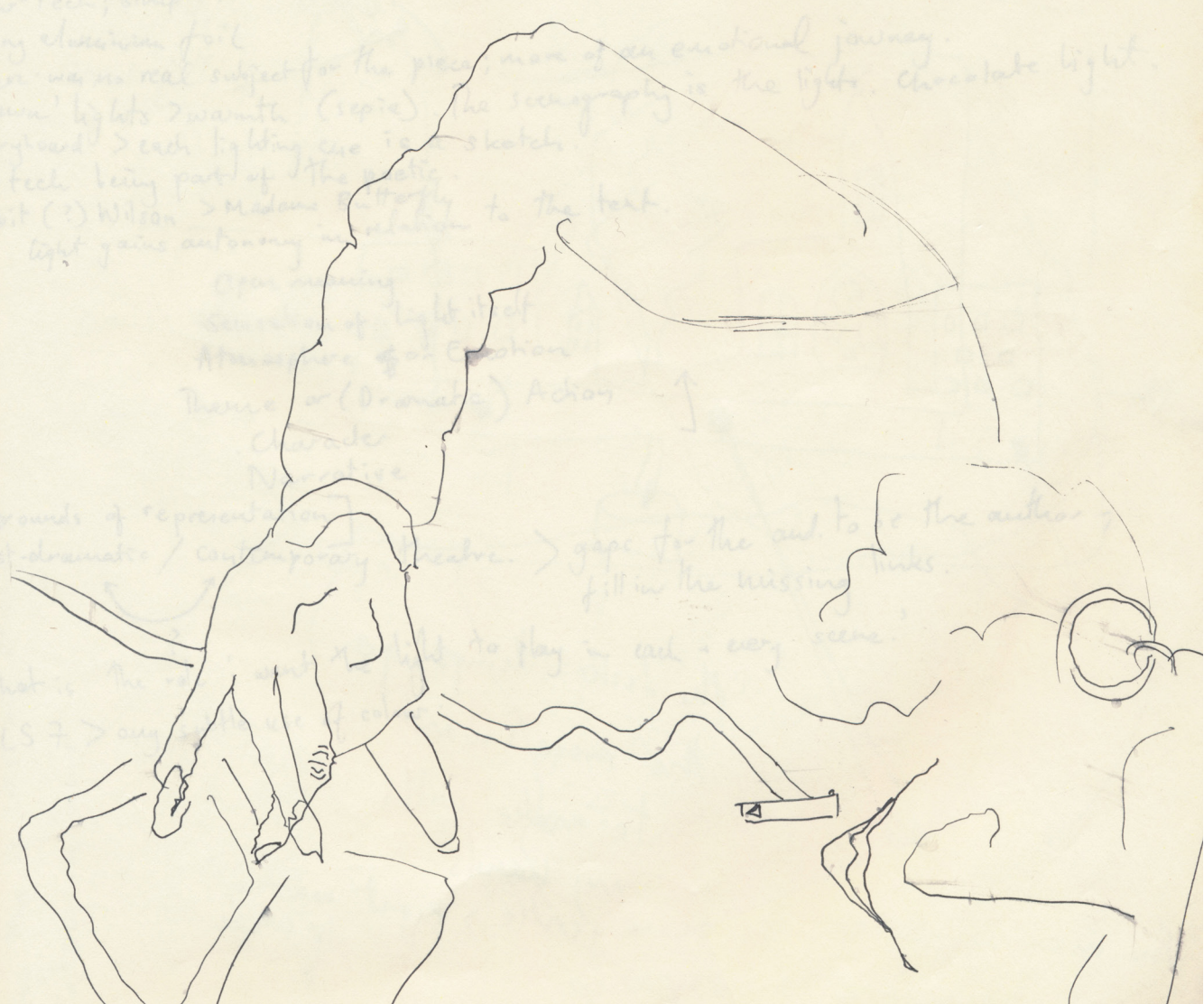


Drawing as a way to feel a sense of intimacy in + with space + others.

Lighting in contemporary theatre
theatre artist
the potential of light to manipulate thought/emotions
medium of light: pot'l to create meaning
language
consciousness + light
light more autonomous, architect in the space
series of waves: down/drop down/drop
long 'combs' -> the illuminated vs. unilluminated parts of the body
the lighting as 'sculptural', choreographed in light as much as in movement
dark light
delimiting of light thru contrast
way Act can environment
our look, simple, handmade
any classroom foil
there was no real subject for the piece more of an emotional journey
'light' lights > warmth (space) the scenography is the light, chocolate light
light > each lighting cue is a sketch
feel being part of the poetic
it (?) Wilson > Madame (though)
light gains autonomy in relation to the text
open meaning
searching of light itself
Attention for questions
Thence or (Drama) Action ->
chance
Narrative
Grounds of representation
contemporary theatre > gaps for the audience to fill in the missing links
do play in each + every scene



Documented Artistic Research Project
(Doctoral Thesis)

This Untethered Buffoon or
the Trickster in Everything

SQUIRM
the book

FRAGMENT
Nº 02

genea- logies of making

—
Stacey Sacks

genealogies of making

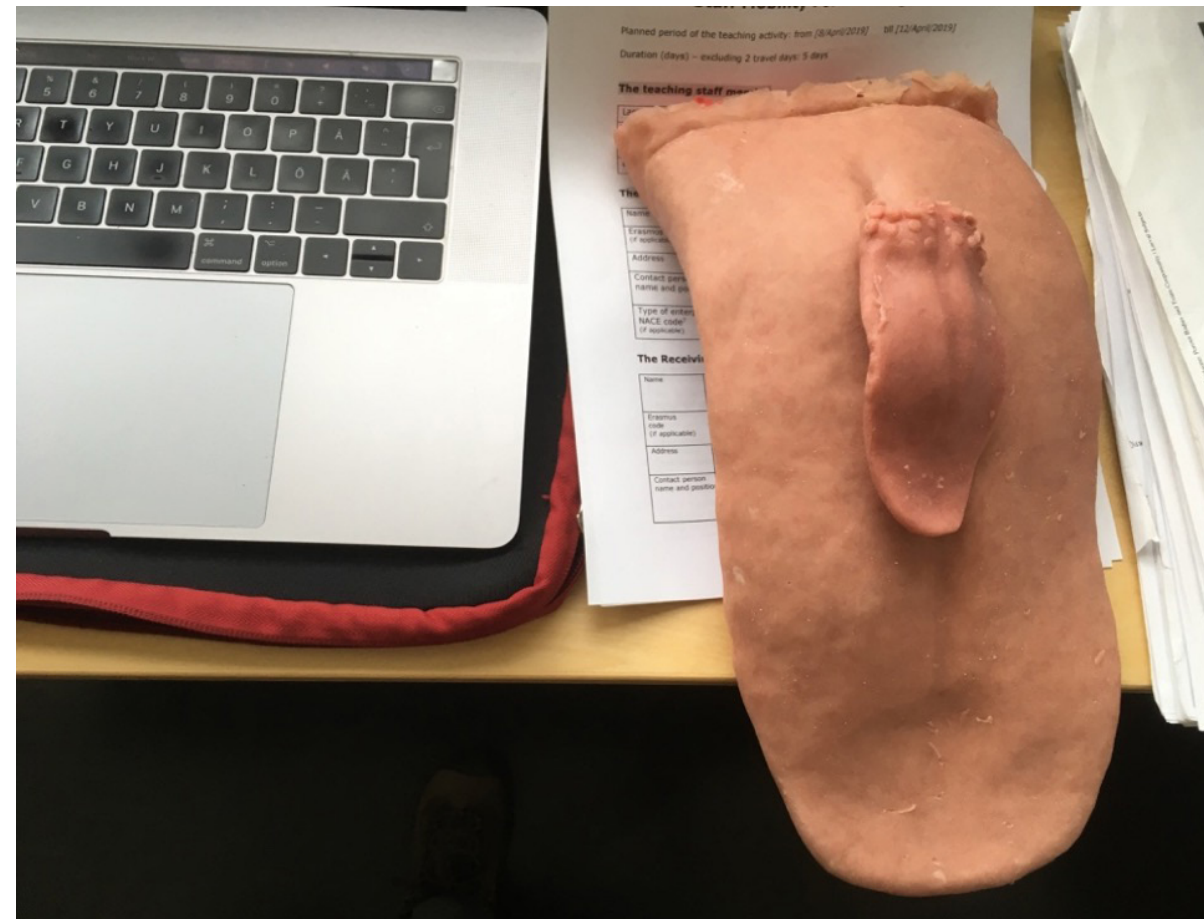
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Stacey Sacks

