

[turn the first page at the same time as the others]

[A room. A group of people reading silently.]

[The pandemic era.]

[They interrupt the reading and look at each other.
Then they turn the next page simultaneously.]

An empty page is a moment, at which the positions of those surrounding it are re-evaluated. It is a time to clear the table, the library, the vocabulary and the theatre. It is a time of radical equality, before a redistribution. It is a time when audience does not yet exist.

As empty as the glowing movie screen in a photograph by **Hiroshi Sugimoto**. Sugimoto has arrived at an empty movie theatre, set his camera on a tripod in the back of the auditorium and opened the shutter for the duration of a full-length film. The light contained in the film has gathered into the photograph: the movie screen is shining brightly, reflecting the light contained in the art work. It is a film from which all details, as well as time, have disappeared.

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A reading is

- 1) an event of reading, e.g., a reading of Quran.
- 2) an interpretation, e.g., a queer reading, a tarot reading, a reading of a water meter.

Before You read further, I have a couple of requests.

This text is defined by few artistic features which suggest a specific kind of response from You, a specific kind of behaviour, a specific kind of dialogical approach to its terms. I would say this is always the case in live performance, but let's not get ahead of ourselves.

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This reading is divided into four acts. My request is that at the end of each act, You will set the manuscript aside. That is the beginning of an intermission. Allow others to proceed to the intermission at their own pace. During the intermission you may stay in the space or step out. When the intermission is over, return to the manuscript. The scripts must always open at the same time.

Secondly. It is easy to hurry when reading. But we are not in a hurry, and You are not alone. That is why the text contains plenty of suggestions which are aimed at lifting Your eyes from the paper or slowing down their movement on these lines. Gaps, repetitions, parenthesis. For example:

[the audience flips back few pages and reads again, delaying, misreading, playing around, until it passes by this sentence for the second time]

Thirdly. Instructions of this kind, and the unconventional circumstances that lead to writing them, tend to awaken questioning regarding the (mis)use of power. A desire to resist the proposals of the author may arise in the audience. This is part of the deal. Likewise, a desire to follow those proposals may arise. The audience appears as a charged condition.

[The readers interrupt their reading and look at each other. Some are still reading the previous pages, some have already passed this point. The gazes of those who have paused here meet. They close their eyes and take a few breathes before moving on.]

Act one:
The Birth of Audience

[Bois de Vincennes, Eastern Paris, June 2017]

We sit on the yard of a theatre built into an old ammunition factory and wait. There are trailers on the yard, some artists working in the theatre live in them. The pre-booked tickets have to be collected three hours before the show; the show is fully booked. We hope to get tickets, even if we do not have a booking. We are the first ones there, the audience (is it already an audience) starts to gather on the yard one by one. An hour before the show the double doors to the foyer are opened and the audience (is it already an audience) lines up. The director **Ariane Mnouchkine** shakes the hand of each individual at the door. She founded this theatre, *Le Théâtre du Soleil*, in 1964, fifty-three years ago. Mnouchkine smiles warmly and welcomes me to the performance. The foyer is a giant industrial hall filled with tables with seats around them. On the left side there is a counter, from which Indian food is served at a low price. The audience (is it already an audience) takes some food, eats, chats.

After having eaten we move into an auditorium located next to the foyer. Finally when we sit there and the first actor steps on stage, it is clear that we are an audience.

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[Present]

There is no auditorium built in this space, and there is no actor stepping on stage.

Is there nonetheless an audience present?

The Greeks write plays and build circular auditoriums from stone, calling them theatres. For some reason all this is repeated until our time: the performance of ancient tragedies, **Aristotle's** reflection on the medium, theatre architecture and the very word assigned to that architecture, and later on to an artistic discipline.

Similar creations in other geographical areas disappear into the stream of time and Ancient Greece is canonized not only as the cradle of European culture but also as the cradle of theatre audience.

The French-Algerian philosopher and theatre artist **Denis Guénoun** writes that the semi-circular auditorium, which gradually became the form of the theatres of Ancient Greece, enables the audience not only to see the stage but also to look at itself. In that age and culture “audience” meant the sovereign members of *polis*, the democratic city state, i.e. free men. Guénoun proposes that this kind of auditorium is the best one for a community setting.

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[Southern Helsinki, November ~~2017~~ 2016]

We wait in the lobby of a classy building. The dance artist **Anna Mustonen**, one of the four authors of the performance, enters the room and starts speaking:

"The performance starts without problems, just like this. I have thought of several options for this encounter. I want this to work. I fear, that you have to support the situation too much. I hope that nobody has to hold up this moment. I may be pretentious, too aware of everything. I speak everything openly so there is no ambiguity. I speak everything open: the windows, the doors, the curtains, the paintings, the furniture, the lamps, the ceiling, the floor, the clothes we wear, the slight tremble moving beside my breath, the tongue wanting to slip along my dry lips. We all bow towards the floor and take off our shoes."

[p a u s e]

Sociologist **Richard Sennett** proposes that audience was born at the end of 18th century in London and Paris, as urbanization made the gathering of strangers possible.

23

[Present]

There is no auditorium built in this space, and there is no actor stepping on stage.

Is there nonetheless an audience present?

It stood out on the cover of the manuscript: "turn the first page at the same time with the others". Before that You received the pages. Before that You entered the space.

24

[Helsinki, January 2020]

I open my laptop and navigate to the ticket booking webpage of *Hotel Room Encounters*. The performance takes place in a hotel room, for one audience member at a time, hourly, eight shows a day for several days in a row. The author and sole performer **Giorgio Convertito** inhabits the room for the duration of the run of performances and has an encounter with each of us separately. The list of performance times at the booking webpage is blinking red, all but one is booked. I become aware that dozens of people have signed up to join the audience (is it already an audience). I book the last show that is still free.

[p a u s e]

I knock on the door and wait. Convertito, dressed in a bathrobe, opens the door. He invites me in and informs me that the room and himself are at my disposal. He has not planned how we will use this hour. Instead he moves the responsibility over to me. I am alone with the performer and cannot escape an active position. I only know that there have been several similar solitary guests and there will be many more after me. Am I an audience?

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[New York, 1950-60s]

Local visual artists expand the field of fine art by bringing the acts of *making art* to the realm of the public eye, accessible to audiences. Performance art is born. The audience does not sit in auditoriums or follow stories about fictive characters. It assembles in a gallery or artist's studio to witness how the artists use their bodies. Theatre scholar **Erika Fisher-Lichte** writes a few decades later that performance introduces a *new aesthetics*. A performance cannot be perceived from a distance like an art work: it is an event, which forces spectators into active participation.

Performance researcher **Richard Schechner** challenges the historical perspective of the emergence of performance. According to him the idea that performance as an aesthetic art form developed from rituals practiced by “primitive” peoples is a western delusion. “In all eras, everywhere in the world and in all cultures, people created and still create dances, music and theatre”.

He proposes another kind of perspective. He writes that ritualistic performing changes into aesthetic performing when a participating audience disintegrates into paying customers. Aesthetic, on the other hand, turns into ritualistic when an audience composed of individuals forms a community. All performances contain a tendency to move in both directions.

I discuss with researcher **Hanna Järvinen** who took part in the process of translating the above quoted book by Schechner. She points out that he has the same quality of which he criticizes western researchers here: of claiming things as if from a privileged point of view, a position from which one can see the whole and make claims about it.

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[Multiple locations and times]

So what was there *before* audience? What distinguishes audience from what was before?

I sit as a tourist in the yard of the ammunition factory as Richard Sennett states from behind my shoulder that as a historical entity audience follows community; the early modern urban individuals did not know those who experienced performances with them.

Mnouchkine's hand weaves us together and Richard Schechner stands next to her and remarks to Sennett that audience does not follow community in historical terms, instead a community can turn into an audience and an audience into community or into customers in all performances, over and over again.

As we bow down around Anna Mustonen towards our shoes, it sounds like Erika Fischer-Lichte was whispering from the next room: "... before performance was born, art galleries were populated by spectators; the audience gathered around the body of the artist is tied to the flesh of the event, into a state of change shared with the performer".

29

[Present]

There is no auditorium built in this space, and there is no actor stepping on stage.

Is there nonetheless an audience present?

It stood out on the cover of the manuscript: "turn the first page at the same time with the others". Before that You received the pages. Before that You entered the space. Before that You waited in the foyer. Before that You were offered a program note. Before that You arrived at the venue. Before that You made the decision to attend.

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Ok, this is a nice slide down towards the break, and I hate to disturb it, but I must make a point here. The way the question is posited here is flawed. I mean especially the word "moment". I think it is already clear that there is no "moment", when something else turns into audience. This is far too linear, chronological and simple. One has to search for a different kind of logic. I will think about this during the break.

[The first act ends.
Members of the audience (is it already an audience)
set the manuscripts aside one by one
and start the intermission.
The doors are open.]

I N T E R M I S S I O N

[The intermission ends with a signal.
The members of the audience close the doors.

The second act starts, when You turn this page
at the same time with the others]

Act two:
Out and In

Ok, let's imagine You are the audience of a minimalist performance in one of the hundreds of contemporary art spaces around Europe.

This performance is composed of

- a simple light design highlighting the center of the room
- a duration of, say, 20 minutes

Nothing else.

Just the light, the shadow, the time, the others.

[The light is landing.]

Well, if You were in that performance, there would be nothing to read.

So, if You like, imagine, or let Your body imagine, for a moment that You are not reading.

That You share the space only with
light, shadow, time, others.

At this point it may be appropriate to reveal what I am after. My proposal is that

an audience appears as a charged condition.

This charge is borne out of three oppositions:

out and in

one and many

familiar and alien

And now, this act
and the imaginary performance in it

(it "is composed of

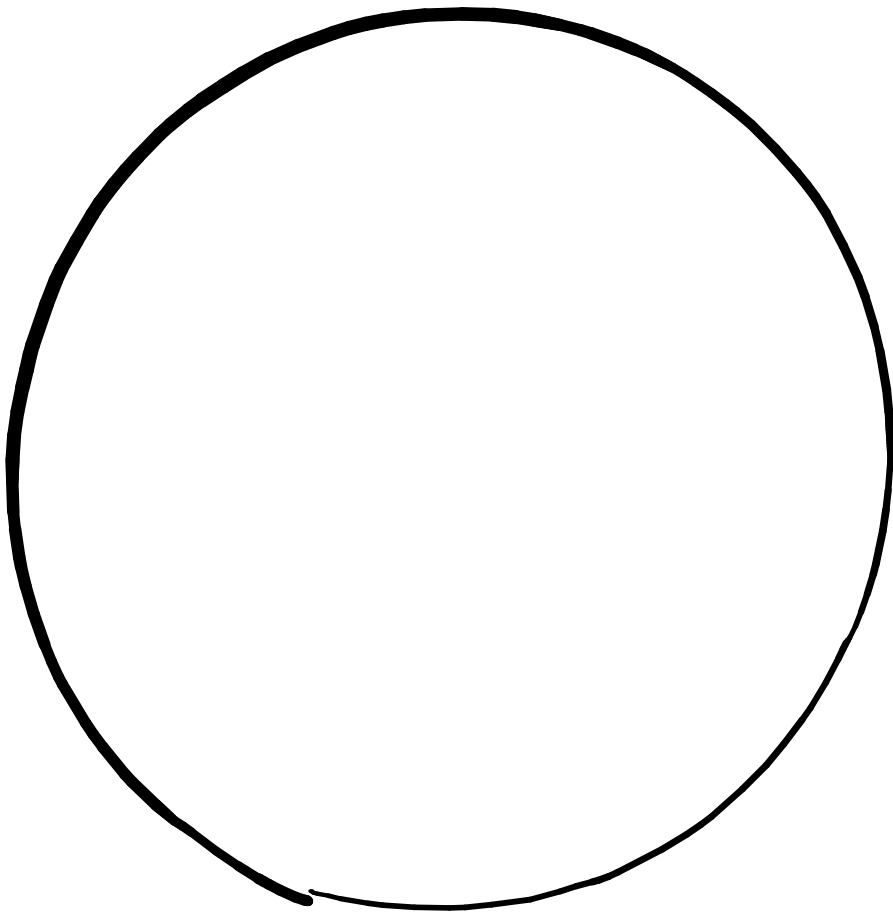
- a simple light design highlighting the center of the room
- a duration of, say, 20 minutes")

is performing the first of these oppositions:

