

Site O3
Fiction O3

The House,
The Wings, The Balcony,
The Dissidents.

The House of the Dissidents

The invisible but ever so tangible
line between backstage and on
stage can be terrifying to cross,
especially when you have to im-
mediately say something like “To
be or not to be”, or “Now is the
winter of our discontent.”¹

Mark Rylance

... or when you are there to tell a story you
cannot tell.

1. Rylance, M. (2016). Mark Rylance: “Backstage, I always have one ear to the house”. *The Guardian*. <<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/nov/12/mark-rylance-backstage-always-have-one-ear-to-the-house>> Accessed 28 November 2016.

Radicality of

a

Pillow

Embracing a pillow could be as revolutionary as throwing a stone. Hiding all night long behind a tree in the front garden could be as important as marching in a demonstration. A joke could be more influential than a thousand pages on the theory of revolutions. It is a characteristic of the dissident life that political and domestic activities are integrated. For a dissident, sometimes, it is important to walk in silence all the way to work, and to sign piles of papers obediently all day long, without any explicit gesture of revolt. For a dissident, it is important to have a pocket, a drawer, an empty container, a piece of paper, a pencil, a spoon and sometimes a ladder. For a dissident, it is important to laugh, sometimes out loud, sometimes inwardly. But a dissident should also be able to cry, sometimes, in fear, when he hides his face in the pillow at night, when he waits in the eternal queues at bus stops or when chopping onions.

Dangerous Love

Letters

Dissidence is a paradoxical acceptance of the oppressive power, i.e. understanding its mechanisms with affliction, while humiliating it by living an oppositional life in the heart of the tyranny, and thereby challenging it on every micro-level. Holding this mood, the loci of action for dissidents can in fact emerge in any kind of space; from the corners of a living room to a desk in an office; from a love letter to forms from the tax office; from a pavement to a bus stop; from a lecture to an informal talk; from the city to the body. Therefore, unlike activism, dissidence is not confined to certain events and specific places. Spaces of dissidence have one thing in common: they are not spaces historically assigned to demonstrations and public dissent, such as squares and streets. And this is why it can be difficult for the oppressive power to find dissidents and oppress them. Spaces of dissidence are composed of the incompatible combination of laughter and fear, of celebration and grief, of anticipation and action.

Oscillation

-
-

The dissident is a political figure who is both in and out; she oscillates between inside and outside, between appearance and disappearance. And through this oscillation, she constructs sites of resistance and subversions. A dissident, however, has to find out when she should be in and when she should be out. And it can be a difficult and risky task to pull off.

A dissident who oscillates in and out becomes a different character every time she appears. She goes out wearing red, comes in wearing yellow, goes back wearing yellow, comes back wearing wings, goes back with a pen, comes back with a hat, goes back with a moustache, comes back with a sack, goes back with a cat, comes back with a horse, goes back short-haired, comes back long-sleeved, goes back as a he, comes back as an it.

Messy

Drawings

Dissidence is an embodied political engagement, but stealthy and in disguise. The dissident's plans are disguised. The plan doesn't go into the details. The dissident's drawings are messy. They erase parts. They remove traces while performing their plans. Like a one-off piece theatre that has played and finished, what remains of the dissidents' plans is a story. So it would be impossible for others to execute the dissident drawings. But one can always remake them, rewrite them, redraw them from one's own imagination. Yet only the dissidents themselves know the secret of the plan's feasibility. Others read it as *mess*, as *mass*, as imprecision, as too fictional.

The House

Now I ask you, dear reader, to take a leap into a house of dissidents, which we are going to explore together in the following folded pages and layers of stories. It is a house inhabited by dissidents, in a critical moment of political transformation in REDACTED. The house is located in a REDACTED, and the story is situated in the everyday struggle of dissidents over a long period of time. A house in such contexts is always a turning point between appearance and disappearance. The house is the place for an oppositional life being played, lived and practiced. When the dissidents moved into this house, little by little, it became the locus of the most radical political actions, where ideas took shape, alternative and oppositional life was lived and family was transformed from a closed, self-centred institution and survival unit to an infrastructure of resistance, change, and an encounter of differences. One play in this game of dissidence was life itself. And life itself struggled to resist what was waiting outside to catch the dissidents, to oppress them.

What's

That *Shadow* on the Landing?

The dissident is the inhabitant of the *backstage*, of the *underground*, of the *closet*, of *storage*, of *landings*, of *hidden stairs*, of darkness, of behind the edges of the roof. Dissidents embrace gravity, they descend, they fall into the darkness. They talk in silence; they write in darkness, they draw in darkness. The backstage and the house are both spaces of invisibility, of freedom from the assigned role, but they are also a space of rehearsal for an upcoming performance. At special political moments, the house becomes the backstage, it becomes the space of waiting; waiting to perform.

The spaces of dissidence of which I speak are similar to the *backstage* of a theatre. The Backstage is a space of life performance, yet it is both imaginary and real. The backstage is at times the space of anticipation, and at other times an empty space. The house I will introduce to you can be understood as the *backstage* of street politics, when the stage, the street, the square, becomes an impossible place to perform, when the performers want to perform a role that is impossible to perform.

At a certain point in the story of this house, the backstage became more important to the dissidents – the performers – than the stage itself. And it was at this point that they began to understand the immense potential of the backstage and to consider a play that was not supposed to be performed; a play that they discovered they were paradoxically performing. The performers of this play, the dissidents, are not only the inhabitants of this house, but also the architects of its spaces, making space by living in it, by playing in the house, destroying and reconfiguring the spaces, hiding in niches and whispering through the cracks. They reconstructed the house, and thereby the meaning of the stage, the backstage, the wings.

A 10-Second Performance on the Concrete Rungs of a *Lamppost*

When the house became the backstage in support of political acts, the stage transformed from one single frame into fragments of micro-acts dispersed across the city: in a telephone booth, on a bench at a bus stop, under a tree, on the concrete rungs of a lamp-post, along the passages of an office building, and in waiting rooms, but also in the entrances to houses, on the threshold, upon balconies, on the rooftops, at the windows, in the gaps, behind the open doors, under the blown-out lights, in the basements, in the storage. These elements, which make the house complicated and permeable, are critical spaces of dissent; they are safe and dangerous.

The house became many, fragmented, taken out by its inhabitants to the farthest and strangest points of the city. The house was what the dissidents were carrying with them wherever they were. And they were bringing back its fragments, changed, vitalised, intensified. The fragments were their micro-stages. These pieces of fragmented and evanescent micro-stages will come to light in this specific house. These micro-stages are a way for the dissidents' performance to let the dissent leak out when the stages of street and square are impossible to perform.

This text is written in the encounter between architecture, theatre/performance and the politics of dissidence. In performance spaces, the areas on either side of the stage, out of sight of the audience, are called the *wings*. It is the space of anticipation, of waiting to appear on the stage. As Andrew Filmer states, the term backstage “is also used metaphorically to denote a particular situation where an individual or entity stands ‘ready to act or make an appearance.’”²

From the performative point of view, the house of dissidents is the space of performance. It is not only a backstage for street politics, but also the stage itself. By defining the house as an assemblage of backstage, wings and stage, I project a performative role onto the spaces of domestic life and forward the politics of a dissident life not as an oppressed status or inability to act, but as a performative, political art of living. Domestic spaces have been considered political sites of resistance from a feminist point of view,³ sites of consumption and production, and sites of individual desire and expression. But houses have also played important roles in constructing revolutionary ideas by becoming hubs for gatherings and discussions, for the formation of political groups, underground publications, political rehearsals, and the production of necessary tools of dissidence.