SQUIRM (the book)
Fragment No. 2, genealogies of making
Documented Artistic Research Project (Doctoral Thesis)
Stacey Sacks
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Cover Image
Front - Animation still: *playing in the studio*.
Back - Notebook, November 2015

**The line I trace with my feet walking
to the museum is more important and
more beautiful than the lines I find
there hung up on the walls.**

FRIEDENSREICH HUNDERTWASSER
(1928-2000)¹



producing knowledge, March 2019.

¹ Hundertwasser quotation inscribed at the entrance of Vienna's KunstHausWien, a museum designed by and devoted to the artist.

Like Hundertwasser these experimentations seem content to be immersed in the beauty of the process and not so attached to outcomes, yet ironically generate innumerable things, objects and bodies as time made present and piles of digital data. I'm playing with what I have, committed to a kind of crazy wisdom² as uttered by actor and comedian Lily Tomlin's homeless character Trudy in Tomlin's and Jane Wagner's play 'The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe' (1977):

I got the kind of madness Socrates talked about,
'A divine release of the soul from the yoke of custom
and convention!' (cited in Mellencamp 1992).



² A concept attributed to Buddhist meditation master Chögyam Trungpa.



playing in the studio: *fleshy sculptures*.

The project seems averse to straight lines, committed to destabilising linearity, dogmatically insisting on constant curly movement while spotted with deep time stops and concrete blocks coming up for air. Improvisatory processes and hand-made experimentations have contributed to unknowing and disorientating my regular artistic practice in an attempt to arrive at new ways of speaking alongside. The publication *Thinking Alongside* has been a useful companion to the research in this regard. It is an appendix to Ingri Midgard Fiksdal's artistic PhD project *Affective Choreographies* (2013-2018).

With the hope of contributing to the Arts and Humanities and Social Sciences I'm searching for alternatives, experimenting as a performing artist and clown with spontaneous creations, hoping in the process to reveal expanded ways of listening, seeing and being alongside, outside of conventional orders of disciplinary knowledge as perpetuated by hetero-patriarchal colonial logic.

Using discomfort, anxiety, shame and stupidity as methodological tools I desire to penetrate this moment of your day in an unexpected way, injecting instability and maybe a bit of *eros*³ into the encounter while attempting to process with humour the tragedies of our times.

Etymologically the word humour relates to fluidity, to wetness, becoming moist.⁴

³ Here, I follow Socrates' elaboration in his essay 'The Nature of *Eros*' (201e –204c), where the description of Love occurs in four contexts: (1) *eros* is described ontologically as being 'intermediate'; (2) it is described spiritually as a diamond; (3) it is described through its mythic genealogy as the son of Poverty and Resource; and (4) it is described with reference to the human condition as being somewhere between wisdom and ignorance. See <http://caae.phil.cmu.edu/Cavalier/80250/Plato/Symposium/Sym2.html> (accessed 8 June 2019).

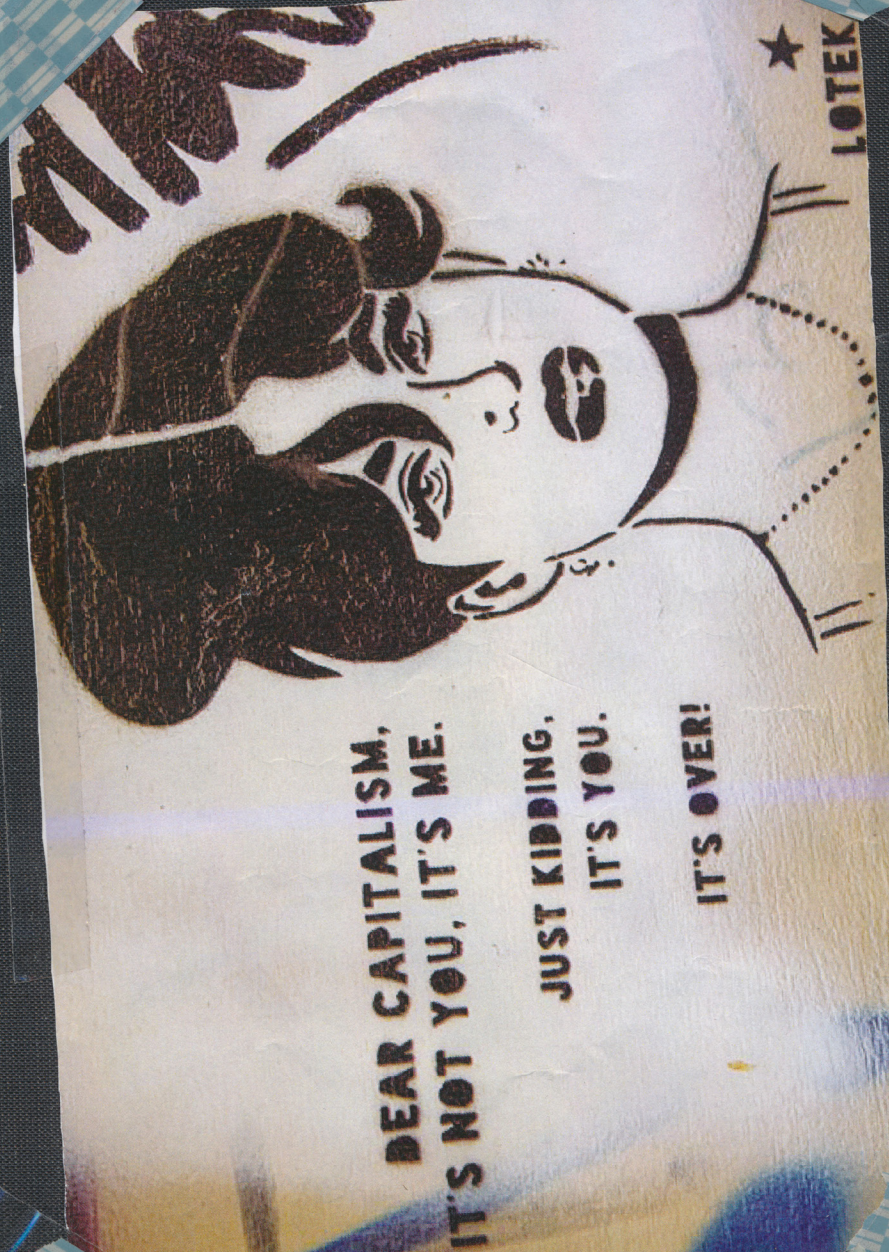
⁴ <https://www.etymonline.com/word/humor> (accessed 8 December 2015).

