

[MARCH 2023, TURKU. A GROUP OF PEOPLE HAS GATHERED AROUND A LETTER. ONE OF THEM IS READING ALOUD. AS IF OUT OF COMMON AGREEMENT, THEY MIMIC USING A DISINFECTANT ON THEIR HANDS, RUB THEM TOGETHER AND EXPOSE THEIR CLEAN PALMS TO EACH OTHER. THEN THE READER GOES ON:]

Dear listeners,

I am dirty.

We — are — dirty.

[PAUSE]

It is a great pleasure to have you here. To start I have a few words about this letter-shaped performance and its reading:

- the letter has writing of two kinds: black (= the text body) and [RED (= STAGE INSTRUCTIONS)]
 - read the text body aloud, you can swap the reader as you like
 - the stage instructions do not need reading aloud, except sometimes. Instead they propose actions, which the reader, or everyone together, realize. The actions are important, but nothing is compulsory. If you do not wish to do something that the text proposes, you can also ask others to do it.
 - reading aloud can be embarrassing - that's totally fine! Silent moments can be awkward - let them be!
- Is this a performance at all?? - who cares! Are we dirty enough - definitely!!!
- — — > like this you will get an impure art experience!

[THE READER LOOKS AT THE OTHERS, CRUMBLES THE PAGE AND THROWS IT ON THE GROUND. SOMEONE TAKES THE REMAINING PAGES AND CONTINUES READING.]

As I prepare to write this letter, I sit on a toilet seat and read the book *Purity and Danger* by anthropologist Mary Douglas. Meanwhile I also keep company to my 2-year-old daughter, who is bathing next to me.

“Poo”, she says, gets up from the bath and moves on to the potty. No poo comes out and she returns to the bath. A smell of poo however wafts to my nostrils. I get up and check the bath water, whether there is poo. “Where there is dirt, there is a system”, I read from Douglas’s book. She explains that dirt is borne as a by-product of organization, as the elements, which do not fit the order, are ostracized.

[PAUSE]

We are dirty. Like my daughter, we too have excrement in our rectums. When it is defecated, it becomes filth. In addition to excrement, there are organisms, bacteria, viruses, foreign objects, dead tissue, miscellaneous affects and impure thoughts teeming inside us. Our skin is sweaty, mucky and, behind the scent of the products we use, it smells of something undefined. The sonic pollution of the city penetrates our ear canals, filters through our skin, vibrates in our internal organs. Our bodies are exposed to each other. Our feelings are infectious. As one of us breathes deeply, the diaphragms of the others notice it. As one of us gets nervous, we all get nervous.

[THE READER CLEARS THEIR(/HER/HIS) THROAT. THEY SCRATCH THEIR SCALP. THEY SCRATCH ALSO OTHER PARTS OF THEIR BODY, PROLONGING THE SITUATION. LETTING THEIR GAZE TRAVEL THROUGH THE FACES OF THE OTHERS.]

Could we do something together? Could you stretch your comfort zone to accommodate it? My request is: let’s say aloud in unison the following motivational sentence: “We — are — dirty”. Ok?

[EVERYONE SAYS ALOUD:] We — are — dirty.

[AGAIN] We — are — dirty.

[AGAIN] We — are — dirty.

[THE READER FORMS THIS PAGE INTO A CUP AND SPITS INTO IT. LAYS THE CUP DOWN SOMEWHERE.]

It is March 23rd in 2013. I am in Helsinki, taking part in a performance titled *Circle*. In *Circle* the participants - the performers and the audience - form a circle, in the center of which two of them at a time encounter. Today the performance is about us feeding each other. We sit silently, the center of the circle is empty. I move there and wait. Someone approaches me from the back and a hand appears in front of my face, sliding something into my mouth. A finger, with some substance on it. It has a familiar taste.

[THE READER STICKS A FINGER IN THEIR MOUTH. PAUSE.]

While purity is the condition of health,

dirt is the condition of art

And performance is the impurest of all art forms. A performance is always unpredictable and surprises its maker. It cannot be polished or finalized, it cannot be purified from the smells of the audience, yawns of boredom, straying minds, indiscreet gestures, frustrated body language, unsilent phones or slimy coughs. It is not immune to power failures, falling ill, stage fright or performers' empty moments, in which they just don't remember what they should say or do. In a performance, all those present do their best to keep their uncontrollable bodies in control, but they never are. They do their best to keep their dirt away from the territory of the others, but it never does.

