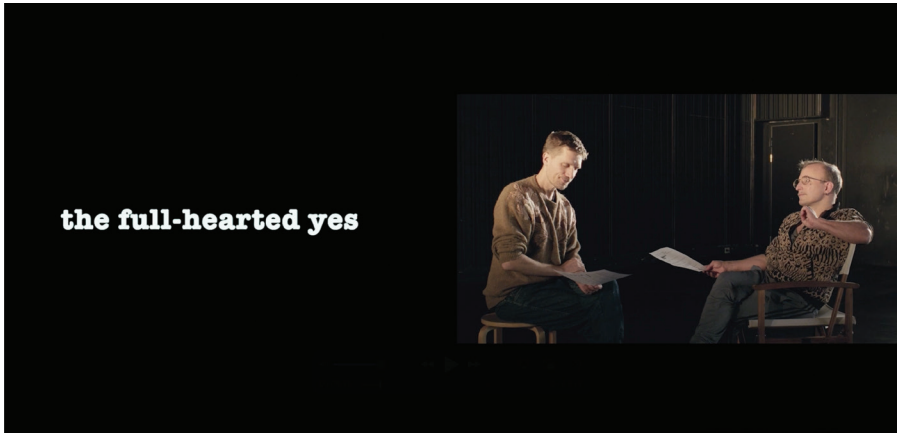
All these situational limits
 play a part in whether I am able to give this.
 Because I ask myself the question,
 what am I able to give with a full heart?
 And it might be that when I ask myself that question,
 I need certain clarifications.
 Like I need to find out:
 Okay, what is it exactly that you want?
 Or I need to negotiate the specifics.
 For instance, I could say
 "I can do this part, but I can't do that part."
 And then we do this, we clarify and we negotiate.

Let's say that we have found an agreement.
 This consent is then sealed
 by the receiving person, me,
 rephrasing the request
 according to the negotiations or new agreement
 and then the giving person
 articulating a full-hearted Yes



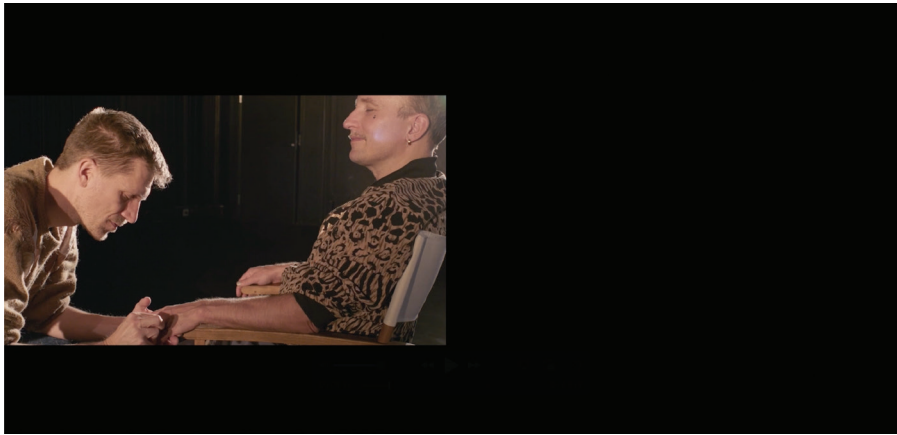
... to take an active part in supporting a good work environment.





And then the three-minute game can start

(...)



(...)





This means a restrictive attitude...



... towards alcohol and drug use.

Now we will show you the other dynamic
that the Wheel contains.
And it is a bit more counter-intuitive
in the sense that the action
that will be performed by Anders
is still for his own pleasure.

So while we usually associate somebody doing an action with giving,
like “giving something to someone else”,
in this case, it will be for his own sake.
And I offer my hand to this.
This game is initiated by me asking a slightly different question,
and we will jump right into it.
I’m going to ask you, Anders:
How would you like to touch my hand
for the next three minutes?

formulating a request

“May I...?”



... kind of paint or draw
with my fingertips on your veins
and try to follow them
and explore their patterns?
Very lightly.

I take this in,
I consider: is there a situational limit to this?
“Today maybe not...” but I actually...
No, I don’t have a limit towards it.
And I can feel that I’m already able
to give you a full-hearted Yes.
So I will set the timer.
For the three minutes to start...
and off we go.

