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Dance by Other Means

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Dear readers!

In 2020, the year of the pandemic, the borders between work and life disappeared into thin air. As the Internet flexed its muscles, we turned our homes into offices and conducted Zoom calls from our bedrooms. Our private space became conflated with our workspace—an experiment much earlier carried out by Hugh Hefner, the director of the Playboy empire, whose bed became a “genuine multimedia production platform” from which he controlled everything in his business and his life¹. Not unlike Hefner’s set-up, we saw our lives revolving around a linked-up centre from which we conducted all our activities—work, sports, sleep, play.

¹ “When I was conducting my research into the mansion, I was struck by the fact that Hugh Hefner, one of the richest men on earth, had spent nearly forty years lounging around at home, dressed in pajamas, a bathrobe, and slippers, drinking Pepsis and eating Butterfingers. Hefner directed and produced the largest circulation men’s magazine in the United States without leaving the house, often without leaving his bed. Connected to a telephone, a radio, a stereo, and a video camera, Hefner’s bed was a genuine multimedia production platform.” – Paul B. Preciado, Artforum. <https://www.artforum.com/print/202005/paul-b-preciado-82823> Accessed: 10 Mar 2021.

Nonetheless, under the neoliberal pressure to be productive, the separation between work and life was to be upheld. In March 2020, author and social activist Naomi Klein², rather than perpetuating the divide between the personal and the professional in unassailable conditions, embraced the fusion of the two: in a lecture streamed from her home to thousands, Klein welcomed the interruptions from her son and their dog. She dropped all pretence of an isolated workplace and positioned her role of mother, often relegated to the shadows of invisible care work, as both valid and valuable.

It is an audacious move, like the one Klein exercised here, to allow the personal to be visible in the workplace. At the risk of being considered unprofessional, we refrain from revealing different sides to ourselves and exposing our responsibilities, needs and desires—even in the field of contemporary dance and performance, where the borders between work and life have always been less clear-cut. Now, in these times of changing work environments and ethics, an all-embracing approach towards our work and professions is called for: perhaps it is by breaking through these neoliberal illusions and by channeling the personal that we can open up new possibilities for working together.

2 Naomi Klein, *How to Beat Coronavirus Capitalism*, Haymarket Books, streamed live on Mar 26, 2020, 124,333 views <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5lxwLHRKaB0&t=603s> Last opened: 10 Mar2021.

In Berlin's contemporary dance landscape of 2020, a new architectural and artistic project for alternative working structures was born. Located on the grounds of Uferstudios in Berlin Wedding, the Heizhaus—previously the electrical power station on the former industrial site—was renovated and opened. The site is run by the PSR (Performance Situation Room) collective, a group of seven Berlin-based artists and cultural workers who develop and initiate artistic-social projects that 'fuel' the links between the dance scene and the networks and communities of the surrounding area³. The first of these projects, OUR DANCE, was a research and laboratory series that extended dance and choreography into other fields and transformed established modes of production.

As part of the OURDANCE project, dramaturge and writer Mila Pavićević created a unique setting in which to delve deeper into her profession: dramaturgy. Having worked in the field for many years, she had grown a deep curiosity for the lives, biographies and career paths of her peers. She wished to unpick the elusive role of the dramaturge by placing it in relation to the domains and the people that shape it. Mila invited fellow dramaturges, choreographers and artists, among them close collaborators as well as

3 Performance Situation Room are: Lea Martini, Sheena McGrandles, Modjgan Hashemian, Stefan Hölscher, Mila Pavićević, Juli Reinartz and Simone Willeit.

newly established connections, to join her at the Heizhaus and together they set out to explore their ways and reasons to practice dramaturgy with her residency *Dance by Other Means*.

Mila started the residency by exchanging letters with her guests. From the outset, these letters were of an informal nature: the participants revealed their different outlooks on dramaturgy and shared stories, such as the struggle of describing or explaining it to an outside world. Miriam Beike compared the role of the dramaturge to that of a double bass player⁴, who, playing in the background, holds the invisible strings to the performance. Perhaps dramaturgy could best be understood as a “queer” profession, “not in a gender-queer way, but in a definition-queer way”⁵ as Jasna Žmak wrote.

As well as speaking lucidly about dramaturgy and its complex entanglements, Mila was not afraid to address the framework of the residency and how it could be interpreted

4 “As the double bass player who is not only the mediator between the rhythm and melody section of the jazz band but also brings in their own melody and understanding of the rhythm, the dramaturge holds the threads of the performance in their hand. A dramaturge listens and observes, serving the logic of the piece.” - Miriam Beike.

5 “Not so long ago I wrote a text about how *queer* dramaturgy actually is, but not in a gender-queer way, but in a definition-queer way.” - Jasna Žmak.

as a form of networking⁶. As elaborated by Jacob Kovner in his text, networking in the neoliberal economy is driven by an “overwhelming monotony of nearly identical desires”⁷. But, by naming these underlying desires and those that may have been assumed by her guests, Mila created a level of transparency that rendered the professional motivations of the residency accessible, open and available as discursive material.

Venturing further outside of the conventions of dramaturgy, the participants explored how dramaturgical devices could be applied not only to art, but also to life. In his text in this publication, Diego Agulló advocates for dramaturgy “to embrace an equivocal approach to life”, which would allow for “contradictions and discontinuity (simultaneous multiple realities)”⁸ to coexist. He proposes to use dramaturgical methods as a means to direct and

6 In her letter to Lee Meir, Mila addressed the fact that Lee might think her invitation to join the residency was an attempt at networking.

7 “Desire permeates the conferences, but nearly nobody gets what they want, because the overwhelming monotony of nearly identical wishes creates a monolithic order. The togetherness of the event is dominated by one set of values, governed by supply, demand and shortage.” - Jacob Peter Kovner

8 “Dramaturgy needs to take care of paradox as well and to embrace an equivocal approach to life, allowing for contradictions and discontinuity (simultaneous multiple realities), instead of being in defence of continuity, causality and logical consistency.” - Diego Agulló.

curate our daily routines. This would entail a “bidirectional process” of delineating a safe comfort zone and taking risks outside of that, of moving in and out from a stable centre. In essence, he considers dramaturgy as a daily practice.

Over the previous decades, the field of dance and performance has seen many practices emerge that, instead of focusing on goal-oriented production (such as the creation of a dance piece), opt for open-ended research. These practices embody a “pro-active”⁹ rather than a productive approach to dance and emphasise process over product. Similarly, dramaturgy considered as a practice and a transferable process, allows for new freedoms to take root: could dramaturgical tools be applied beyond the specialized role of the dramaturge? Could dramaturgy be more broadly conceived as “an artistic form of ethics”¹⁰

⁹ “Namely, the goal of practice is not to produce (products), it is an action that has a goal in itself, although that action may result with various results and consequences. So, instead of being productive, the practice is ‘pro-active’” – Ana Vujanović with Ellen Söderhult, *Movement Research as a Performance Practice*, in *MOVEMENT RESEARCH*, Mårten Spångberg, 2018, p. 359.

¹⁰ “But if we look at dramaturgy not as a profession but as a practice that has moved away from the context of art and entered the domain of life, then it becomes an artistic form of ethics (in the sense of ‘care of the self’). To say ‘the dramaturgy of my life’ means that there is a practice that takes care of *why I am living in the way I do*. Instead of searching for ways of enacting and embodying *on the stage*, dramaturgy now searches for ways of embodying ethics in everyday life.” - Diego Agulló.

or, within the increasingly plastic confines of our working structures, as a practice of self-care?

During Mila’s residency, the invited participants Diego Agulló, Miriam Beike, Jacob Kovner, Sophia New, Kirsten Maar, Sergiu Matis, Sebastian Matthias, Lee Méir, Goran Sergej Pristaš and Jasna Jasna Žmak explored dramaturgy in its broadest sense, dealing with questions of aesthetics and ethics, of sharing and setting boundaries, of collaboration, of commitment, of rest. They considered the dramaturgy of not only their art but also of their lives, they discussed their relationships with colleagues, collaborators, romantic partners, and confronted the intertwining of their career paths and their personal narratives. With this publication, consisting of texts written by the participants after their time together, they invite you, dear reader, into their process and offer their reflections on a profession that, like life, keeps on moving.

Letters

Mila Pavićević
Goran Sergej Pristaš
Sergiu Matis
Sophia New
Jasna Jasna Žmak
Lee Méir
Kirsten Maar

Berlin, 1 March 2021

Dear reader,

First a disclaimer is in order. This book was supposed to be a performance lecture, performed by a group of practitioners who entered the field of contemporary dance through their affiliation with other fields; especially dramaturgy, theory and philosophy, but also visual arts, theatre and performing arts, writing and martial arts. The choice of collaborators was very random as well as very personal, in the sense that it was driven by my curiosity about certain people and their practices, as well as already established relationships and history between us. We met at Studio 16, in the Uferstudios in Berlin, in the summer of 2020, over different periods of time and through different media. And if ongoing circumstances hadn't stopped us, mainly the world COVID-19 pandemic, we would be dancing in front of you instead of presenting this book.

In hindsight, I realise that the circumstances

did me a favour by leaving me in the realm of the written word. In this era of adaptability of formats and expansion of performances in digital realms, as well as years of practising dramaturgy and collaboration in different contexts, I almost feel like I should re-claim the solitude of writing as my primary practice. There is of course a danger that in the contemporary dance scene in Berlin, overly saturated as it is with dance discourse, there is barely any audience left that would approach yet another publication on dramaturgy with curiosity. Also, I tried not to fall into the trap of wallowing in complaints about the position of the *poor dramaturge*, which has actually gained a lot of power since the 2000s, becoming a gatekeeper of discourse and of institutions and occupying the role of curator. But nevertheless, the first lesson that the pandemic taught me in regard to this publication, is that dramaturgy itself should not be exoticised. We shouldn't make it more performative for the sake of appearances—even if it might leave us at the very end with yet another publication about dramaturgy, which very few may want to read. Anyway, for me, dramaturgy is this creature, this thing with a hundred eyes and a slightly curved spine that sits in the backstage of theatres and rehearsal spaces, discerning structures and patterns, only to come home to write



another application, to curate, to host, to mediate, to teach, to produce, to write an article, to feed back, to coordinate, to take care of projects and the people involved. From that perspective, there is seemingly nothing sexy or appealing about dramaturgy yet still, I am in love with her. And this is why I find it essential to make another publication about dramaturgy. Although this letter is addressed to you, dear reader, it is my personal letter to dramaturgy as well.

When I started my residency however, I was very frustrated with dramaturgy. At this point in my career, being a mid-life dramaturge going steady with a couple of Berlin-based choreographers from the independent dance scene, I started to tire of dramaturgy. The same kind of *tiredness of* and *with* dramaturgy that Jasna Jasna Žmak speaks of in her letter to me. We both probably share the same exhaustion and frustration when it comes to explaining what we do, why we do it, and finally how we do it. The very same thing that brought us to the field of dramaturgy: its open definition, its malleability in different contexts, as well as the distant position of dramaturgy in the dance field, far away from conservative macho theatre in Croatia, where I started at 22 years old, all made dramaturgy appealing at the time, or at least made her seem the lesser of the evil choices. But

now, when attempts to redefine dramaturgy fall into redundant, self-serving loops and its malleability provides a platform for the commodification of the arts (reinvention of new formats with limited resources). When theatres in Berlin don't seem that evil now I am 32—or at least seem just as macho as the independent dance scene, the questions remain: Why do we still have to explain? Why do I start my text with a disclaimer instead of manifesto? Am I interested in another definition of something that is already institutionalized with so many labels? Labels come in handy when they make our profession more versatile and therefore more desirable in the art markets. As a dramaturge I hardly face the same amount of pressure to chase every project grant that a choreographer my age might have to in order to make her living. Although I too developed a taste for self-definitions and explanations—I can now say that I am sick of them. Because I also have a steady job now, writing a PhD on dramaturgy, I can afford to be sick of them. Maybe this is why I can allow this letter to be more personal and intimate—most inappropriate for a serious dramaturge!

Since 2017 I have developed a practice of writing love letters. It was a private practice—connected to my relatively unstable and turbulent love life

and the fact that I was trying to keep connections between Berlin and Zagreb for an unreasonable amount of time. These turbulences were mostly internal. My love letters remained unsent or for the lack of a more appropriate addressee, were redirected towards friends and choreographers as art objects. They found their final resting place in projects, for example in Sebastian Matthias's XOXO, premiered in 2019 in K3, Hamburg. One of the very first love letters was redirected to Sergiu Matis during our research residency in Dubrovnik, my home town, in 2017 after which we continued writing letters to each other. What I realized during this process was not necessarily how dramaturgy could be implemented in one's personal life, as some of the texts in this publication suggest (in my opinion a valid if rather unrealistic aspiration), but how the form of the love letter can contain or provoke a potential for unravelling concepts when it comes to the complicated relationship between dramaturgy, work and dance. This residency taught me that dramaturgy is always personal and that it can learn from individual biographies, life trajectories and from observing the logic of how we make choices. It also taught me that the psychology that somehow remains outside the discourse comes into play more often than



we care to admit. Personally, I was never interested in exploring the intersection between life and art, because I always thought that it already had its place in history. Somehow due to circumstances however, I found myself at that intersection. The question for me was how can dramaturgy learn from its context, including the biographical and personal, not in order to improve, repair or heal the biographical, but to open new perspectives on dramaturgy. Referring back to the question of what we do as dramaturges, how we do it and why we do it, I realized that the first two questions, having to do with definitions, are minor or at least far less relevant than the last one. Because the question “why” ultimately addresses our personal and intimate interest in a vague and disparate matter, as well as encompassing the context in which work, with whom we work, and what kind of ethics we exercise within these conditions.

Following my interest in love genres further as well my ongoing fascination for “cheap” thrills (cheap in the sense that they are printed on low quality paper and taken to the beach, toilet or metro, or screened on Netflix during holidays), I took a closer look at the *genre* of romantic comedies. Most romantic comedies have similar dramaturgy, there is a rule book, a know-how, when it comes to getting a guy/

girl. The order of events is already prescribed, and you can relax into it by following it while napping on the couch or cooking or still thinking about an unfinished task that is long overdue. Analogically, borrowing the tools from romantic comedies, I might claim that my time of being in love with dramaturgy could offer such a rulebook. At the beginning of this process, I somehow naively thought that this could be done. The only semi-conclusion about my long-term relationship with dramaturgy is that I am getting more confident in the not-knowing. Sometimes I don’t know what dramaturgy wants, what it needs and how it manifests, but I am getting more and more of a sense of what it doesn’t want. So instead of finishing this letter with some kind of conclusion—a legitimation for a very dissonant collection of text with very few interconnections, I give you, dear reader, without further explanation or disclaimers, my personal manifesto. It is my collection of DON’Ts that I have repeated many times over the years. Although I still sometimes contradict them, I firmly believe that both dramaturgy and dramaturge and all other parties involved could definitely benefit from applying them.