Once, in Johannesburg, I attempted to create a womxn-only stand-up comedy collective called *The Wet Sets*, based on this notion of humour having the capacity to wet its audience ('I pissed myself laughing'). It was also intended as a re-centering of womxn's sensual pleasure, a kind of reframing of the testosterone-dominated world of stand-up comedy and everywhere, replacing hetero-porn-infested mentalities with alternative versions of *eros* and comic arousal. The people I invited weren't so into collectivity at that point; the idea dissolved.

Is this partly what my tongue-making is about? In casual conversation once, filmmaker and PhD colleague Mia Engberg, initiator and producer of 'Dirty Diaries' (2009), a compilation of short feminist porn films and director of 'Belleville Baby' (2013) and 'The Lucky One' (2019), referred to my short animated film *the walls have tongues* as a 'dyke glory hole'. I'll keep that, thanks Mia.



Animation still, *the walls have tongues*.



I started this PhD wanting to smash hetero-patriarchy and never imagined that would lead me straight into confrontation with my personal ancestries, into dialogue with inherited collective memory, experiences embedded in my DNA, viscerally pumping through anxiety-ridden veins.

I've found only two things help my anxiety. Sugar and coffee.

If, as environmentalist Greta Thunberg suggests, panic is an emotion appropriate for the times, I'd like some of the excavations I've been exploring to stir this state in the contexts that need it, while simultaneously offering some kind of miniscule sanctuary. I have found, both through discoveries alone and in encounters, playdates and conversations with others, that in the doing, the praxis, lies some healing balm for this untethered splintered soul, and maybe others.

The word 'dialogue' is key to understanding strands of this genealogy. *Dia* meaning 'across, between' and *legein* 'to speak'.⁵ Both a verb and noun, the word implies conversations and discourse between two or more persons. Inspired by animator and PhD colleague Lina Persson's lecturing with blueberries⁶ (2015), I've been destabilising, undoing that person's bit, playing with a plethora of so-called dead and non-humxn bodies in an attempt to arrive instead at polyphonic polylogues.

⁵ https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=dialogue&ref=searchbar_searchhint (accessed 10 December 2019).

⁶ <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/265814/265815> (accessed 3 December 2019).

Within a year of research, **clown alone** is a discovery and new turn.

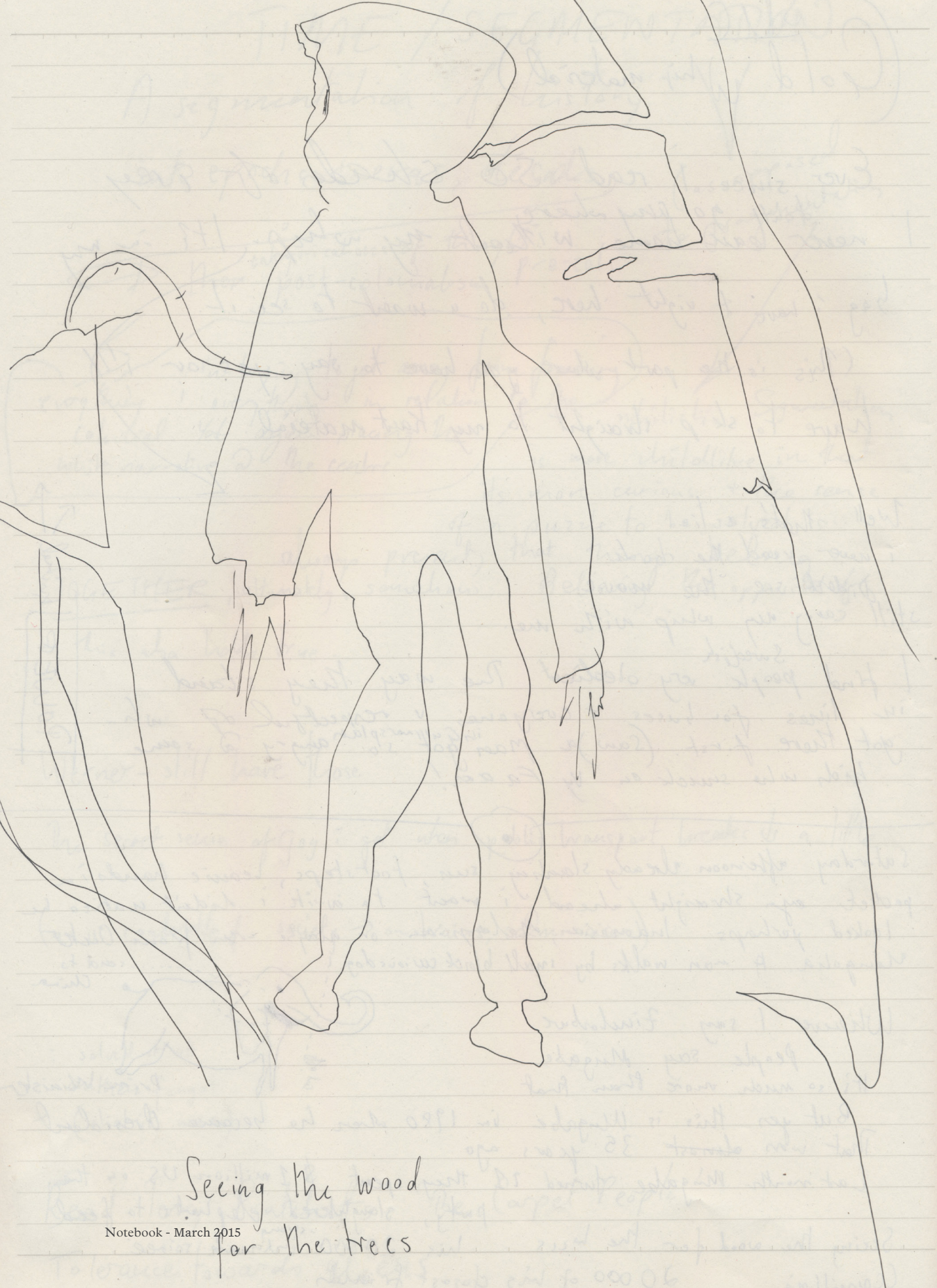
The ridiculousness of performing clown alone could be a worthy research pursuit in any PhD concerning fools and idiocy; add to that performing clown alone on sites of trauma, and another sedimentation occurs. Is occurring. I'm still processing those resonances. Stanley G. moving with the wind-dancing trees in Treblinka, Granny lost in the forests of Utøya, drawn to the stage by the eyes of almost strangers and the hook of a violin.⁷

Since I'm invested in clowning as offering possibilities for both disturbance and healing, it seems a perfect mode through which to process the very humxn traumatic cycles of oppression and victimhood. What and where is a site of trauma?



Stanley G. and Granny hanging out at the Final Seminar (ARS DIALOGUES, 25 October 2019).

⁷ This refers to an improvised performance with violinist and PhD fellow from Sibelius Academy in Finland Pia Siirala, at the Summer Academy in Artistic Research, August 2019, on the Norwegian island of Utøya.



Seeing the wood
for the trees

Notebook - March 2015

If bodies can be sites of trauma and I draw from Donna Haraway's idea that 'bodies as objects of knowledge are material-semiotic generative nodes' (1988, p.595), the questions emerge: what making can I engage to generate zones of inner and outer kindness, gentleness and safety, as well as a stirring of discomfort?

Clowning is always already relational. This process has been one of learning to attune sensitivities outwards/towards and receptively/from alterity, as well as towards and from those ungraspable inside spots, where impulses arise. Using clowning as method and praxis in every material and technological exploration, I explore multi-sensory listening as a way of attuning to that which presents itself.