[timer rings]



The employer, SKH, students and all employees, have a joint...



... a joint responsibility ...

And I bring my action to completion.
And it's me saying "thank you".

And I will say "you're welcome".

*

And this is quite interesting
in terms of the situation
with being able to lean
there is a risk
that the person in this presence
or in this dynamic, the person that is doing
actually starts to give.

And I, myself, notice, of course,
that it's pleasurable for me.

And so there is another type of risk
that is: I assume that "it's for me".

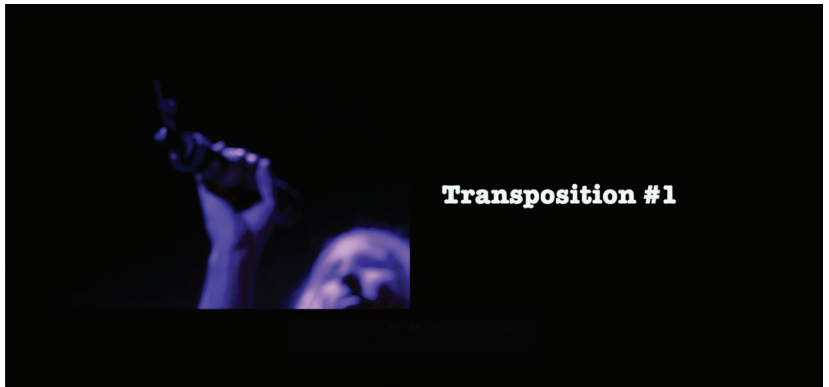
So it's a sort of interesting dynamic
to stay in...

Betty Martin says:

whenever you start giving,
remind yourself
that it is actually for you
in that case.

And we call that position
that I was in here, leaning, TAKING.
That I'm taking this.
It's for me.

(...)



As mentioned earlier, we are here today
to rehabilitate the relationship
between actor and director



... to promote a positive and creative environment.



And this means a dissociation...

in its asymmetry.
 And for this purpose, the TAKE and ALLOW dynamic,
 where we are sitting now,
 seems to be the proper starting point.



Yes. The TAKE quadrant
 especially seems to be extra charged
 when it comes
 to the position of the director.
 Because the TAKE quadrant
 accumulates a lot of asymmetry.
 The things that are happening in
 the TAKE quadrant are “for me”.
 So they are feeding into my, let’s say, directorial vision.
 And at the same time
 it is also me that is “doing”.
 I am in control, let’s say, of timing,
 of suggestions, of... I have the agency.

So it’s a quadrant that really ...
 where two things intersect that have been
 problematized mostly in their “shadow side”.
 So it’s very hard to tell the difference
 between a TAKING
 that is within the borders of consent
 and the shadow side
 that would be “stealing”.

If we now want to rehabilitate
 this asymmetry between us,
 then it’s interesting to understand that
 there is a sensitivity that invests
 a lot of attention into the two quadrants
 that are on the giving end, where you’re doing things
 for the partner.



... from drugs, doping agents and other habit-forming substances.



By entering this event we all agree to respect each other's physical, mental and emotional boundaries within the space.

Now Anders is sitting in ALLOW but
there's also SERVE.

In a rehearsal process there can be a group dynamics
that identifies with Anders' position very much
as somebody that is maybe "pushed over"
maybe "enduring".

While this TAKE position is often
seen as some kind of,
in a colloquial sense, pervert,
somebody that has an illegitimate desire.
And what we try now with this exercise,
playing the Wheel without touch,
but still staying in
these dynamics,
is to train our consent skills,
so we can actually manifest
this line between TAKING
and "stealing" and emphasize it.

(...)

So now we're going to play a three-minute
game.
And I'm sitting here in ALLOW.
And I'm initiating this game
by asking: "Johannes...
here and now, how would you like...
or what would you like to do
to me the next three minutes?"
Now Johannes is a little bit checking in.
Perhaps he has an emergence of...
a kind of emerging desire
or a request.

Yeah, I have something.

Okay.

And in this dynamic,
I will always formulate with "May I...?"