1. Don't be a friend in the work space.
2. Don't be an *agent provocateur* in the rehearsal and a crisis manager afterwards.
3. Don't advocate for the work even when this is explicitly expected of you.
4. Don't be reckless with references.
5. Don't be embarrassed by your stationary position and therefore feel obliged to take part in warm-ups, if you don't feel like it.
6. Don't deny language as your medium but be aware of the power and impact of your words.
7. Don't explain what you do to a new colleague or a host. Let the choreographer or the person who invited you make the effort this time.
8. Don't be a hard-working dramaturge. Don't be available 24/7, just because you can still talk (or rather listen) while doing the dishes.
9. Don't write the programme notes if you can help it.
10. Don't be afraid to be exposed.

Zagreb, 9 February 2021

Dear Mila,

It doesn't seem that so much time has passed since our last meeting and conversation, and yet we can already enumerate several political defeats in the communities we live in, a pandemic that has landed us into a multiverse of simultaneous scenarios of unpredictable outcomes and earthquakes so strong that they cannot even be internalized as a trauma. As a child, I experienced two devastating earthquakes in Banja Luka and I thought that that was enough for one's lifetime. Now, after two more, I know that they do not even happen in the measure of human life, a measure which could fit our traumatic capacities. These tremors are caesuras in the poetic line of the life of matter. Immersed in the matter's score, we catch our breath in its tacets, but we are not the authors of the score. We can't boast of knowing either its rhythm nor the score's code. The author is apparently some *thing*, something in the earth, some uncreated human, and in

front of us is a time when we will have to learn how to execute their choreography.

When we were envisioning an Institute for Rhythmanalysis in Dubrovnik a couple of years ago, it never occurred to us that such a correction of rhythm as we are experiencing today was possible. A few weeks ago I was in Dubrovnik, just before the last lockdown and what seemed impossible to us became a reality—people living under the winter sun, listening to the wind, bathing in the December sea... Dubrovnik has become affordable, even the most expensive restaurants deliver food at provincial prices. In the midst of the usually overcrowded Christmas holidays, that city ceased to be a theatre, a public fair, because there were no more spectators. The great apparatus of tourism ceased to reproduce both the images of the city and the presence of their spectators and turned it into a shelter from which people emerge like meerkats, standing on their hind legs and looking out over the city walls—for the sun, the sea, the smell of oranges. The only thing that alienated this natural geographic scene were face masks.

And tell me, before that yet-uncreated human woke up, could you imagine that, with earthquakes and viruses, the concept of a deadline would be shattered and emptied overnight and that audience

numbers would no longer be the main evaluation criterion?

There was never less activity, and never more simultaneous planning. One might say, time to think. Personally, I never knew how to sit in the dark and contemplate things. Experiment, theatre, discussion, teaching, all these are rehearsals of thinking by other means and now that they have been reduced to a minimum, some read or written piece of poetry, work in a political ZOOM cell and even this letter, all help me to think through matter. And the same questions keep coming back to me—how not to go back to where we were before the pandemic, how to deactivate values that were normalized or that normalized the previous reality, and what does dramaturgy have to do with that? It all seems impossible and countless arguments will be made for the impossibility. But I believe in what John Cage believed when he wrote the Freeman Etudes - in difficult times, when everything seems impossible, we need to make the impossible practical, to resist the doom of the blinding clarity of how capitalism works and challenge the transparency of impossibility. Such impossible gestures will, in the worst case, create a new language of impossibility.

We have discussed countless times the role of art in the political transformation of society, and



I remember the *aporias* of your graduate project (in 2015 at the Academy of Dramatic Arts Zagreb) that had the materialist theory of dance at its core. However, this caesura, this penetration of the perspective of the uncreated human has forced me to make a few thoughts at least axiomatically true, for as Adorno said, “True thoughts are those alone which do not understand themselves.”

1. I will hold to the belief that political representationism in art smothers politics (Althusser once already concluded this) and opens up public space to reactionism. Reportage art incorporates the linguistic structure of investigative journalism into society, and political intervention in reality does not transcend the syntax of information.

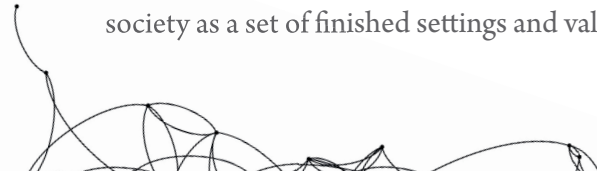
2. The prevailing discourse on praxis and practices and the accompanying reduction of artistic work to labour precludes a discussion of the poetic potential of art, the potential of art to put something into existence (I also wrote something about this in *Exploded Gaze*).

3. There is always a gesture on the membrane that mirrors *praxis* and *poiesis*, our acts that make art and

production by art, and the question is what is the gesture of practising the impossible in the matter, in a problem or in “our struggle”?

I began to realize that if I wanted to avoid the closures of political representationism, I had to separate organizational engagement in politics from my art practice. Involvement in the organization of a new left-green political platform *Možemo!* in Zagreb has resulted in a more concrete political engagement with certain issues related to the problem of values, which are constitutive for our political and cultural gestures. The political process of this platform is not the accumulation of values but their determination. However, values are not born out of themselves. Macherey’s reading of Marx’s *Capital* showed that value relations should be produced, and that this relation of expression is, “materially realized, in a gesture reminiscent of that of experimentation.”

Value is, therefore, constructed, it is a concept. As the recently deceased David Graeber (another loss in the infinity of last year’s losses) wrote, “value is the way actions become meaningful to the actors by being placed in some larger social whole, real or imaginary”, and the precondition is not to understand society as a set of finished settings and values, but as



in a sense always an active project or set of projects. My engagement in *Možemo!* might make sense as long as that political process is set towards the dynamic understanding of society.

What can dramaturgy do in the construction of value? I'm not sure I'm interested in that answer, nor am I sure that I'm interested in how value is produced in an artistic gesture, because value is always tied to meaning. I do not want to reduce dramaturgy to the practice of production of meaning, but to as its name suggests, the work of drama, to the question of how does drama, how does work, work? So I want to go back to a work of art as a work, as a drama (not a play) that always works, that is being-at-work. What makes a work of art a gesture, apart from being-at-work (Greek: *energeia*), is that it is always 'being between' (Latin: *inter-esse*) action and production, known and unknown, fact and impossibility. Whether we view this gesture as physical, positional or an act of imagination, the primary question to be asked is how does this gesture work, what kind of experiment is it in a larger social whole? Gestures are metastabilities in which a certain energy is brought to an edge, where it is not yet unstable, but is subject to a certain regime of interest, a set of conditions that define the field of the problem. An artistic gesture that aims to practice

the impossible, attempts at shifting the regime of interests and rendering a new problem visible. The shifting of regimes of interest produces problems that are trans-individual, de-centred, producing new stances (new modes of existence), new *Zustände*, even di-stances, which is to say, configurations that are not simply stable or self-contained but above all *relational*, determined (as Samuel Weber would say) by the *tension* of its *ex-tension*, by its relation to that which it has interrupted and from which it has separated itself.

In such a set of dynamics of interest (*inter-esse*), the question is not what our gesture is or represents, but what it has the potential to become or more precisely, how it opens up the potential for becoming in conditions determined by impossibility.

To that extent, from a dramaturgical perspective, the key question is not how to produce value, how to produce meaning, but how such a production of values works, how it entangles other social circuits and alongside other actors. Dramaturgy, therefore, will not deal with values but with the valences of the work. Art that, in the field of values, experiments with the valences of a particular gesture is an art that changes the regime of interest. The regime of interest that renders valences visible opens up problems of the combinatorial power of the work, its potential to unite,

react, interact or simply die in a social whole.

In the dance with the yet-uncreated human, the question arises as to how to occupy their perspective, how to look from the matter. While the world is illuminated only by the light of catastrophe, the view from matter seeks another light, the light of redemption that Adorno wrote about in the finale of his *Minima Moralia*. That view is impossible because,

...it presupposes a standpoint removed, even though by a hair's breadth, from the scope of existence, whereas we know well that any possible knowledge must not only be first wrested from what is, if it shall hold good, but is also marked, for this very reason, by the same distortion and indigence which it seeks to escape.

However, isn't that light, the messianic light of redemption the only light we operate within theatre? Isn't the practice of time as the one that remains (until the end of a performance, until the end of the world), a training in the construction of the experience of time? Every gesture of practising the impossibility of taking the *post-hoc* position toward catastrophe, brings us closer to comprehending the impossibility for the sake of a possibility. If nothing else, it brings us closer to the possibility of losing the fear of the end of the

time-picture based on the principle of possession and irreparable loss.

I recently drove through the woods along the border with Slovenia. The border is incised by a small river that, out of boredom, pushes the two states aside bit by bit. Along the river there are a number of green hideaways where in the spring, excursionists burn various types of meat, improvising an epic return to nature. Plato observed somewhere that Homer's heroes preferred spit roasting their meat to fishing or cooking. The epic rhythm cannot stand the clanging of pots. Some cottages were built along the river, mostly in a very inoffensive forest style, and on sunny days, the bling of the razor wire, placed on the Slovenian side along the entire length of the border, ups the excitement. The flash that passes through the bushes, past the cottage courtyards, across the tributaries and among the trees, is the glow of European security. A refuge in nature surrounded by safety wire is the pastoral (of) care of modern Europe. At night, when the spotlights of the catastrophe are swallowed by darkness, a few more fireflies will flash by on their way to their own extinction. Their luminous gestures will not make the way through the wire visible, but the passage to the disaster will be recorded. The intersection of that passage and the flow of the river is our next stage.

Unreservedly yours,

Sergej

P.S.

I know that you'll ask me for footnotes, but I would prefer to suggest reading the whole books:

Adorno, Theodor W. *Minima Moralia: Reflections On A Damaged Life*. Verso, 2005.

Althusser, L., Balibar, E., Establet, R., Ranciere, J., & Macherey, P. (2019). *Reading Capital*.

Graeber, David. *Toward An Anthropological Theory Of Value: The False Coin Of Our Own Dreams*. Springer, 2001.

Kostelanetz, Richard, and John Cage. *Conversing with Cage*. Psychology Press, 2003.

Weber, Samuel. *Benjamin's-Abilities*. Harvard University Press, 2009.

Sergiu Matis

Berlin, 2 February 2019¹

Dear Mila,

Recently I was talking to Paolo (you met him at Möbel Olfe the night before you left Berlin) about re-constructions and re-visitations (which aren't quite the same as responses, reactions or replies but still have this 're', omnipresent in current cultural politics, especially in dance). I said something like, "If I'm walking through a museum, I won't be the one bowing in front of the old masters (or taking the camera out for a quick picture). I'll be the one attempting to vandalise their work!" It was more of a politico-philosophical sort of polemic statement. I'm not that violent.

Do you think it's because I'm Romanian, and "our heroes" and "national poets" always have a dodgy side? Until recently I thought I was beyond that sort of identification. I was even trying to hide my nationality.

¹ Letter exchange initiated by Astrid Kaminski and Franz Anton Cramer in the frame of "Letters of..." presented at HAU and Volksbühne Berlin.




There was quite a bit of shame attached to it. You know I secretly wanted to be French—LOL. I wanted to think I was European, or even crazier: a citizen of the world! Now I'd rather be a globally-oriented citizen.

Lately I was reminded, though, that I'm Romanian and as an Eastern European, like you, we have quite a different perspective on dance and dance history from Western Europeans and even more so from North Americans. So pretty much all modern / postmodern and contemporary dance is something I've learnt, but it arrived in ballet schools in the Eastern Bloc (mostly on VHS tapes) from the West after '89. I learnt Béjart and Cunningham choreographies from video tapes. That was quite a headache: a lot of rewinding and slow-motion watching, to be able to copy those choreographies. Nobody told us how to do it properly. We watched it in the video room then went back to the ballet studio to try to reproduce what we'd just seen. The missing movements that the camera didn't capture due to close ups or camera movement and so on, were replaced by the "modern" dance teachers or by us. Those were my favourite parts. The missing images! The parts that we had to reimagine to link them with the documented parts. But you know that already.

Maybe the fact that I grew up in that peripheral

Europe (where only ballet and folk dances had continuity, tradition and history) slightly warps my relation to Western modern dance and I can afford to say disrespectful things (although I love the fact that all those techniques and styles entered my body and still occupy it) because it entered the periphery as a Western product, somehow symbolising this "new freedom" that we just swallowed, admired and adopted—without much criticism at the time. Also, I've lived in Germany since 1999, so I'm fully immersed in Western contemporary dance. But lately my roots have slowly started to become more and more visible, for many reasons.

These thoughts made me think of that time when you said that your love for theatre maybe, just maybe, wouldn't have ended so abruptly, if you had been born in Berlin and had access to German theatre as a native speaker of German. Then I thought that in that parallel universe we wouldn't have met, so I was even happier that our paths crossed in this one. But for the sake of speculation (as we often both had to imagine empowering fictitious pasts), in my mind even in that parallel universe we would have met—most probably at Möbel Olfe. You would have ended up as a dramaturge at the Gorki Theatre and somehow you would still have an interest in Eastern Europe. As



an East Berliner of course, it would only be natural. We would end up talking, in this smoky bar, about my father, who even in that parallel universe would end up playing a bastard clarinet (called “taragot” in Romanian) in a gypsy band. Then I’d sing a few Roma songs—and here it is, the project we’d end up doing together in a parallel universe my dear! I’d end up dragging my Roma family to Berlin for a show at the Gorki Theatre, curated by you. But in this universe things are somehow easier. We’ve known each other for more than 7 years now, so there is no need for the Fates to intervene in weaving our paths together, which by now are beautifully interwoven.

I also told Paolo that I’d rather speculate about the work / choreographies of a non-existent Soviet or Romanian choreographer from the “golden age” than look again at the work of (for instance) Cunningham. I think the mental exercise of research or let’s say forgery of a person like that would be way more interesting. But that’s just me. Nothing against Cunningham. It’s just that he’s got plenty of worshippers at his shrine already. No need for another one, right?

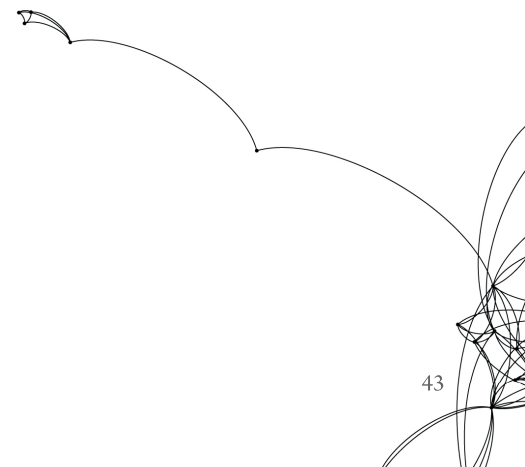
The lack of documentation or simply the absence of dance performances other than ballet, cabaret and folk dance in Romania, made me think (or fantasise)

about radical choreographers who were censored or forbidden for their performances during Ceaușescu’s regime. It started almost as a joke, also of course inspired by all the research that’s going on in Germany about “forgotten” dance makers. I started faking obscure Romanian and Moldavian choreographer identities. I had to invent my “background” (my own Mary Wigmans), or speculate about a past that could have been but didn’t make it into the history books or into the newspapers of the time, which were fully in the control of the Party.