The intersectionality of being a clown, queer and so-called 'woman' in the world has me investigating the relationships of womxn with power and humour. There's a certain humour-less-ness ordinarily ascribed to womxn in power. Think of Theresa May, Margaret Thatcher, Golda Meir, Hilary Clinton, and a leader recently fallen in the eyes of the so-called Western World for her silence around atrocities being committed against the Rohingya community in Myanmar, Aung San Suu Kyi. These womxn don't inspire comedy. Not the same for the current political fodder for daily comedy news shows, the now current PM of the UK, B.J. – whose full name shall never grace these pages, just like D.T. They shall remain abbreviated, hopefully mirroring their reigns. In the southern African context, it's only in the last 20 years or so that men have creaked open the doors for more womxn in stand-up comedy (or perhaps womxn have gathered the balls to open the door for themselves; but I hate the use of balls to implicate bravery and strength, rather let's say you need the power of a CUNT to withstand the pressure and violence of the stand-up world).



MAKE CUNT GREAT AGAIN

What I'd like to imagine are polyphonic explorations, however, may simply end up yet further reinforcing the ongoing univocal colonial mentality I claim to be so vehemently hoping to transgress and shatter. A wannabe anarchist stuck in a neoliberal ouroboros sucking on the institutional teat that offers it its daily bread. Nauseatingly self-aware of its privilege and incapable of escaping it, condemned to perform its context's Whiteness in a tautological loop of entitlement and self-congratulatory back-patting. We all know that self-mockery is key to a thriving neoliberal democracy, and that's the big problem – the 'we all'. If transgression is already subsumed by that culture in which I exist, the so-called 'western' or 'first' world, believing itself 'right', 'civilised', 'humane' and all that, then how do I speak to or perform for those who think they already know in a way they don't feel preached to or patronised or bored? And, why should I bother performing *for them* at all. Is entertainment what our world needs from performing artists at this precise geo-political moment?

As a performer playing with clowning, I'm more interested in performing *with*. What does it mean to perform with in this Stockholm context and, what is the difference between performing for and with? How is it possible to collapse the binaries of performer/audience, maker/receiver, self/other, humxn/non-humxn? Relations between the humxn and non-humxn or animal-humxn or vegetal-humxn recur throughout this exploration, entangled as it is with all these hand-made fabrications; from Latin, *fabricatio*, 'a structure, construction, a making'.⁸

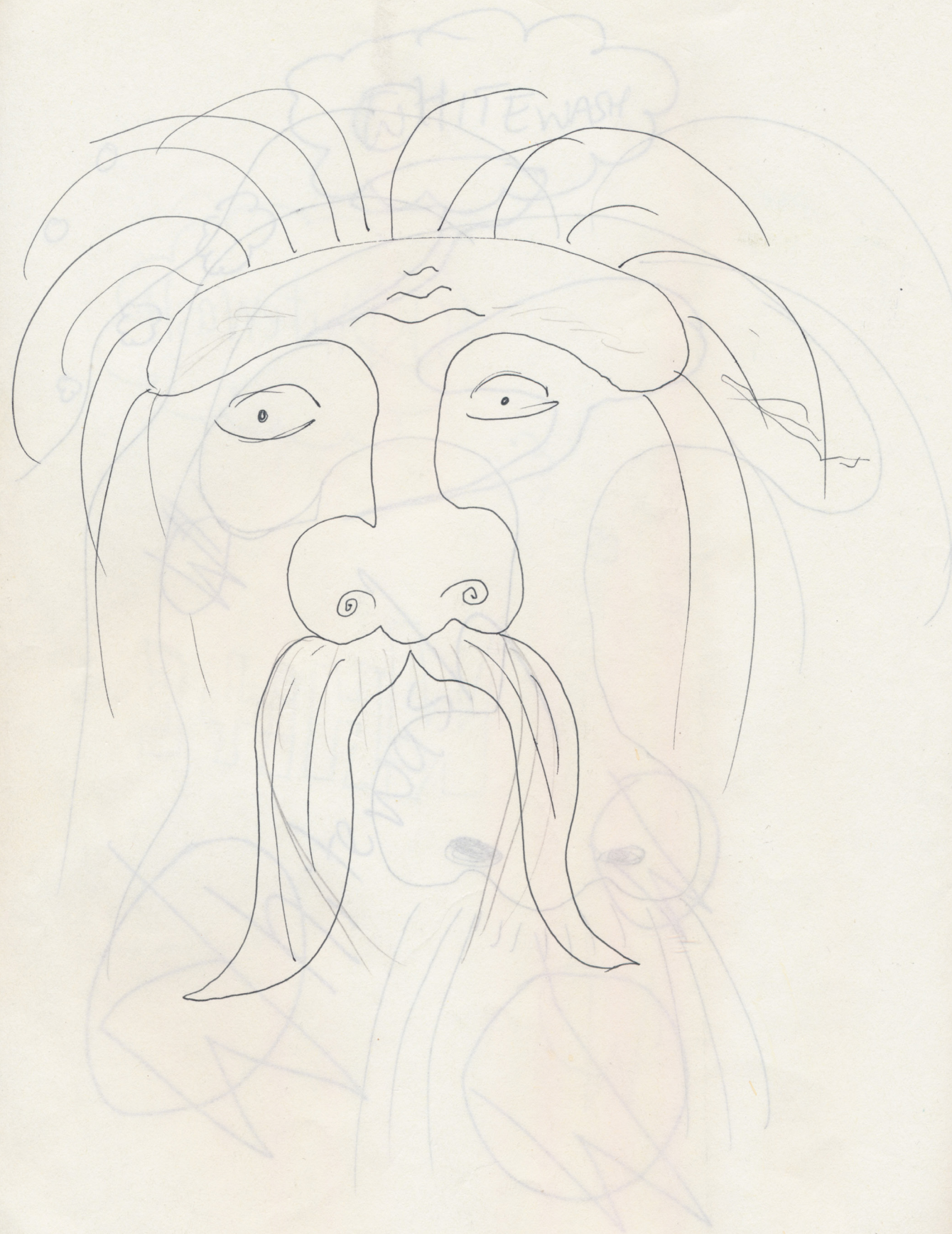
⁸ <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=fabrication> (accessed 25 February 2017).

Whose body is the clown and what is a body? And it's not only clowning, I'm working with masks, half masks, masks made in Bali out of Pule wood. Which brings up relevant questions regarding appropriation. None of the mask makers I speak to in Ubud or Sukawati in 2016 seem to care about this politically correct anxiety I carry with me. They laugh my hypersensitivity off, giving me blessings to take the mask and do with it as I pleased. Of course, they may have just been polite, and I can't ignore the power dynamics of an economic exchange. But their desire to have me translate this element of their culture into something relevant for my own seemed heartfelt.

I see the masks as sites to encounter otherness, as bodies to both inhabit and be inhabited by for a while. As sanctuary, shield, shelter from the storm and simultaneously the way of walking straight into its eye. I seek refuge in the characters, they provide my uprooted soul with temporary homes, allowing me to explore deeper notions of acquiescence, porosity, alterity and belonging. John Wright in *Playing the Mask: Acting without Bullshit* says mask is the place where acting and sculpture meet (2017, p.76). The masks have allowed me an intimacy with my own stories and ancestral tales that would otherwise not be possible. By concealing they allow certain revelations to emerge.



Masks gleaned in Ubud, Bali, 2016.



Notebook, January 2016



Outside the studio at Linnégatan, a *Temporary Hallway Encounter* (T.H.E.), 2017.