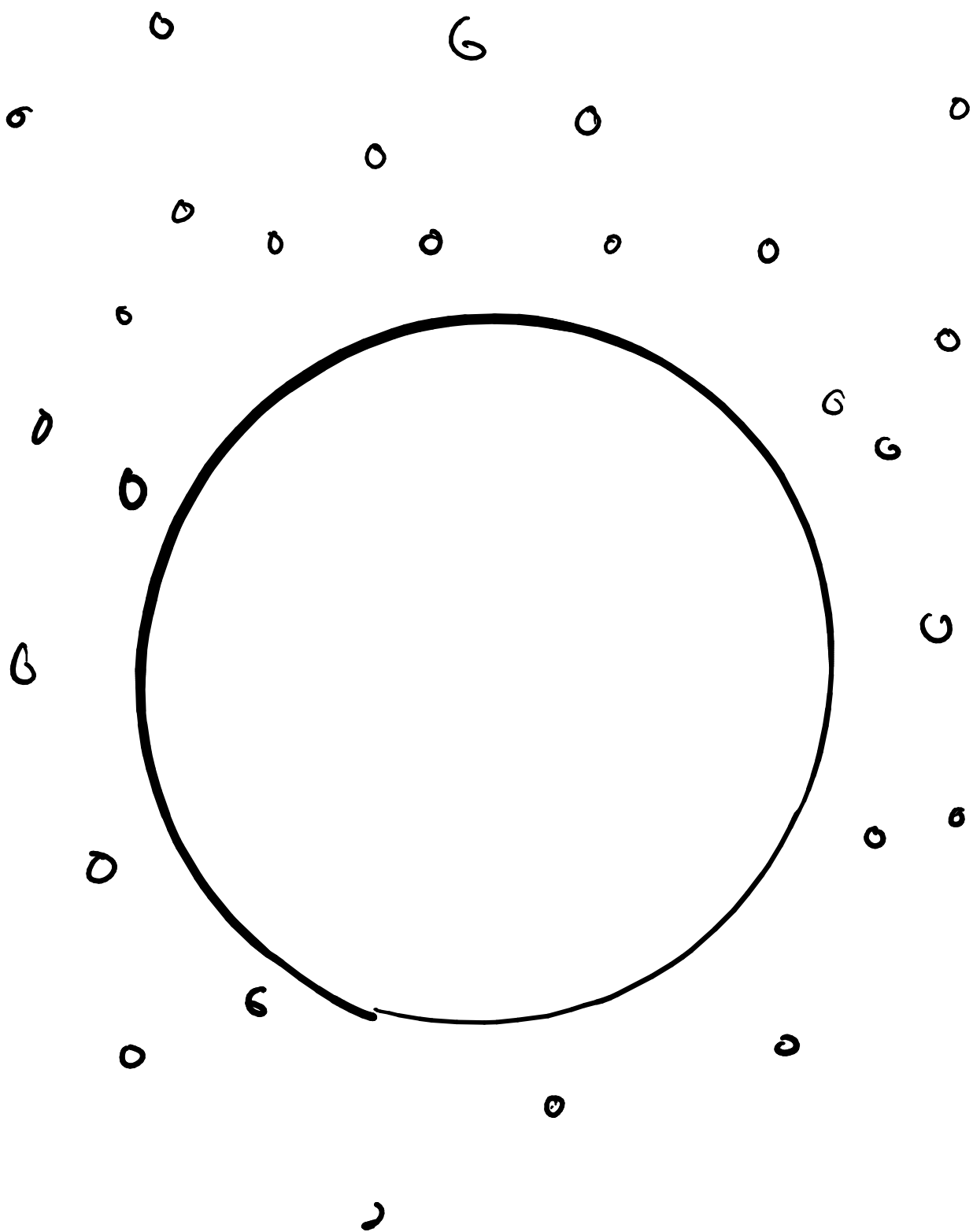
the charge between the positions of "out" and "in".

The audience has stepped into the space and realized what is offered to them, with what they need to survive in this room.

Light, shadow, time and others.



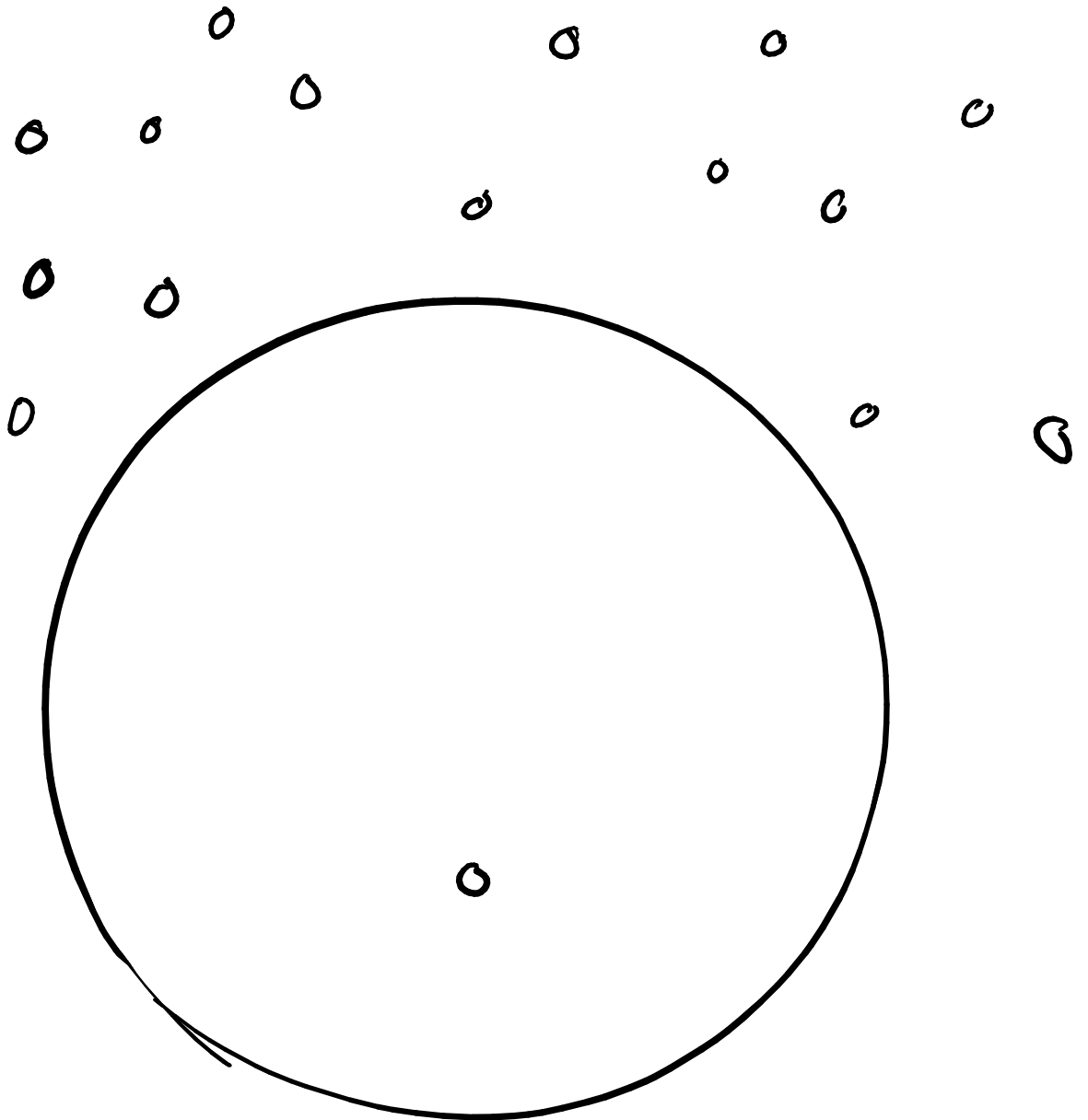
The audience might leave the light untouched.

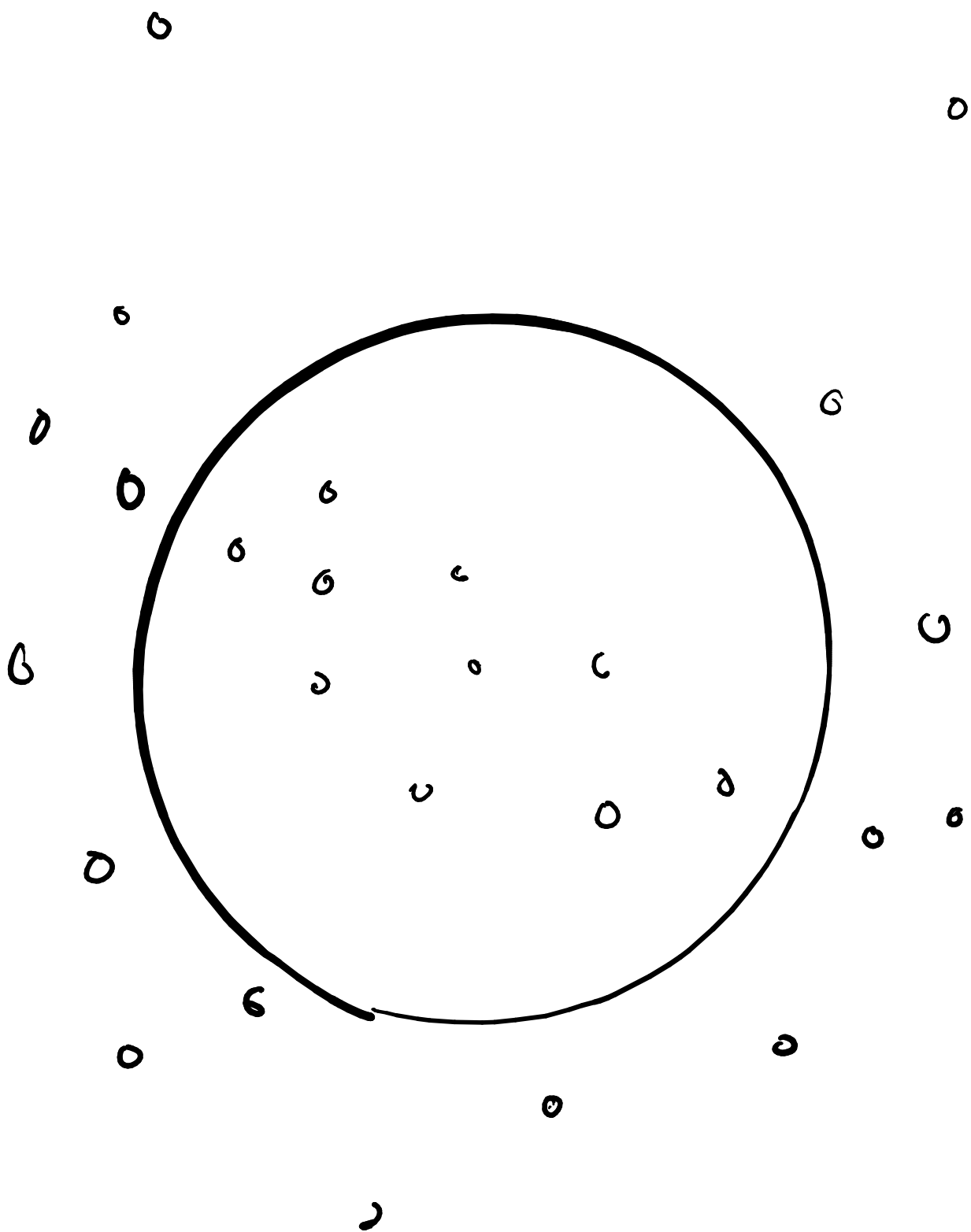


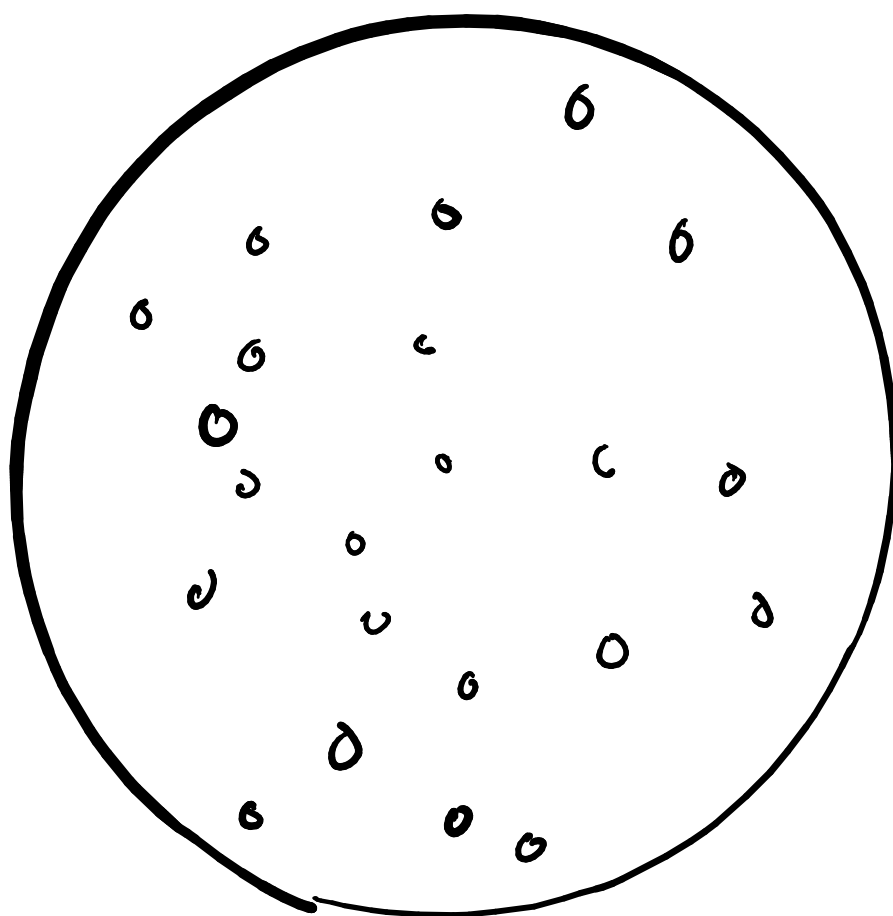
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6

or enter it, like a stage







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In 20 minutes, they might even get bored and forget the light.