Looking forward to seeing you soon and curious about your reactions when you see Manon, Martin and me practice “data forging” in motion.

Love,

Sergiu



Berlin, 22 June 2020

Dear Mila,

I remember the morning we met 7 years ago in Helsinki. I think you were there when I organised an elaborate performative introduction with the students. I felt a bit silly to make them put so much effort in when no one else did such an extensive introduction. What I still find so great is that out of that exchange, your collaboration with Sergiu Matis (then an MA SODA Student) began and continues to this day.

I think in 2013 there were 4 of you who came as dramaturgy students with Sergej Pristaš. In Britain, dramaturgy is seen as quite a 'European' thing which means that it was both considered 'over there' in sense of not belonging to the British theatre landscape (even when we were part of the EU), but at the same time, there is a fascination, with it being somehow 'cool' and 'enviable'. I think the envy comes from a better funding system for state theatres, in which there are more positions that take care of productions. I wonder if you

consider dramaturgy to be a caring role? The curator of the production? The outside eye and inside ear? Would you say that you are invited to a production because of the knowledge that you possess in the field and of the specificity of what the maker wants to pursue?

Being a dramaturge in the dance field also seems to require the ability not to be intimidated by creating a language to talk about movement. How did you practice finding a language to talk about and refer to dance? Many people find this intimidating, claiming they don't have the language to interpret or reflect on movement. In the feedback culture around performance making, often the simple attempt to describe what one sees is a starting point. There one is already confronted with all the proscribed spectator habits and personal preferences.

We spoke in March about the 'imposter' syndrome of entering the dance field as someone not trained in dance or dance studies but rather an outsider. I am increasingly coming to the conclusion that the best strategy is just to own this 'outsider status'. It is often precisely this reason that people want an outsider from another discipline to challenge and reflect on the work they are making. It takes guts to say you don't know the references or have language to

relate to what you have seen. Do you still say you don't know? Is there a pressure on you to always have an opinion? Do you say you need time to respond? I was thinking about the fact that people from completely outside the field of independent dance and theatre are often baffled that I teach at a dance school when I am neither a dancer, nor a choreographer. How do you deal with the question of your position as a dramaturge predominantly working with dancers?

I am also trying to touch on the fact that the dance scene has opened up so much in the last 30 years that they even let people like us in! If one was not a spectator of contemporary dance one might not know that expectations around a dance production have changed dramatically. How do you handle or describe that shift? Or that it is common for dancers to use text too?

To lastly return to the present moment, in which seeing live dance is only happening in contexts outside of theatres or online. How can we use our skills as viewers in this new landscape? Attention has changed, the thresholds of attention are much more limited online, yet the wealth of online viewing is so vast that one can easily get lost in a mode of consumption. Do you still find 'live' work to be the mode where you are able to be more generous and attentive? At the same

time I am ashamed to say, I don't miss going to the theatre as much as I thought I would—it has a strong social aspect that I miss but at the same time it has been nice not to constantly be struggling with the 'fear of missing out' and embrace 'the joy of missing out' for a bit.

Curious to find out more about how things are for you.

Warm wishes,

Sophia

Lee Méir

Berlin, 29 June 2020

Dear Mila,

Thank you for inviting me to share this week with you at Heizhaus, without knowing me very well. I always like meeting people this way (sharing studio space and time) because it has a certain intimacy, as well as clear frame and context, which allows intimacy to arise, rather than forcing it to happen.

The first thing I thought about, when you posed the question, “How do we relate to dramaturgy?”, is a conversation I had a few days ago with my father, in which I was explaining to him what the role of the dramaturge in dance pieces is. I was talking to him about this because he asked me what I had been doing and I had just come back from two days with the dramaturge Lidy Mouw, with whom I am working on two of my current pieces. The reason I decided to explain to him in detail what I was doing and get specific with what dramaturgy means (instead of simply saying “I was doing research with

my colleague for a piece”), is because in the past two years, since my mother passed away, my relationship with my father has changed and I took the decision to share with him many more details about my life than before. Before my mother died I would talk with her in detail about what I was doing (in my work, private life, my thoughts about life in general), but with my father I would only give a kind of overview and rough structure of my life. After she died and things radically changed in our family and in our relations to each other, I decided to experiment with new ways of communicating, allowing the change we all had experienced to manifest itself. One of the things I started to practice is to share with my father everything I do and go through, of course to a limited extent and with care (for both myself and for him). I decided that there is nothing that I shouldn’t be able to at least share with him, even if he would not understand it completely or would be critical towards it.

The decision to practice this format of sharing with him is also a way for me to re-think and re-name the things I do and experience, which means that this process of sharing is also a process of translating, because I have to find a different language—a language we can both communicate in. It has to be a language

that is accessible also to someone who lives a very different life than mine. This notion of *translation* and the idea of *finding a language* are also very important to my work and to how I think and process things.

So in our conversation I told him that I had been working with Lidy for the past few days. First I gave him a bit of context about the person I was working with, and also about where dramaturgy comes from. I said it’s a role that was developed mainly in the German theatre context and that over time had also become very present in the dance field—I hope this is true? I said that the role of the dramaturge in dance pieces can vary a lot from work to work. Usually I see the role as someone who is a kind of mediator or even psychologist, mediating the process between artists and the creation of artworks. I said that often what happens while working on your own piece, is that you lose a sense of objectivity towards the work. Somehow it becomes too personal, like looking in the mirror. Your work (and by work I mean the whole thing: concept, rehearsals, colleagues, staging etc.) unconsciously becomes a reflection of yourself. Art making is also a complex experience. On the one hand, the work of art is always a reflection of the artist in some way, but on the other hand it isn’t. A bit like your child or your lover or your friend,

it is also completely independent from you. In the end it has nothing to do with you. For me this is a very important aspect of making work—allowing it to claim its own sense, its own self, to become what it needs to become, reminding us (artists) that through making a piece of art, we gain the privilege of practicing making something without owning it, without possessing it, but rather creating the ground for it to grow, to become something in the world.

Before I go back to the role of the dramaturge, I will allow myself to linger a bit longer on this thought (because we don't really know each other and this letter is a way for us to get to know each other). Here is a short text I wrote a while ago after reading a book that impressed me a lot. It's called *Grief is the Thing with Feathers*, by Max Porter¹:

I know a piece of art is good when I notice that I leave the book a different person to the one that arrived. With some pieces it takes time and I gradually see myself changing... and sometimes it starts and I know that change is already happening.

After about 3 pages of this book I already knew that I



was different—I could feel it making space in me to settle down.

It's a tiny book with a heart that explodes in every word and every word is chosen with such precision and intensity that beauty simply happens. Not because things should be beautiful, but because if beauty exists in a raw, chaotic, untrained form—it is in a heart exploding from the intense attempt to be precise in this chaos.

I know that a piece of art is good when it reminds me that metaphors are kind of artistic survival instinct—When the gap between the metaphor and what it refers to disappears. When the metaphor is not like a thing, it is the thing, and there is no other way for this thing to be. If there is something that grief can teach you, it's that you do not own your love.


If there is something that art can teach you, it's that love is not meant to be owned.

It's meant to be carried, to be shared, to be given space, to be taken care of.

What if your art can carve a place for love to be in, without your desire to own it.²

¹ Porter, Max, *Grief is the thing with feathers*, London: Faber & Faber, 2015.

² My text: *Thoughts after reading Max Porter's ,Grief is the Thing with Feathers*, written in March, 2020.



I'm sharing this text because it has a lot to do with what I've been practicing in my artistic work and also in my personal life, how to love something without claiming ownership of it. I am very happy to go deeper into this idea, and also into these different notions of art, work, love and ownership. I would be very happy to know if you also make connections between them and how do you think about these connections.

Now, back to the role of the dramaturge—I think the dramaturge's job is to support the artist in maintaining a healthy relationship to their work, by keeping the relationship between the artist and the work dynamic and non-hierarchical. In Jonathan Burrow's book *A Choreographer's Handbook* he writes: "Even when you are not working, the work is working."³ The dramaturge can allow the work to be at work, even when the artist cannot see that.

Of course there's much more to talk about, so let's do it! I'm very curious to hear and read your response.

Yours,
Lee

³ Burrows, Jonathan, *A Choreographers Handbook*, New York: Routledge, 2010.

Pula, 27 July 2020

Dear Mila,

It's weird to be writing to you in English. I haven't even started and I already know I am going to cheat. I am going to cheat because you asked me to write to you in English, so other people can understand too. You also asked me to write in English because a lot of our work happens in English nowadays, yours especially. And lastly, but not less importantly, you asked me to write in English because this letter is co-produced by Life Long Burning. (Such a weird thing to say about a letter, right? But this is not the last of its peculiarities.)

So anyway, I am writing this letter in Pula and you'll be reading it in Berlin. And if some other people will be reading this, who knows where that will be happening. Which is another weird thing to say about a letter, right? Because it's a letter I'm writing to *you* and not to *them*, but I definitely have them in mind while writing, because I know they will be reading it too. *I ako stvarno netko drugi bude čitao ovo pismo, netko*



tko ne govori srpsko-hrvatski, hoće li se taj netko potruditi i pokušati prevesti rečenice poput ove?

So maybe I can use this peculiarity—these three peculiarities—to write two letters instead of one? One in Serbo-Croatian, the other in English. *Jedno koje ćeš razumjeti samo ti i još pokojni govornik, drugo koje će razumjeti svi, ili barem skoro svi.*

You wanted me to write about how I got into dance (and) dramaturgy and how I feel about it these days. *Iskreno ću ti reći da sam malo umorna. Prethodna se rečenica gotovo sama od sebe ispisala.* I know this is not the only letter of this kind that you will be receiving and I wonder if others will be writing their letters in English only or if some of them will be cheating like me. *Kao da i samo pisanje nije varanje, bez obzira na jezik, netko mi šapće... ali ja zapravo ne vjerujem u to.*

Not so long ago I wrote a text about how *queer* dramaturgy actually is, not in a gender-queer way, but in a definition-queer way. It was the same old story of no-one knowing what dramaturgy really is, of having to explain it over and over again. I was writing this text and I was thrilled, thrilled about the fact that no-one really knows what dramaturgy is, thrilled because I always have to explain it. It's something I am often thrilled about. But not today.

Pada mi sad na pamet loša fora—dramaturgija je zapravo malo kao srpsko-hrvatski, skoro nitko ga zapravo ne razumije, taj mali jezik govori tek šačica ljudi koja onda ima neke svoje interne fore koje ne prebacuju dalje od... granica bivše Jugoslavije? Što bi Juga u toj metafori bila, u to još nisam sigurna, pogotovo s obzirom na to da više ne postoji... a isto vrijedi i za engleski.

So anyway, the text on *queer* dramaturgy I wrote—which, it only occurs to me now, was also a letter!—was full of enthusiasm. Joy was basically lurking behind every word I used. *Baš kao što umor vreba iza svake riječi ovog pisma, umor malog jezika, umor male dramaturgije.* I'm telling you, the enthusiasm was so thick, you could lick it off, as if it was ice-cream. There was enthusiasm about the fact that dramaturgy is so hard to define, the fact that it's basically a shape-shifter. *Ali iste stvari koje su me tada veselile, sada me umaraju.* Because the thing is, after you spend so much time explaining yourself, it starts to feel like you are defending yourself. *A to mi se više ne da.*

Recently I watched an episode of some random LGBT sitcom and there was a scene that really stuck with me. The main character, a butch dyke, meets another character, your typical straight, white, guy next door. It's a friendly encounter but at one point

she says something he doesn't understand and instead of explaining it to him, she just says, "Go educate yourself, it's not the work my community needs to do for you, we already did enough." At first I felt it was such a harsh thing to say but then I thought that's exactly what we need to do, restlessly, tirelessly. *Ali sad savršeno shvaćam umor, sad stvarno više nemam snage objašnjavati samu sebe.* So it turns out that for me, dramaturgy is *queer* in other ways too.

This is the point at which the question of context comes in perfectly, don't you think? Because being queer or being a dramaturge or being both in Berlin means one thing, but being queer or being a dramaturge and especially being both in Zagreb (or even in Pula) means something completely different. *Pitanje je, dakle, gdje sjediš?* Because these two worlds speak two different languages, just like this letter of mine.

Does this mean I wouldn't be so tired in Berlin? I don't think so, unfortunately, because wherever there is dramaturgy, there is also a need for explanations. So I would basically be as tired as I am here I think, the only difference would be that the reasons behind my fatigue would be different. I am worried that I will sound too complaining, but it was really not my intention. (Sounds like something a bad dramaturge



would say, no? I hope you're laughing now.)

It all reminds me of a queer Croatian collective that existed ten years ago. Or rather, it reminds me of its name. The collective was called *How much queer work*. It was short-lived, as queer things often are and it used Rosie the Riveter as its visual reference. How very appropriate, no? When you think of the references involved: World War 2 and anti-fascism. So if I had to give this letter a name it would be, *How much more dramaturgy work needs to be done?*

(To be honest, the more I think about it, the more I am convinced that dramaturgy is a highly social function—actually a form of artistic emotional labour. I know, I know, nowadays almost every function in the cultural field involves a certain amount of emotional labour that comes free-of-charge, as a surplus to the basic job description. But I feel that dramaturgy is emotional labour *par excellence*.)

Sad tek shvaćam da mi je hrvatski nestao negdje po putu, nema ga u zadnjih nekoliko paragrafa. Slučajnost? Nisam sigurna.

I also realise that I have said nothing about how I came into the dance world. In short, I think it was one of those coincidences that, years later, turned out to make total sense. In short, it was no coincidence at all. Dance is where you run to when the mainstream scene

doesn't speak your language and so to continue with that in mind: *Ples je, dakle, isto kao srpsko-hrvatski, isto kao i dramaturgija ili queer, mali jezik koji tako volim. Da, dobro si pročitala, volim, umoru usprkos.*

So to finish, I am not sure if this fatigue is just a phase I'm going through, or a condition that is here to stay. Hopefully, I will write a third letter on dramaturgy in a couple of years that will resolve this perplexity.

Hugs from Pula, *puse s juga,*

jj

Berlin, 9 March 2021

Dear Mila,

Last summer you asked me to write about “how I became a dramaturge”. But after our talk at the Heizhaus concerning the autobiographical circumstances, I decided not to repeat these miscellaneous thoughts. As if I could even after all—practising dramaturgy, teaching courses on dramaturgy or writing about it—define what dramaturgy is.

A lot of peers working in the field have shared their thoughts on this topic over the last years. The fact that we are pursuing a common research project on the histories and developments of new formats and their interconnectedness with social changes, is only one more indicator that the reflection of one’s own activities in the production of art is increasing.

We were talking about the difficulties in defining the practice of dramaturgy, nourished by so many different experiences of teaching, mentoring, curating,

writing, researching, reading etc. These manifold competences help us in our practices and routines, but at the same time lead to the fact that with every new relationship, with every new project, sometimes even within the project itself, we have to define anew what it means to work as a dramaturge.