[TOGETHER THEY SEARCH FOR SOMETHING CLEAN IN THEIR ENVIRONMENT.]

The removal of the wrong kind of population, for example specific ethnic groups, from a society is called “cleansing”. In these cleansings certain origins are seen dirty. The expression is used for example about the violence excersised towards the Jew population of Germany in 1930s and 40s and the violence excersised towards the Alban population of Kosovo in 1990s. The murders, expulsions and other measures realized by the Nazi and Serbian forces were directed towards the extinction of a dirty people. The goal was a pure state.

[PAUSE]

Many thinkers have challenged this idea of cultural purity. They have said that families, communities or local cultures can not be fouled, since they are originally impure. There is for example no pure and original Finnish culture, only a culture originally mixed, cross-blooded, hybrid, impure.

There is also no original culture of Turku, only this culture of Turku you witness around you right now.

**[AS IF OUT OF COMMON AGREEMENT,
THEY TAKE MIMIC TAKING DISINFECTANT ON THEIR HANDS, RUB THEM TOGETHER AND
EXPOSE THEIR CLEAN PALMS TO EACH OTHER.]**

This page is clean

[THEY FIND SOME DIRT AND TAINT THE PAGE.]

Artist-researcher Nora Rinne writes that during the Romantic era, in the 18th and 19th century, dirt was appreciated in art. Artists lived in sublime decadence, in the mouldy, restless and stinky boroughs of Paris and Venice, sacrificing their health for art and writing about coughing, sick heroines. In England of the Victorian era, during the last half of the 19th century, hygiene replaced dirt as the valued quality. This laid the foundations for the “purity” of modernistic aesthetics. The elegant modernism of the 20th century was not the result of brilliant and revolutionary artistic thinking — it was borne out of bourgeois fear of dirt.

[THE READER SNIFFS THEIR SELF.]

But, we are no longer on the clean 20th century. We are in a performance, on the century of performance, during which everything has become and is becoming mixed and impure. The fences around the yards of the bourgeois are falling down, racial hygiene has become outdated, viruses spread across the world in a blink of an eye, art forms contaminate each other and the mutual dependency of people and other species, their entanglement with each other, is revealed as the measure of everything.

[THE READER BURBS AND FARTS. IF THEY CANNOT DO IT ON DEMAND, THEY ASK IF SOMEONE ELSE IN THE GROUP CAN DO IT.]

During the time that it takes for me to read this sentence, 58 toilets are flushed inside the buildings along the Esplanade street in Helsinki. Shit and piss flow in the pipes and connect into a bigger and bigger flow of sludge moving towards the Viikki wastewater treatment plant. It takes two hours for the shit and piss to reach Viikki. A similar stream of excrement is surging under the streets of Pori, under our feet.

Underground — flow — shit and piss.

[EVERYONE SAYS:] Underground — flow — shit and piss.

[AGAIN] Underground — flow — shit and piss.

[AGAIN] Underground — flow — shit and piss.

[THE READER SLOWLY RIPS THE PAGE TO PIECES.]

This is the last page. There is no poo floating in the bath water,
and a clean place too has its meaning, but

in a performance we are all dirty.

**[THE READER, SOMEONE ELSE PRESENT, OR EVERYONE TOGETHER
FIND SOME DIRT AND STAIN THEMSELVES, THEIR SKIN, THEIR CLOTHES OR THEIR
THINGS IN THE WAY THEY LIKE.]**

Or, in other words:

Purity — is — a performance.

[PAUSE]

Thank you for your time and your impure beauty,
Filthily yours,

**[THE READERS DESTROY THE PAGE.
THEY COLLECT THE REMAINS OF THE LETTER IF IT IS POSSIBLE.
THEN THEY LOOK AT EACH OTHER, THEIR NEW DIRTY FRIENDS.
AS IF OUT OF COMMON AGREEMENT, THEY MIMIC TAKING DISINFECTANT ON THEIR
HANDS, RUB THEM TOGETHER AND EXPOSE THEIR CLEAN PALMS TO EACH OTHER.
THEY THANK EACH OTHER
AND RETURN THE REMAINS TO TUOMAS.]**