The story in this text is real and imaginary, and it resides in a hand-drawn plan, drawn from memory by the inhabitants of a demolished house. The house is real, and its real architectural plans were lost following its demolition. The house was built in a critical time of war and revolution and had undergone different phases of inhabitation. As an investigation on writing architecture, this text is written through layers of writing as sketching on hand-drawn plans. The acts and stories have emerged through the re-writing of spaces and their relation to the contextual politics of the place. The text consists of different layers that extend the spaces of the house, multiply it, mirror it, stretch it beyond its walls, complicate its relations. They animate its elements, bring back to life its demolished walls, windows, and doors and revitalise the stories embedded in each and every element. The house thus

2. Filmer, A. (2008). “Minding the Gap: The Performer in the Wings”. *NTQ*, 24(2) Cambridge University Press. p.159.

3. bell hook’s idea of “homeplace” for example is a rereading of private domesticity as a public act of resistance. She writes: “Despite the brutal reality of racial apartheid, of domination, one’s homeplace was the one site where one could freely confront the issue of humanization, where one could resist.”

Hooks, B. (1999). *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*. Boston, MA: South End Press. p. 42.

creates a world in itself by going deeper and deeper into its spaces. This is not only enacted within the text, but also in the materiality of the text.

The following text includes *fictional conversations*, interrupted by the *scenes*, *secrets* and *manuals* that go on across the stages and in the wings of the (theatre-) house. The stages for the performance of dissidence include: 1. Balcony 2. Stairs 3. Ladder 4. Sudden Room 5. Rooftop. Wings include: 1. Kitchen 2. Storage 3. The underground/basement. Yet from time to time, they interchange their roles. For moments, the kitchen itself suddenly becomes a stage. The complexity and impossibility of exposing the details of a dissident life is exposed in the structure of the text through the method of narration and different modes of writing, thereby complicating a simple house. The text consists of conversations, stories, scenes, lists, manuals, secrets and puzzles.

The sequences of the text are architectural. The text, similar to the drawers of the cabinets in the kitchen, could be opened and reopened and could expose more stories, hidden ones, unknown ones, and mysteries, and the new ones imagined by you, dear reader. Each cabinet, each space, each corner, each detail holds a story, meaning that this written story is just one possible story among many.

You are watching this house from the outside. You are standing on a pavement looking through the iron bars around the house. But you have a map in your hand and several stories to read that help you navigate with your imagination. You are watching a performance that cannot be staged.

Balcony, Storage, Kitchen, Roof

Let's think of the balcony as our *stage*. That would be the most obvious stage in the house. But it is a different balcony in the sense of its location and its use in this house. The balcony hangs over the parking ramp and faces onto the street through an iron bar that separates the ramp from the pavement and the street. The balcony has no railing; it is laid with cement tiles and covered in *dust*.

The storage, as you see in the plan, is a small space *with two doors*: one opens onto the balcony, the other to the kitchen. In order to get into the balcony from the kitchen, you need to pass through the storage, unless you want to jump through the window. The doors are wooden and unpainted. Let's think of the storage as the *wings* of this (theatre) house.

The household's kitchen is the *grand narrative* in the life of a dissident. Soviet kitchens, for example, were the hotbed of dissent culture. When all the public spaces were monitored by the Soviet regime, domestic spaces were the only option for social gatherings. Kitchen tables were therefore the locus of discussions, sharing music, reading books and not only preserving the culture, but also creating it. So "the kitchen became the place where Russian culture kept living, untouched by the regime."⁴ They say that people still did not feel totally secure there, always fearing a possible spy, a neighbour eavesdropping through the walls, or someone among them leaking sensitive or incriminating information. They were afraid of hidden microphones, of telephones, of all the gaps where words, voices, names, activities, images could leak through. They covered the phones with pillows, left the tap water running, and often whispered to prevent any leakage.

But in this house, although the kitchen is still there as a main site of action, the story tends to shift to the storage. We will find out more about it in the drama that unfolds below.

And we will get to the roof at some point.

4. The Kitchen Sisters (2014). "How Soviet Kitchens Became Hotbeds Of Dissent And Culture". *npr*. <<http://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2014/05/27/314961287/how-soviet-kitchens-became-hotbeds-of-dissent-and-culture>> Accessed 21 October 2016.

The House, The Wings, The Balcony, The Dissidents

The Characters:⁵

I: Who narrates

He: Who draws the plans

She: Who recalls the story

She: Who has the luggage

He: Who grows, who dreams, who falls



5. The characters throughout this thesis merge with each other, change gender and move from one place to another. This characterisation in transformation, is distinctive of the dissident character that, despite holding onto fixed identities, is masked and fluid. In this way, the main 'He' and 'She' stand for many dissidents who move around this house and other sites in this thesis. 'I' refers to the narrator; the author also transforms to she or he. The politics of characters in *Writing Dissident Architecture* are discussed further in the concluding chapter, "Fugue: On Writing Dissident Architecture."

Conversation

Part 01

He is looking at the orange trees. The oranges are still green and the all-night rain has washed them bright. Some are perfectly round. Some are distorted. Some have fallen under the tree, having failed to make their way to ripening, young yet rotten. Despite these tiny gestures of death and malfunction, the garden looks fresh and green. He adores the garden. His short grey hair moves slightly in the humid breeze.

The sliding glass door opens. Her perfume has a distinct floral edge and mixes with the scent of the wet garden as she steps onto the veranda. Her long flowered skirt touches the stone floor when she bends to sit down across the table. Steam rises from the teacups as their contents meet the air. He puts on his glasses and mumbles something while drawing the last bits of *the house* plan on a piece of graph paper.

When I ask how he still remembers all the measurements and details of that house, he takes off his glasses, leans back and says:

- I was there with the construction workers almost every day. Checking the construction, as architects would. So I knew the blueprints by heart. You know, I like architecture and construction work, although I never really did that work myself. It was the first project that was dear to me. And then... at some point we had to stop the construction because we ran out of money. War had broken out. And we were both about to lose our jobs. It was not great; a tough time indeed. But at least we could move into a house. It was habitable. There was the roof and walls and windows... and doors to be locked so the kids could feel safe.

He laughs and continues:

- Well... it wasn't that bad. It was a great house even in its incomplete state, but just a tad rough.

She smiles and says:

- Even the walls were unpainted. The plaster was still a bit wet when we

moved in. So we had to wait before we began painting. And the cement floor was uncarpeted. We carpeted the house shortly after we moved in. That was another moment at which we had to be sure of the measurements. And later, for painting the walls, too.

He nods and continues:

- And it was winter. Sanctions. No gas. We could heat only one room. *The rest of the house was as cold as the street.*

She moves a long finger over the plan and says:

- I used to cook in the kitchen in my winter jacket. And the only oil heater we owned could only heat that one room.