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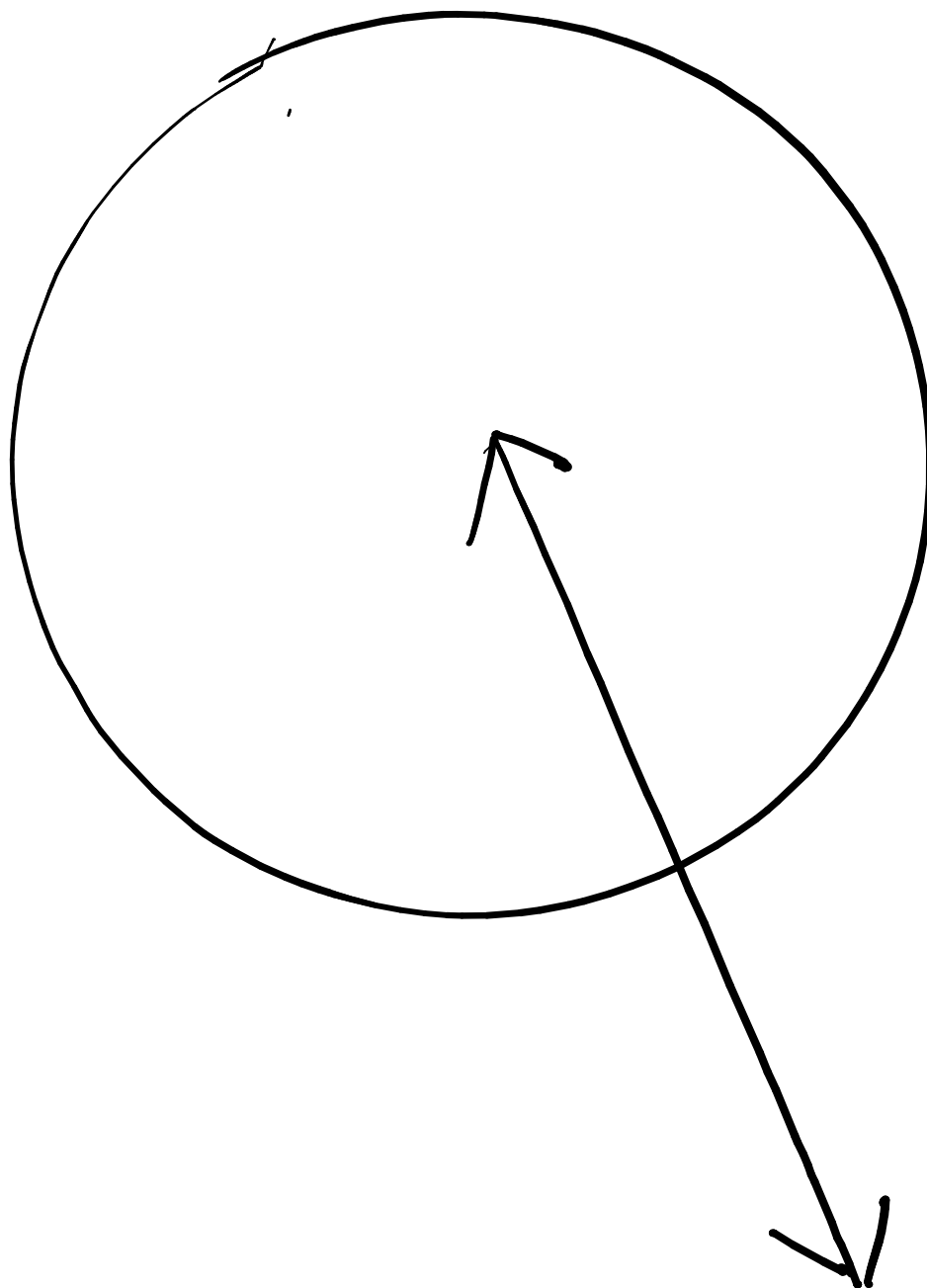
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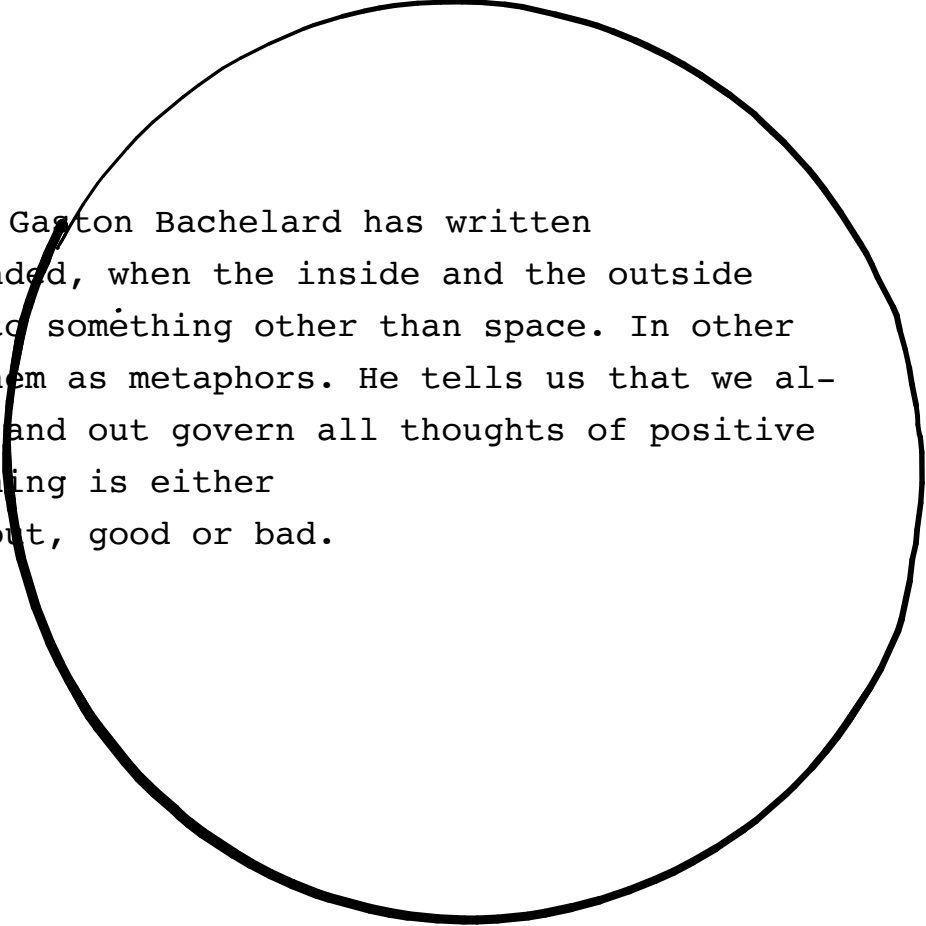
if artist-researcher Vincent Roumagnac was there, he might
leave the room

if performance artist and pedagogue Ray Langenbach was there,
he might leave his eyes closed

but in this frame, any action or passion would contribute to the charge inherent in the audience condition, the charge between the out and the in.



[The audience starts to develop a shared mind, within which
the imagined performance takes place.]



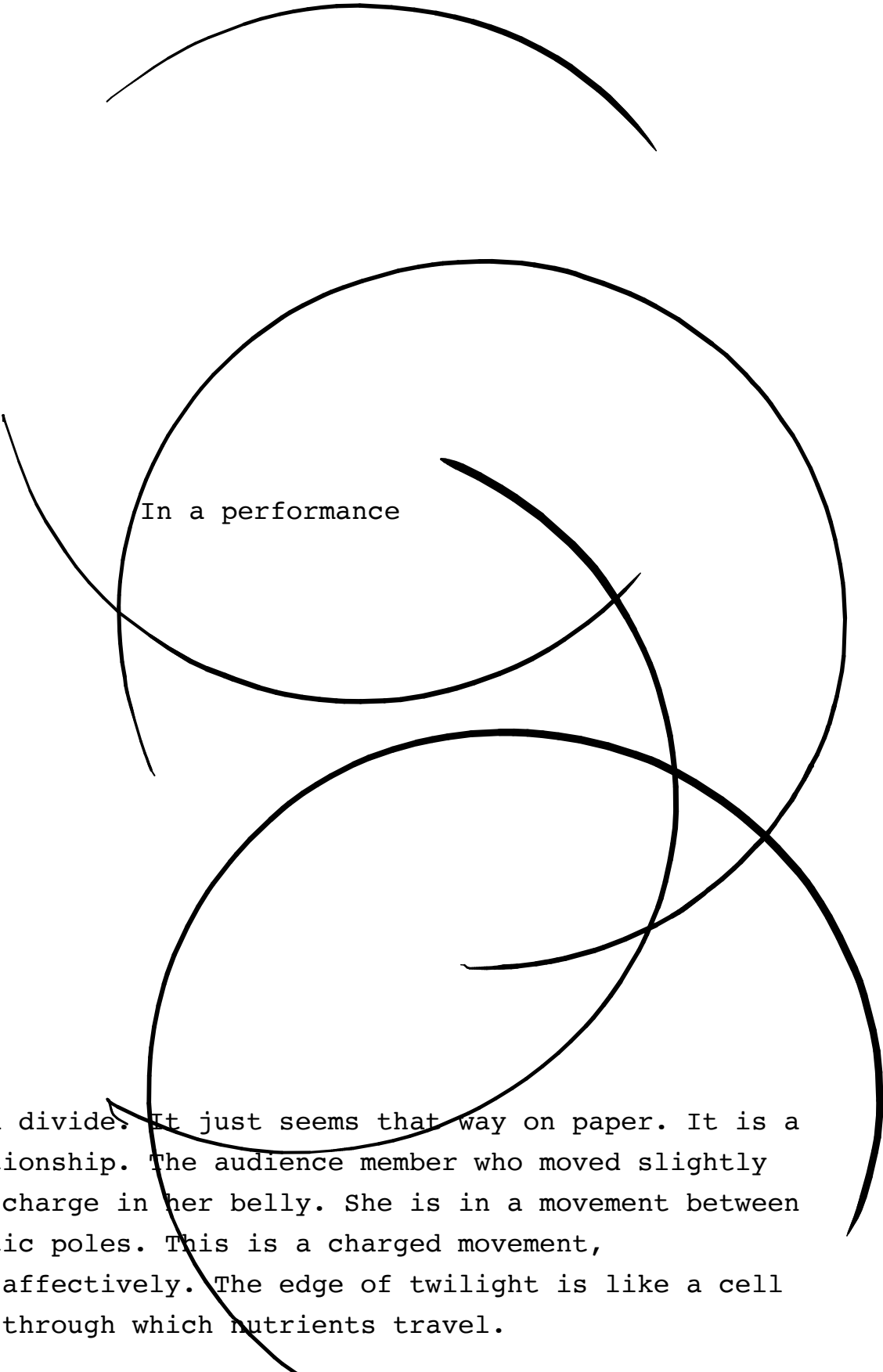
Philosopher Gaston Bachelard has written
that we are blinded, when the inside and the outside
start to refer to something other than space. In other
words, when we use them as metaphors. He tells us that we al-
low the images of in and out govern all thoughts of positive
and negative. Everything is either
yes or no, in or out, good or bad.

Outside and inside = a feature of space and a metaphor (?)

An audience of a performance = inside a performance space (?)

The performance imagined by you = inside your mind?