Following inspiration from a question and answer session with Srinivas Mangipudi, a visual heuristics presenter at the Alliances and Commonalities conference at the Stockholm University of the Arts in 2018, I attempt to understand myself and the world by doing something I don't understand, and hope that in this disorientation lie ways of re-habituating orientations, patterns of thought, ways of being, seeing, feeling, imagining. It's an operation performed through this body with its particularities and situated experiences in the hope of discovering methods to rewire minds skewed by imperial and colonial logic. As Haraway says: 'not partiality for its own sake but, rather, for the sake of the connections and unexpected openings situated knowledges make possible' (1988, p.590).

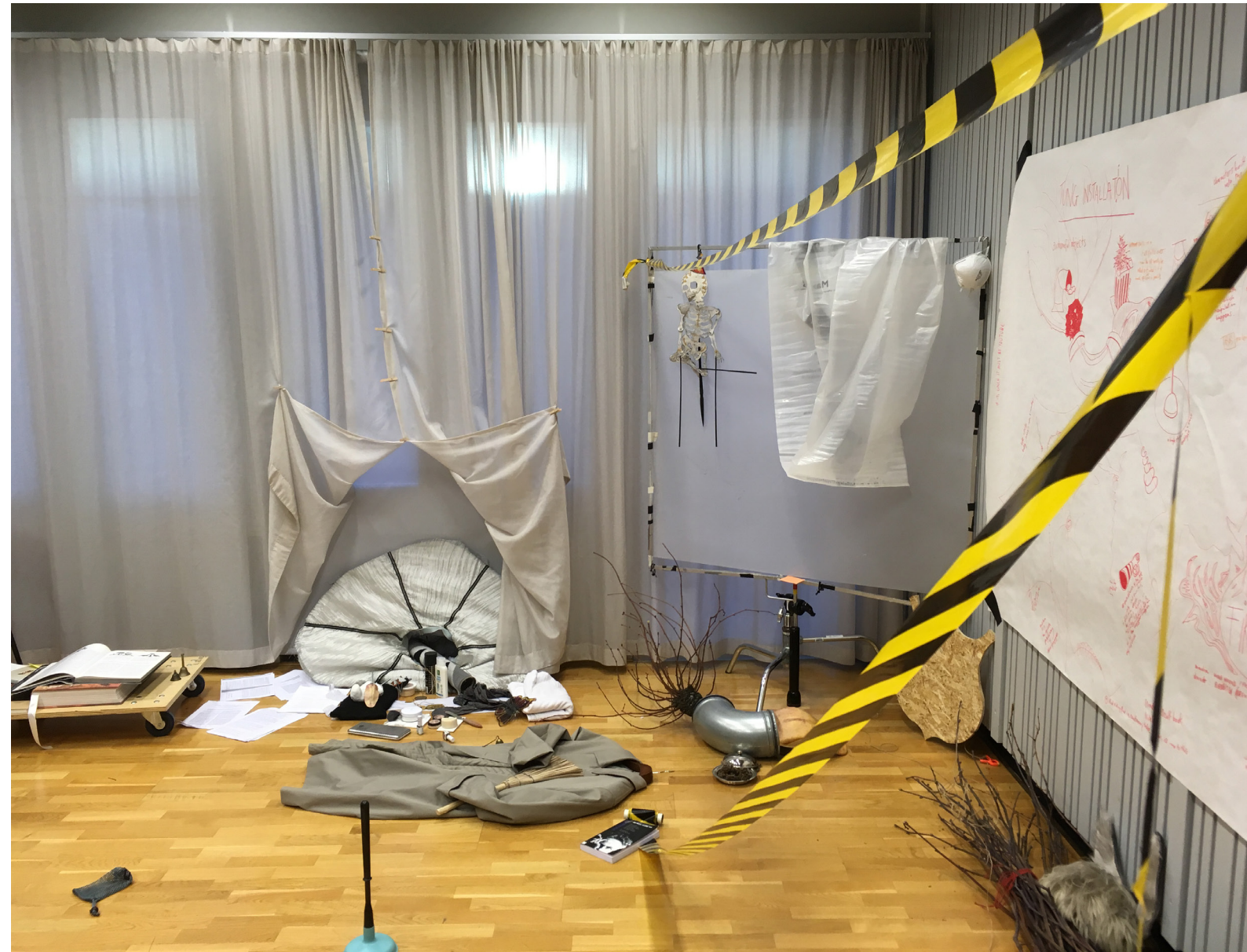
This spontaneous inquiry manifests a multitude of forms: tactile/moving installations, mask performances, a collection of films, animations, sculptures of tongues, this writing, a series of photographic images, drawings and writings in notebooks and further proliferations.

The gleaning, the making and collecting refuse to stop, consistently fed and interrupted by political, social and material events always seeking further dialogue. I like to think of the thing-ing on a multitude of tracks, layers stacked one on top of the other, a concatenation of simultaneities absorbing anxiety, global concern and curiosity in an attempt to intensify an experience of the world, developing new ways of seeing alongside the mundane every-day.

The excess, the leaky spill and tentacular sprawl have become methodological tools, inspired by Fred Moten's 'consent not to be a single being' (2017), the work a palimpsest of different practices through which I clumsily trip, surf and glide, and the art objects appear as time made present. The output is almost grotesque, testimony to the emotional, physical and spiritual labour inherent in the task I set for myself. It's an idio(t)syncratic, speculative and embodied laboratory procedure employing insecurity and uncertainty as method. The ambiguities that doubt, hesitation and self-reflexivity generate open productive gaps for elongating knowledge.

Well, I'm hoping so anyway. It's why I choose the genre of 'performing essays'. The idea of the 'essay' form going back to Montaigne (*Essais* 1580) and picked up by Bacon (*Essays* 1597), where the tradition of writing essays focuses on the emerging process of thinking and not the finished thought itself. From the French *essayé*, it is a try.

Being concerned with the culture and politics of the place where I was born and grew up, Zimbabwe, as much as with the culture of the places I now awkwardly call home, I'm located on the borderlines, straddling continents and contexts, constantly contemplating my position in the 'geopolitics of knowledge' (Mignolo 2008). Accordingly, I need to start with my own locus of enunciation and epistemological practices; that is, the place in geographical, emotional, artistic and theoretical terms from where I speak. In *Queer Phenomenology*, Sara Ahmed, a British-Australian academic working at the intersection of feminist, queer and postcolonial theory, writes: 'Orientations are about how we begin; how we proceed from "here", which affects how what is "there" appears, how it presents itself' (2006, p.8).



Valhallavägen studio, 2018.



Stanley Goldwater. Photo: Bengt Söderström.

This question of **ENTERING** pervades the work. Geographically I orientate the practice with *hello Karlaplan*, a clowning photographic essay reflecting upon the physical context in which I find myself here in the Stockholm suburb where my studio is situated. It is entangled with the film essay *Clown Alone* as well as with the online VIS journal exposition on the Research Catalogue, *luxurious migrant // performing whiteness*. Addressing the problematics and ridiculousness of this situatedness, Stanley Goldwater, a Yiddish-y character who evolves as Third Opponent⁹ to the PhD's artistic outputs, sprouts the following during the PhD's 50% Seminar *luxurious migrant // performing whiteness*:

To say the very least, W(w)hiteness is a gooey sticky sauce stewing in the beige privilege a sense of so-called freedom, safety and power affords. A subject cloaked in denial, shame and guilt.

And that's the positive side.