May I, Anders,
spin you around like, in a way that
you are on the floor
and I will, mostly hold you ...
we will mostly be in touch by the hands.
And I would spin you
within this circle that we have now.



We don't tolerate racism, transphobia, homophobia, ableism, misogyny ...



... or any other oppressive behaviour or language.

Not as a consent circle,
but just as a space.
But sometimes I would also like
to spin you on your feet.

Spin me on my feet?

Like like like by holding your feet.
So, like, you would always be more
or less on your spine.

Oh, yeah.
With my spine.

Yeah, exactly.
And I would use your feet to spin you.

A clarifying question would be:
do you want me to be like a beetle
on my back...
offering both my arms and legs perhaps?
And you are going to spin me, right?

Yeah.

And is it important for your enjoyment
that it works?
That we get a spin on it?

Yeah.

It matters in the sense
that I should feel like
it's very easy for me to do this.
I think I should feel ...
I want to feel competent in terms
of being able to produce
a lot of movement
by seemingly little action.

Yeah, I see, I see.
That can depend on the friction
you know, from what I'm wearing right now
and it will not help if I undress,
I think it will be even worse.
Just with those clarifying questions,
I can give you a full-hearted Yes.
I want to try this.

Okay.



Never... assume consent!



Be aware of your prejudices, privileges, behaviours and the space you occupy.

Fantastic.

Then I will re-ask my question:

“Will you, for the next
three minutes, allow me to spin you
by touching both your hands and your feet?”

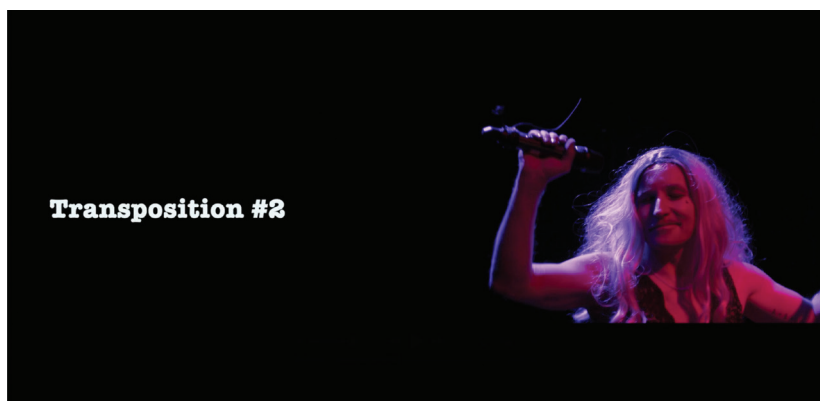
Yes.

So then we get rid of our chairs, right?

(...)



(...)



In our next section,
we will show you some of the adjustments
that we deemed necessary
to turn this therapeutic practice
into a method of artistic creation.



Avoid using perfume !



Never ! ...

And we do that
by doing a first move outside
of the therapeutic practice,
by playing a three-minute game
that doesn't involve touch.

Not necessarily.

Not necessarily. Yeah, exactly.

And we're going to stay,
with this dynamic in TAKE and ALLOW,
we only swapped seats.

And as you know by now it starts
with the person in ALLOW,
Johannes in this case,
asking this question to the person in TAKE
and now in the variation
of this question,
it could be like this:



Instead of asking,
“How would you like to touch me?”
we will just go with “What would you like
to do to me for the next three minutes?”

And what I'm about to do now
is to formulate
something that we have called
a “request” so far.
But let's problematize
that term a little bit
because we found that necessary.
“Request” belongs to a rather cognitive approach



... assume the identity, sexuality, gender, pronoun, health or sickness, ability or background of others.



Director: I think this works really nice. The montage of those two texts and gestures: lenience and retribution.

to human interaction;
 IT language or economical language.
 And what I mean by that is
 that there is a risk of aligning the Wheel
 with what I would call a logic of
 confidence culture.
 Where a lot of emphasis is given to our ability
 to articulate,
 to know our desire.
 "Request" carries this undertone of a
 desire completely intelligible to ourselves,
 accessible to the subject at any moment,
 as if consent was the result of
 a symmetric equation of input and output.
 And while such an assumption of control
 might be productive for therapeutic purposes,
 artistic work will not benefit from it, I would claim.
 Because we deal with emergence
 and loss of control, unforeseeable events,
 and so on.
 We invite those qualities.
 In short, the unconscious.