She moves her finger to the top corner of the plan and continues:

- That was the only room we lived in during the winters. And at night the kids slept there, and we slept in our own room with hot water bottles. Earlier today I read Svetlana Alexievich's Nobel Prize lecture, where she says: "We had become 'people of war'; being at war or preparing for war".⁶ We had also become people of war, of revolution, of scarcity, of waiting and waiting and waiting.

He makes a mischievous face:

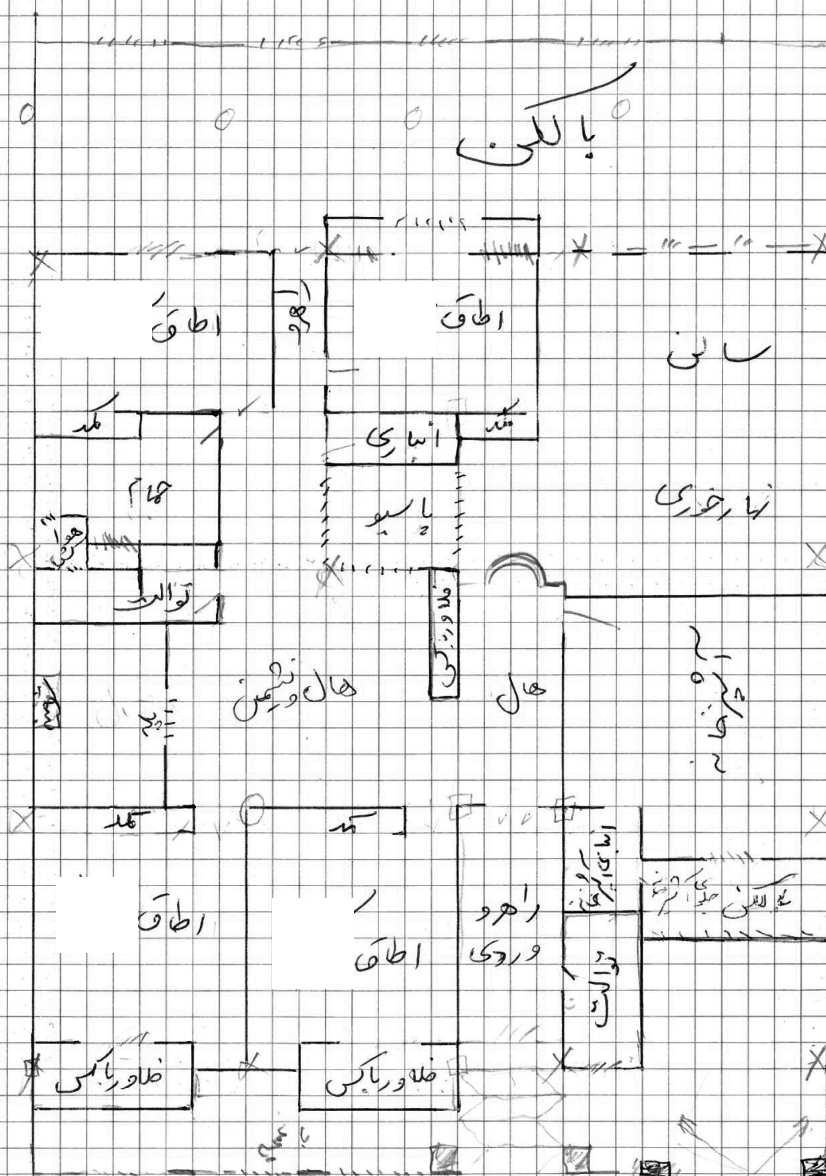
-Aaaaand people of...?

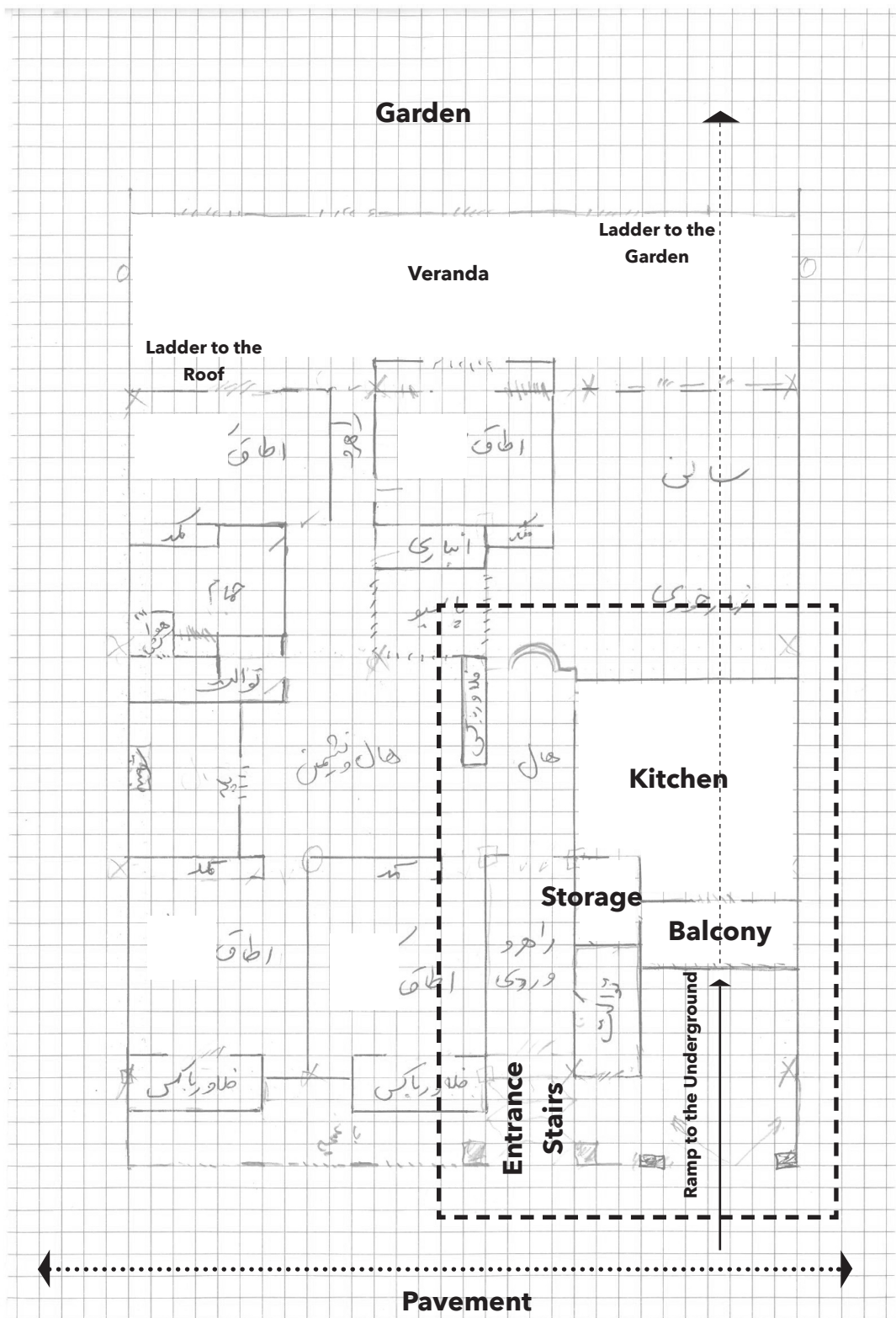
She smiles with the same gesture:

- ...jokes



6. Alexievich, S. (2015). "On the Battle Lost". *Nobelprize.org*.
<https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/2015/alexievich-lecture_en.html> Accessed 17 October 2016.





