

## The reality within the fiction. Reflection at the mid-point. 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. Interesting 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 that level of devising was not serving the purpose of the „piece“.

After the initial refusal, it took us some argumentation 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/project responsible or me as director? - that I was finally able to "convince" my collaborator to take creative control for the duration of the coming week<sup>1</sup>. – (Note the compromise!)

I'm very happy for this moment of negotiation to occur within our fiction, as well as in the reality of our collaboration. As it is quite an exact 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<sup>2</sup>?

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<sup>1</sup> I wonder: was it "convincing", „talking into“ or was it "ordering"? And does it matter, given that Sarah has a clear stance on how she is providing a basic YES for the director, given his/her overview of the whole? Saying YES to things, that might start to make sense only after another round of resistance. Again, in her own words: „**Generally, I am in a very intimate relation with the directors I work with. To some extent it is an erotic relation; and so I have to say YES quite often. (...) The really painful thing happens *in-the-meanwhile/in-the-course-of* (the day to day-process; my add-on). But that's only because there is an overall YES. (...) And despite all the difficulties, an actor/actress is also a soldier. Despite all difficulties, I will be at disposition.**“

<sup>2</sup> Get me right: when speaking of ability, I'm not referring to the creative capacity of a specific individual - which for sure has very different ranges amongst actors, with someone like Sarah f.ex. residing on the very rich end of that spectrum. What I'm referring to, is the lack of overview over a concept that hasn't materialized anywhere else really than in the mind of the director and possibly the production team.

And speaking of will: of course, most actors, especially the younger generation, will want to contribute, grappling with the structural information disparity described here.

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 organisational 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.

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