So how to crank the Wheel
 out of this
 cognitive-behavioral matrix that we feel
 it risks falling into?
 In other words, how to soak it
 in the juice of an active transference?
 One point
 of entry for letting an unconscious agency
 into the dynamics of the Wheel
 is to exchange the term "request"
 with an alternative term.

And what this term should do or perform
 is the acknowledgment that desire or the unconscious
 is not an individual digging
 in the depths, in the vertical depth.
 It's rather a horizontal...
 horizontally in a Lacanian sense
 so that the unconscious is a channeling
 of something out there.
 Something that is in the air
 or because of someone
 looking on or a camera being present.
 In other words, it is phantasmatic.
 And looking for an alternative term, we, of course,



First with the coffee cup with aquavit: “That alcohol policy is just a dull paper, right? ...



... but not the CODE OF CONDUCT !”

need an alternative word.
 And the one that we suggest here
 comes from the experience
 of teaching German-speaking directing and acting students.
 And one student,
 when we were trying to fit
 all these Wheel of Consent words...
 when we were trying to translate them,
 one student
 came up with a German equation of “request”
 that she called “Gelüst”.
 “Gelüst” might not speak to you immediately.
 And for now,
 it can also stand as an empty signifier.
 We will just use it
 as a technical term in German.
 However, it is interesting to somehow
 compare it
 to the mother tongues we have.

In Swedish it would be “bøjelse”
 and in English “inclination” maybe.

And “Gelüst” of course has yet another ring,
 but in German definitely,
 It has a kind of baroque undertone,
 something of a De Sadian empire or universe.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. The libertine.
 It could also have something to do
 with perversion or “the pervert”.

(...)



After this parenthesis now,



You get this extreme host/hostage-taker energy. This “Dog Day’s Afternoon”-vibe. “Remember: I, Sonny Wortzik, am the victim here!”



I don't think we are playing a trans-woman...

problematizing the idea of a “request” and exchanging it
 with the notion of “Gelüst”,
 we will play our game,
 and see what that change of term...
 how it affects our three-minute game.
 (...)

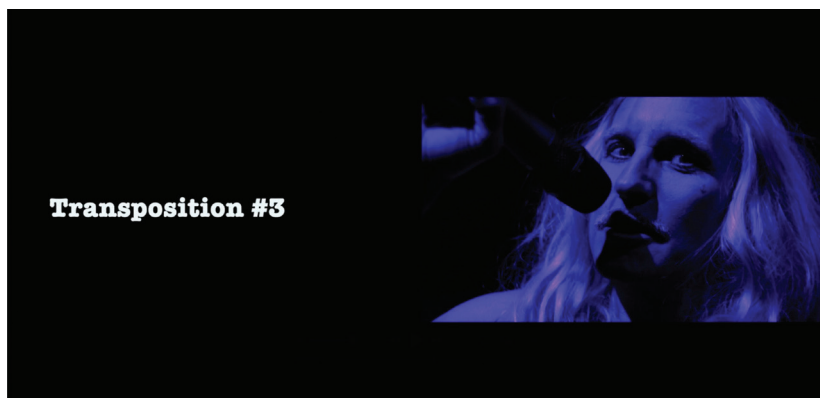


[timer rings]

Thank you.

You're welcome.

(...)



In our third demonstration,
 we will mark the disciplinary divide
 between actor and director with a cut
 like this.



We can just play a white guy in a wig.



Because if everything has to be respected...



And, in this specific setting –
 of an imaginary audience presence –
 this situation of rehearsals
 can remind us of a Brechtian conception
 of rehearsals as potentially public.
 And that,
 of course, has a lot to do with the notion
 that we've discussed about the phantasmatic
 of a rehearsal situation
 or the shared horizontal space.
 (...)

We will now play
 two last three-minute games
 in our disciplines.
 We have arrived at the point
 where Anders is – as an actor –
 and me – as a director – in the dynamics.
 And we start with SERVE and ACCEPT.
 Anders in SERVE, me in ACCEPT.
 And this is what I call
 the default setup of theater,
 if you want, but also specifically
 of the director's theater.