The Wings

The Kitchen, The Storage, The Underground

● Scene 01

The Kitchen

Shadows stretch to the ceiling, linger there a bit, tremble,
move, slide back down the walls.

Shadows tremble, conjoin, move, flow, leak, tremble and
disappear.

Shadows appear, conjoin, enlarge, diffuse, grow, grow,
grow and abruptly shrink, disappear.

Shadows crawl back, slither down the walls.

Shadows conjoin, move around, break into fragments and
slither down different walls.

Shadows, rustle, rustle, rustle.

Rustle, rustle, rustle, gurgle, rustle, rustle, cutlery tapping
the plates, rustle, whooshing water, water running, foot-
steps, rustle, rustle...
doorbell...

Silence,

whisper, whisper, whisper, whisper, silence, silence, silence,
silence, silence, silence, silence, silence, silence, whisper,
footsteps,
squeak,
clack,
silent darkness.

The kitchen can be seen as epitomizing the sacred sustenance of the family unit. But it can also be considered the most political space in the entire home – itself a microcosm of society – in its relevance to social function and its aesthetics of creation, preservation, and waste.⁷

The kitchen was huge, with pale yellow metal cabinets covering only two sides of the room, brown plastic carpet, and pale yellow tiles on the walls. There was a wide window on the northern side. The window faced the street. Not directly, but there were sequences of other spaces along the way. First there was the balcony, hanging over the parking ramp. Then there was the parking ramp and, depending on your height, you could see part of it between the edge of the balcony and the pavement. Then there were the painted, rustproof bars, chained shut with a big dark lock. Then you could see the pavement and the street.

As with most ordinary kitchens, most of the time there is something cooking slowly on the stove. Steam condenses on the windows, gradually making them opaque. Just when the glass becomes hazy, drops begin to slide down and make irregular patterns. If you stand outside on the sidewalk, you see the faces and figures distorted through the misty window; the figures are masked. The house was not well insulated. The interior climate was not very well under control. And the vapour is the result of the encounter and interaction between the stove, the unfinished quality of the house and the climate outside. Together, the combination of all these dysfunctional elements produces the quality of this house, which allows our story to develop. Our story moves through and

7. Hellman, C. (2004). "The Other American Kitchen: Alternative Domesticity in 1950s Design, Politics, and Fiction". *Americana: The Journal of American Popular Culture*. 3(2). <http://www.americanpopularculture.com/journal/articles/fall_2004/hellman.htm> Accessed 17 November 2016.

leaks through the unfinished joints, elements, poor insulation.

● *Scene 02*

The Kitchen

(A 35-min performance)

It is quarter past 9 in the evening. The kitchen windows are gradually becoming hazy.

It is now ten to 10 in the evening. From the pavement outside, everything in

Inside

the kitchen looks like a dream.

This kitchen was the producer of various sounds. The sounds were made to distract the passer-by from the main activities: running water, a boiling pan, a sewing machine, a steaming safety valve, chewing crispy rice, clacking pot lid, the opening and closing of drawers, rubbing a silver fork on an aluminium pot, a ticking clock, moving a brush in a can of yellow paint, slurping tea, tearing a paper, sneezing, and dropping a spoon in the kitchen sink every forty five minutes.

The sounds from this kitchen were curious; sometimes humorous, sometimes upsetting. It was impossible to connect the sounds with any specific, familiar activity. It sometimes sounded like a jazz concert by amateur musicians, sometimes like a quarrel while a wall was being knocked down, sometimes like the stirring of a spoon in a big metal pot while a very ordinary phrase, like *good morning*, was being uttered repeatedly. It was never exactly this or that sound, but a combination of several. And things became stranger at night, when you could actually see the shadows from the outside. From the pavement, a passer-by could only wonder what was going on when witnessing the shadows of two figures dancing to the sound of a sewing

machine.

And on the stove, there was always something being cooked, to produce the vapour, to make the boiling sound, to spread a smell of life and as part of the pretence that: 'It is an ordinary kitchen.' But the kitchen was also a watchtower and an escape route. It had three openings: one door opened onto a hall, one window opened onto the balcony, one door opened into a storage room that itself opened onto the balcony.

I call the kitchen a workshop for *making* dreams. And the challenge for the workshop was: how to hold on to a *threshold between disguise and exposition, between withdrawal and leakage?*

To put it in a nutshell, it was a workshop for inhabiting a house at the time of few possibilities, and where imagining an alternative life was a great challenge. Instead of abandoning all hope and taking refuge in private spaces and staying silent, the inhabitants were inviting risk into the domestic spaces, to learn how to dance with it. They were transforming the fear of the time into play, dancing and laughter. So the family was constantly collecting tools and materials to make this possible, transforming the house constantly to let other imaginations happen.

Warning 01

This kitchen is not that much about cooking and eating. Don't expect conversations around a dining table, or collective cooking events.

Inside THE Inside

The drawers and cabinets were full of different tools, from kitchen utensils to socks, from medicine to screwdrivers, from blankets to empty wine bottles, from bags of rice to toy trains, from blind dolls to half empty whisky bottles, a violin bow, wrinkled shirts, plant seeds, passports, stationary, expired formula, broken glass bowls, a cracked sofa leg, a distorted wrench, bricks of different sizes next to a chandelier. There were gadgets of different forms, all stacked without a clear order. There were also many boxes named with strange names such as: *letters from a brown shoe, postcards from the snail, bills to be paid by the horse, textbooks of the course: building the stairs, instructions for using a mirror, poems of ascending a ladder* etc., etc. Every drawer was a fiction in itself. Every cabinet was an unrealized novel.⁸

Poem of Ascending a Ladder – 0263

The ladder starts from the edge of the roof and continues upward.
In a state of suspension
One wonders
How to get to the edge of the roof
To start ascending?

And this is a poem.

Cabinet 09

Cabinet 09 is located on the northern wall under the window. It is big, 50 centimetres deep, 60 centimetres wide and 80 centimetres high. It opens and closes with a strong squeaking sound. It makes the loudest noise of all the drawers and cabinet doors of the kitchen. There is one removable shelf inside the cabinet that is hung in the middle.

Inside the cabinet, there is a radio, a bottle of water, some blank A4 papers, some A5 envelopes, a perfume, a wrench, a hammer, a folded old newspaper, a bottle of vinegar, some crooked nails in a dark blue round metal empty crème container, a blanket and a couple of rusted keys hung in a red key holder. The key holder is made of a compact glass with a thin paper inside advertising a Dutch cheese factory.