⁹ See *SPLEEN 1* entitled *Third Opponents and Other Academic Jesters* compiled by Dr. Anders Sandberg, Future of Humanity Institute, Oxford Martin School, Oxford University. This document emerged after a conversation between us about the possibilities of a jester/fool/clown in the Academy (Stockholm 2015). To me, if in the business of re-enactment at all, it seems apt to invigorate the more generative practices of the 18th century as opposed to ones instigating genocidal race pseudo-sciences. In performance, Stanley G. evolves into a figure embodying the 'Third or Turd Opponent', as he critiques, comments upon and re-presents the 'ars' research emerging from Stacey Socks/Sex/Sucks' doctoral project and its multi-modal excavations of W(w)hiteness.

Think of the research as a 5-year shame-shower, a drenching in white complicity, full immersion into the mouldy gravy of inert racist muck operating unconsciously at the base of collective swampy souls. It was Jung who said shame is the 'swampland of the soul'. There is an earnest hope and real desire for purging, yet sad realisation of its probable impossibility. Should this potential failure cancel the attempt? Well *vos veisse chazar von lokshen* they'd say in the old country, which loosely translates to, 'What does a pig know about spaghetti?'

What does it mean for a so-called white person in today's particularly white landscape to interrogate Whiteness within this luxurious predominantly white institution, indeed in one of the whitest and most privileged countries in the whole entire world?

What does it mean to excavate Whiteness in this context? What's the point, what does it produce? Is it simply a reproduction of all the tropes it imagines it's critiquing?

Is it vaguely possible to rewire the privileged mind, to splinter and destabilize it?

—
SHITFUCK!

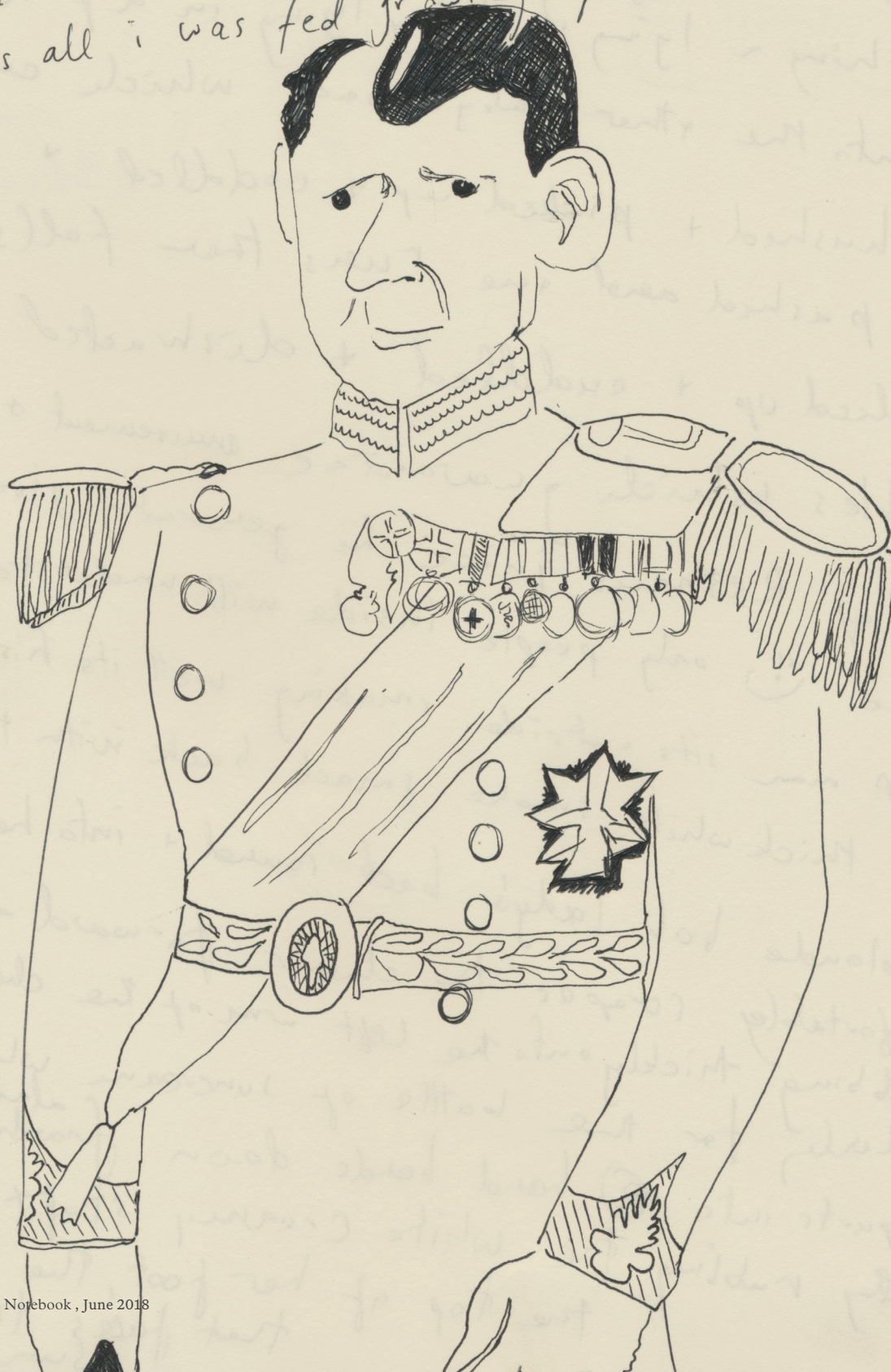
Here in Stockholm the Academy gives the artist-researcher a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate to probe their subject, gives them the white flag you could say to wave on behalf of the institution, as if signaling to the outside world, 'Look! We're not afraid to look at ourselves deep up the wazoo, only we get this white African to do it for us!' The work seems to become a righteous looking deeply up one's own cultural asshole, taking Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's notion of 'critical intimacy'¹⁰ literally!

The researcher did not intend to become the poster child for critical Whiteness studies but that seems to be happening ... In a quest to excavate Whiteness and question entitlements and representation they have shattered into polyphonic strands of hyper-subjectivities, a multitude of multitudes, what Professor André Lepecki would call an explosion of singularities. Another way of saying the performer-researcher no longer knows who they are. They are everything and nothing. Their subject becomes the same. This is the risk you face when you impose intellectual ideas, when you inject academic discourse or insert theory into the vulnerable body of a natural clown whose only desire is to be with what is and to trust that things evolve. So in the vein of this nonsense, suspended in the condition of existence, that being a permanent state of indeterminacy, we wonder how the lost researcher imagines they can decolonise an imperial mind that only knows how to speak English. Is nonsense the only way out? And is nonsense a cop-out? Where does that leave us?

Shitfuck.

¹⁰ <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/critical-intimacy-interview-gayatri-chakravorty-spivak/> (accessed 17 September 2016).

Ready for the fight,
 a hunt on a fox with dogs mice chasing mice
 Jerry's all i was fed growing up on tv.



Another question this exploration inhabits is: what do parody, and satire actually do in these unstable times? Who do they serve and to what ends? Parody is not always transgression and not all satire is anti-establishment. Cartoons are regularly used to manifest unambiguous points of view, upholding and perpetrating racist and bigoted belief, sometimes to horrific ends, as witnessed with the 2015 Charlie Hebdo massacre. How to be sure I'm not upholding through my satirical and parodic sketches those very institutional structures of domination I so desperately yearn to dismantle, and also, how not to be paralysed by that question? As author, academic and aerobics instructor Melissa Myambo (2015, p.5) writes:

Satire can be used to poke holes in the flawed logic of hypocritical power brokers, but it can just as easily be made to reaffirm a univocal point of view which masquerades as a dialogue.

Playing buffoon (from Italian *buffare*, to puff out the cheeks) is a balancing act of humour and menace. There is an agenda: parody here functions to distance, to mock, to denigrate and de-centre traditionally held notions of knowledge, but also to make audiences *breathe* together by laughing together, cringing and groaning together.