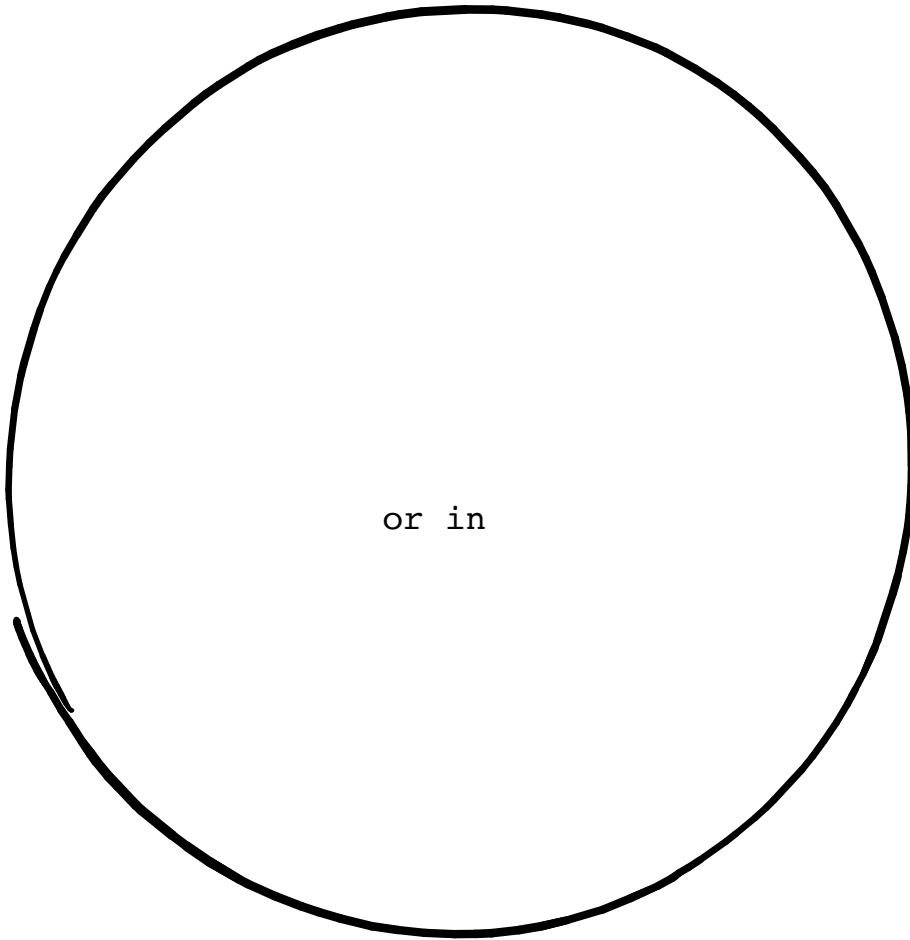
Someone in the audience makes a slight move towards the light. Suddenly the idea of a divide between the out and the in evaporates in the air.



In a performance

it isn't a divide. It just seems that way on paper. It is a live relationship. The audience member who moved slightly feels the charge in her belly. She is in a movement between two magnetic poles. This is a charged movement, vibrating affectively. The edge of twilight is like a cell membrane, through which nutrients travel.

If one is left completely out



the charge is gone,
and with it the membership in audience

Exclusivity means that the performance is meant for only a certain type of audience. The at-tack is difficult or even impossible, if you are not a part of the target audience. All performances are exclusive to someone (no performance is accessible to

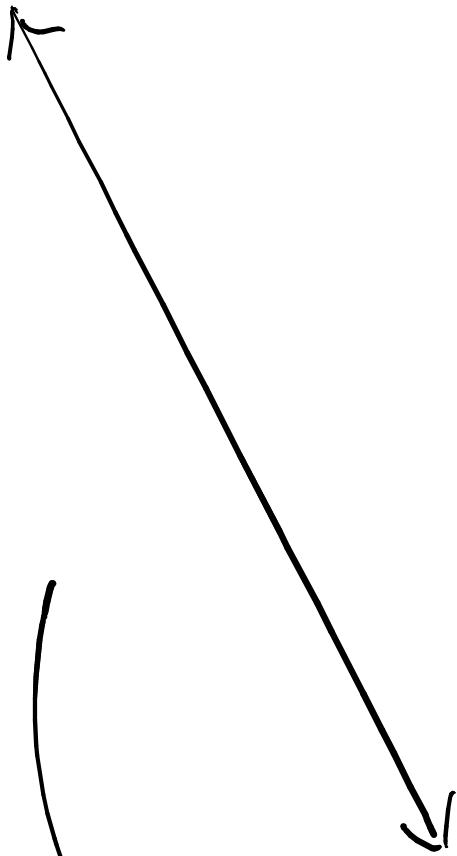
everyone). Especially when viewed from outside the target group, exclusion appears as a political choice. The term is accessible: if the space is not accessible with a wheelchair, the ones traveling with one are left out. One is left out also, if one does not choose to go in, even if one could. Outside one can not be a part of the audience. The marginal is the outer border. Falling over the edge is not far from the marginal.

Being inside
is a cultural phantasy.
A daydream of belonging, VIP
tickets, secret knowledge, presence.
Not even the authors
stay inside.

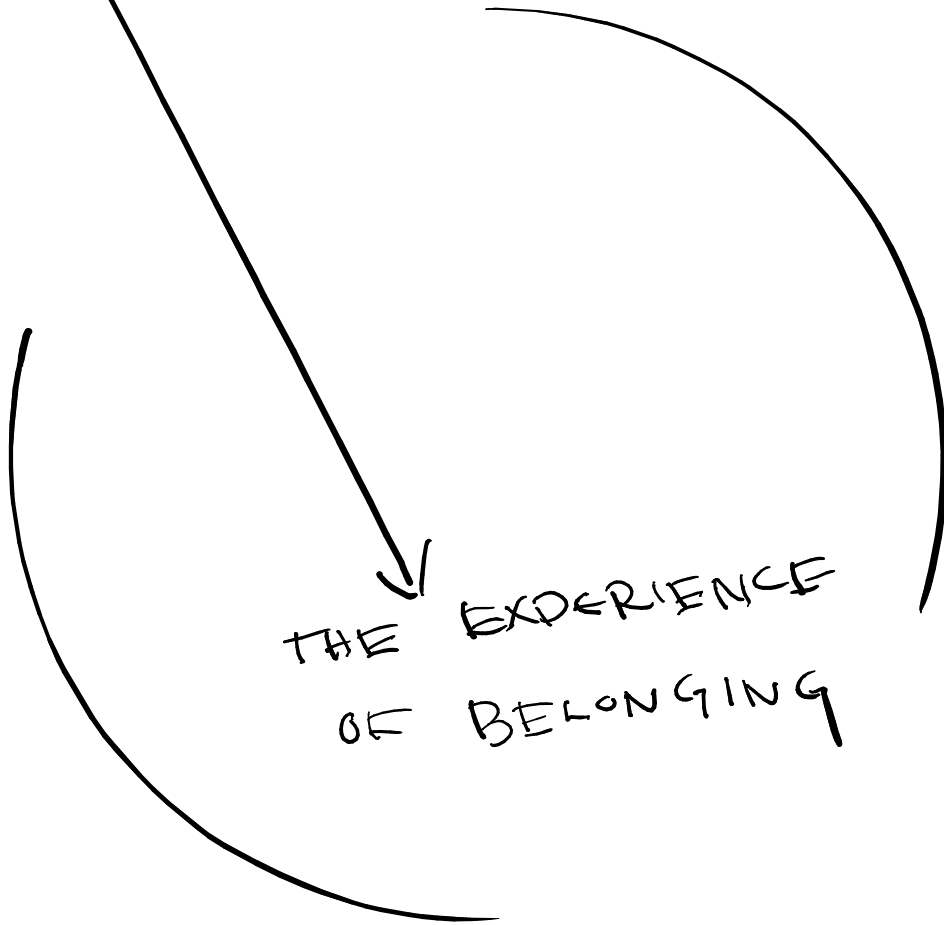
"I feel like an outsider. I see people moving in front of me. [The performers] request the audience to move themselves. Still feeling like an outsider. Next time when I enter the room, they are walked around. My mind is occupied with the possibility to influence [the show], and it makes me feel lousy; I am responsible for the movement of these people. And yet, when I become one of those who walk them, I feel like a performer and adapt like a chameleon, outsidersness is left on the outside. A smile rises on my lips and I get inspired."

(a high school student writes in Kunsthalle Helsinki)

THE EXPERIENCE
OF EXCLUSION



THE EXPERIENCE
OF BELONGING



Remember to mention:

- all performances blur the configuration of what is "out", what is "in"

- some blur it more than others

- the blurring is essential

- James Baldwin: "I was to discover, that the line which separates a witness from an actor is a very thin line indeed. Nevertheless, the line is real"

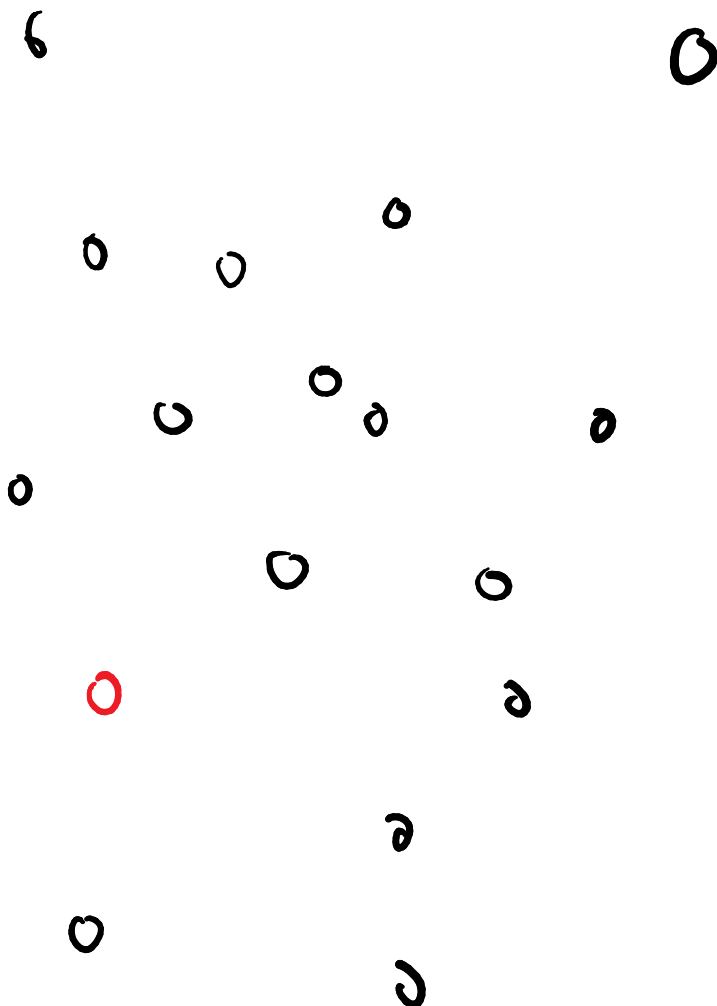
> for there to be a charge, the poles need to be inaccurate and unpredictable, but existent

- the more enthusiastically one tries to eradicate the metaphor of out and in, the stronger it gets (check f.ex. avant garde)

audience exists in the middle ground, invited in but haunted by feelings of exclusion

[Unconscious affects flow through the space without anyone noticing.]