Even if a dramaturge is not really necessary,¹ or if we rather talk about “the dramaturgical”², which could also be done by everybody inside or outside the company – what is invisibly shaping the neoliberal structure of today’s work is maybe not so much the ambivalent character of the so-called immaterial or “affective labour” as Beatrice von Bismarck mentions for the communicating, networking character of the curator³—but indeed the problematic economies of

affection (Bojana Kunst)⁴—even if we know about their self-betraying character.

The claim of ‘being involved’ as a dramaturge, which has in many respects replaced the notion of the ‘outside eye’—seems to be the bittersweet bond, which attaches us to the well-being of the company and their needs—in a form of responsibility and care-ethics. And even if we clearly refuse to be the psychotherapists of the company, it is the collective structure, it is the character of friendship, which we have invented ourselves, that ties us to the commonalities and the common habits of the company.⁵

We all know that working in neoliberal structures (especially in the art field), demands our whole personality. Our total engagement is required, since if we don’t give 100% of ourselves, we won’t even get

1 Bojana Cvejić: *Dramaturgy: A Friendship of Problems*. In: TkH 18 (2010): *Dance/Theories – Reloaded*, pp. 46–53: <http://www.tkh-generator.net/portfolio/tkh-18-dance-theories-reloaded/>

2 Janez Jansa: *From Dramaturgy to Dramaturgical – Self-Interview*, in: *Maska* vol.16, # 131-132, Summer 2010, pp.54-61, <http://sarma.be/docs/2871>

3 Beatrice von Bismarck: “Relations in Motions. The Curatorial Condition in Visual Art and its Possibilities for the Neighboring Disciplines,” in *Curating Performing Arts, Frakcija Performing Arts Journal*, no. 55, Summer 2010, pp. 50–57.

4 Bojana Kunst: *The Economy of Proximity. Dramaturgical Work in Contemporary Dance*, in: *Performance Research* 14 (3) 2009, *On Dramaturgy*, ed. by Karoline Grizner, Patrick Primavesi and Heike Roms, pp. 81-88, <http://sarma.be/docs/2872>

5 When I am speaking of the “company”, I refer to the group of dancers and performers, who only since last year in August 2020 form a company: Cranky Bodies a/company was initiated and then founded by Peter Pleyer and Michiel Keuper, who worked with those dancers for many years in different projects and during all that time enabled a continuity in exchange.



back 30%. As such, the economies of affection play a large role in what we are doing. This also leads to a paradox. The “technologies of belonging”⁶ within a larger community of the dance scene, are part of why we love our work, even if we are badly paid. And as such, the question of ‘how do we want to work together?’ goes deep into the work ethics and operates between trust and distrust,⁷ between acknowledgment and misunderstanding.

But being involved is not the only mode of giving feedback, and still the idea of being an outside eye has not completely vanished from rehearsals. Between the problems of dealing with flat hierarchies and taking responsibilities, between giving feedback beyond interpretation and criticality, between complicity and taking responsibilities, we try to grasp this situation as a parasite. This is the disturbing but at the same time, preserving factor within the mediation process of communication. Finally, we could understand this as the productive mode Bojana Cvejić calls “creating problems”.

6 Brian Massumi quoted in Isabelle Stengers: *Introductory Notes on an Ecology of Practices*, in: *Cultural Studies Review* 11(1) 2005, pp. 183-196.

7 Rudi Laermans: *Moving together. Making and Theorizing Contemporary Dance*, Amsterdam: Valiz 2015.

But how does one create problems?

I want to suggest that this entanglement of problems and solutions, demands a double way of fictionalizing. Within our work we are dealing with an asymmetrical order of knowledges,—from *knowing how* to *knowing that*, which are mingled in our daily practices by constantly interweaving practical and theoretical forms of knowledge, traditionally opposed to each other. Observing the emergence of relations between fact and fiction, between fabulation and documentation, it is the entanglements of things and words, of doing and thinking, which characterizes the “speculations against the probable”⁸.

This queer-feminist perspective—queer in the sense of opening up the horizon of other possible futures—and feminist in the sense of how a minor key is situated in a partial perspective—is based on an examination of the conditions, under which knowledge is formed. It is the re-tracing of narratives with the practices itself, which is different from classical narrative in theatre but attaches us to the embodied histories, the forgotten histories, the haunting histories, the entangled histories, which

8 Karin Harasser: “As reality creates itself...”, <https://www.lakeside-kunstraum.at/en/essay-karin-harasser-2/>



could then form our reservoir of telling future histories. As in ‘the market of useful and non-useful knowledge’⁹, it is about including our surroundings, our environment, the expertise from unknown practices and then observing the emergence of a new object of knowledge. In these dramaturgies, it is about learning to learn from each other, as well as learning, teaching, thinking together and in these precarious processes, certainly the most obvious thing to learn is listening.

I will end my letter for now. Happily, there are stills lots of things to say, exchange and ask, especially in these times of absent proximity.

best,
Kirsten

⁹ <https://mobileacademy-berlin.com/en/front-page/>

Essays

Diego Agulló
Sebastian Matthias
Jacob Kovner
Miriam Beike

The Drama of Dramaturgy: a Contradictory Equilibrium between Nonsense and Meaning Making

Notes from the Ongoing Never-ending Practice of Life

Navigating Across Chaos and Cosmos

In this text, dramaturgy is proposed as the art of navigating across chaos and cosmos (the nonsense of chaos and the cosmos of meaning making, not just intellectual meaning but also affective meaning). Any process of creation does not just imply order or meaning making but also chaos and nonsense. To expect that dramaturgy is just about order and meaning making is an over-simplification that falls into the dangers of being univocal and having a unilateral perspective. Dramaturgy needs to take care of paradox as well and to embrace an equivocal approach to life, allowing for contradictions and discontinuity (simultaneous multiple realities), instead of being in defence of continuity, causality and logical consistency.

This text seeks a dramaturgy that preserves potentiality instead of working only with *what is the case*. This is not just a dramaturgy of the facts but rather of the latent potential reality that didn't become actual. In other words, every time that something happens and thereby becomes actual, dramaturgy must be aware that *what didn't happen* also exists as potentiality. One can be affected by what didn't happen as much as by *what actually happened*. There must be a *contradictory equilibrium* between chaos and order. The dramaturgy of what never happened. The dramaturgy of what was never written. One must be able to read between the lines.

Life is What you Make of It

Dramaturgy after drama, is this the drama of dramaturgy? The drama has left but dramaturgy is still here with us. But what if art leaves? What is the role of dramaturgy in *post-artistic* times? How does one think about dramaturgy when the artistic practice is beyond the art context? Art beyond the artist. Dramaturgy beyond the dramaturge.

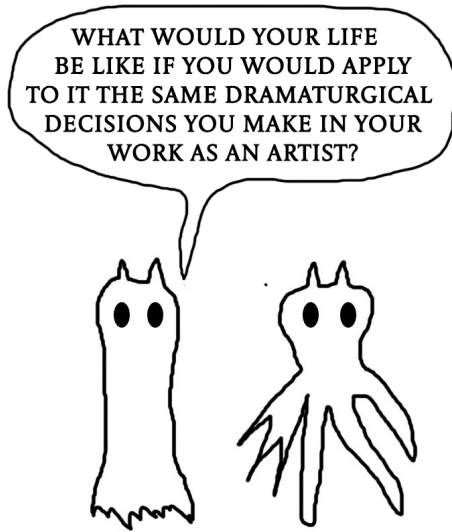
The word *drama* comes from Greek and it means action,

from *drao* “to do”. The intimate affinity between dramaturgy and ethics is that both are concerned with actions both are concerned with the criteria that govern people's actions, performances and behaviour.

Is there such a thing as the *dramaturgy of life*?

Dramaturgy as a profession is the practice that, within the context of contemporary dance at least, has been associated with discourse, theory, reflection, advising and writing—both concepts and funding applications. The dramaturge is the theory-oriented person, the one who has read many books: *the one who knows* and the one who has the power of discourse, the philosopher who found a job in art being a choreographer's adviser and s specialized in researching the topic in question and writing texts for printed programmes.

But if we look at dramaturgy not as a profession but as a practice that has moved away from the context of art and entered the domain of *life*, then it becomes an artistic form of ethics (in the sense of “care of the self”). To say “the dramaturgy of my life” means that there is a practice concerned with *why I am living the way I do*. Instead of searching for ways to act and embody on stage, dramaturgy now seeks ways of embodying ethics in everyday life.



How do artists “create” their lives as opposed to their artworks? If the purpose is to make art at the end, then the question becomes, how do you rescue life from being ephemeral and vanishing in time? Art can be seen as a life strategy for overcoming ephemerality: for persisting in time.

Life is what you make of it. The decisions you make, the directions you take. But this does not mean that everything that happens to you is the result of your will. There is contingency, there are the fortuitous events that you didn't sign up for. And yet, life is what you make of it, in the sense that only you can create meaning out of the chaos of your life. We can still give form to the formless matter of everyday life by responding to the unexpected nature of life. In this sense, we speak about the *art of living* or the *dramaturgy of life*, when the artistic practice applies to life and not to art. Life is an artwork and you are the maker, always in collaboration with randomness, the unpredictable, the unforeseeable.

Life can be a learning process, a journey. Experimenting with the art of living means a *never ending sym-poietic morphogenesis*. What if ethics and aesthetics become one and the same and the boundaries between art and philosophy get blurry? Philosophy understood as a *way of living* and art understood as a *life practice*—no more differences between philosophy and art. Being at once the performer and spectator of your own life—dis-jointed but also present. Life becomes an exploration that takes its own

risks, creating its own as it goes, as it moves, without a pre-established trajectory or goal. Life is not a result of design thinking. There is no final achievement. It is experience for the sake of experience. Experimenting for the sake of experimenting. No master plan. No business plan.

Dramaturgy is part of the *art of living*. The art of living is not only a set of exercises and practices to stimulate powers (of what can we do in life) but also purposefulness when applying those powers. Art of living means *learning how to use the powers one has exercised*. A combination of embodiment and acting accordingly. Developing practices of the self. Changing material conditions in order to change your consciousness. Spiritual exercises are practices performed in a highly self-conscious manner that engage and train specific faculties (exercising potentiality and self-actualization), seeking how to live one's own life. *The unexamined life is not worth living* (Socrates). But self-examination is also a painful struggle. Self-overcoming is not a comfortable learning process: one must confront anguish, inner contradictions, groundlessness and personal limitations. How do you risk being the artist of your life? How far do you stretch the tension between identity and alterity?

How can dramaturgy propose a new *modus operandi* (new ethos), new routines that can exemplify and instantiate new ways of being? Dramaturgies of ways of living. To stop submitting oneself to the already pre-packaged ways of living. The mission is to give value to those ways of living that don't reinforce the normative standards. It is necessary to come up with the criteria of how to live a life of rich significance while finding different dramaturgical criteria to make life decisions. Purposefulness without a purpose. Intensification of existence. Meaningful and significant determination to move/act/live.

Life poiesis: giving form to life. To live life as a poetic practice: being the choreographer of one's own life. Life is pure matter without a preconceived form and the art of living gives a significant form to that uncooked matter: the outcome is your specific way of living. Giving form to life *from within* life, in real time.

Dramaturgy can be understood as a practice of life making, the art of life praxis. In this context, dramaturgy is practical wisdom, it is not a *techne* or expertise. Dramaturgy is at the

service of personal transformation, political innovation and the integration of life into a holistic experience.

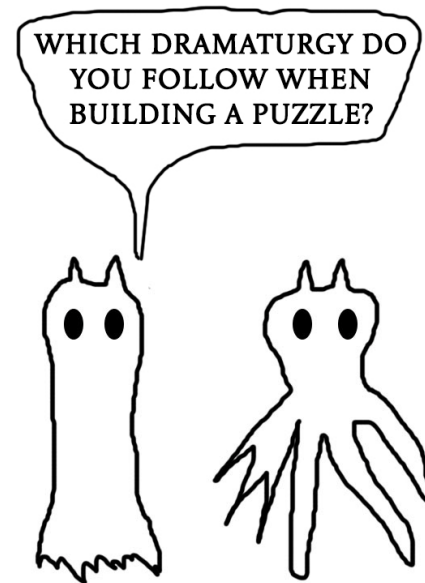
Dramaturgy can be understood as a self-transforming practice. The art of giving meaning to an experience: “experienced meaning” (not only intellectual), after the experience our subjectivity has changed qualitatively: the art of paying attention to the fact that every experience can be meaningful. I am my own audience. The purpose is self-knowledge.

Dramaturgy can be understood as the art of installing new routines or practices in everyday life that give rise to self-knowledge and political commitment, and that creates community, making an effective world.

How could dramaturgy and research work together? Let’s consider this bidirectional process:

1. Centring practices provide the necessary stability and fearless attitude: strategies and tactics of centring or returning to a stable centre such as morning rituals/ routines: daily writing, rooting the body, grounding, breathing techniques, relaxation, etc.

2. Risking practices, moving outwards from a stable centre, experiencing the unknown. Leaving the comfort zone, researching, experimenting, embodying the other, encountering the event, such as travelling, new research topic (domain of discourse or knowledge production), meeting new people, learning something new, changing habits, promiscuity of practices, somatic experiments, explorations, etc.

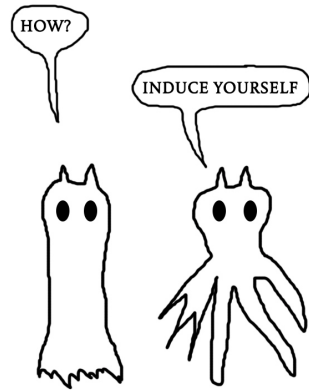
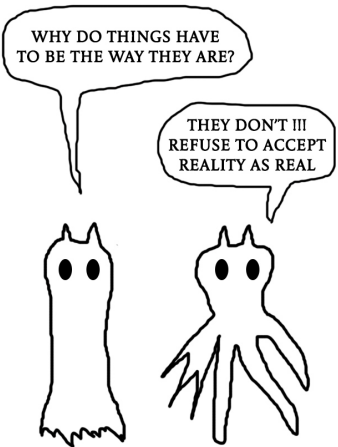


When we move away from the art context directly into life, the dramaturge-philosopher becomes our friend. The life coach or the psychotherapist are simply professionalized versions of this friend. How many friends are your dramaturge in your life in any case? A friend is dramaturge of *life like art*. Your friend is your life dramaturge, your advisor, your feedback-giver, your listener, the one who supports your decisions or helps you to make sense when everything goes wrong, your psychotherapist or coach, mentor, spiritual guide.