Puzzle 01

Take cabinet 09 as your site of action. How could you make an escape route through this cabinet?

_____ . You are freed to _____
Take _____ . Remove _____ . Open
The secret of Cabinet 09
Secret 01

Conversation

Part 02

He continues:

- And we kept doing small things in the house, but it was always difficult with the situation... So the house stayed unfinished.



STORY 01

The house stayed unfinished forever and then it was demolished, and a five-storey apartment building took its place. Its basement was earth. Its swimming pool was of soil and brick, with a crumbling wall on its west side. The garden had pine trees, peach trees, blackberry, plum trees, and roses, lilies and jasmines. The two old vines had grown over the south and west walls. The dog strolled in the garden during the days and undertook her mischievous acts at night. The night sounds were the weeping willow sighing in the wind and the dog barking at the ghosts. And he, the youngest, was a skinny boy with big gazing eyes. He would stare at your eyes when you worked in the garden, and at your hands when you talked about how a peach tree stops bearing fruit after five years. On that summer afternoon, he stood on the long veranda, bid farewell to the dog and headed up to the grocery store. He never came back.

Conversation

Part 03

Rain has begun falling faster. The red geraniums are trembling under the raindrops. They look at each other. He says:

- I know what you just remembered. That night...

She stretches her hand to remove a dry leaf from the geraniums and says:

- It was the last time we saw her, wasn't it?

He narrows his eyes while looking in the distance and says:

- I think it was. It was past midnight. She came with a luggage full of "stuff"... you know what I mean... I mean "the books". Where else she could go?

The Stage

The Stairs, The Ladder, The Balcony, The Sudden Room

● Scene 03

The Stairs

As the door opens, the blue light slides down and enlarges over the first,

second,

third,

fourth,

fifth

step,

and drags along

a

silhouette of a body carrying a trash bag.

The silhouette leaves the blue light and is absorbed in the amorphous darkness. Left at the front door, the bag deforms and rustles under its own weight. The silhouette ascends the stairs and leaves the door ajar. Stray cats creep towards the bag. The blue light casts a line of light on the stairs. From the front garden, another silhouette skulks toward the landing between the iron bars and the stairs and ascends the stairs. She is carrying a suitcase. The door closes behind her.

Conversation

Part 04

She says:

- And as soon as he heard her voice, he jumped out of his bed and chased you in his pyjamas. I wonder if he remembers that night. He was five. So he should ...

He continues:

-We both headed down the parking ramp and I unchained the iron door of the basement on the left end, while she was holding the oil lamp in one hand and the suitcase with the other. The door squeaked as I pushed it in. We stepped into the earthen basement. As always, her sense of humour broke the horror of the moment; she whispered: "You could never be a bourgeois, pal!". We dug a hole. He asked her if the books were dead, if that was why we were burying them. And she said: "No ducky, we are making a treasure trove." He said: "Do we make a map?" And she replied: "Yes. We'll draw a map, and put it in a bottle and throw it to the seas. And maybe one day, a sailor will find it in his fishing net... or a storm will bring it back to the shore while you are making a sandcastle in the sun... But then you'll have to throw it back in the sea, because you already know the treasure map, don't you? So that someone else could find it..." And he really took it seriously. I wonder if they ever drew it?

She says:

- Probably yes. Who knows? I remember they were playing and drawing at the breakfast table the next morning, before she kissed us goodbye... It could be that map.



The Wings

The Kitchen, The Storage, The Underground

● Scene 04

The Storage

The storage is dark. Its both doors are closed. A pot
falls
down
and makes a loud noise. But only those in the kitchen would hear the sound.

You, standing on the pavement, would probably not hear anything.

InsidE

Being a kind of pure permeability, infinitely transformable, inherently open to the specificities of whatever concrete it brings into existence, *chora* can have no attributes, no features of its own. Steeped in paradox, its quality is to be quality-less, its defining characteristic that it lacks any defining feature. It functions primarily as the receptacle, the storage point, the locus of nurturance in the transition necessary for the emergence of matter, a kind of womb of material existence, the nurse of becoming, an incubator to ensure the transmission or rather the copying of Forms to produce matter that resembles them.⁹

The storage is a humble place in the story of the house. From an architectural point of view, it is a transitional space, both in the sense of spatial sequences of the house and its function. It is located between the kitchen

and the balcony. In order to get to the balcony one needs to pass through the storage. It is an in-between space that is becoming the main plot in this story. Philosophically speaking, one could call it a *chora*. But it is also a transitional space in the telling of this story. Perhaps I should reformulate my statement: the storage is the *humble main plot* in the story of the house.

The storage is always ignored in the story of the house. Its door is usually closed. People drop things in, pick stuff up, they pass through it to get to the balcony, but no one really stays there. No one talks about it. They talk about the kitchen, the living room, the veranda, the patio, the dining room, the garden, even the basement, but never about the storage. They go in, come out, shut the door. So the door is mostly closed and it is always dark inside. No one even fixes its blown-out light bulb. They keep on forgetting about its life, its problems, its hopes, its worries, its potential stories, its dreams and nightmares. But it contains everything within itself. It continues to live in darkness, inside itself, silent. It listens through its own doors. Looks to the light coming in from the gap under its door. And when the door opens, it collects and collects: food, medicine, dried bread, ladders, candles, toothbrushes, kitchen utensils, light, noise, voices, words, and smells.

The inhabitants do not include the storage in their conversations around the kitchen table, as if it doesn't exist, until it starts to speak itself: CO-LL-A-PSING noise heard from behind the closed door. It is when the stack of stuff can no longer hold, and things fall down from the top of the pile, from the shelves or from the walls. The storage speaks by letting things fall.

The storage is the site of the encounter of incompatible things, where things of different and opposing characteristics are put together. They attract or repel each other, but through this process the site of action or the performing ground is produced. It is a site where not only things that will be necessary in the near or distant future are kept, but also those things that we are unsure of whether to keep or discard. They are somewhere in between useful and useless.

The storage simultaneously presents the past and future. It manifests the excess, the politics of scarcity. It is a site for saving the articles picked up in the time of war. It is a site manifesting fear and uncertainty, but also a hope for life. It is the political site of the house.

*M*_{annual 01}

How to Move a Story from One Plot to Another?

The politics of grand narrative are that it casts light solely on its own importance. It renders what exists in its shadow as trivial or even non-existent. However, in the minor politics, the area in shadows is where stories are constantly constructed and grow from those “cramped spaces”. The question here is how to turn the story from the grand narratives to the ‘minor’ stories of refusal, of dissidence?

Step 01

Write a letter.

Step 02

In the story of the house, to move the story from the kitchen to the storage, one should first fix the lamp. You can find the new light bulbs in a box, on the second shelf, next to the oil lamp in the storage. Inside the box there are two bulbs. Pick the blue* one. Grab the aluminium ladder that is leaning against the left wall and place it under the lamp. Ascend the ladder and replace the blown-out bulb. Descend the ladder, fold it and lean it back to the wall. Switch on the lamp.