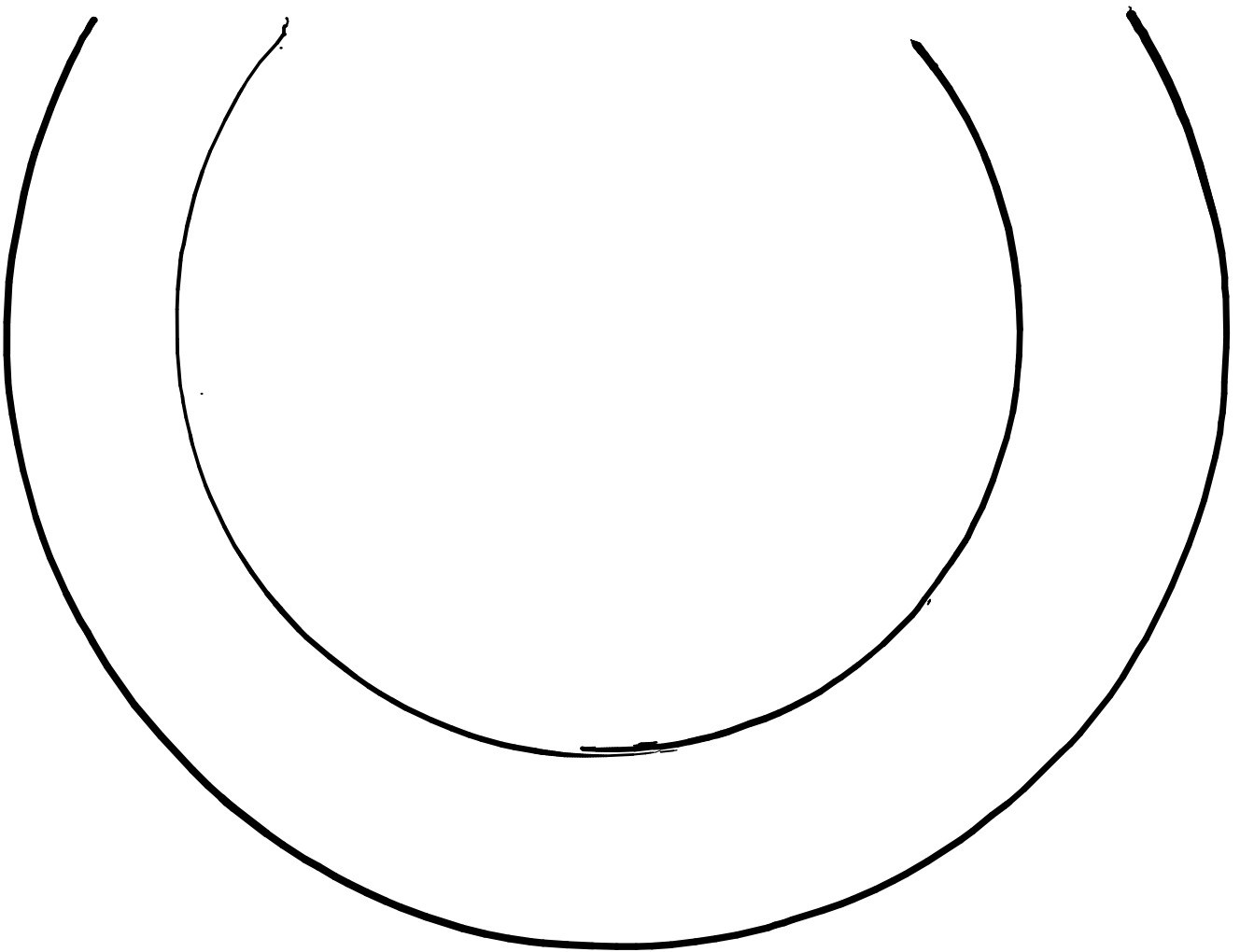
If something interesting starts to happen anywhere, people tend to gather *around* this interesting thing in order to see it. It may be that this is what has taken place since time immemorial, or prehistorically. Whether the "stage event" is a dance, a song, a fight, a political speech or someone injured in an accident – the audience will without difficulty surround it.



Artist-researcher Davide Giovanzana writes, referring to aforementioned Denis Guénoun, that a circle is the original form of community. A form, which was eventually broken by the entry of a stage.

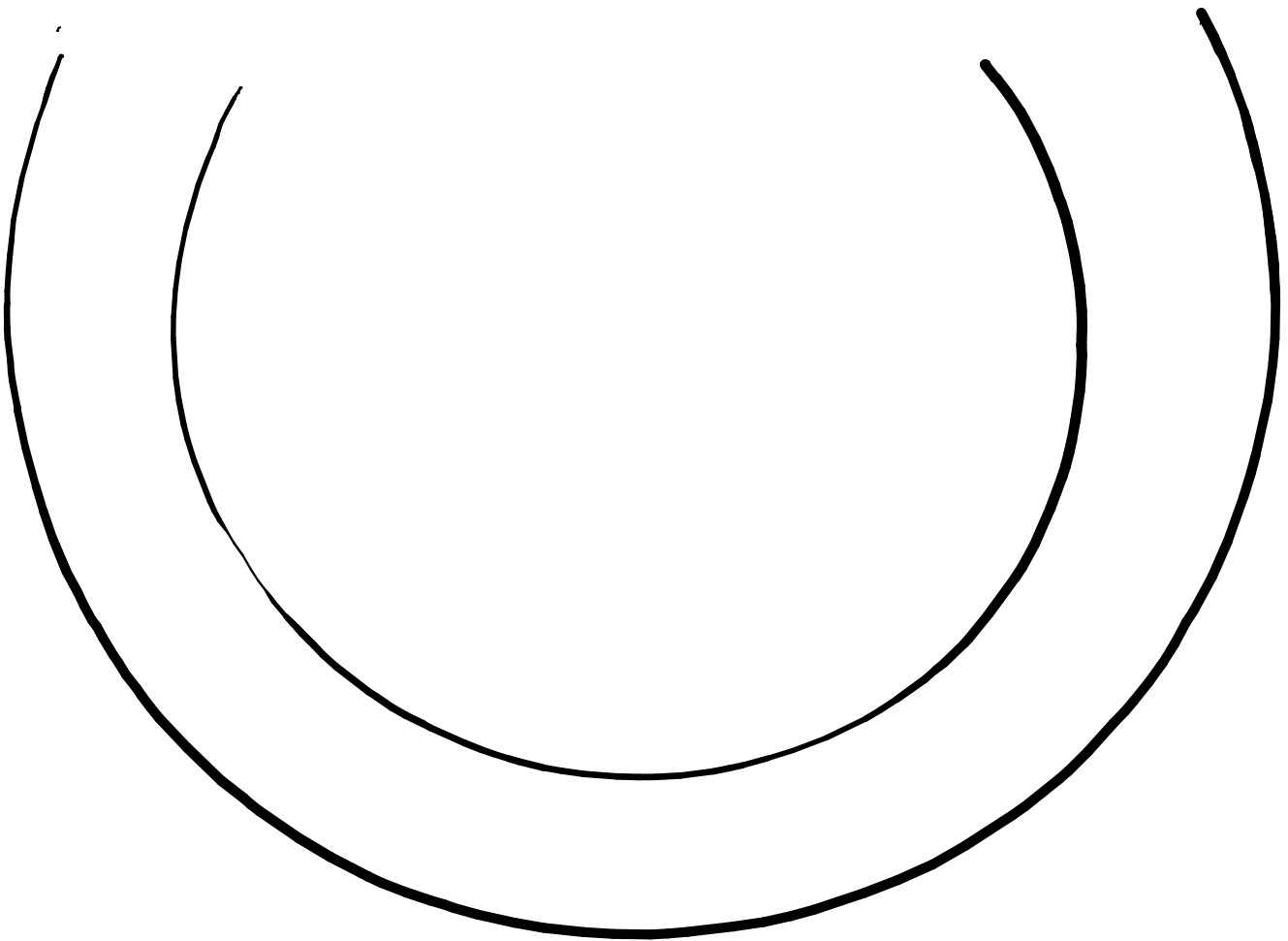
"Maybe audience appears in proximity to architecture of the theatre", the artist-reseacher Karolina Kucia points out.

The classic (or "golden") era of Ancient Greek theatre takes place in the fifth century BCE. Theatre is structured as an open air building where the audience sits in semicircular rows of *theatron* ("the place of viewing") and watches events taking place on the *orkhestra* ("the place of dance"). *Skene* ("tent") is a backdrop, behind which the actors can change costume. In front of it an elevated stage, *proskenion*, is built. The events move on stage.

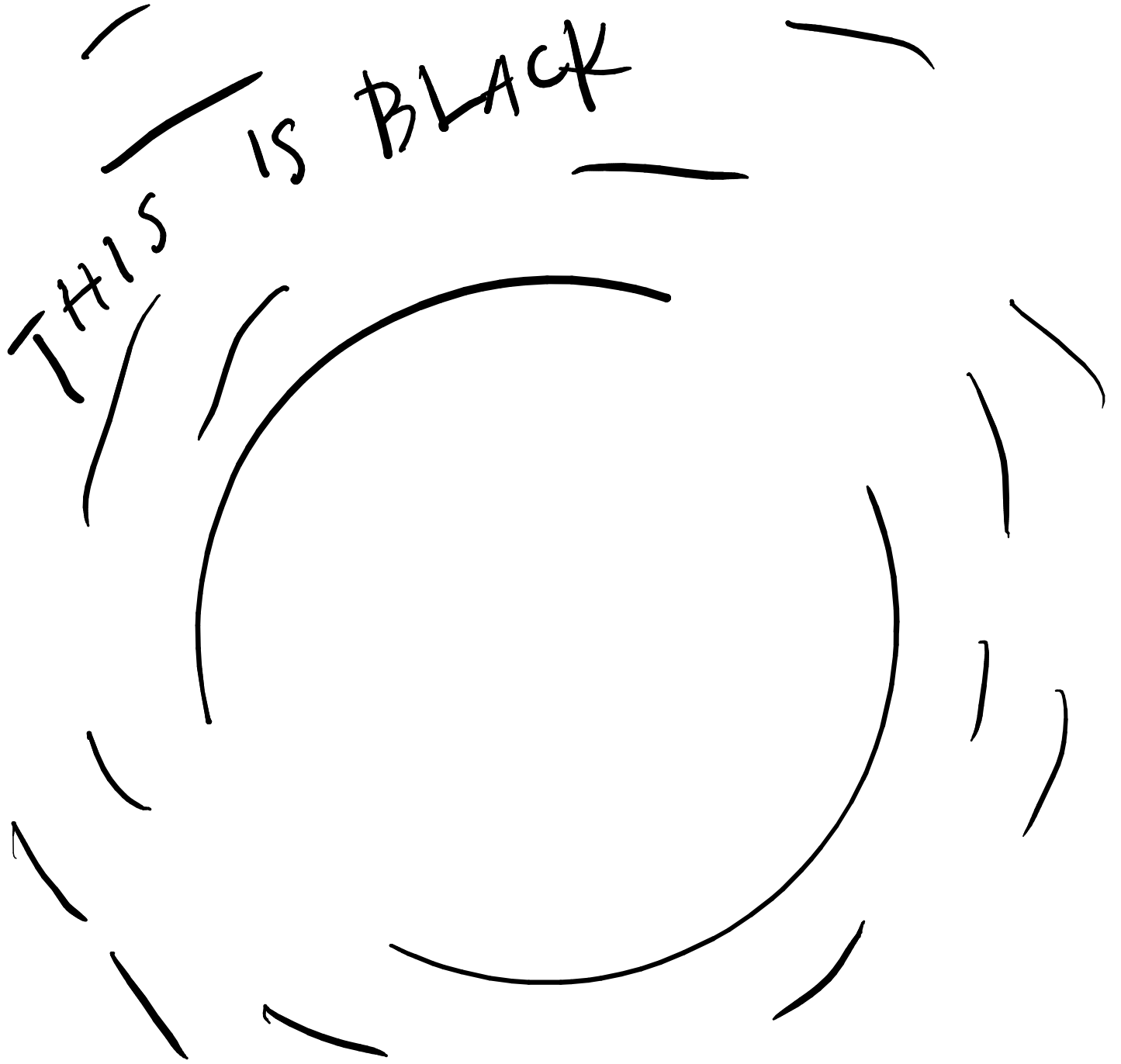


This theatrical system has in many ways survived for millenia. Broken or not, it is a classic spatialization of the charge between the outside and the inside.

By the 18th century the structure is reiterated in European theatres. Jean Francois Marmontel observes how the audience condition of the theatres of his time reflects the political segregation of the people into classes. Theatre is constituted of an elevated *stage*, several stories of semicircular rows of seats, i.e., the *gallery*, and in the center a *pit* for the standing audience. The pit "is where the spectator is the most uncomfortable, and where the tickets cost the least".



Marmontel elaborates how the class of the audience members determines their position, experience and behaviour in the theatre.

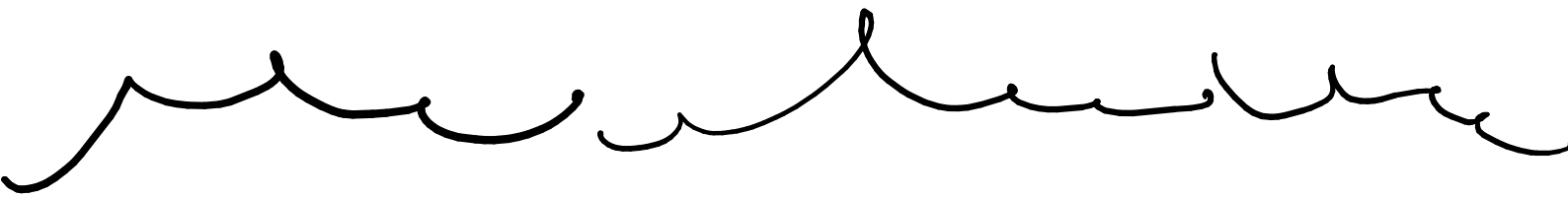


During the 19th century the oppositional aspect of theatre – its division into two completely separate zones: the stage and the auditorium – is further enhanced by directing light on stage and dimming the auditorium.