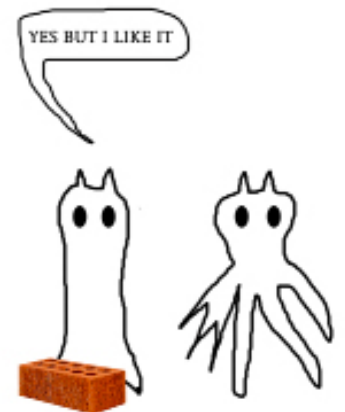
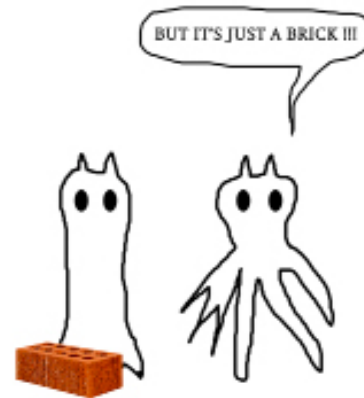
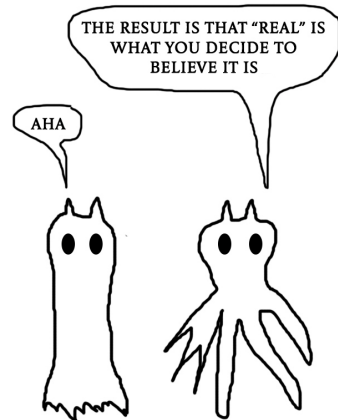
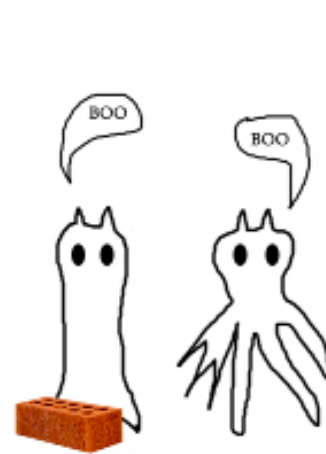
The power of repetition. *We are what we repeatedly do* (Aristotle). To articulate life also means to compose actions in time and space. What do we do every day of our life? What do we practice? What are our habits and routines? What do we train? What do we repeat? There is an art to setting up repeated patterns that are transformative or beneficial: good habits and transformative practices.

Dramaturgy needs irony. Irony does not produce *oeuvres* but *manoeuvres*: it does not produce a solid object but rather an immaterial activity such as a movement, a motion. Dance and irony belong together.

A question for artists: Which decisions do you make in the studio that you would never make in your life outside the studio? Why?



A FEW DAYS LATER...



Dramaturgy Fatale

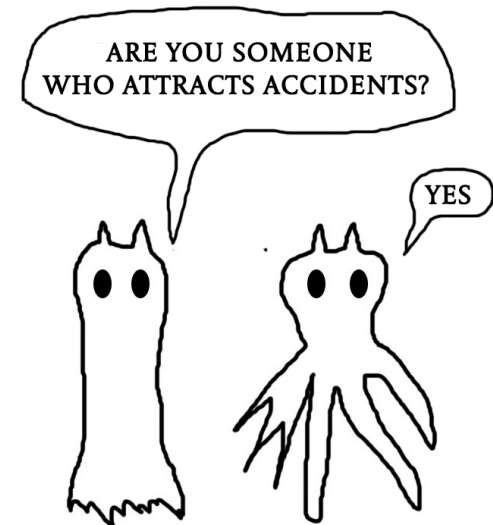
The dramaturgy of fatality, or in other words, *dramaturgy fatale*, is a practice that prefers the worst case scenario to nothing happening at all. Better to send it all to hell than let things continue as they are.

Choreographing the irreparable accident. Composing the irreversible catastrophe.

In order to provoke a crisis and to tempt the unexpected to irrupt, dramaturgy fatale always has to be one step ahead to anticipate the worst case scenario, foreseeing the irreparable. Dramaturgy fatale turns things into a state of *being without remedy* and is followed by the irreversible nature of time that makes it impossible to undo any unfortunate event.

A paradox: when you expect the unexpected.

Being the spectator of my own fatality is the condition that makes it possible to render my life meaningful. The feeling of perplexity is necessary. I should ask myself: *is this really happening to me?*





Love in Post-dramatic Times

The lover.

The dramaturge.

The lover of the dramaturge.

The dramaturge of the lover.

When does the lover become the dramaturge?

When does the dramaturge become the lover?

When does a love relationship become a dance piece?

When does a dance piece become a love relationship?

What is the dramaturgy of love?

What is the love of dramaturgy?

Dramaturgy and Nonsense

What
escapes
dramaturgy?

Which
material **can't** be
dramaturgized?

What is the
enemy of
dramaturgy?

What are
the *limits* of
dramaturgy?

When does the
impossibility of dramaturgy start?

Can dramaturgy exist without a reason?

What is the dramaturgy of
nonsense?

Qualities Lived through the Body

In October 2014 I finally met a physiotherapist who was able to help me with a neck injury that had hampered me for the previous two years. The transition from being a dancer to being a choreographer who spends most of his time at the computer had resulted in a prolapse. Only a few sessions were enough to help, during which my physiotherapist Rebekka instructed me in a few exercises. Initially I had to do a certain routine every hour, which later became a training I did every day. If I did it, she promised that I would be able to avert surgery. What followed were four years of my life structured by this one-hour routine in the morning and the evening. The discipline that ensured my healing enabled a new physical experience step by step. I was able to rediscover a body that could once again sleep, walk and sit down. Later I could carry backpacks, swim, ride a bike and finally I was even able to discover a love of jogging. The concentration on my body, the attitude towards my life resulting from this shift in priority, the structure of the day

and the respect for the slow-moving recovery all shaped the experience and sensation of this new body. This physical sensation and memory marks a distinct part of my life. Can the experience of being in one's own body give meaning to the lived path that one chose as well as to trajectories for alternative futures?

In my part of the residency series *Dance by Other Means*, one of the main discussion points was our definition of dance dramaturgy. In discussions with Diego, Mila and Jacob, we concluded that dramaturgy consists of two opposing movements: One that brings an opening impetus to the conceptual framework of the choreographic material, pushing the work beyond known and tested methodologies. The other is a focusing/closing imperative that forms an understanding of why and how we move and hones in on a structure that gives meaning and further shapes the material. It is a process of naming the organizing principles that guide the movement and structuring logic of the dance. Based on this idea, Mila proposed an exercise to think of our love life as a dance and to try to name and analyse the organizing principles that shaped our romantic biographies. We listed our significant others and the nature of our relationships to find a logic that seemed to shape the past: Person X enters the stage (enters our life) and events 1, 2 and 3 happen, because of problem A. Naturally coming

from Mila's perspective as a writer, this resulted in a narrative, the discussion taking the form of a psychoanalytical session. From the perspective of writers like Mila and Jacob, but also out of habit, it seems plausible to give our romantic reality some kind of narrative structure. However, if I look back at the exercise now, I would have to rethink the task from my position and understanding of choreography. I would have to go about the task differently. I would have to look at my life with the closing dramaturgical imperative mentioned above, using body sensations: *qualities lived through the body*.

My dance pieces are structured by improvisation systems that I call *movement qualities*. Derived from Laban's notion of movement qualities¹, they are modes of moving that create a specific sensation in the subjective experience of the dancer. This specific sensation guides the movement generation and dancing material not unlike the feeling

¹ In Labanotation, eight movement qualities such as pressing, sliding, or whipping are defined, which determine basic qualities for the analysis. When I refer to *movement qualities*, I am less concerned with the reference point for describing linear movement sequences and more with the affective potential of the quality that emerges most clearly over time. See Rudolf von Laban (1991), *Choreutik – Grundlagen der Raumharmonielehre des Tanzes*, Wilhelmshaven: Florian Noetzel: 41.

of a groove.² However, one never knows how it feels to experience someone else's body from within. Since one's own physical experience can never be transferred directly to another person, we define the physical sensation through the movements that give rise to this sensation. The sensation of collapsing for example, can be described through the movement that creates it. These movement sensations can be deconstructed as a specific relation and the degree of effort, space and timing that its movements afford as well as a set of rules that define its relation to others. For example in my *groove space* choreographies, there were approximately five sections, all with specific improvisation systems that were defined by a different sensation in the dancer's body through a detailed movement mode.

How can this kind of dramaturgy be transferred to my own biography? Rather than organizing the conceptualization of my life as a course of events through goals achieved, projects conducted and people met, I propose the following thought experiment: to structure my personal history using the memory of the felt sensation in my body. In order to describe the sensation in words, I will describe movement that could create the feeling in question. To be sure, this

² See Sebastian Matthias (2018), *Gefühlter Groove – Kollektivität zwischen Dancefloor und Bühne*, Bielefeld: transcript.

process is as (or more) artificial, as the construction of a narrative or a certain trajectory of intentions. However as an exercise, it might shed new light on the past for me.

1) My playful body:

My playful body follows a predetermined structure. It requires an increased effort and the movements are continuous and chained, while spiralling further into space and time. It isn't very fast but rather a relaxed pace that offers moments of playful interactions with mainly the same people. Since this body acts within a predetermined structure, it is guided by an outside system that doesn't leave much room for understanding the body's own needs and exertions. The dominant structure inscribes itself into my body through ongoing practice. This inscription will always be a reference for other later experiencing bodies.

2) My wanting body:

My wanting body has a lot of forward momentum. An increased effort relentlessly pushing forward into time. It pierces through space, winding its way through obstacles, creeping through niches, finding its way with a clear focus that presented itself. There aren't any breaks or pauses for reflection or questioning, as the goal was clear. It is inherent in its movement. The driving force is very satisfying and protects against inner and outer disruption. It is nourished

by an urge for a better way of being in the future.

3) My achieving body:

My achieving body is structured in phases: One phase is intense effort and concentration and the other is total exhaustion and disappearance. The difficult but satisfying sensation alternates with emptiness and isolation. Although travelling through different spaces would offer a lot of information, there is no locomotion. Even though the movements achieve the set goals in functional time in a predetermined way, the achievement of them doesn't provide any relaxation or pause. In the phases of pushing through, my body disappears, pleasure disappears, sexuality disappears and sociality disappears. It results in a twisted figure with a racing mind, unable to align weight to hold itself up.

4) My healing body:

As described above, a daily routine structures this body. The repetition reveals new sensations, spaces and functions that were not known before. Pedestrian movements and micro movements determine the locomotion. Slow and steady the movement of this body finds its way safely into the unknown, through focusing on itself. Pushing into time, the movements build a security that would give way to the next step. The determination sometimes feels like a

protection. The concentration on the moment leaves the mind steady to care for itself. This body doesn't afford many interactions with others.

5) My searching body:

The movement quality that shapes this body's experience is jittery as it moves through space. Starting from the extremities, different parts of the body are guided into different and changing directions. The initial momentum of some body parts comes to an abrupt stop that reverberates through the entire body. Other body parts rest, deforming as they sink into gravity and then reforming back into shape, while other body parts get lost, meandering. All these movements happen at the same time, sometimes entangling with each other. When my extremities entangle so much that they end up in a knot, locomotion stops. Otherwise the body moves on all fours finding new perspectives from all the different locations it ends up in.

In an attempt to find words for these different bodily sensations, I have tried to narrow down the descriptions of movements that could lead to the respective kinaesthetic memories. In doing so, I have recalled experiences with dancers during the creative process. The same physical sensations can never be felt by another human being or be compared directly to those of another person as you can never

be in another person's body. In order to work, compose and communicate our physical sensations in dance, we use and compare movements that we can imitate and examine how they felt. These nuanced feelings are described in fantastical ways to grasp the complexity of sensory movement realities. In the creation process this focusing imperative on sensation at certain intervals examines dancing material (or the methods used) retrospectively, trying to grasp its shape for further realization. What seems valuable or relatable in one's own experiences can be used in the next step of the creation process, in which intangible material is discarded. In relation to dance making, dramaturgy is a process that precedes and foresees the act of choreographing and by doing this it retains a (temporal) distance towards what is being choreographed.

Gabriele Brandstetter defines choreography as "dance texts" that enable movement to be re-performed in a particular way³. Following Brandstetter's idea of choreography, the focusing imperative of dance dramaturgy is the moment just before the act of "writing". It is not unlike putting words onto this page, there is an attempt to grasp the guiding principles that lead me to decide on the next step, the next

3 See: Brandstetter, Gabriele (2005), *Choreographie*, in: Erika Fischer-Lichte/Doris Kolesch/ Matthias Warstatt (eds.), *Metzler Lexikon der Theatertheorie*, Stuttgart/Weimar: Metzler, pp. 52-55, here 53.

word. In the notion of dance as text⁴, it is thought of as a chronological movement that is described retrospectively in order to refine future repetitions.

In this sense, dance dramaturgy is an attitude of stopping and understanding what happened in order to shape how to move on or accept what needs to be done next. Do I agree with the meaning and performativity inherent in the dance material? If yes, I keep repeating this logic, each time reinstating and refining the choreography further. If not, I can use the opening imperative of dance dramaturgy to offer a new structuring logic to apply and see how it plays out. To investigate further what these logical structures are and how the grasping and opening rhythms could be understood is a longer process that is not possible here. However in the end, this recurring process has shaped the specificity of my choreographic work through the opening and closing activity of dance dramaturgy outlined here. Can this grasping and opening process be used in my everyday life? How do the *qualities lived through the body* shape the performance that is my life to come? How could past physical sensation guide me towards my future body? What should be repeated? What needs to be opened for new ways of being? Maybe it is time for me to use this dance dramaturgy for other means.

4 Susan Leigh Foster (1986), *Reading Dancing – Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press Books.

What Porn Theaters Can Tell Us About Dance Residencies

Using Samuel Delaney's Times Square Red, Times Square Blue to Consider Non-productive Research

The primary thesis underlying several of my arguments here is that, given the mode of capitalism under which we live, life is at its most rewarding, productive and pleasant when large numbers of people understand, appreciate and seek out interclass contact and communication conducted in a mode of good will. My secondary thesis is, however, that the class war raging constantly but often silently in the comparatively stabilized societies of the developed world... perpetually works for the erosion of the social practices through which interclass communication takes place and of the institutions holding those practices stable, so that new institutions must always be conceived to take over the jobs of those that have been battered till they are destroyed.¹

¹ Delaney, Samuel R. *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 111

The quote above begins Samuel Delaney's essay "...3, 2, 1, Contact: Times Square Red," in his monograph, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*. The book focuses primarily on porn theaters in New York's Times Square in the 1980s and 1990s. Delaney describes these cinemas as being spaces that are embedded in everyday life but endowed with a certain freedom that comes from being beyond the mainstream or 'socially acceptable'—they are broad-based, and yet particular. The value Delaney places on 'interclass contact' emerges from that context. Yet this quotation poses a question that is relevant beyond the confines of that specific inquiry. The question that lingers after reading is, what institutions create the *Freiraum* of contact for us today? Delaney's work provided me with some of the needed vocabulary to better understand what was at stake during the research residency that served as the impetus for this publication, as well as some ongoing concerns within my own artistic work. I'd like to think all of these things together to consider the value that certain kinds of meetings can offer as they transpire within the context of art.