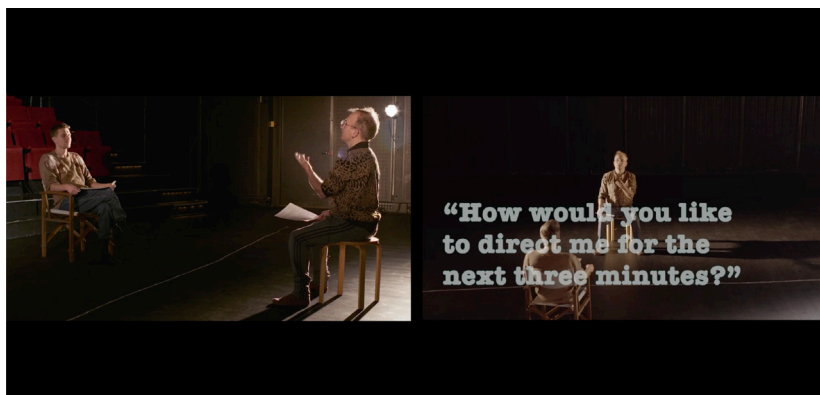
And now in this specific spatial setup
 with an auditorium and a stage,
 the initiating question will be,



Actor: ... then no assumptions about my identity can be made anyways!



Just because I have a penis... Don't assume anything...



Although Johannes described that
as the “default setup of theater”,
note that this way of putting the question
actually, gives me, the actor,
the decision of
when the rehearsal begins.

So now Johannes
is checking in or has already.

I have something coming.
And in the SERVE and ACCEPT dynamics
I start my question by “Will you...?”

Will you, Anders,
hide the fact that you’re working
for George?
Like every action
that I will tell you to do
will be informed by the desire
to look good on the camera
now, of this video,
but will you hide that from me?
So will you make me feel
that I am the point of focus
and everything that I say?
That would be
how I would like to direct you.

And maybe if I spin
on and fantasize a bit more,
it could be a
fictional situation
that I direct you into.



... just because you see this !



Yeah, it could be
a situation that I decide upon in the moment
what it should be.
That's my GELÜST.
That's the first thing that I see.

Now some clarifying questions.
You will give me some kind of situation
and I will act for you
but secretly actually
acting for the camera
to look good on the camera,
but I don't necessarily
look straight into the camera?

That would be not hiding it from me.
It's important that you hide it from me.

Yeah. Okay.
Is there more
that I would need to ask on that?

Now Anders is also checking in,
and we're playing on all planes
of an aesthetic limit of an ethical limit.

Nothing more comes to mind,
so I think I'm ready to jump into this.
So you have a full hearted Yes.

Fantastic.

(...)

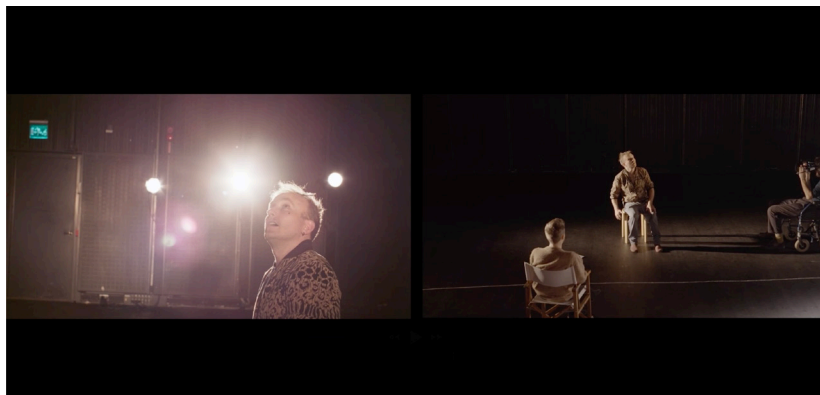
Your knee has this shot.
And now you look up to the sky
and there's snow coming on you.
It's snowing on you.



Director: That's a twist that makes it really harder to read.



I really like this dramaturgy of inviting the audience by mocking guidelines...



(...)

Thank you.

You're welcome.