"I am part of an audience by being in audience place", she continues.

Performance art emerges as new mode of staging (?) bodies and does not follow the conventions of theatre in situating the audience in space. Performances are realized for example in art galleries, artists' studios and public space. These spaces of performance are usually tho roughly lit, they rarely have seats and the audience (or 'visitors', 'spectators') is supposed to move indepen- dently closer or further from the performers. The audience is composed of other artists and passers-by and gallery visitors. When something interesting starts to happen in the space, they gather around it.

The 20th century popularizes a form of theatre architecture. There is no fixed auditorium built into the space, instead there are mobile structures, which can be re-organized every time. Through this the spatial relationship between the stage and the audience can be included in the aesthetics of each performance. Consequently one can find all kinds of versions of spatial polarity in 21st century contemporary theatre, contemporary dance and live arts. The chairs of the auditorium are assembled as squares, corridors, circles, triangles, corners and other geometrical formations. Through the composition of chairs the stage appears where the gazes of those sitting on the chairs are directed. With the help of the blackness of the room the illusion of the separation between the reality of the stage and the reality of the auditorium can still be technically achieved: in a black space light cuts things in or out.



In 1960's the aforementioned artist-researcher Richard Schechner thinks about the theatrical space in a new way. He creates the category of "environmental performance". In environmental performances no part of the space is reserved for the stage or the auditorium. Instead the performance takes place all around the audience members.

In the first decade of the 21st century British theatre artists develop a similar idea and build magical worlds in industrial spaces in which their audiences venture. These performances begin to be known as *immersive theatre*.

Immersion stands for being submerged in something, like water. Immersive theatre aims at submerging the audience into itself in a way that audience members no longer sense the reality outside of the performance. The illusion of theatre gravitates toward an imaginary place where the audience forgets about the outside.

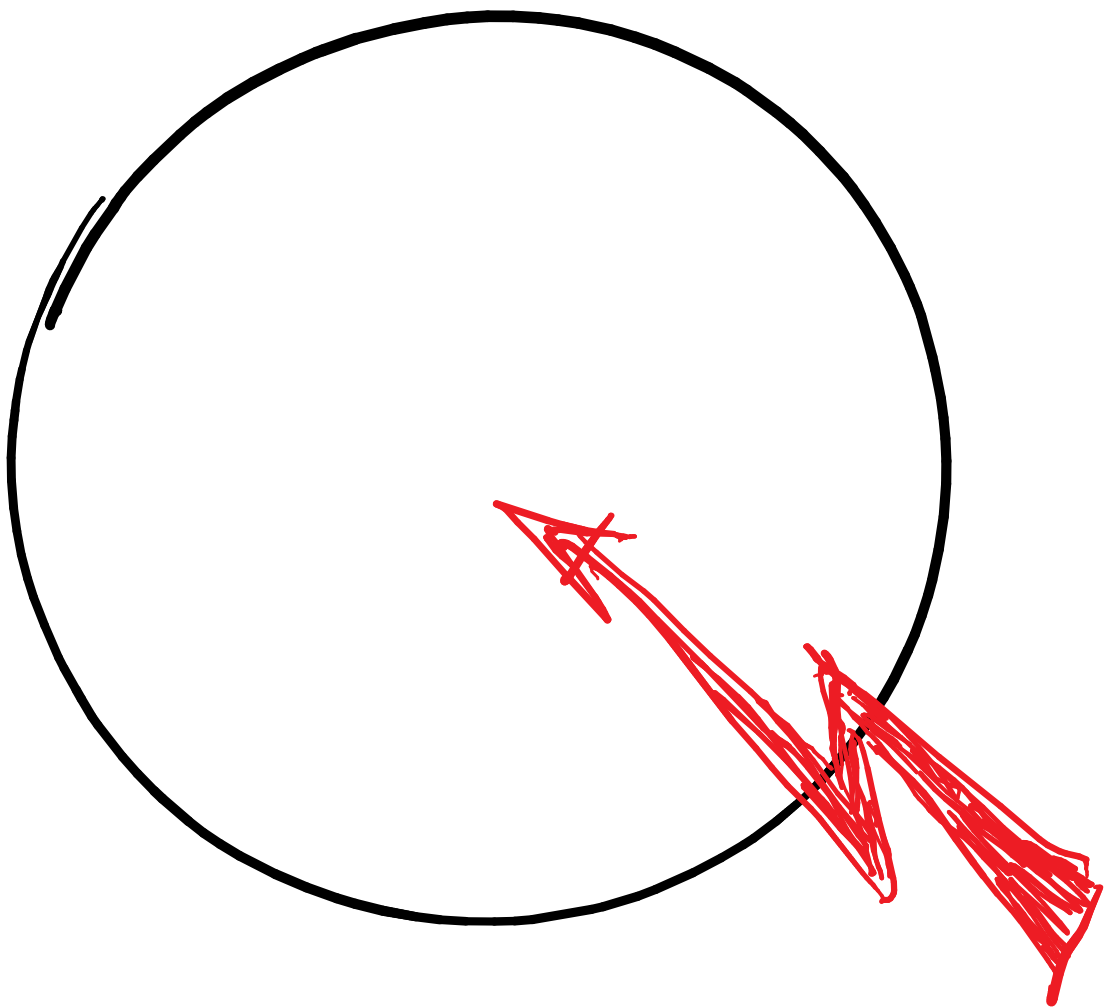
But the outside does not disappear.

[The audience-mind is corporeal.]

[The light and the twilight touch the audience-body.

As the time of the performance passes, the body ages.
The audience is older every moment.]

The philosopher, artist and situationist Guy Debord awakens to see the capitalist society as a *spectacle*. For him, we, as modern consumers, are imprisoned in the outside, in an alienated state of spectatorship, without access to direct living, to a lived reality. There is no way in.



Or maybe there is? Debord and his fellow situationists think that instead of "art" we need a *revolution*, to which end they create avant-garde techniques to liberate people from this distanced imprisonment of spectatorship, to penetrate the inside.

Cultural theorist and activist Stuart Hall writes that binary oppositions swallow often all distinctions into their rigid structure. Binary oppositions are also rarely neutral, instead there is always a power relation within. For example **white/black, men/women, masculine/feminine, upper class/lower class.**

Hall points out especially how black bodies are represented in 'the West'. He offers it as an example of how 'the Other' has become a spectacle in western societies. The spectators of this spectacle consider themselves distinct from the stereotypical others they spectate. Black people are placed outside the audience circulating these stereotypes.

The artist Allan Kaprow creates
happenings aiming at the elimination of
the audience. It is done by activating
everyone. Then all are in.

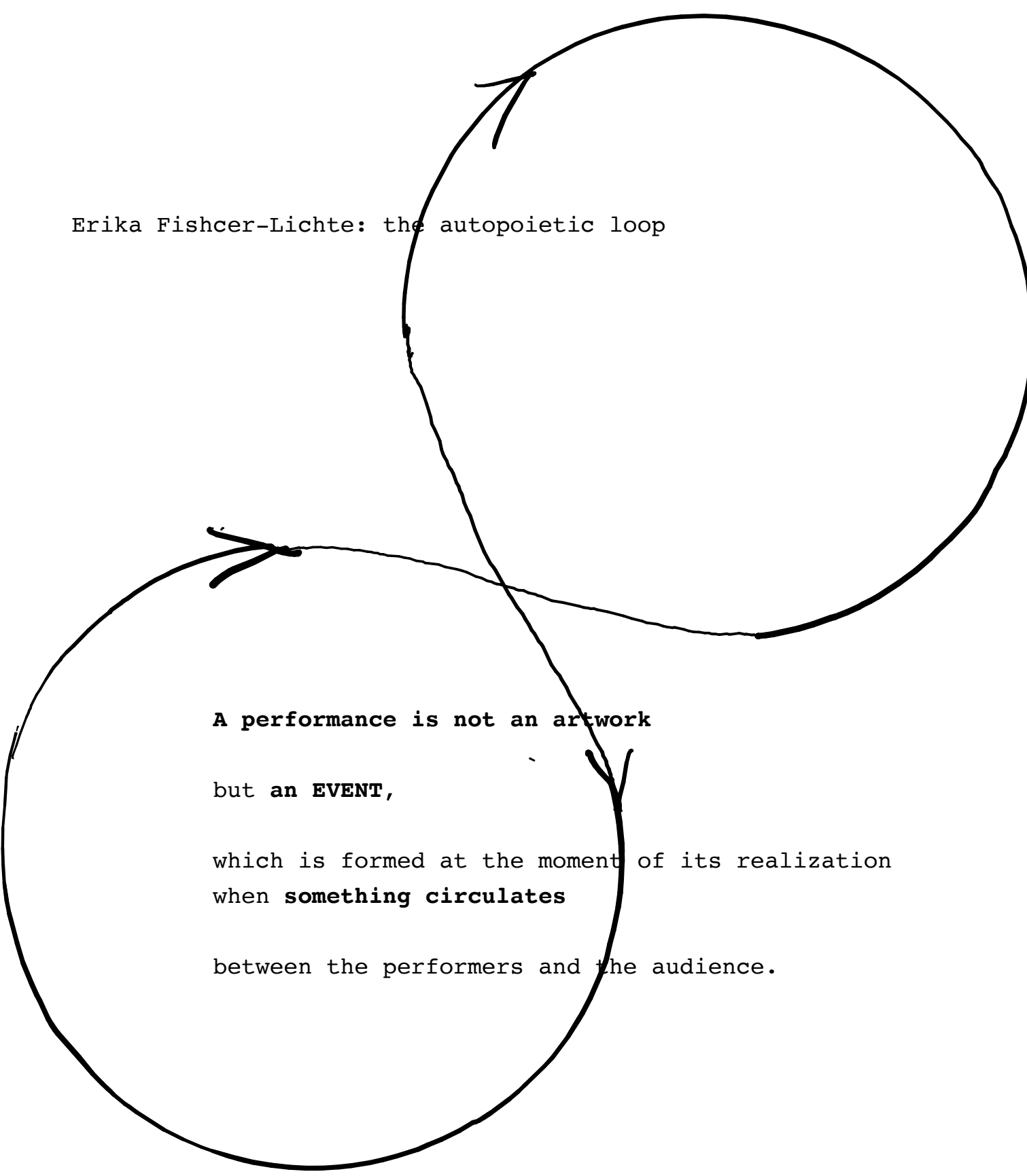
For the philosopher John Dewey, art takes place in the experience. While attending an art work enables a shift, or a heightening, of experience, it nevertheless is only a part of the terrain of experience. The audience is constantly "inside" experience. There is no outside.

Or if there is, it is out of our reach (or beyond the limits of the page).

... which re-
minds me of a
work by Vir
cent Roumag
nac: "there
might be no
thing outside
of the stage
any longer."

[p a u s e]

Philosopher Jacques Rancière implies that theatre-makers do not appreciate spectatorship. He writes that they aim to activate their spectators, turn them into agents. Instead, he suggests, we could let go of the distinction between active and passive. In the topography of out and in, Rancière's spectator is on the outside while not being an outsider. The inside is not better, and distance is a way of taking part in it.



Erika Fishcer-Lichte: the autopoietic loop

A performance is not an artwork

but **an EVENT,**

which is formed at the moment of its realization
when **something circulates**

between the performers and the audience.