This past summer, I spent five half-days in a research residency at the Heizhaus at the Uferstudios in Berlin, Wedding; I was one in a series of guests that Mila Pavićević invited for similar brief sessions, adding up to a larger

body of research, the result of which you are holding in your hand. I spent this time with Mila, Miriam Beike, who assisted and facilitated, and Sebastian Matthias, who was both another residency guest as well as Mila's business and creative collaborator. Mila said the topic was love. I couldn't get my mind around this explanation, so I synthesized my own understanding. As I came to see it, Mila invited us to investigate to what extent our current emotional worlds were products of our artistic practices. Each of us explained our professional history to the group, giving special attention to the thread running through the disparate choices, making each of our work lives distinctly our own. Subsequently we asked ourselves and one another how this underlying ethos may have, in turn, shaped the emotional connections available to us in our professional worlds and beyond. We arrived as if for work, although usually one person arrived late or had to go early; then we spoke, disarmingly openly, sharing very personal details about our difficult choices, our doubts, our disappointments. It wasn't a support group—self-pity was in short supply, and there was a general ethos of admitting to one's shortcomings while also recognizing that, by some measure, we were all lucky as well as skilled to have persisted in one way or another in our chosen field. Thus the days we spent together existed in a strange liminal space between the transactional/professional and the personal/intimate. When the week was over, we left each

other sentimentally, exchanging hugs, which for me at least, was quite exceptional in the summer of 2020. What was it that transpired in that dance studio in Wedding? Why had it felt so ‘rewarding, productive and pleasant,’ to borrow Delaney’s turn of phrase?

Delaney’s concept of contact resonates with my experience of that time spent together. He opposes contact to the phenomenon of networking. Delaney says: Networking is professional and motive-driven. Contact is broadly social and appears random. Contact is a chat standing in line at the grocery store, or when your neighbor sets a chair outside the front door to enjoy the good weather and you start talking. It’s the exchange with the bar’s bored but affable regular, as you wait for your date to arrive. But more than that, contact is cruising, as well as the conversation you might have after the main event, in which your hookup tells you that he knows someone who’s looking for an assistant when you need a money job. Networking, in contrast, is more homogeneous, often connected to your profession or close to it.

I imagine that at first glance, a research residency of this kind seems to be a prototypical example of networking. But let me paint a slightly different picture. Mila, Sebastian and Miriam are neither my friends in the narrow sense of

the word, nor colleagues of mine. They don’t know my romantic partner, or my home address or where I like to eat. Professionally of course, we are somewhat homogeneous, all being artists, yet the institutions and networks Mila and Sebastian primarily find themselves in are not ones that I’m a part of. Particularly as we shared our stories, the differences in our *milieu* grew more legible. Even if we were all legible as creatives in our social worlds today, we come from meaningfully different class backgrounds in different parts of the world under different economies. Our obligations: mostly none, one homeowner. No-one has children, some are in relationships, but not all. There were differing levels of precarity and institutional anchoredness. Delaney says that networking is professional and motive-driven. Contact is broadly social and appears random. Our interaction was about the professional but centered mostly on the negotiations that we make with ourselves regarding the nexus between professional and personal life. As for being motive-driven, the upsides of the event were mostly to be found in the pleasure of being there. Broadly social—yes. As I described, this residency took place in a climate of accidents, hassles, the need for quick adjustments, lots of communication mistakes, no need to work, a dog coming one day and not the next, as well as some daytime drinking. It appeared random but like I mentioned, not really understanding the topic and being merely dance world

adjacent, it was only through being together that I started to understand why I was there at all.

A lot of my work has circled around how to be social in a way that admits friction, with as much bold speech as there is perceptive listening. Staged conversations, I call them—they have rehearsed elements and improvised ones. The idea behind this form has been that our conversations tend to be either so safe that they don't challenge us—among friends, say—or so dangerous that they cause us to walk away or defensively dissociate. To put it differently, “contact and communication,” as Delaney refers to it, are seen to belong primarily to the realm of private life. And yet, the close ties of our private lives are not generally imagined in such a way that uncomfortable situations of growth are welcomed. Bourgeois society places friendship within a mental health apparatus which should hold you, not destabilize you. Friendship is harmonious and makes you feel good, it is your safety net. And the well-being it fosters is supposed to reconcile you to your place in public society and the social order. By some definitions, this is life-affirming—almost in the sense of confirmation bias—yet I like to believe I would be better for more than this dimension of social life.

Often, but not always, the field of art places value on

and even provides a venue for less reductive versions of togetherness. One sees it in how artists often become well versed in the language of theory, or how the community of artists is often the place in which writers find their voice, or even in the strange intermingling of rich collectors and practitioners whose lives are characterized by precarity. Differences in fields of reference and attitudes towards living are more normalized than elsewhere. I'm reaffirmed in my affection for this field when I find myself in a certain kind of professional friendship that allows me to be something different than my private friendships might permit. With these people we share the assumption that we are not immediately transparent to each other, that we have existed in multiple iterations of ourselves, that we have developed peculiar and non-replicable bodies of knowledge and that at least parts of our respective works evince some interest and respect from the other. No more the idea that friendship hinges on the idea of empathic connection—understanding each other right away, “hitting it off” or being understood for who you are. We have been released from the prison of the authentic self, which is confining because friendship focuses so much on the bourgeois notion of private identity and its corresponding normative morality. We have all had our moments of glory, compromise, defeat and we meet in this strange landscape of having kept on keeping on in our fields.

At the end of the five days, Mila and I wrote letters to each other. In mine, I formulated these dilemmas of intimacy, which I'll cite here:

What are we? What are we becoming? I'm scared of a reality that might immediately want to appropriate our intimacy and turn it into something simple and regulated and belonging to a conventional notion of closeness. Or, said a different way, what has been so exciting to me about the past days has been that we experienced affinity without the formalized quality of friendship. We were not "there for each other". Neither of us can be expected to know much about the other. It is a feeling of affinity rooted really firmly in the present.

I didn't expect to speak so openly in this process, but what emerged was a practice of honesty that I wanted to be part of. I made a choice of fidelity to the event and it has been very rewarding. A large part of why that has been rewarding is knowing that I don't belong to anybody here, nor them to me. Having these non-formalized relationships allows for a possibility of talking beyond the ordinary. Somehow that is unsustainable, and will be lost. And yet...

One of the things that has come up for me over and over again this week is the idea of professional love. This thing that I have felt so disconnected from in my life lately, has been something I have experienced a little this week, or at least it has been infatuation. The capacity of pouring one's soul out and being listened to, the ability to offer attention. Losing the borders between the people involved—our discussions so often deeply focused on one person but that attention is somehow deeply rooted all of our own preoccupations. Self-involvement feels akin to being lost in someone else. In many ways, the conversations this week have felt deep and meaningful because they supersede a logic of occasional coffees and wines. The worries and wishes we have expressed here have been deeply rooted in the quotidian but through our epic maps and deep questioning, the form has permitted an intimacy and interest that is profound. This work has allowed me to imagine a future in which I can bring the part of my subjectivity that loves to all parts of my life.

I think what I am describing here is an interplay of closeness and distance. This calls to mind Esther Perel's description of desire in relationships, which to her requires aspects

of affinity as well as difference². This group, I believe, was held together by some kind of limerence³. This limerence came, in part, from being able to be different people than usual, framing our lives differently than we do sitting next to a significant other on the couch, or at a premiere party in the foyer of a theater. We became the contact versions of ourselves. And in this diverging from our normal personae, which often feels imposed on us, and sharing our own re-framing with others, we feel recognized by one another. This sudden intimacy led me to take the risks that might happen in other contact situations—suddenly sharing “too much.” I didn’t feel bound by the conventions of garden-variety professional exchange. I followed my desire to be close.

And indeed, desire does play a significant role in Delaney’s model. In contact experiences, desire functions centrifugally, sending people out of their class and loyalty-bound structures into the world, seeking like-minded others, whether that means similar sexual practices or something else. Where a particular class has become too narrow for the fulfillment of those needs and desires, the individual must

2 Perel, Esther. *Mating in Captivity: Unlocking Erotic Intelligence* (New York: Harper Collins, 2006) 22

3 Limerence can be understood as the obsessive-romantic phase of a love relationship.

go elsewhere—the guy at the literary conference who goes cruising in a park once the day’s presentations are done, say. Desire, specifically as it functions in contact situations, is essential to a pleasant feeling of falling apart. He lists a series of examples of how, in contact experiences, he and others go on from the initial exchange to be generous, helping the people he encounters along the way with jobs, or finding someone who coincidentally knows something about a favorite author, etc.

Desire in networking works precisely the opposite way, ultimately abetting class war. Delaney contemplates at some length the literary conference as a prototypical example of networking. Desire permeates the conferences, but nearly nobody gets what they want, because the overwhelming monotony of nearly identical wishes creates a monolithic order. The togetherness of the event is dominated by one set of values, governed by supply, demand and shortage. “The structure of desire that holds the conference stable cannot be fulfilled by the conference, or conferences would simply erode,” Delaney writes⁴. Not everybody at the conference can get a book deal, because that’s what everybody wants. He goes on to state that this structure, instead of mitigating the class war, stabilizes it—desire, in

4 *Ibid.*, 137

this case, functions centripetally. It doesn't cast people out into the world in search of each other. Instead, it permeates the conference, requiring the few who have the position to dole opportunity out to group together, confirming both the gatekeepers in their roles as well as the huddled masses in theirs. Networking relies on the promise of social favors. However, the price of those favors is generally higher than in a contact situation, where desire is both generally less endemic and also more peculiar to the specific parties involved.

As Delaney concludes in his essay, "I am not interested in the 'freedom' to 'be' 'gay' without any of the existing gay institutions or without other institutions that can take up and fulfill like functions." While the freedoms and marginalization of gays and artists are different, I would like to suggest that both being gay and being an artist are deeply interconnected with some emancipatory desire. It is important to keep insisting upon the desire for those freedoms, just as it is important to stand up for the institutions that enable them.

I think it can be hard to stand up for the sociality of art, as wildly mixed up as it is. Regardless of precise artistic practice, there's a litany of networking events—first night theater foyers, after parties or vernissages—in which desire

is a kind of liability, the engine for a jouissance that drives you ceaselessly back to a scene of desire that fails to fulfill its promise. There are application processes and conversations with curators and programmers that require an aggressively neoliberalized and marketable self. In this sense, desire in the art world is constantly unleashed centripetally, to consolidate the classes within the field, in the form that can be used against us—where hierarchy and shortage govern. However, this is also a field with a tremendous practice of contact. And the institutional practices that back up this contact are perhaps weaker, or less available or have to be created independently. There is space for our desire, but we also have to be courageous enough to keep making our desire visible, to also use our desire for a centrifugal action, casting us out from our class within the field, destabilizing hierarchies.

As Delaney implies, particular freedoms exist as they are able to come to fruition within certain institutions and praxes. Much has been made of research and, truth be told, I think research in an artistic context has been talked about too much and substantiated too little. Bluntly, I'm not sure that what comes out of research residencies is really research, and often it is not really artistic work either—neither fish nor fowl, for no particular audience. They won't exist forever—perhaps they will already be absent from any

if not all post-COVID cultural budgets. However, I think there's another layer of what these research residencies do, and how this practice is a kind of guarantor (for now) of the freedoms of being an artist. The freedom of a space that does not demand being legitimized by neoliberal logic or the homogenized hierarchies of a given field. It's the freedom of cruising for professional love, or at least the possibility of a space in which you can invite someone up and see where it goes.

A Diary as an Overview and Documentation

Dance by other means: This diary functions as a record and gathering-together of seemingly simple and clear parameters. Who is the artist we are working with? When do we work? Where do we work? How is it outside? What is going on around the studio space that we are working in? I have taken note of the people, the rhythm of our days and weeks, the room, the weather, the construction site in the charts that follow on pages 130-133 with short key points. Through the accumulation of these facts, deeper levels can be recognized, connections can be made and traces of structures revealed. These facts are no longer fixed but are questioned, opened and challenged as moving structures. What do I mean when I speak of rhythm? Who tells us that the rhythm we feel also applies to others? In what ways do the atmosphere and mood of being in and outside of the studio space shape the ways we work? What do these facts tell me about my understanding of dramaturgy and the dramaturgy of the residency? I attended the residency out of an interest to gain a deeper understanding of dramaturgy,

as well as the different approaches and practices of the invited artists. On the one hand, I witnessed the process of the residency and the changing dynamics of each week. I was an observer, a dramaturge, looking at the process from outside. On the other hand, I was engaged in the discussions from an inside perspective, as one of the participants. The overview here refers to both levels of observation during the four weeks of the residency I took part in (out of six in total).

In the meantime, I have realized that I have not yet written a letter to you, Mila. Therefore, it may be best to start in this way:

Dear Mila,

I am finally writing you that letter. After observing, sensing and listening to your letter exchange with Sophia, Diego, Lee, Sebastian and Jacob I am sitting here thinking about what I want to write to you.

I first met you through FLUSH, a work by Sheena McGrandles that premiered in 2020 in the Sophiensaele in Berlin. The piece amazed me, not only because of the physicality of the performers and interplay of music, lights and stage design but also because I sensed a roundness, an understanding of For me, dramaturgy is often like a double bass in a jazz band: You are not necessarily

listening to it (just when a player does a solo and other instruments are quiet) but you immediately notice if it is absent. Something is just missing, the connecting link between rhythm and melody. Like a double bass player, a dramaturge, in my understanding up to this point, works in the background. Their voice blends in with the louder ones and it creates a round sound. As the double bass player who is not only the mediator between the rhythm and melody section of the jazz band but also brings in their own melody and understanding of the rhythm, the dramaturge holds the threads of the performance in their hand. A dramaturge listens and observes, serving the logic of the piece. At the same time they have their own artistic approach by being inside and outside at the same time.

But of course, all of this depends on the circumstances of the project and mode of working with the other artists, etc. These are the hard facts of dramaturgy in practice. During my relatively short experience of being the outside person, coming in the final rehearsal phase to watch and give feedback, it was obvious to me that this was not my work and I was just there to help. I was wondering how you experienced this split? Do you also play a solo when everyone is more quiet and how does it show? Do you even want that: to be seen? What are the realities of being a freelance dramaturge in Berlin? This city is home to many different artistic approaches and artists, always seeming to be on the hunt for money and jobs in order to realize their ideas. I was and still am curious about your

understanding of and approach to dramaturgy. In writing about dramaturgy, it almost seems like another person, an object with clear outlines, easy to capture. For me the contours of this something are still blurred. So I ask myself, can you touch it? Can you touch dramaturgy?

I am thinking about the fabric of new insights I gained during the residency that shines in the bright colours of the different perspectives of each individual artist. There are still gaps between the single threads that could be filled in but is this ever possible? Definitions are not much clearer and the interwoven fabric can't be reduced to a single thread or colour. What else can be touched by dramaturgy and where can it still reach into our daily lives?

Thank you
Miriam

Swiss writer Max Frisch wrote the following in his novel *Bin oder die Reise nach Peking*,

If we do not know how the matters of life are connected, we always say, do this first, then do that later! The place in the calendar! Another place of course would be the place in our hearts. There, things that are thousands of years apart can belong together, even be next to each

other. While perhaps yesterday and today or the events that happen while drawing the same breath, never meet.¹

Max Frisch here refers to ways that we experience things and how they are connected to each other. He explains that experiences cannot necessarily be grasped in the linear flow of time but that moments which are far away from each other can be connected. With this intention and understanding of experience, I will first outline why I have chosen the categories that can be found on the drawing above, then I will try to grasp and summarize different structures and rhythms of the research, in order to weave them into a network of different markers and coordinates on the map that showcases their interconnections.