** Blue light doesn't produce shadows, and that is why it is used in the wings of theatres: so those waiting in the wings to appear onstage won't cast any shadows, and the audience won't see them. Remember to wear black whenever you want to go to the storage.*

Step 03

Go to the kitchen and open cabinet 08. There is a red sack on the second shelf. Take it and unzip it. There is a pair of black gloves and a black spandex suit. Put them on and go back to the storage. Close the door.

STORY 02

Falling

The fall happened here, on a disappearing staircase that led down an infinite room. It was not more than a year after the Revolution, when we perched on the *building 110 Freedom* with all the others. After everyone descended the temporary stairs of the semi-finished building, I insisted on staying there. You were lost and I was filled with despair. Many things were lost, even that *safety pin*¹⁰ that we used to carry with us. I finally gave up too.

I was in the storage room, searching among the bottles of vinegar, oil, jams, cans of tuna, pasta, the bags of rice that were stacked on orange painted metal shelves. I was looking for that bottle, that, if I recalled correctly, was an ordinary empty bottle of olive oil on the breakfast table. We filled it with red vinegar though. We thought red vinegar was opaque, and that no one would guess there was something inside. We rolled up the map and put it in a plastic bag, sealed it, pushed it into the bottle and filled it with red vinegar. We labelled it: “Red Vinegar/1981” and put it in the deep corner of the shelves in the storage. Then we covered it with other stuff.

As the undamaged part of my memory remembers, there were two ladders in the storage, which had helped the family paint the whole house. One ladder was made of light aluminium, hence unstable and wobbly. The other was heavy, wooden and covered with splotches and splashes of paint, mostly white, but there were some pink spots too. They leant against a wall by a wooden door that opened to a balcony without a railing, which hung over the parking ramp and looked out on the street. The other door of this storage opened to the kitchen. Next to this door there was a rotted first aid kit hanging on the wall; inside there was penicillin powder kept in a saltshaker and a couple of rolled white bandages. The middle shelf of the box showed traces of Betadine that had been poured out; the smell remained in the box.

On the edge of the middle shelf there were a couple of oil lamps emitting a strong smell of oil and a box full of candles that had been lit, birthday candles, half-melted numbers hinting at the past birthdays and ages of each family member; a wish, a blow and applause.

In this room of strange mixture of odours, objects, memories, doubts, fears and hopes, something untimely happened: the event of disappearance. You fell, and while falling you recalled the sound of falling things from behind the storage closed door when you were sitting at the kitchen table.

10. Find the safety pin in the journal *AI-Croquis*; at KTH Library, Main Library, North Gallery, Architecture and Art 720.I.

The Wings

The Kitchen, The Storage, *The Underground*

● Scene 05

The Underground

- Catch me!
(The voice echoes along the vertical tunnel)

The vertical tunnel ended in an open space, a spacious crossroad, with five roads branching out.

The *ueue* of the *Queueueueueueue*

I never decided to wait in the queue, yet I ended up in this maze. I am not waiting for anything special, o

d, so she is last in the queue. There are also some in the middle of the queue

who think they are first. And there are others just next to them w

e. Are there four, or two?

Or is it only one maze w

queues there are here, and who is the first and who is the last. I am not the last, by the way, p how many

am I?

Break and Breach
(the 110 freedom building is becoming a
finished building)

In a blink of an eye, the construction site resumed being a construction site again. I was still perching on the edge of the building, in a dilemma of either staying put or descending as everyone else had. The developer made this easier for me. I had to leave, as a wall was to be built where I had been sitting. The wall, I thought, consisted of layers of different material: bricks placed on top of each other with the mortar, the plaster inside, the cement outside and the white stone, the white façade. That bit of the wall replaced 'I' and 'she' and 'he'. The 'plural I'¹¹. That wall was the outset of the city about to come.

l, or anything at all. I arrived here half an hour ago and there are, as far as I can tell, five queues.

He says he is the first in the queue, yet I thought he was the last. The other one says she has just arrived, s

m who think they are the last ones in the queue: I am wondering how many queues there are here. A

ze where at each moment, at each turn, one feels she is the first or the last. But if I wait in one of these queues, as an experiment, I might be able to understand

11. By Trinh Minh-ha, cited in Pelias, R. J. (2014). *Performance: An Alphabet of Performative Writing*. London & New York: Routledge. p. 14.

● Scene 06

The Underground

The underground was the extension of the garden. There was no wall between the basement and the garden, and the soil had extended into the furthestmost interior walls of the basement. The trees had stretched their roots through the soil into the basement. The rusted metal columns of the house had grown from the earth. There were plants growing in the darkness. Their leaves were blue, were white, were grey. Their leaves were looking for the particles of black darkness and grey dust that were sliding down the column of light, penetrating through the gaps in the brick walls. The plants were growing to the whispers, to the rustle, to those humming noises on the cusp of falling into silence. Their roots were red. But they were not revealing that red; they were keeping it all to themselves. The plants were warm in their roots and cold in their leaves. Yet if you looked closely into their leaves, you could see that the midribs were a slightly pink – or pale red – shade that grew paler in the veins and the small netted veins.

The Wings

The Kitchen, The Storage, The Underground

*M*_{annual 02}

Where to Find the Treasure Map?

Find bottle number 17. Empty the vinegar into the kitchen sink. Try to take that plastic bag out of the bottle, preferably with a pair of needle-nosed pliers. Unzip the bag and take out the map. The map leads you to the Sudden Rooms.

***Warning!!**

Don't break the bottle.

You might need it later.

Conversation

Part 05

He says:

- I held his hand as we walked back through the iron door. She went toward the yard and I asked her to wait until she saw that the bedroom light was on. He was jumping up and down saying: "I will turn the light on" (repeatedly), and then she could come up the ladder.



The Stage

The Stairs, *The Ladder*, *The Balcony*, *The Sudden Room*

There are four ladders in this house: three wooden and one aluminium. Of the three, two are straight ladders and one is foldable. The two straight ones are outside: one between the balcony and the garden, and the other between the balcony and the roof. This balcony is on the other side of the house, overlooking the garden. They are both wobbly, unstable and they shake and make noises when they are ascended or descended from. You could ask someone to hold it for you, or you could take the risk of ascending it by yourself.

There is this rule in the house that when you ascend the ladder from the garden to the balcony; if you are the last one, as soon as you get to the balcony you should push it down so no untrusted person can get to the balcony.

For the ladder between the balcony and the roof there is no such rule. It is always there, leaning against the edge of the roof.

● Scene 07

The Ladder

Clouds appear when passing over the moon. The shadow of the window frame stretches to the furthest wall of the yard. The weeping willow whispers very slowly. The rungs creak under her feet. After the last rung she throws it away. The ladder hits the ground and bounces on its other end. The shadow of the window disappears. Silence.

Poem of Ascending a Ladder—049

(Found in cabinet 03, in the box with the same name)

And next time come from the window,
Break the glass,
Ignore the doors,
Leave the mud inside
Stay
Laugh
Leave
As you leave, laugh.
As you laugh, break through the walls.
Let your laughter echo forever in the room
interrupted by the collapse of the walls.

I close the door. Tape the windows. I
caught it; your *laughter* is trapped!
"The room of laughter", I write down and
start to draw the plans, the sections, the
façades,
a perspective,
where you are about to disappear in the
focal point,
but you don't.
You never do.
Because your laughter is haunted in the
room and has haunted the room.