These days satire is a kind of reinvention of political journalism, especially in the US and the UK where comedians are faced with the challenge of having to mock public figures who are already parodies of themselves. This is a world where America's First Lady goes to Kenya in 2018 wearing a pith helmet, disregarding history, embracing colonial chic as the latest fashion craze. I call these satirists contemporary jesters since they 'punch up' towards those with political power. Trevor Noah, Stephen Colbert and Seth Meyers mocking D.T.'s voice and timbre while reading out his tweets reside in the world of parody, utilising mimicry, a doubling and only slight distortion. If we strip the D.T. narrative of its rhetoric it becomes sad and vulnerable in its ridiculousness. If we examine something closely it becomes less scary.

During my search for an ethico-aesthetics that incorporates intersectionality I encounter endless questions about what it means to be a so-called white artistic researcher immersing oneself in discourses of feminist, queer, black and critical whiteness studies. What does it mean to be engaged in this fragile attempt to excavate whiteness through clownology in order to contribute to the project of racialising whiteness, making the invisible visible in this Swedish context?

Perhaps one understands how anxiety and discomfort begin to play a central role in the methodology. Since the research evolves through the radical subjectivity of my own performing body, histories and experiences, I am both making the parody/satire as well as being outside of it – judging and analysing its potential resonances – and these have been complicated positions to occupy simultaneously. It may be one of the problems associated with this form of artistic research, being both inside and outside at once, but perhaps this undermines those binaries I'm so politically intent on smashing. I'm supremely idio(t)syncratic on stage – hoping the radical subjectivity is a strength, but here on the page can only achieve this through my non-sequitur prose-poems. And letting go of self-consciousness and self-doubt is key because, ultimately, they are curses for creativity, especially for being open to the spontaneous impulse that you cannot know until it happens 'all-of-a-sudden', the original meaning of improvisation as offered by Carlo Mazzone-Clementi and Jane Hill (2003). This exploration has nothing to do with the unrehearsed, it has to do with basic stimulus and response, a being in the where you are.



As such, it is a project of poesis and imagination – training the self to relate to something unknowable, training curiosity and new ways of seeing in the encounter with uncertainty. I am creating this PhD through a series of improvised acts (random ones, let's say, impulsive) in an attempt to remould/re-learn/re-wire/reassemble hierarchies, through comedy, in this particular body, on stages wherever they find themselves. The project evolves as a deeply em(bodied)bedded exploration of the creative impulse, the desire to make from within this situated African Queer Jewish so-called white body in this Stockholm context, but at the same time to question what these categorisations do. As such it is an intra-cultural, auto-ethnographic study and parody of W(w)hiteness, privilege and colonial logic through multiple (dis)embodied spontaneous experiments and unintentional assemblages.

At the PhD's 80% Seminar, skin + bones // with-nessing W(w)hitenesses (November 2018), my discussant Professor Mark Fleishman from the Centre for Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies at the University of Cape Town, points out that for Heidegger, angst is a basic or fundamental mood (*grundstimmung*) that could be used more productively in this project. He explains further:

Heidegger dissolves the basic Cartesian distinction between conscious subjects and the world of objects, and replaces it with the idea of being-in-the-world. That is: we exist within this world completely bound up with things and other people who are simply ready-to-hand, available for use or enjoyment. There is a sense of the homely (*heimlich*) here. In anxiety, all of this changes. It is like we are immersed in a sea, floating happily, and then all of a sudden the tide goes out, the water recedes, and we are left stranded on the beach with a sense that everything is strange/uncanny (*unheimlich*), that we have lost our sense of home. But it is in this moment of exposure that the self emerges, that we are able to distinguish ourselves from the world. This is described as a moment of freedom – the freedom to begin to become oneself.

But what is my critical position in this anxiety-inducing artistic practice? By entering uncomfortable conversations, I attempt to call myself to account through encountering alterity by what Fred Moten, in his preface to 'Black and Blur', terms a 'continual finding of that which is never lost in being lost' (2017, p.ix). Could *fruitful uselessness* be a proponent of epistemic disobedience? What does it mean to carve space in the academy for the doodle, the unknowing, the erotic? And what does it mean in this context to draw attention to the ongoing Whiteness at the root of centuries of violence, intimidation, shame and fear? This is a difficult conversation for everyone, and by stirring the racist muck sitting inert at the base of ancestral tales, the shit is lifted from the deep bottom and, upon emerging, splashes everyone in the face, centre and periphery. By confronting wounds, walking closely with my own ancestries, giving close attention to my personal history, experience, politics, positionality, the project has forced me to become vulnerable to facing history and the present at their ugliest, and to become hyper-sensitive to how micro-oppressions are perpetuated in every-day entanglements.



Animation still: *the uncertain everything*.

The first step on my doctoral path has been introspection: a kind of auto-critique, a self-ethnography attempting to deconstruct the ways my own sense of privilege and entitlement reveal themselves. Becoming more aware of it, reflecting on it. So how do I enter the conversation, how do I insert myself, positioning myself both as artist and researcher? How to risk articulating myself knowing that every time it could be a re-colonisation, a further appropriation, and how to not be paralysed by that. Self- and auto-ethnography seem to offer a way in for me, as Thommy Eriksson (2010, p.91) writes:

In traditional ethnography the researcher studies a group of people that are in some way estranged, and typically involves 'breaking in'. In contrast, self-ethnography involves the study of the researcher's own group; a group in which the researcher is an established participant. It typically involves 'breaking out' of cultural and social structures taken for granted within this group, understanding them from within.

This helps me to connect more deeply with Spivak's aforementioned 'critical intimacy', but the visceral sense of shame evoked by a deep examination of W(w)hiteness, which can feel for me a profound indulgence, is assuaged partly by Sara Ahmed (2007, p.149-150), who writes in 'A Phenomenology of Whiteness':

Does speaking about whiteness allow it to become an 'essential something'? If whiteness gains currency by being unnoticed, then what does it mean to notice whiteness? What does making the invisible marks of privilege more visible actually do? Could whiteness studies produce an attachment to whiteness by holding it in place as an object? We could say that any project that aims to dismantle or challenge the categories that are made invisible through privilege is bound to participate in the object of its critique. We might even expect such projects to fail, and be prepared to witness this failure as productive.

The project resides in this space of productive failure. I have sometimes ended up reinforcing the stereotypes I'm aiming to dismantle, and often run the risk of getting stuck in the 'flop' as Jacques Lecoq would say (2016, p.323), the only escape from which, I have found, is to play. This has entailed an attempt to flesh out alternative dynamics of knowledge production that have been historically conditioned by the academic world and certain privileged ways of seeing, thinking and writing. I want to create playfully new frames of knowledge that open up to other modes of engagement ... poly-knowing? By questioning how non-reproductive of hetero-patriarchal systems I can be during this enquiry, I attempt to invent practices that are at least partially outside of the commodity system. Yet, ironically, this involves tremendous labour on my privileged behalf, labour that ultimately leads to burn out.