Rhythmus – Bau – Wetter – Raum

Here, the multilayered word rhythm (*Rhythmus*) is not just

1 „Wenn wir nicht wissen, wie die Dinge des Lebens zusammenhängen, so sagen wir immer: zuerst, dann, später! Der Ort im Kalender! Ein anderes wäre natürlich der Ort in unserem Herzen, und dort können Dinge, die Jahrtausende auseinanderliegen, zusammengehören, sich gar am nächsten sein, während vielleicht ein Gestern und Heute, ja sogar die Ereignisse eines gleichen Atemzuges einander nie begegnen“ Frisch, Max: *Bin oder die Reise nach Peking*, (Suhrkamp) 1959, p. 37-38 translated by Miriam Beike.

to be understood as time, i.e. the beginning and end of each meeting. Rather, I would like to argue with Henri Lefebvre who in his essay *Rhythmanalysis*, describes rhythm as going hand in hand with place, time and expenditure of energy. Rhythm is the overlapping of cyclical and linear repetitions and the question of how to measure these two opposing motions.² The residency proposed a specific time frame, which was interwoven by assemblages of individual actions. So everyone's rhythms collided in space, shaping and transforming our collective feeling of time. Personal emotions and struggles, as well as external time commitments and unforeseeable events shaped the content of the residency.

The residency took place in the recently opened complex of the Heizhaus, at Uferstudios in Wedding, where renovations had not yet been completed. The exterior staircase and the interior area of the café and kitchen were still under construction (*Bau*). The construction process was going on parallel to our exchange, which in its taking-shape mirrored the process we experienced in the residency. In addition, the construction site had a direct impact on our exchange due to noise and the presence and absence of workers.

Another external influence on the research phase was

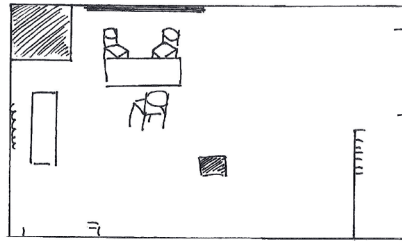
2 Lefebvre, Henri: *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*, London/New York (Continuum), 2004.

the weather (*Wetter*). Even though it may be more of a subconscious influence, it is a factor that we cannot control. We experienced the change from the heat of summer to the rainy, colder autumn season. Especially in times of a global pandemic, where avoiding having a lot of people in one room and overcrowded places is crucial, sitting outside and taking a coffee break in the park becomes a very important necessity. The breaks we took outside in the decreasing summer sun were times of coming together, reflecting on what had just been discussed and reorganizing our thoughts.

In terms of space (*Raum*), I observed our spatial paths and different trajectories. The question that arises, is how do different places and ways of working, (sitting at the table or on the floor, dancing, or standing) influence the dynamic curve of the day and the processes of the residency. In this regard a score is developed, an *expanded choreography*³ of bodies in space. A choreography that is affected by external influences, it is in the making, cannot be fixed and constantly changing. Through this moving choreography the studio itself becomes a negotiation of space, which is tested for its possibilities and explorations.

3 Maar, Kirsten: *Entwürfe und Gefüge. William Forsythes choreographische Arbeiten in ihren architektonischen Konstellationen*, Bielefeld (transcript) 2019, p.11.

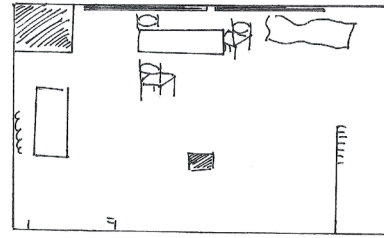
23.06.20



Rhythmus 11⁰⁰ - 13⁰⁰ - 18⁰⁰ - 19⁰⁰
- Jee, Milla & Miriam

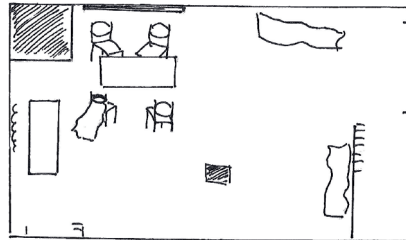
Wetter sonnig warm
Raum vorallem links im Sitzen am Tisch
Bau laute Arbeiten, bewegliche Einheiten vor der Tür

28.06.20



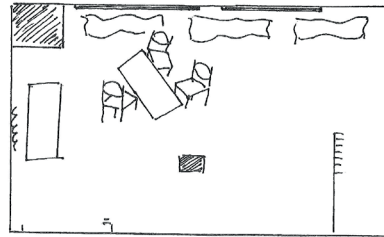
Rhythmus 13⁰⁰ - 16³⁰ - Jee, Milla & Miriam
Wetter sonnig warm
Raum nah an der Wand vor der Mindmap, Musik -> ruhige Stimmung
Bau teilweise laut

24.06.20



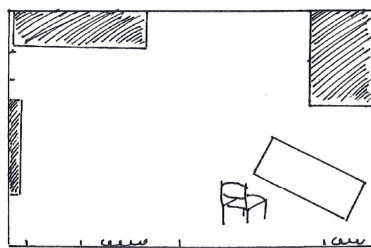
Rhythmus 15⁰⁰ - 18⁰⁰ / 19⁰⁰
- Sophia, Milla & Miriam
Wetter sonnig zwischen warm und leichter Kühle
Raum Sitzkissen rechts im Raum, Vorwiegend am Tisch links Sitzend
Bau Arbeiten mit Holz draussen, nicht so laut wie den Tag davor

30.06.20



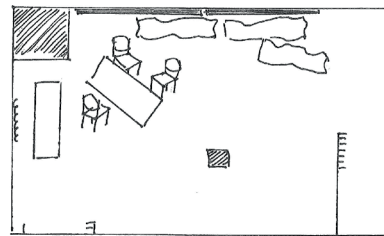
Rhythmus 11⁰⁰ - 17³⁰
Wetter warm, windig
Raum am Boden auf Sitzkissen, vor den Mindmaps, links im Raum
Bau eher ruhig, Sachen werden zusammen gepackt

25.06.20



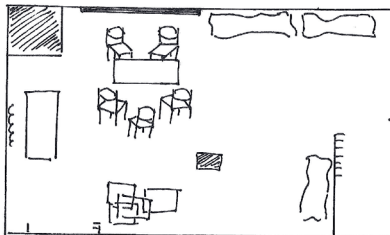
Rhythmus 11⁰⁰ - 13⁰⁰
Wetter sehr sonnig warm
Raum zu Hause, mit Blick aus dem Fenster
Bau

01.07.20



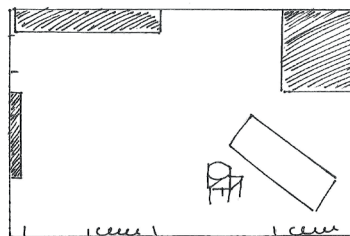
Rhythmus 12⁰⁰ - 18⁰⁰ - Jee, Milla & Miriam
Wetter sonnig, lauwarm
Raum am Boden, Mindmapping im hinteren Teil des Raums
Bau Bauarbeiter sind nicht mehr da

27.06.20



Rhythmus 11³⁰ - 17⁰⁰
Wetter sonnig heiß
Raum voller Kisten, Kaffeekanne, Essen, verschmutzter Boden
Bau lauter Staubsauger, beruhigende Musik

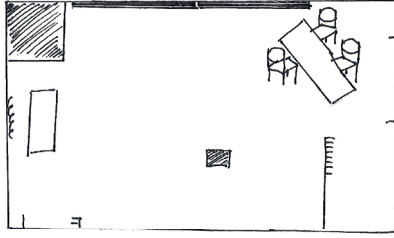
03.07.20



Rhythmus 10⁰⁰ - 11³⁰
Wetter sonnig, warm
Raum zu Hause, mit Blick aus dem Fenster
Bau

responsibility of dramaturgy

08.07.20



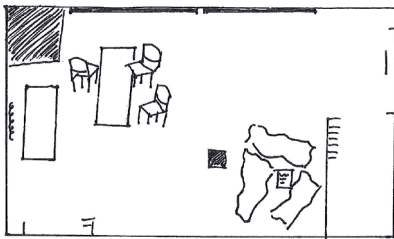
Rhythmus 12⁰⁰ - 18⁰⁰ Diego, Nila
Miriam

Wetter windig, sonnig kalt

Raum mehr im Raum, Tisch steht an der hinteren Tür

Bau Bauarbeiter sind nicht mehr da

09.07.20



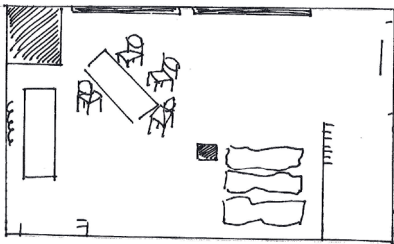
Rhythmus 12⁰⁰ - 18⁰⁰ Diego, Nila
Miriam

Wetter stürmisch, regnerisch, teilweise sonnig

Raum Bewegung im Raum, Speise am Tisch, liegen auf dem Boden hinten rechts

Bau Andy arbeitet in der Küche

10.07.20



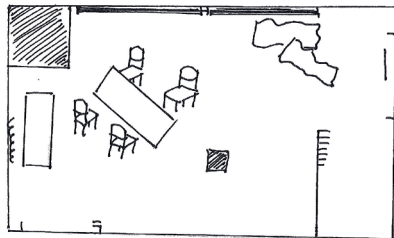
Rhythmus 12⁴⁵ - 18³⁰

Wetter sonnig, eher kalt

Raum erst am Tisch sitzend, dann Bewegung im Raum, Matten hinten, rechts bewegend und liegend

Bau Andy arbeitet in der Küche

13.07.20



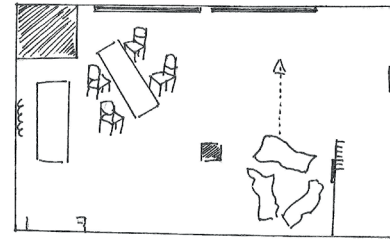
Rhythmus 13⁰⁰ - Nila & Sebastian
14⁰⁰ - Jacob & Miriam

Wetter sonnig, windig

Raum am Tisch, dann hinten links in der Ecke auf den Matten

Bau leise

14.07.20



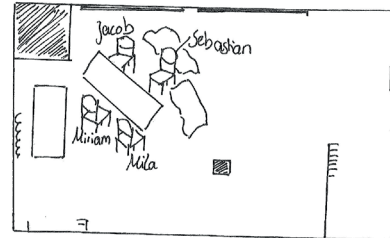
Rhythmus 12⁰⁰ - 15⁰⁰

Wetter sonnig, warm

Raum rechts hinten auf Matten dann hinten links vor der Kindmap

Bau leise

15.07.20



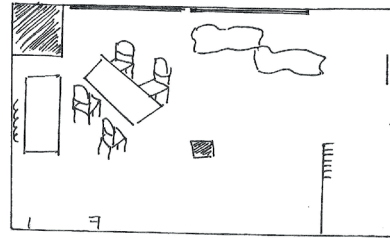
Rhythmus 11³⁰ - 18³⁰

Wetter lauwarm, windig

Raum sitzen am Tisch und auf dem Boden vorne links

Bau teilw. lautes Brummen von draußen

16.07.20



Rhythmus 12⁰⁰ - Nila, Miriam
12³⁰ - 18⁴⁵ - Jacob

Wetter regnerisch, teilw. Sonne lauwarm

Raum erst kurz am Tisch sitzend, dann am Boden vor der Kindmap

Bau leise

Summary of the Weeks

From 23rd June to 24th July 2020, Mila invited six artists to spend one week each with her thinking, discussing and reflecting about different notions of dramaturgy in their own practice and personal life. I was able to take part in the first four weeks, which I document and summarize here.

The first week can be summed up as *searching and finding*. The residency was an open framework, without pressure of a concrete result at the end. Sophia New, Mila and I approached the overall topic of dramaturgy in different contexts and with various definitions. We negotiated possible goals and methodologies to approach the question and come up with different ideas of how to describe dance through the concept of dramaturgy. A weekly practice initiated by Mila was developed that continued to grow, which was redefined over the course of the residency:

1. Letters were written to each other (this exchange took place between Mila and the invited artist), about their work, their biography. Questions raised included, what constitutes dramaturgy? What kind of dramaturgy is implied in their practice and how is it implemented?

2. One's own work was reflected upon through an abstraction of the letters. Keywords were obtained and interconnections were represented graphically with a mental map on paper, hung on the wall for reference afterwards.

3. Questions were developed from the mental map and letters. What tools for operating in the field of dramaturgy can be developed?

4. The artists' practice was explored together.

5. Our own biographies were explored and reflected upon. How do we refer to the different stages in our lives? What kind of events do we select for our biography? How are they told and why? What kind of structure can be observed from the outside?

6. A question was left for the artist coming the following week to connect the separate processes.

Various external influences affected the course of the first week. Changes in professional careers and personal lives, happening parallel to the residency, shaped the energy and working rhythms of each session. These outside interferences often determined when to start and

when to end the session or whether to continue writing and reflecting at home. The room was set up during this week—on the second day we got a trash can, as well as toilet paper, we also searched for cushions and found them. The set up is rather conventional—we sat at the table or in front of the mental map. The floor was very rarely used. For exploring Sophia's practice, we went outside and did a practical exercise in the yard. Everything feels like it is just beginning. The space, the construction site, the questions of the residency refine themselves and begin to take shape.

In the second week we worked with Lee Méir. The ambience was much calmer. It established itself with soft music on the first day and intimate conversations sitting on the floor in front of the mental map. The construction work got quieter and the silence spread through the surroundings. All this contributed to establishing intimacy. Calmness emerged, in which intense and personal topics that have an impact on the work could be discussed. Most of the time we sat on cushions on the floor with our shoes off. We shared food. We opened the metal door at the back that faces the street. With this the space opened up, merged with the outside and let the warm winds and late summer sun inside. The room was explored further and different corners were used. The time structure was renegotiated every day and shaped by our individual needs. Referring back to Lefebvre, the

rhythm was shaped by curiosity and the expenditure of calm energy.⁴ Methods and thoughts kept growing and no conclusions, no outcome was demanded. From the moving and building of the first week, this second week was marked by a quiet spontaneity and gentle shaping of the research.

When Diego Agulló joined us, the flow of our sessions became smoother. The rhythm of the day was more regular, more consistent, with a clear beginning and end. Formulations and objectives were sharpened. More clarity and reasoning behind the invitation was required. The rhythm was more punctuated and faster, speeding up towards visualizations in graphs and mental maps of new findings. Concentration was heightened, as personal life turbulences did not make as big an impact. The construction site also quietened, with only one person left working in the kitchen. Overall, the different methodologies developed with Sophia and Lee were tested quickly and applied to Diego's research interests. A notion of *being on the spot*, a continuous mutual interviewing developed. Not only were our professional biographies critically questioned, but we also analysed the dramaturgies, patterns and structures of our personal lives, focusing on love relationships. What

4 Lefebvre, Henri: *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*, London/New York (Continuum), 2004.

events are described in which way? How is it received and does this correspond with what we desire? Rhythm sped up and intensified, partly because of the different use of the space and the objects in it. These shifts made it possible to focus on and structure the different parts of content during the week, a *negotiation in space*⁵ of the discussed topics and our moving bodies. We approached Diego's practice through moving. The sharing of different martial art forms with short balance exercises wove into the discussions and parts of the conversation. The body became the focus. To borrow from Gerald Siegmund's considerations of the body as a hinge between different fields of knowledge⁶, the body moved into the centre more as a medium about which and with which we communicate. We experienced and reflected upon our body's relation to the environment, especially during the surprise encounter with Tzeshi Lei, a somatic artist who Diego invited without us knowing beforehand.