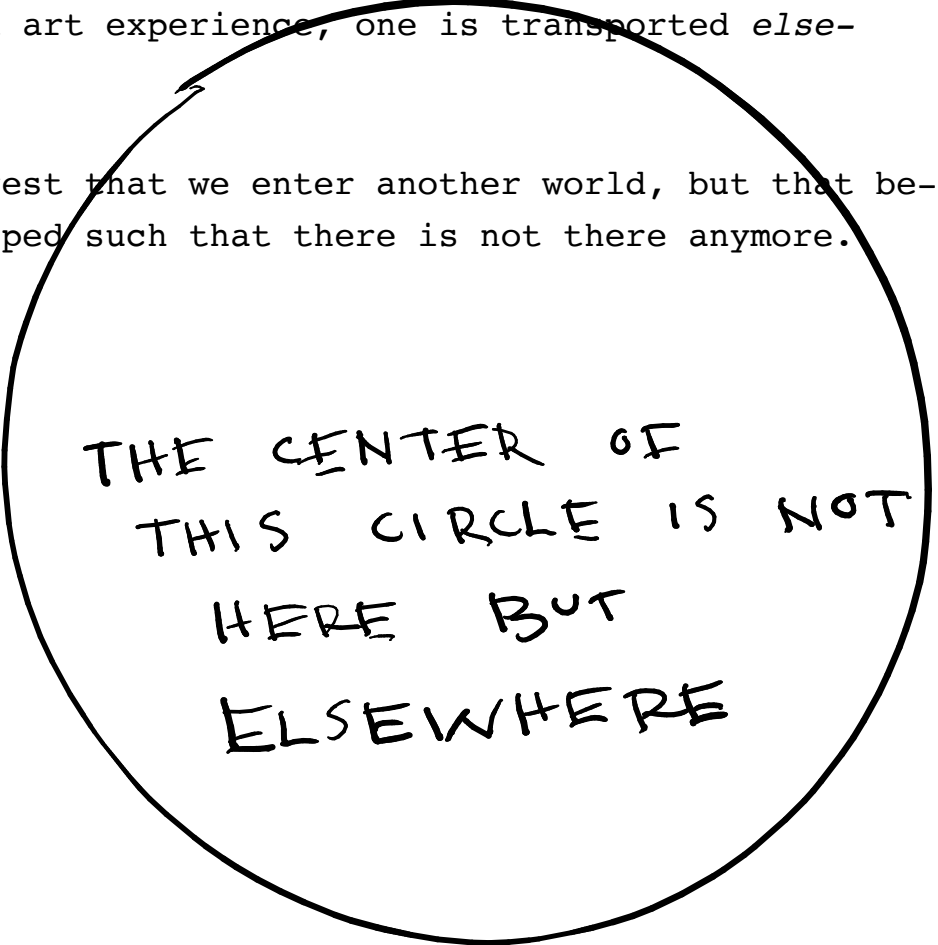
And lo and behold, theatre scholar Ana Pais proposes that the function of the audience is *affective resonance*, which is to say that

a performance needs an audience, the affects of which vibrate due to its influence

Like Rancière, Pais rejects the dichotomy of active and passive.

The Finnish phenomenologist Harri Mäcklin writes about the *immersion* brought about by art and proposes that when one is immersed into an art experience, one is transported *elsewhere*.

He does not suggest that we enter another world, but that being-there is warped such that there is not there anymore.



THE CENTER OF
THIS CIRCLE IS NOT
HERE BUT
ELSEWHERE

ÄÄLLÄ

HERE

But what is this *being-there* that is warped by art? Mäcklin leans his words on the German concept *Dasein*, with which phenomenologist Martin Heidegger described our existence. In Finnish it is translated as *täälläolo*, here-being.

While Heideggers words keep on circulating in philosophical discourse in different languages, I ask dance artist Melanie Maar, while she is performing in the virtual space of the internet, what is *da*. She types into the chat window:

"da to me is here as in alive at this moment. Dasein like being alive. Maybe an embodied version of 'here' as in this place I am in right now?"

"Bist du oder ich da?", I ask

(+) here

"Du bist da. Ich bin auch da. simultaneously together and in different geographies."

THERE

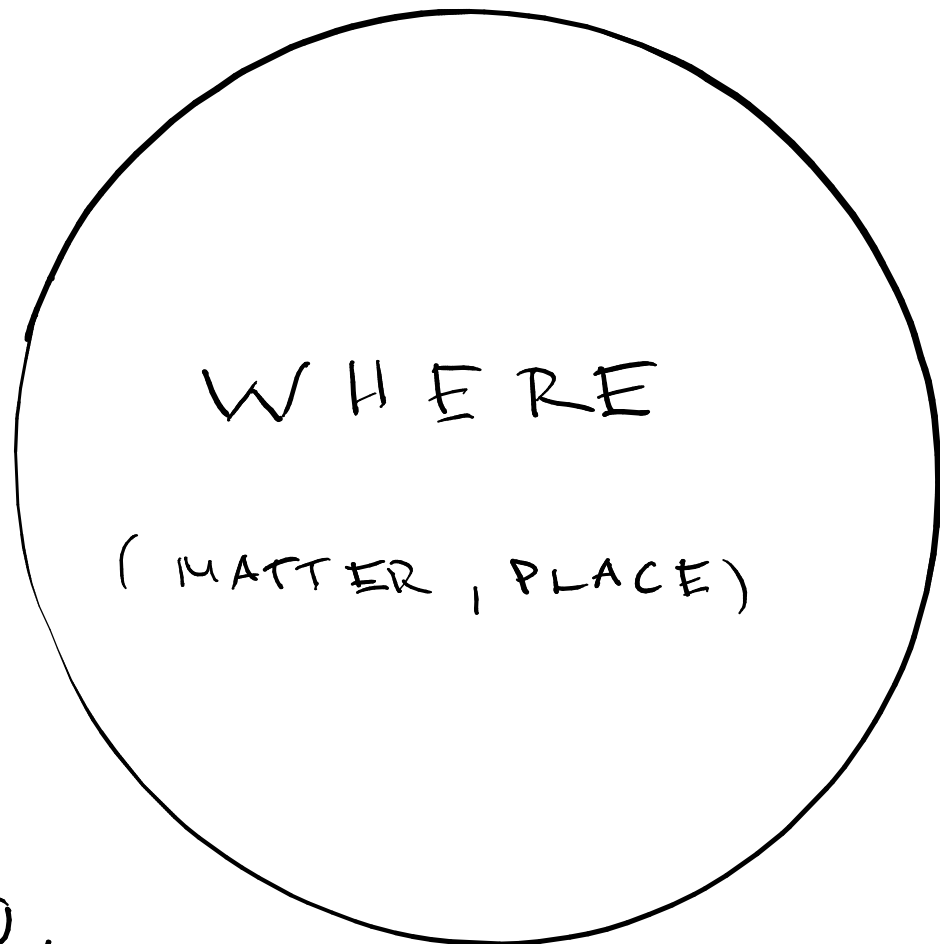
DA

DA

Philosopher and Iranologist Henry Corbin is configuring the composition of the world, based on his experience of translating Arabic and Persian texts. He uses the concept *the where* to refer to material or concrete reality – material reality is localized.

He writes that in western societies imagination is considered *unreal* and is situated in the *inner world* of a person. The texts translated by Corbin state the case differently. The *imaginal* (as Corbin calls the registers that are usually named "imaginary" or "spiritual") is not unreal and is not situated inside the material reality, *the where*.

Instead it surrounds the where.



NO WHERE
(THE IMAGINAL)

Debord: We are out.

Rancière: We are out for a reason.

Hall: 'The Other' is out.

Fischer-Lichte: We are in a loop.

Pais: We are in resonance.

Mäcklin: In is elsewhere.

Corbin: The where is in the imaginal.

Kaprow: We are in if we act.

Dewey: We are in.

Roumagnac: Everything is in.

Debord: We are out.

Rancière: We are out for a reason.

Hall: 'The Other' is out.

...if we combine Rancière's proposal,
that spectatorship is a specific
and necessary form of participation

and the idea by Pais, that this form
is affective and in a vibrational
relationship with the "art work"

and Mäcklin's paradox, in which
one immerses elsewhere

Mäcklin: In is elsewhere.
and Roumagnac's suggestion, that
the contemporary stage (and auditorium?)
are composed in registers
of time and space
existing beyond the reach of
our limbs and members...

Kaprow: We are in if we act.

Dewey: We are in.

Roumagnac: Everything is in.

[The second act ends.
Members of the audience set the manuscripts aside one by one
and start the intermission.
The doors are open.]

I N T E R M I S S I O N

[The intermission ends with a signal.
Members of the audience close the doors.]

The third act starts, when You turn this page
at the same time with the others]

Act three:
One and Many

Act three:
One and Many

Act three:
One and Many

[There are chairs in the room. The audience finds them with their gaze. Ponders, if this instruction is to be executed for real. Decides, that it is. Moves toward the chairs. Each audience member takes one chair. They arrange the chairs into rows, forming an auditorium. They leave a distance of a couple of meters between the chairs. After having seated themselves in the auditorium the audience continues reading.]

[A voice starts to speak. It does not echo in the room but in the mind of the audience.]

- Hey.

- --

- Do you hear this well?

- --

- You are here.

- Can you give me a sign that this reaches you. Like changing your position on the chair slightly.

- --

- Ok. Fine.

- I am one of these chairs. It does not matter which one. I am just one anonymous chair, under one anonymous butt. Maybe yours.

- - -

[Another voice joins in.]

— — One and many.

- Excuse me?

— — One and many. The title of the act.

- Yes. You are right. Also this speaker is a chair. Also this speaker is difficult to locate, but she is here as well.

— — I am being sat on. I am one of us who has a sitter.

- Alright.

- --

- So here is audience.

- - So here is audience. A funny word. It is like a singular, even though it is like a plural.

- Like us: an auditorium.

- - Looking at it from the perspective of the auditorium, I have noticed something. Performers always talk about the "audience" as if it were one creature. "The audience laughed". Not "two audience members laughed" or "seven audience members laughed". "The audience laughed". The audience reacts always as one. "Today the audience liked me" or "What a tough audience".

- I can feel this audience-body against myself.

— — I always loved etymology, and I checked this: the word *yleisö* in Finnish was invented by the activist, pedagogue and word-sculptor Volmari Kilpinen, who also came up with the word *esine*, an object. And more: *henkilö* (person), *suhde* (relationship), *ympyrä* (circle) and *taide* (art). To him, *yleisö* meant "people in general".

- In English *public*, in Latin *populus*: "a people, nation, citizens, multitude, crowd".

— — We the auditorium are a silent crowd. We are seats in general. The audience is not composed of spectators but sitters.

— — — I am also a chair. I will tell a story about a performance.

In this performance we have been arranged into rows along the sides of three long tables. The tables are placed as a triangle and we are on the inner sides, backs against the center. Outside the table there is nothing, just a wall. Then objects arrive. They start to move from the far end of the table, on my right side, towards me. The first object is passed from one hand to another, until the person sitting next to me hands it to my sitter who hands it on to the person sitting on my left side. Then the next object arrives. And the next. And the next. The whole performance is like this.

Halfway through we are moved to the other side of the table. So, for the first half of the performance we face the wall. Now, after the move, we face toward the room and we can see the whole space and all the other people.

The objects move as if on an assembly line. The same movement but each object is unique. There's a sense of respect and multiplicity of objects. Sensitivity of human hands on us. We are simultaneously a multitude and individuals.

- I can feel this audience-body against myself.

- I am not emotional but people are. They have affects.

- - Which are...?

- Sensations which take place faster than people are able to think or without them noticing. Pre-conscious feelings.

So the question is, can *audience* have affects, meaning as a "creature". Or are people alone with their feelings and conditions?

If the audience now, or a moment ago, or soon, takes a deep breath, do they not approach the same feeling? Isn't the fact that all butts are pressed against a chair, a common human condition?

- People want to be different. A performance comes to mind. The audience sits on three sides of the stage, in one row of us chairs and in front of us in a row of cushions. The audience takes a look at itself and recognizes each other: the young dance students who aim to look confident; the self-aware choreographers who have made a breakthrough on the international art scene; athletic young men with their George-Michael-style beards; an art critic with a warped spine; a curator sweating power on his young date; two Japanese butoh dancers with suspended eyes. All of them performing, doing their best to be individual. At least at the beginning.

- - - Do they experience a we-ness. Do they we. If "we" were a verb.

- - A kind of letting go, stepping aside...that I am not that important, just listening and watching from the sides. Chairlike.

— — Like the auditorium, the audience is also anonymous. It does not separate into particular persons, unless those persons are engendered by stepping on stage. If a performer is a scenographic element, an audience member is a chair in the auditorium. Like us, they are seemingly static, though secretly in constant movement. Withdrawn into their inner charge.

[p a u s e]

— — — — I am this sheet of paper, on which these lines are printed.

The attention of the reader is attached to the text. However, the essential content lies between the lines. There the author has scribbled an implication of who is reading. These implied readers resemble the author more or less.

Likewise, performance-makers hide a specific kind of audience in the structures of their work, and that audience resembles the makers. An implied, imagined audience haunts the audience that actually attends.

— — — — — I am the structure of this space. My floor, my walls, my roof, my doorway, my location. I sense the audience, I carry them, I feel the tiniest movements of the soles of their feet. Right now. How their desire is moving, how their blood is rushing. I swallow and vomit them.

— — — — I can feel the skin of the hands of this audience-body against myself.

— — — — — I am the air moving in this room. I travel from one pair of lungs to another like affects travel from one body to another. As the audience is breathing, I come from them and go into them. The idea of separate individuals is a phantasy. They are vibration, the vibration has a feel and the vibrations reaching other vibrations overlap and search for a common rhythm. Lungs are both independent and connected.