And it leads me to the question: what does caring for mean? What is it to give attention? Can I discover tenderness as well as criticality in my encounter with things? Practically, what could 'radical tenderness' look like? 'Radical tenderness' is a term I encounter quite late in the research; it's coined through the work of transnational performance collective La Pocha Nostra and a radical tenderness manifesto has been written by Dani d'Emilia in collaboration with Daniel B. Chavez in 2015.¹¹

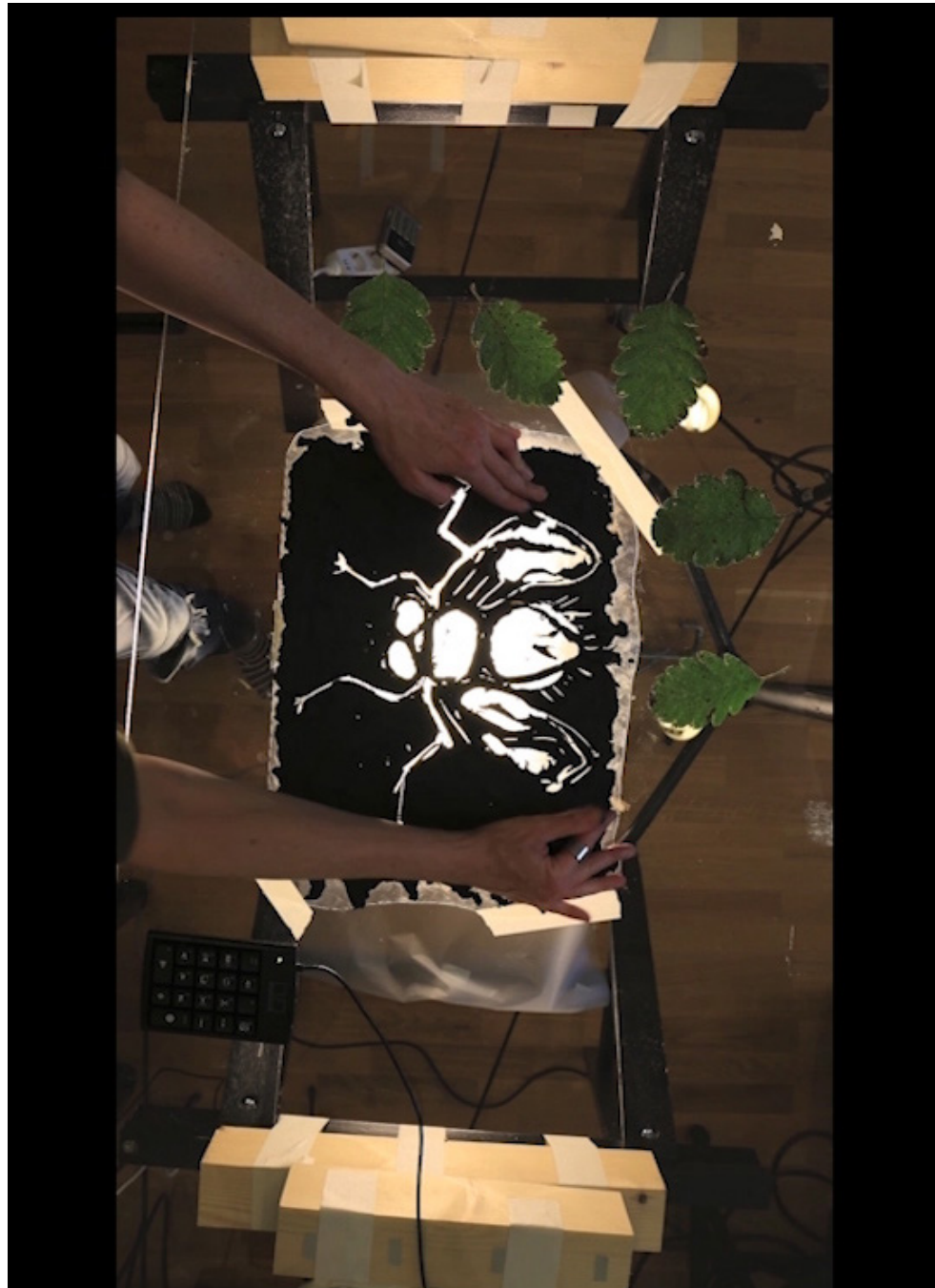
Can I call out the ongoing systemic racism that the institution (even unconsciously) perpetuates? To be in any institution requires some degree of obedience. In return you are hugged tightly into the academy's armpit and somehow simultaneously expected to resist. As I've already said, transgression has become so much a definition of neoliberal mentality. So, I like to think of this as a game of giving attention to the micro-shifts, to the minutiae of the everyday. Games are experiential, once you enter a game you enter a structure; there's an element of consent but also of acquiescence to the rules, a consensual space that teaches about structures in an experiential way.

Is this where solidarity resides? Is this being alongside, is this being with the moment, a key to ways of thinking about solidarities? Does allowing the uncertain or coping with it create neural patterns that lead to a kind of rational compassion and kindness? And is **WITH-NESSING** about learning to live with the impossibility of reconciliation? Learning to be accepting of difference, finding solidarity in conversation with diversity? What does it mean to recognise difference? What does it mean to not recognise difference? How can we create a society where inclusion does not need to mean integration?



Animation sequence: *white panic is real but not a rabbit.*

¹¹ <https://danidemilia.com/radical-tenderness/> (accessed 1 September 2019).



Animation still: *exit man haunted by flies*.

If representation is about bodies having particular, static, actual properties and substances, then this project asks what can I do to inject humour, the fluid, making parodies, mimicries or rather mediations that move, touch and vibrate. From feminist theorist and physicist Karen Barad (2003), how to transform, translate and elucidate matters that come to matter?

Can I segue ideas of representation rather towards notions of transformation? But transformation for whom? For what? To what ends? Can I hop off the do-gooder train, the one that claims rightness on the moral compass, the one that claims Truth and authenticity and all that problematic stuff, and begin to explore more deeply this notion of productive disobedience, being the fool doing the heavy labour myself, an operation performed through this body with all its histories, politics and experience. And in the process of choosing what to include, can I resist the reduction of all potentiality? Or in the end, am I reduced to making myself as a self-portrait? A self-portrait as a tongue, as a rabbit, human goat, as an old man who thinks he has all the answers but knows he does not, a self-portrait as a fly, a racist Granny, scaffolding, a beggar, fighter jets, a bullet a scarab beetle a crocodile ...

As a key to ethical accountability, the project continues to find tools to help trigger and develop the imagination. The performances generate experiences in time and are not ways to resolve anything as final. Performance paves paths for polyphonic imaginaries, it offers spaces of refusal. Refusal to codify anything into a system, a guarantor of constant ephemerality, ongoing transformation. It's why the Trickster plays such an important part in the making and thin(k)-ing processes. My performances attempt to expand/stretch ways of seeing and listening, hoping in the process to uncover or reveal ways of valuing and encountering.



Animation in process: *luxurious migrant* // *performing whiteness*.

Mythologically speaking, Trickster occupies the space of resistance, outsider-ness, shapeshifting. It makes a mockery of representation and category with its constant transformations, satirising knowledge as circumscribed by colonial logic. The energy of the trickster consistently knocks me off my high white horse too. It scoffs at any idea that imagines it's discovering decolonial gestures, and reminds me that as a so-called maker, it's absurd to produce meaning for the receiver. Trickster collapses binaries, troubling dichotomies of maker/receiver since in the act of performance I am transformed by the encounter too. We are collectively perched on the precipice of transformation and our willingness and consent to be in that space at that particular moment together is testimony to our collective desire to dive into the abyss, not knowing together.

During a course entitled Concepts and Composition Professor André Lepecki (2015) encourages us to think of artistic research as not necessarily about the production of new knowledge but more about opening up spaces for experimentation that would otherwise not have the opportunity to exist.

He mentions being open enough to the wild thing and so, in this spirit of opening portals to chaos and indeterminacy, I share here some spontaneous tries – *essayé* in its original sense – playing in the university of shame, vivisectioning W(w)hitenesses, searching for a ministry of kindness, of radical softness, unpacking difference and its necessity, one phantom at a time.

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