In the last week, Mila and I were joined by two other artists,

⁵ Maar, Kirsten: *Entwürfe und Gefüge. William Forsythes choreographische Arbeiten in ihren architektonischen Konstellationen*, Bielefeld (transcript) 2019, p.11.

⁶ Siegmund, Gerald: *Konzept ohne Tanz. Nachdenken über Choreographie und Körper*, in: Clavadetscher, Reto/Rosiny, Claudia (Hg.): *Zeitgenössischer Tanz. Körper – Konzepte – Kulturen. Eine Bestandsaufnahme*, Bielefeld (transcript) 2007, p.49.

Sebastian Matthias and Jacob Kovner. The dynamics and rhythmic structures changed the way that four different ideas, interests, bodies and relationships collided. These different relationships required initial renegotiation of how to work and come together in terms of positions, constellations, trust, and hierarchies: Mila and Sebastian already had a long working relationship, Jacob had not worked with Sebastian or me before, I had accompanied Mila during the residency so far and Sebastian was my former professor at the Freie Universität Berlin. A mutual understanding of trust and safety, which had already silently established itself in the previous weeks, had to be clarified and explicitly spoken about. Furthermore, Jacob brought his dog Francis along, which shifted the energy towards another being in the space that required a different attention. After Sebastian left in the middle of the week, methods were reformulated and discussions became more concentrated on a clear and conscious visualization of our findings. The spotlight was on not only the person being interviewed about their own biography and relationship structures but also the person visualizing and drawing the mental map. Different colours were used and their subconscious selection was questioned. The systems of each individual practice were challenged. The space, shaped by the exploration and uses of the previous weeks, shifted between discussions while sitting at the table and on the

floor with the cushions. The dynamic of this week was more focused and we mostly stayed inside the studio space. That was also because of the colder temperature and rainy autumn weather and the silence without the distractions of the construction site.

The different ideas of and approaches toward looking at dance and dramaturgy stretched out over the four weeks like a kaleidoscope. It did not result in only one realization. The many findings unfolded on the mental maps, diagrams and notes collected on the wall around the room. Although the points of the previous discussions were not explicitly discussed with the new artists joining us (Mila only reiterated the central question and gave a brief summary) there was a continuity, repetition and connection of individual points. From my perspective as an observer, a dramaturgy of the process unfolded in the interconnections and traces of content that we covered, left and came back to over the different weeks.

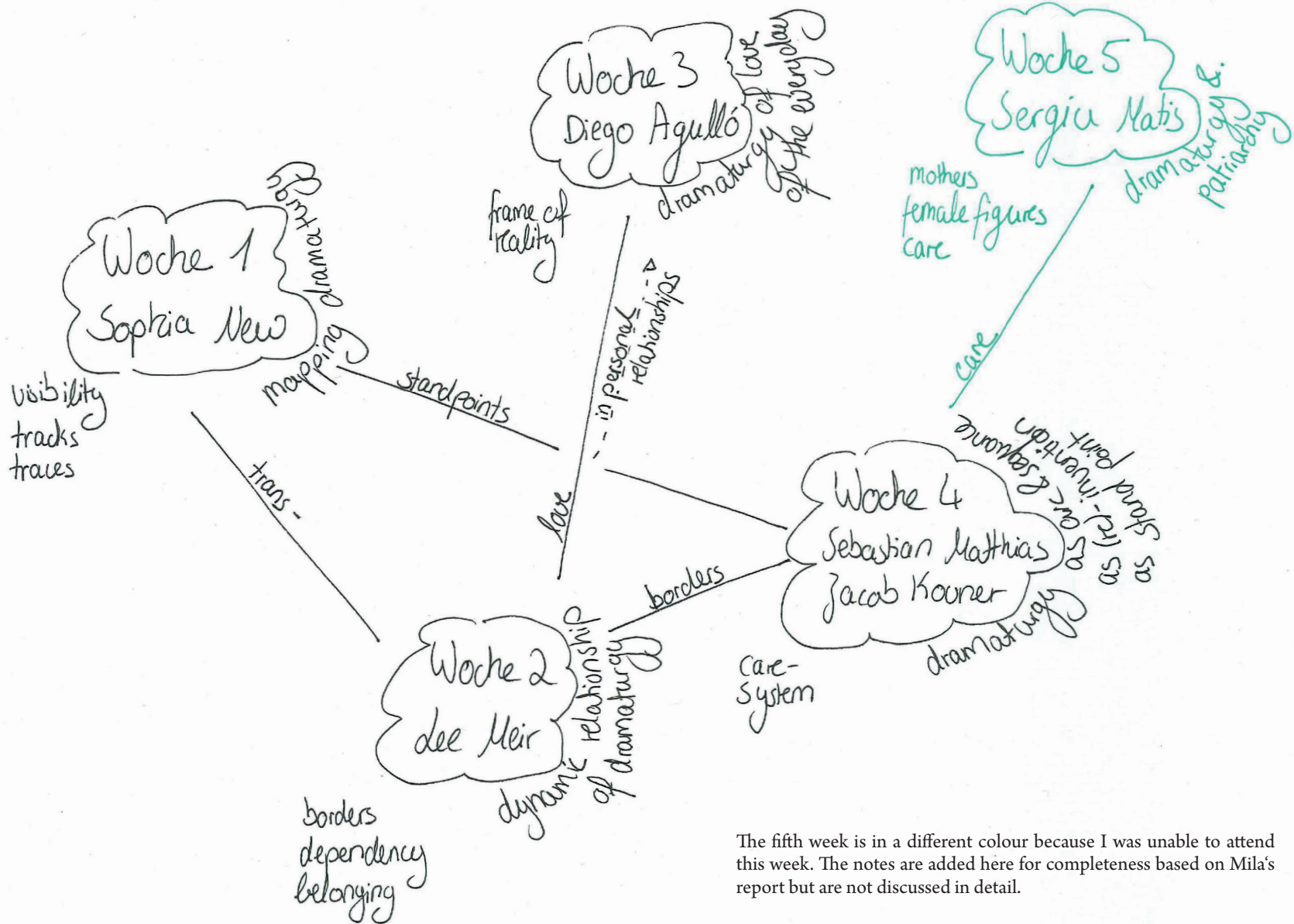
Interconnections

The key phrase of the first week could be *mapping dramaturgy*. Examining Sophia's artistic work, we dealt with the theme of visibility. What traces of our work do we leave

behind? Which tracks and traces can dramaturgy make visible, or is the dramaturgy itself a track that connects the dots of our work? Does dramaturgy have an archival character?

These reflections connect to the week with Lee through the prefix *trans-*: *transitioning, transparency, translucent* etc. Etymologically, the prefix comes from Latin and means *beyond, through, across*.⁷ I can say that in our discussion it stood for the openness of the system of art making we work in and how this system must allow us to go through and cross its own lines/boundaries/borders. In addition, it is a symbol for the *transparency* and hybridization of structures in the dance field that must also be flexible. This can be thought of in relation to the concept of dramaturgy as a movement between different fields. When Lee joined, we increasingly focused and delved deeper into the *dynamic relationship of dramaturgy* through the lens of the prefix *trans-*. A main focus was the dramaturgy of relationships in working environments. Among other things, we talked about issues such as boundary-setting, dependency, belonging to groups, working with other people, as well as relationships on different levels and meanings.

⁷ <https://www.etymonline.com/word/trans-> (last accessed 1/3/2021)



The fifth week is in a different colour because I was unable to attend this week. The notes are added here for completeness based on Mila's report but are not discussed in detail.

We understood these relationships in the work environment as informed by a notion of *love*. In the discussion with Diego the idea of love shifted from the idea of love toward people in the work environment to love in intimate relationships. What sort of dramaturgy can be found in love relationships? What structure and patterns do these relationships entail? As the key phrase of the week, the *dramaturgy of everyday love* infers, we talked about the everyday and its dramaturgy in relation to the encounters of *love* in different shades. The reality of the everyday was questioned and different frames of reality were imagined.

The notion of *borders* arose in the week with Lee and were further discussed with Sebastian and Jacob. Where do we encounter limits in our professional life and where do we need to draw borders in order to maintain integrity in working relationships? As we encountered the practice of Jacob the idea of care in different systems arises. In my understanding of dramaturgy as a practice of taking care, the notion of setting clear borders on various levels of work is essential. *Dramaturgy as a notion of arc & sequence*, as point of view could apply as a motto of the fourth week. Here, a thread can be linked to the encounter with Sophia. In this week, questions about the *standpoints*, especially

in the context of institutions, were also discussed. Which art form do I belong to, where is my standpoint in which system?

The dramaturgy of the residency in relation to its content is more of a collage, a *mnemosyne* as proposed by Aby Warburg of different ideas. In the interaction with these different ideas a picture of the term dramaturgy is created, which stays blurry and is opened to new fields such as every day interactions, love relationships etc.

The residency process is marked by the freedom of research that does not need an outcome. This premise shapes the structure and dramaturgy of the residency, it makes it possible to embrace spontaneity and let our lives outside of the studio influence proceedings. That notion of spontaneity makes the dramaturgy of the process hard to grasp since it shifts between refining the methods proposed by Mila, outlining and clarifying the topic, the space we were working in and unexpected encounters, moving structures and dynamics. Over the course of the weeks, thoughts accumulated, the negotiation of different rhythms and bodies in space gained more clarity and speed. Each week had a different dynamic, a different process and

structure and therefore its own dramaturgy. The question I posed in the beginning, “Is there a dramaturgy of talking about dramaturgy?”, could only be answered with difficulty. The term dramaturgy itself is dazzling and elusive. It evades direct explanation. But structures during the weeks could be identified and the dynamic change and the spanning arc of progress could be traced.

This network of interconnections could only expand because of the opportunity to research on this specific topic without the pressure of a specific result, the freedom to have the space, time and financial support in order to imagine new ways of connecting and doing dramaturgy. This access also questions the distribution of resources for other practices that require an outcome to legitimize the time spent and an audience to witness the work. Is it enough to reflect on my own practice and engagement with dramaturgy in my professional and personal life in the encounter with other artists? There does not need and cannot be a direct answer to this, it stays undefined, elusive and therefore exciting. I hugely benefited from the freedom of taking the position of a dramaturge both inside and removed from the different situations over the course of four weeks.

Diego Agulló is an independent researcher and a dilettante artist intervening mainly in the fields of contemporary dance and performance investigating the affinity between Body and Event. Having a background in philosophy, his work covers different media such as dance, performance, essay writing, publishing books, video art, laboratories for research, the organization of participatory events as well as the creation of contexts for different practices.

Miriam Beike studied Contemporary Dance at the Folkwang University of the Arts and Dance Studies at the Free University in Berlin. Her practical and theoretical work is characterised by interdisciplinary, collective structures. She is particularly interested in looking at different systems from the perspective of the body.

Jacob Peter Kovner is an artist and writer whose work has focused on autofiction and inherited wealth through writing, film and performance. His live work takes the form of staged conversations, which bring together tactics from therapy sessions and town hall meetings, creating a space that oscillates between personal and political. His forthcoming film <Doubles> will be out in summer 2021. He is working on a novel, *Servants* (working title), which reads class relations in New York through the prism of care work.

Sergiu Matis was contaminated with ballet technique at an early age in a freshly post-communist Romania. Sergiu

is now looking for new virtuosity, learning from machines, scrambling fragments of history, skipping and swiping through the archives—both personal and those belonging to Western dance history. He likes playing with language in the form of performative texts, choreographing meaning and ideas, flirting with poetry and theory, with a pinch of visceral filth and groovy noises in there too.

Kirsten Maar works as a dance scholar and dramaturge. She has been a professor at the Department of Dance Studies at the Free University Berlin since 2018. From 2007–2014 she was a member of the DFG-Collaborative Research Centre “Aesthetic Experience and the Dissolution of Artistic Limits”. Her research fields are the intersections between visual arts, architecture and choreography, social choreographies, changing discourses of gender, class and ethnicity, scoring practices and composition.

Sebastian Matthias is a choreographer and dance scholar. Since May 2019 he has been a post-doc in the research project “Participatory Art Based Research” at HafenCity University Hamburg in collaboration with K3 | Tanzplan Hamburg. With the support of the German Federal Cultural Foundation, he collaborates closely with the Bürgerbühne at the Staatsschauspiel Dresden and Theater Basel until 2021. He studied dance at the Juilliard School in New York, dance studies at the Free University Berlin and received his PhD from HafenCity University Hamburg.

Lee Méir is a Jerusalem-born, Berlin-based freelance choreographer, performer and costume designer. She has been developing her solo practice since 2011, which she sees as a home base to go away from and come back to when lost in the wild, wild west of contemporary art. She works in collaborative formats as a way to simultaneously destabilize individual ideas and practice forms of togetherness. Her upcoming piece, *Safe & Sound*, which explores rhythm and togetherness, will premiere in 2021 at HAU (Hebbel am Ufer) Berlin.

Sophia New is originally from London but has been based in Berlin since 2001. She studied Philosophy, Literature and German at Sussex University but was surprised to discover that apparently women had nothing to say in that field (at least they were never mentioned in the 1990s). So she found what she was looking for in an MA in Feminist Performance at Bristol University. Now she is finishing her PhD at Exeter University about the performative and material processes of the digital traces she has created as part of plan b. Sophia has been teaching at the Hochschulübergreifendes Zentrum Tanz Berlin, predominantly on MA SODA, since 2012, where cross-disciplinary approaches to dance are welcomed.

Mila Pavićević is a dramaturge and writer, born in Dubrovnik (Croatia) and currently living and working in Berlin. Since 2020 she has worked as a researcher at the Free University Berlin, in the Department of Dance

Studies. She is a published author, with work translated in different international contexts. Her interests include the intersection between poetry, storytelling and performing arts, superheroes on and off stage, crossovers between performance lecture and Balkan folk music and experimenting with practical dramaturgy and collaborations.

Goran Sergej Pristaš is a dramaturge and co-founder and member of BADco. performing arts collective. He is a professor at the Academy of Dramatic Arts, University of Zagreb. He was the first Editor-in-Chief of *Frakcija*, a magazine for the performing arts and author of *Exploded Gaze*, Mi2 Zagreb, 2018. With his projects and collaborations (BADco., Frakcija), he has participated at the Venice Biennale in 2011 and 2016, Documenta 12, ARCO and numerous festivals and conferences.

Jasna Jasna Žmak is a dramaturge and writer based in Zagreb, Croatia, working in the fields of performance, dance, literature and film. She is assistant professor at the Department of Dramaturgy at the Academy of Dramatic Art in Zagreb from where she previously graduated. Her research interests include different shades of performance dramaturgy, reflections of feminist perspectives and the intersections of intimacy and theory.