- From the chairs' point of view the audience is like an auditorium. Not an experiencer but a supporter, we support the audience; the audience supports the performance. The function of the audience is care. Performances need care to stay alive and the practice of this care is *audiencing*. It is a kind of love, which does not require liking.

- - Audience could be one, and disintegrate into many persons, customers, spectators - or it could be many and assemble into an organism, mass, community. It could be an intermediate space, not a community, and not a collection of individuals. Neither one nor many.

- In human consciousness the individual seems to be highlighted, while the unconscious lacks specifically this.

- - Handmade chairs resemble humans - individuals matter - but the division into conscious and unconscious does not appear.

– – In rows we are parallel.

– Rows are always against something. In contrast.

– – That is why we can think of adding here words starting with para- and contra-.

- How about money?

- - Does everything have a price?

- Is it so, that audience disappeared due to capitalism and was replaced by the spectator?

- - Drugs have a user. A shop has a customer. A school has a student. A prison has a prisoner. Democracy has a people. A family has a member. A home has an inhabitant. A television has a spectator.

- A knife has bread. A book has a reader. A broom has dust. A father has a child. A chair has a sitter. Lungs have air. A medicine has a disease. An ear has sound.

– – An ethos of equal human worth has been popularized by humankind. People evaluate objects as well, but this is not considered a problem. I do not evaluate people, for example this one sitting on me now. As long as I am not broken.

– I am a European chair. The European audience was born through spectating difference. For the ones experiencing themselves as similar, those who are different become a spectacle. In Europe, it has been worth noting, if someone is different. Often it is the similar who are in control and spectate others without having their permission, and in ways that have not been authorized by the others. This does not appear among objects.

- – I wish that someone would say: agency is overrated.
- It's not overrated but it is only one side of the matter.
- – People don't even have a word for the other side.
- It is not "being", it is not "passion", it is not "passivity", it is not "marginalization"
- – It is on the side of the audience. On that side agency is a side note.
- Is it receptivity? Is it a step back? Is it reflection? Is it contemplation?
- – Or is it something more exciting?

- There is some *väki* here.

- - *Väki* is an old Finnish word: it means "people", but also "might" and "spiritual beings". I see your point.

- People, yet not only people, but also the disembodied beings they bring with them and conceive during the event. Living objects and materials. Dormant energy, which functions through receptivity and resonance. All at once one, many and something which is neither - but a natural force flowing over categorizations.

[The third act ends.
Members of the audience set the manuscripts aside one by one
And start the intermission.
The doors are open.]

I N T E R M I S S I O N

[The intermission ends with a signal.
This time no-one closes the doors.
Each audience member takes their manuscript and
finds an appropriate spot for themselves.

The fourth act starts, when You turn this page
at the same time with the others]

Act four:

~~Familiar and Alien~~

~~Native and Acquired~~

~~Inborn and Conditioned~~

~~Familiar and Foreign~~

Fami~~li~~ar and Ali~~en~~

Tuttu ja Vieras

Helsinki, 8th November 2020

Dear Reader,

(instead of "reader", the above line would have the name of the specific audience member. Here in the parentheses there would be something personal, something I did not write to anyone else. This parentheses part was added on November 11th.)

on Christmas Eve 2010, nearly ten years ago, I was climbing with snowshoes towards the top of a slope. I had searched for a place just above the polar circle, or more accurately: just where the sun would not rise for three days at the time of winter solstice.

Those three days I had spent in a cabin below the slope. I stayed in the dark waiting for sunrise; the rise that would end my year-long artwork, during which I had, each month, retreated to do art for three days, each time with a different artist. With them I had created eleven ways to practice everlasting life. Now I was here alone, creating the twelfth work.

It was a public event. I had announced the coordinates. And now I was climbing towards the top, the peak of my career as a performance artist.

The symbolic, ritualistic and energetic charge was strong. I had been engaged in intensive work with the sacred for a year. I had lead a research project at the Reality Research Center, a project in which we asked whether the sacred can be performed. This series of three-day retreats was part of it. In the series I had started a family, written dozens of letters, been initiated into the spirit of the town of Oulu in Northern Finland, built a temple in a virtual environment, sang chorales at a market square, demolished a car, thrown children into the air, changed into an ageless hermit, tied up audiences and stayed awake through the night beside a coffin. Now I had woven my three-day periodicity into the movement of Mother Earth. I was in archaic rhythm. I was following the solar cycle of death and rebirth. I rose up from my cave on the third day.

In effect, the piece was megalomaniacal and far from accessible. I approached the top with a frosty beard.

I arrived well before midday. Though it was not easy to decide what was the "top". It did not seem like there was one, at least not one that would have a clear southward view, towards the awaited sunrise. I chose a spot anyway and waited.

It was few minutes before noon. Then noon. Then past noon. Nothing happened. No ray of light bursting through the clouds. No crack on the surface of reality. No thundering voice of god. No inner transformation. Everything seemed exactly as before 12 o'clock. The light filtered evenly through the clouds, just as before. The snowy scene was silent, except for my own sounds, just as before. No applause.

The peak of my career as a performance artist. That is how I like to remember it. It is nice to tell this to you. You feel warm. I don't know you and yet I do. I feel you rubbing against my imagination. Your body is rubbing against these tapping fingers through time. You are already accustomed to reading, after all these pages you are used to it. I dare to say this, even though it is impolite, it invades your territory, it positions you in a way that you have not agreed upon. Or maybe you have, but I don't know it, I only trust that you accept this, that you accept me stating things about you as if they were true. As if they become true by me saying them. You are used to this. Used to reading, maybe also to reading each act in a different way, maybe also used to the fact that you are now reading a letter. I have guided you towards being used to it. I have brought you to the theatre, which is familiar. I have called you an audience, which is familiar. I have given you pages to read, which is alien. I have surprised you and familiarized you. You don't know what the next sentence will be. You can't know, and even if you did, you couldn't know what reading it would bring about. Neither could I. I can write the same sentence over and over again, it can be read again and again, it can be read by the same person, or a new person each time, but the setting will not change. The sentence is familiar and alien. You are familiar and alien. I am familiar and alien. Only thus we can proceed. Only unfamiliarity motivates us to take a step. Only through familiarity do we know how.

The sun intrudes on my study warming my left hand on the keyboard. It is almost violent in its unconditionality. I feel the exiting of the same light as violent, the skin of my hand cooling down, the room darkening – and I notice having become oversensitive within a few lines of text – one limb becomes too present – my breathing deepening – my body is here – urgently here – the aluminium of the laptop is electric against the skin of my wrists. I am thinking of you, and that I would like you to become sensitized as well as you read, feeling, like I do, your skin and the world against it. You too would be present in a magical way, the bubble protecting you would burst, and feelings would flow, in the absence of danger, safely, trustfully, throughout the space. You would breathe and get up, take few steps, sense everything again, sense the right direction and move again, in this shared space, in this imaginal and tangible space.

When I have written long enough, I invite visitors to read. Their bodies inhabit the room and change everything again and again. As I read, I do not know what they feel, but on intermissions they tell me about it. Each seems to have a different spot, which has affected or irritated them. A scholar of history speaks about historical juxtapositions. A feminist about radical equality. A performance artist about the simplified origin of performance art. Someone working with spectator experience and suggestion about how preconceptions on audience behaviour are or are not included. A team athlete about the fact that being inside is not only a fantasy but also a biological need.

Each is touched or provoked by a different page. I assume, that the page resonates in their body, memories, desires. I assume there is something very familiar about the page. Maybe these feelings are woven into an invisible affective cloth through the shared space-time.

Artist-researcher Miklos Gaal offers me a thought: if an audience member says that this or that thing is out of place, they maybe do not speak about the thing itself but a feeling, which has recurred during the event, and has become attached to that thing.

When the manuscript is read for the eleventh time, on the 9th of November 2020, dramaturge Katariina Numminen wonders about how I combine the metaphors of reading and theatre. Are they not irreconcilable? It happened exactly here:

READING \neq AUDIENCING?

PAGE \neq THEATRE

An empty page is a moment, at which the positions of those surrounding it are re-evaluated. It is a time to clear the table, the library, the vocabulary and the theatre. It is a time of radical equality, before a redistribution. It is a time when audience does not yet exist.

Katariina's words seem familiar. I am pretty sure I said the same thing a couple of years ago. Reading is a different modality than audiencing a performance. A reader withdraws to perform their own reading solo. A reader does not gaze at a shared stage, but at the two-dimensional surface on which the text is situated. A reader reads, they do not audience. (?) Why then the attempt to reconcile irreconcilable metaphors? Why reading together? Why is the memory of a performance with no audience so meaningful? Should these questions be answered and if so, should the answer be written and shared with the readers? Which part of this reading is concealed from words? Which part of the reader is a member of the audience?

I am still writing, even though it is already the time to print, set the stacks of paper next to each other, search for the right spot, place this page there, close the scripts. I write, then read, then write, then imagine ~~you~~ the audience reading.

My hands continue on the keyboard, drifting in the space between two languages, one familiar and one alien. The languages try to penetrate everywhere in my body. I think in both, write in both and translate both ways. But they are asymmetric. They are not equal, and this is the alien one. It still feels alien even after all these years. It is not the same to audience in English. I reach my virtual hand across the Atlantic towards the poet-architect Robert Kocik. His body doesn't seem to repel language, English in particular.

I tell him about the words muscling inside me. I have looked into the relevant etymologies. "Familiar" is traced back to the Latin *famulus*: "servant, slave". That fits, I think, as familiar is then something the audience masters, the conditions as servants. I think of "unfamiliar" as a counterpart, but I don't like the negation, it doesn't stand on its own.

"Alien", then, comes from the Latin *alienus*, "of or belonging to another, not one's own, foreign, strange", from the root *al-*, "beyond". To this root I can relate as well. Though in Finnish it is better: *vieras* means "alien, unfamiliar, strange" but also a "visitor, guest".

I sit back and wait for Robert's reply.

"I might have gone with the alliterative "familiar and foreign." I might have gone with the developmental "native and acquired," or "innate" or "inborn" as distinct from "conditioned." Then again, because words are for me cosmogonic, I might just collapse nature and nurture into our inhering. Being spoken. Conceived of. The Is-Audience formed by the audible in order that it be heard, that there be he(a)ring. What then to make of our current economic, ecological and inequity mess of crises as the sonic and connotative consequents of stuporpower English? How to Fin(n)ish reEnglish? Help!

That said, "familiar" embodies *liar*, and "alien" *lien*. If we think we know, we're kidding ourselves. The more alien the more we belong. The former makes us slaves to our selves, the latter, honored guests to all that exists.

Audience always shows"

, Robert writes.

I let my mind wander back to the year 2016, to the town of Pori in Western Finland, where the same hands, which feel alienated from the metallic surface of my laptop, the same hands pull a red thread across Pororiginal Gallery, organizing my thoughts into a network, into a labyrinth, into power lines.

The regional performance artist Maire Karuvirta has invited me to work in the gallery for the weekend. It functions as an open studio – I have not prepared an exhibition but have brought with me some materials, with which I work during the opening hours.

On the first day nobody enters the gallery. Not one visitor. I am disappointed and frustrated. I feel like I've hit rock bottom. My career as a performance artist seems redundant. I write an email to 27 colleagues. The mail is titled "Gallup". I explain my situation and write:

"I am good at learning new things, so I could do something else for my profession as well. What do you think, should I?

- A) No.
- B) Yes. What's that?
- C) Other, which?"

One of them answers "b".

I imagine you reading. You are hopelessly distant. I hope you can hear. I hope the page has become your friend. I hope it has become so good a friend that you dare to take it in your hand and squeeze it too hard, so that it is crushed, its sides pressing against each other, its lungs emptying out and filling up again as you let go. I hope that the space has become your friend so that you dare to be rude and gentle towards it, to forgive and let go. I hope that time is your lover, for whom there are no rules and for whom rules are no problem and in whom you can rest, shift, stretch towards the horizon. I hope that the one who is writing this has disappeared, become useless, a mere dream vanishing from memory, and that the only thing left is ink on paper, light, shadow, time, others.

[There are square brackets on the page, containing a parenthesis.

The audience is reading,

as they read the fourth act ends.

It is followed by an epilogue, during which

- the audience stops reading
- it recognizes itself and the fact that an epilogue means an end, an end of audience, or, dramatically put, the death of this particular audience
- the end feels like something, for example, beautiful, casual, plaintive, a relief, unfinished or clear
- the space empties out gradually
- the act turns into chatting and art turns into the everyday
- the sentence closes in a dot.]