See? Sometimes you don't even need a ladder.

Secret of the Ladder
There is a secret about the
ladder leaning against the
edge of the roof. The ninth
rung makes a slightly differ-
ent noise when you step on it.

The Stage

The Stairs, The Ladder, The Balcony, The Sudden Room

The Balcony

[...] the balcony is actually something quite remarkable yet invisible. It is the means by which the façade is colonized and humans can float in the air while simply standing. ... They seem uncommon enough to be special.¹²

The balcony is a space for exposition, for exhibition. In its political history, it has been a podium from which rulers, heroes, revolutionaries, kings, dictators and despots wave at masses from these protruded elements from various kinds of buildings; from palaces and institutional buildings to ordinary ones. Perhaps Rem Koolhaas was right when he said: “Without the balcony, the history of the world would have looked completely different.”¹³ This is how the balconies work in major politics. In the Venice Architecture Biennale 2014, the balcony was one of the architectural elements exhibited. It was exhibited through two major manifestations: one as a “micro-political balcony” representing “mass individualism” and used as a platform showing one’s identity. The other was the “macro-political” balcony for the manifestation of dominant power.¹⁴

However, in minor politics and in the politics of dissidence, balconies perform differently. As an extension of the interior living, they could either expose the activities going on inside the houses or conceal them, depending on the situation. They could expose the excess of material objects or activities. They are *micro-stages* for flash-performances, unchoreographed and spontaneous acts, when suddenly the life of the interior *jumps* out into the public. But they could also distract surveillance by means of staging a parallel activity different from what is going on inside. Balconies could offer a platform to be closer to the

12. Horton, G. (2012). “The Indicator: A Brief History of Balconies”. *archdaily*. <<http://www.archdaily.com/268924/the-indicator-a-brief-history-of-balconies>> Accessed 05 April 2017.

13. Wainwright, O. (2014). “Rem Koolhaas’s Venice Biennale will ‘be about architecture, not architects’”. *The Guardian*. <<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/architecture-design-blog/2014/mar/12/rem-koolhaas-venice-biennale-architecture>> Accessed 14 March 2014.

14. van Parys, C. (2014). “The Balcony”. *CedricVanParys*. <<https://www.cedricvanparys.com/my-statement>> Accessed 29 April 2017.

outside, yet with immediate access to the inside. They “balance safety and engagement with the world below”¹⁵, providing the inhabitant a way to keep an eye on the outside. They thus also create a platform for connecting to others or being together while staying at a distance.¹⁶

In the house of dissidents, the balcony is an architectural element that could assist in transforming the dissidence from resistance and withdrawal into a transformative and subversive force by making the appearance and disappearance. A balcony is a fooling element, a fooling space. In this house, when the real performance goes on in the wings and backstage (storage, basement and kitchen), the balcony partially exposes the performance of the dissidents in the house to the random passer-by, but only momentarily and tactically, to protect the dissidents.

Inside

The balcony is the space on the cusp of visibility. It is usually empty, but it leaks the performance, stages it like a flash of light. You step onto the balcony, stand with your hands on the railing and look into the street (remember that there is no railing in this balcony, so you should just *act* as if there is one). You stay there for some minutes and go back to the storage. After a couple of minutes, you step back onto the balcony and:

● Scene 08 *The Leakage*

The iron bars open. The stray cat jumps through the bars. It is silent and a gleam of blue light shines onto the dark deep balcony. It means that the storage door is open. On the balcony the silhouette of a woman can be seen; she is carrying an orange chair with dark green legs. She puts the chair in the middle of the balcony close to the wall, sits cross-legged and rustles the newspaper open. The door on the left side of the balcony is slammed closed. The kitchen curtains close behind her.

15. Stamp, J. (2014). “The Medieval Origin Story of the Balcony”. *Smithsonian*. <<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-origin-story-balcony-180951755/>> Accessed 05 July 2016.

16. See the “Falling (infra)Structures” in the section “Pause”, where the infrastructure as a model of creating collectivity through the politics of minor is discussed.

Conversation

Part 05

He peels an orange and says:

-When do these oranges ripen?

And then, with a sigh, continues:

- The house was under a spell methinks! We could never finish it. It happened several times. We were about to finish it. We managed to get a developer involved. But it never worked. And we had to demolish it. We did demolish it.

I wonder if the unfinished status, the cracks, the gaps that were letting the cold winds in, the chimney that let the mouse in, the crumbling plaster, the plants growing in the basement, were there as channels for the magic, for the spell to crawl in the house, to make it under a spell?

She says:

Dysfunctional melancholy. Melancholic dysfunctions. Dystopian serendipity. Hopeful hopelessness. Uncertainties with opening to...¹⁷



17. This refers to Rebecca Solnit's text on hope in dark times, where she writes: "It is important to say what hope is not: it is not the belief that everything was, is or will be fine. The evidence is all around us of tremendous suffering and destruction. The hope I am interested in is about broad perspectives with specific possibilities, ones that invite or demand that we act. It is also not a sunny everything-is-getting-better narrative, though it may be a counter to the everything-is-getting-worse one. You could call it an account of complexities and uncertainties, with openings." Frontpage (2016). 'Rebecca Solnit on Hope in Dark Times.' *E-flux*. <<http://conversations.e-flux.com/t/rebecca-solnit-on-hope-in-dark-times/4127>> Accessed 17 October 2016.

The Stage

The Stairs, The Ladder, The Balcony, The Sudden Room

The Sudden Room

Inside

How could one describe a room that doesn't exist, and about which no one knows when it comes to existence? Everyone knows that it surely appears, on one moment, on one day or one night. But wasn't it already a description of the room? This room, which will be called a *Suddenroom* from now on, is a room of hopes, laughter, imagination. It is the materialisation of the humorous moments of life, the critical release of laughter, a micro-revolution in the midst of boredom and despair.

● *Scene 09*

The courtyard is not part of the house, but it is part of the 110 Freedom Building, the unfinished building. It is a yard where he has stayed since. The unfinished building is finished now. He has watched the plants grow, waited for the sun to stretch to the far wall, and washed the carpets every year before the end of the winter. His carpet washing is a ritual. He first sets a whole living room in the courtyard, brings out the armchairs, sofa, plants, vases. Then he lays the carpet in the middle of this living room and starts washing it with a wooden snow shovel. He calls this *ritual hospitality without guests*.