What we will do now is play a last game.
 And as you can see, we haven't changed
 anything in terms of our disciplines.
 It's still me down here,
 as a director, Anders as an actor.
 But we swapped the positions within the Wheel.

So within the SERVE and ACCEPT dynamic,
 I am in SERVE now, which is indicated
 by me not having anything to lean on.
 So I am in the giving half.
 While Anders, as an actor, is in the receiving half
 And the way it works as a game now
 - I have the control over initiating -
 and I do that by asking Anders:



... but your oppressive behaviour ??! That's not re[dick]ulous.



It's so nice...



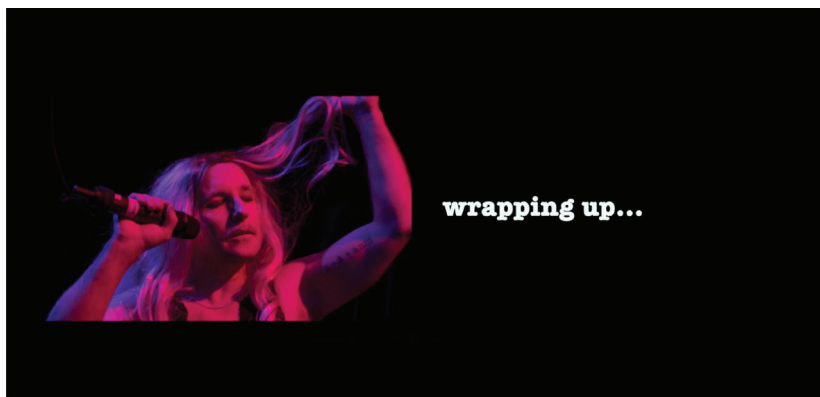
There is obviously a GELÜST coming up.

It's always the most stupid idea that comes first.
But that might be something in it.
So I try to expand on it and see if it...
I would like us...
no, I should formulate it like this.

It's for you.

So will you, Johannes, direct me
for the next three minutes ...

(...)



What we aspired to demonstrate here



“Don’t assume anything ! ... Just because you see this !”



“That’s just your projections! That’s your prejudice!”

was that the Wheel of Consent allows us

to destabilize power positions
without
suspending
our respective disciplines.

And in spite of asymmetry
in roles, function, and influence,
the Wheel of Consent can help us
to trouble the default conceptions
of, for example, authorship, initiative, mastery over time,
etc.

So this is suggesting that – possibly –
trans- or post disciplinary approaches
are not the only way to trouble
or destabilize power
in rehearsal situations.

There is even a utopian scenario
of a split rehearsal day
where the initiative
is redistributed ...

Let's say, in the morning,
the ensemble would be in the giving half
of the Wheel – that means in SERVE and ALLOW –
while the director is
in the receiving half.

The director would be in TAKE or ACCEPT.

And then in the evening
it would be the other way around.

Let's say the director would then be in SERVE
– just like I have been in the most recent game –
or the director would be in ALLOW
and the actor in TAKE.

So the initiative, as you've seen, of starting
a game is always in the giving half.
So SERVE and ALLOW assume mastery over time.

And in that sense, the morning rehearsal
I've just described would only start
when the ensemble,

the actor, is asking the question,
“how would you like to direct me or us?”

And in that sense an essential power of the director,
which is related to starting a rehearsal,
but also cutting off improvisations, is suspended
by the help of the Wheel.



Hihih!

And that is sort of
one of the promises it makes.
We're not all the way through with
exploring all its possibilities for
an actor director-relation
or for rehearsals as such.
But this is what we got.

*

So thank you.

Thank you.

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ⁱⁱⁱ D.W. Winnicott, "Hate in the Counter-Transference." *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* Vol. 30 (1949): 69-74. Quoted in *The Journal of Psychotherapy Practice and Research*. 3(4) (Fall 1994), 352

^{iv} Gallop, *The Daughter's Seduction*, 142

^v Luce Irigaray, "The Limits of the Transference" in *The Irigaray Reader*, edited by Margaret Whitford (Cambridge, MA and Oxford: Blackwell), 114

^{vi} Gallop, *The Daughter's Seduction*, 143

^{vii} Ibid.