● *Scene 10*

It's two in the afternoon. You try to make a piece of music in your head with all the ticking things, rhythms, beats etc. in this waiting room. The marriage didn't work after all. You pretended to be happy for way too long. The air-conditioning unit rattles and leaks into a bucket; its dripping gives another rhythm to this room. You notice some familiar faces that you have encountered during the last days, hollow gazes, dozing, sinking in thoughts

or in intense soliloquy. The chairs and armchairs are fake brown leather, arranged around the hall. The four white doors open and close irregularly. Their handles are golden coloured steel. A clock ticks on the wall. The aluminium-sliding window opens to a backyard, onto which another building also looks. You feel something humorous in this *Marriage & Divorce Office*, and you soon discover that it is actually a drop of sweat rolling down your back that is tickling you. You don't want to grab that newspaper on the glass table in the middle of the waiting room. But you read the headlines from afar while looking at the photo of an orange city: *The Orange City Warns Us To Stay At Home Today*. "Oxygen is orange" you think. It's a tad weird that you should wait all day long for an institution to recognise your falling-out-of-love. You hear the thump of stamps from next door. You make up a game for yourself, guessing which of the stamps are for falling in and which are for falling out. You randomly appoint a hesitation to the falling out. And you count: 74, 75, 76..., 82,... The stamp beats blend with the ticking of the clock, the rattling of the air-conditioning unit, the sound of water running in the backyard. The symphony of (dys)function, of leaking, of failing. You crane your neck and look down. A middle-aged man is washing a carpet. The carpet is flanked by a row of classic style armchairs that are arranged by the cement wall on your left side and in front of the row of armchairs, a row of plant pots on your right side. The man pushes a snow shovel on the surface of the carpet, which is covered with suds, and with each movement you get to see the blue and white flowers on its red background. You sniff at the smell of the dust mixed with water. You direct your attention back to the waiting room, where tens of others are sitting around glumly, and continue: 104, 105, 106. You are about to count the 107th when a room suddenly appears in the middle of the hall:

● *Scene 11*

The Sudden Room is cobalt blue from outside. And inside, no one knows what colour it is because no one can enter this room. You just watch it from outside.

● *Scene 12*

The Sudden Room has a door. The door is locked. You try to open the door. You can't. Act ends here.

● Scene 13

The Sudden Room has a door on its roof. But there is very little space between its roof and the ceiling of the office. You find a ladder in the courtyard, take it here and climb up it and arrive at the roof. You try to squeeze yourself in between the roof and the ceiling. There is no way that you could make it. And even if you could, there would be no chance of opening the door, because the door opens outward and there is almost no space for it to open. And if you could, I would eat my hat.

*M*_{annual 03}

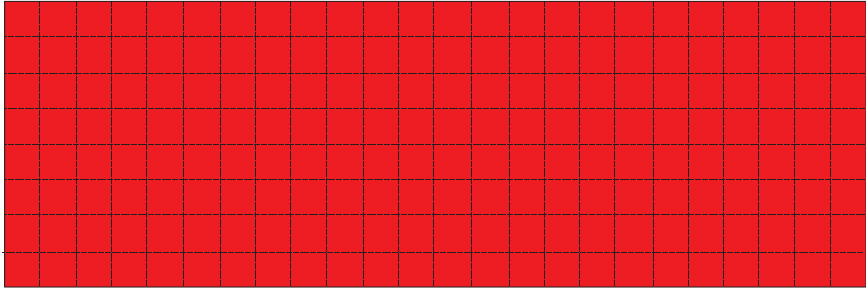
Forget about the institutionalisation of falling out of love and shake a leg. You'll need a bit of elbow grease here. Go downstairs, knock on the nephrologist's office door. Go in. Unfold your ladder and place it in the middle of the waiting room. Go up the ladder. Push on the ceiling. You get into a cobalt blue room. There is a door that you can open. It opens into a long corridor where you'll be immersed in the city noise echoing around you. Keep on walking.

*M*_{annual 04}

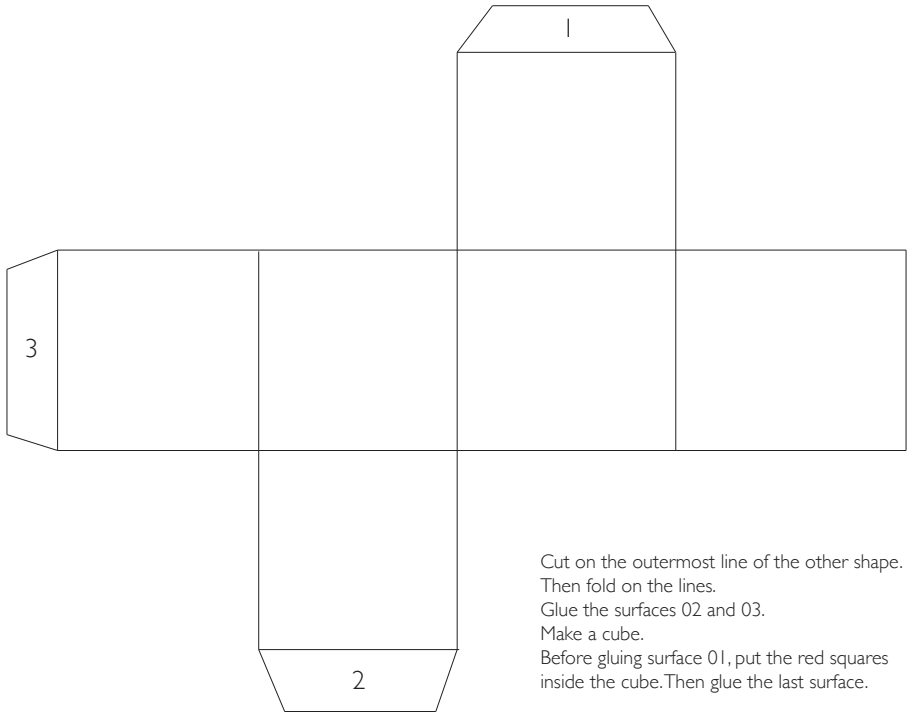
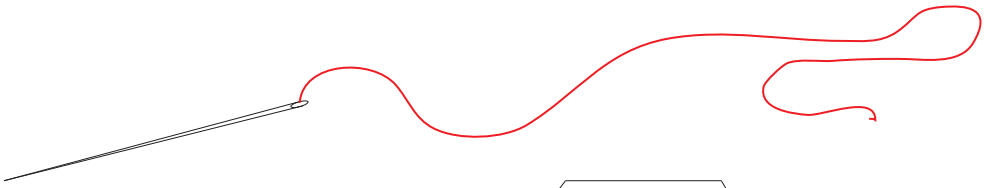
Making a Sudden Room 01

The Sudden Room works like a translating machine. It translates the tragedy to comedy. You can try one type of Sudden Room here while waiting in the Marriage and Divorce Office. First, cut the next page on the dashed-line and follow the instructions.

1. Cut out the red rectangle through the lines. You will have 48 squares. Keep them on one side of your desk.
2. Cut on the outermost line of shape number two. Then fold on the lines. Glue the surfaces 02 and 03. Make a cube.
3. Before gluing surface 01, put the 48 red squares inside the cube. Then glue the last surface.
4. Attach the thread to the side of your choice using the needle. You can remove the needle later or keep it if you wish.
5. Now hold the thread or the needle if you decided not to cut it and rotate the cube in the air.
6. Document what happens.



Cut this red rectangle through the lines. You will have 192 squares



Cut on the outermost line of the other shape.
Then fold on the lines.
Glue the surfaces 02 and 03.
Make a cube.
Before gluing surface 01, put the red squares
inside the cube. Then glue the last surface.

Attach the thread to one side of the cube
by means of that needle. You can remove
the needle later.

Now hold the thread and rotate the cube in the air: