

TODAYulysses

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TODAYulysses

a red dot
two dots, three dots
HELP ME! I am sick
we see a sign that says SYMPTOM
a symptom means the return of repressed reality

does it hurt this crack that opens
no it shows what you didn't want to know
how the system worked
would you sense you had pancreas
before they discovered you had diabetes

FETISH –
a friend of mine once told me a story about a
friend of his
he meets a beautiful young woman, they fall in
love, marry and would have lived together ever
happily after were it not that
in a year or so the lady has to go to the doctor
one-two-three, breast-cancer
in two months she dies
everybody expects the man to be desperate
but surprisingly enough
he seems very calm
he can speak about it
recall the last painful moments
and my friend is astonished

on the verge of thinking him a callous emotionless
monster
but, the strange thing
whenever speaking about her
the man is always holding a hamster in his lap
caressing it
two or three years later
the hamster died and the man was lost
it used to be her pet
how long do you think you can sustain reality
as long as I can enjoy it
I fully enjoy and I am away
I have my singing

*I go through all this
before you wake up
so I can feel happier
to be safe up here with you*

in the good old days of ideas
they believed what they proclaimed
they fought for what they declared
equality, unity, fraternity, eternity, totality,
justice, pride, prejudice, progress, faith and
freedom, family and god and father and author
and history and man
"Man is of our greatest concern"

until
until one becomes a little paranoid
you write to the newspaper you trust
and they don't publish your letter

the first symptom
your friend goes for a business trip
and disappears, it turns out to be a holiday of
some years
a car stumbles over a rock and there you go
a collective grave of corpses pops up

this red dot
the most real thing on my body
but the funny thing
if I had known it was going to come
I would've prevented it, isn't it
and then it wouldn't be there

you learn to read symptoms of a totality
of repressed reality
what are symptoms
those things that tell you you are ill and should go
to the doctor
but what when there is no doctor
there is repressed reality
a reality that was stolen, disguised, controlled
and now in its mistakes, its "symptoms"
it returns to you
so, what I wanted to tell you was a fairy tale
once upon time, not so long ago, there used to be
IDEOLOGY
a screen to project your view on the world
it was enough to think that changing opinion
could change the world
we wore sunglasses

and now?

I am a bitch
I can declare whatever I want
feminist, gay activist, fighter for greenpeace
and human and animal rights
as long as I pay my taxes regularly and keep the
music low for the neighbours
I am so keen and angry telling my experiences of
a victim to you others, who will never understand
I spit on you
but I say it is a very normal world, the best of all
possible worlds as st.augustine said
because we know that everyone of us

has the right to have their own truth and "nobody can
take this away from you..."
there is plenty of opportunity to be free
that is, to truly enjoy yourself
remember: you always have freedom of choice
to go into your passions
please, we ask you, be passionate about your
problems and serious in your pain
fetishize
what you like and what you don't like
that means: keep your experience special
exclusive and inaccessible to others
fetishists are cynical cold realists, they are able to
sustain reality in all its cruelty, because they have
their fetish to acquire a certain distance
so, I hold on to my hamster

bess mcneal
for many years you have prayed for love
shall I take it from you, is that what you want?

*oh no, I am still grateful for love
what do you want then?
I pray for jan to come home
he will be coming in ten days and it's better for
you to endure
you know that
no, I can't wait
this is unlike you, bess
out there, there are people who need jan and his
work
what about them?
they don't matter
nothing else matters
I just want jan back
please, oh please, won't you send him back
home?
are you sure that's what you want?
yes*

she is an idiot and we believe that only idiots can
truly love
the girl is speaking with her god, her inner voice
asking him to get her loved one back asap
so her god brings him back, but as a cripple
we watch and we sympathize: what a cruel destiny
but love
love is much stronger
than any of us can think
how can the man be saved
only through love
he asks her to fuck with others not to be a victim
herself of his accident

the more she fucks the better he gets the more
she suffers though feels redeemed through love love
a sacrifice, a fetish
the voice speaking from within, her hope
sustaining the reality of living

why did you take this movie
it is a horrible manipulation of what people think
the dangerous side of love is
what people think a movie has to be
an image to drown in and live after
a ritual bath where we worship hope and fear

IMAGINE

when I say: we are the image
contrary to film, to cinema
in theatre
we are the image
you and me
me and you
us
we are in the image
and
we are it

when I say: we are the image
what do I exactly mean by this
do I understand myself what I say
we are the champions
presupposes conflicts, with losers
and so on, the exclusion of the not-champions
whereas 'we are the image' includes
we are the champions sung out of tens of

thousands throats does not express
unity
although it loves to send this message
it presumes hierarchy and competition
'we are the image' looks back
quand chacun a accepté la difficulté
de reconnaître l'un l'autre pour ses propres besoins

imagine a room
high, large and elegant
sparsely furnished
a wooden table
one chair
empty but ordered
rain against the window
continiously
on the floor
an open suitcase with roughly piled up books
american detectives
on the wall a wet raincoat
still dripping
and photoes
wittgenstein before his cabin in norway
in vienna
and moore his obsession
on the table a pile of notes
titled religious belief
and a steaming cup of tea
a man enters the room
a towel over his head
he is frotting his hair
and speaks some indiscernable words
when he is ready and the towel hangs around his

neck
he looks into the audience
and says
"I remember an austrian general, heavily
wounded, who promised
to think of us after his death"
the man didn't mean it grotesquely
he meant what he said
all he meant
the whole heaviness of it
comes together in this image
it can't be replaced by another one
when I say that somebody uses a certain image
I just make a remark of grammar
believing that god exists
or that there is such a thing as life after death
can only be verified by the consequences one draws
from it
when someone says...I am an automat...you know
when I kill him he won't feel pain
it's of course possible not to draw these consequences

the image in theatre is not a pure
product of the mind
it is neither
the product of comparison
but
it is the product
of the reconciliation of two realities
more or less different

the more the connection

between the two realities
coming together
is distant and close
the stronger the image will be

two realities that have no connection
can't be drawn together
in a meaningful way
then there is not such a thing as creation of
an image
and two realities
that oppose each other
do not come together at all
they fight each other

an image is not strong
because it is brutal or fantastic
but because the association
of ideas is distant
distant and close

we are the image
you and me
me and you
two realities more or less connected
approach each other
like those of smoke and crystal
the two states of being
between which we are used to navigate

and that describe the tragedy
of the dead
who

in the generation of my parents
were killed
the night of crystal
and the mist
of the smoke
and
it is between smoke and crystal
that we navigate
us
here
especially me

what can I do now? what can be done
that isn't symbolical or that immediately doesn't
draw an image
everything I'd do now would bear some relation to
what you said
but would not really be connected because I don't
relate to that something-in-between state of
smoke and crystal
and the more I speak
the less I have the opportunity to change what I
said
you can't take anything back
there is no erasing possible
you can just continue

why can't I say something lighthearted
that wouldn't become a statement or a question
or a comment
that would be something detached from you and me
words that don't command or negotiate or defend
a meaning or myself

silence would be meaningful
no, I wouldn't like you to take these words as
sounds
nor do I believe that you can take any sounds as
sounds only
I cannot control what you give or take

do you remember that performance
"I like to move it move it, aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa..."
he's in a fast car commuting from work to home
from one country to another
isn't that great
but gets stuck in a traffic jam
his dick is stuck in his pants
there is a mobile phone
hi, darling
quand ça bouge c'est de l'amour
et quand ça ne bouge pas c'est de la pornographie
quand maman et papa le font
c'est quelquefois jolie
et autrefois c'est caca

LANDSCAPE

why do you want to make a performance that is like
navigating in a landscape
transport
why is nature still a value for you
because it is disinterested
has no opinions
but we are now in the situation of a factory
producing words and images
and exchanging them on a marketplace
is it this fluid irregular shape you want to take

just like megamoney
you are too concerned with your ideas
I have an idea, it's enough to have an idea
but they are like the stock prices you watch on tv
flowing borderless, promiscuous, superfluous
you think it matters to someone
yes, it does matter to a whole lot of people
but it's not to be the question of life and death
anymore
most are indifferent
it's enough to pick up the telephone and there it
is
the whole marginal net holds on to me, throws
onto me the insufferable good trust of everything
that thinks it has to communicate
the free senders that jabber, sing, express very
well, it's all a fantasy of the content

if I had to confess
I would tell you that I am not afraid of
an oppressive BIG BROTHER
but of a myriad of well-wishing little
"Sisters are doing for themselves..."
relating to each one of us on a personal basis because
they know who we are
DISPLACEMENT
so, that's what you want, you want to be
displaced
tourist, immigrant, refugee, exile, guestworker
I wanna I wanna wanna be
here and there
somewhere between the channels
what is characteristic for him is not

the unimaginable distance from the real
but the radical isolation as the absolute nearness
the total directness of things without
the possibility to sustain or escape from them
he has been robbed of a scene
he is overlit and x-rayed by the world
pierced through not being able to prevent it
because he is no longer able to
produce the borders of his own being
he can't hold a mirror in front of him
he is only an absorbing screen, a turning disc

and if this is true, if this is possible
then this obscenity and ecstasy of communication
might be the much-desired state of transparency
the state of reconciliation between the subject
and the world
and then it would be that the last judgement has
already happened
le pire n'est pas à venir
le pire est déjà passé
maybe landSCAPE
all these -scapes, soundscapes, mediascapes,
technoscapes, ethnoscapescapes, finanscapes... these
disjunctive models
used to describe the world of continuous flow...
the borderlines are open, but we cannot tolerate chaos
is just an escape
she has to work for
the imagined world
an imagination
a fantasy of self-display
an image that is too distant

on the phone
when the batteries are empty
she closes her eyes and she
discharges
DISCHARGES

he closes his eyes and he
discharges
discharges

somewhere in poland, first world war
wittgenstein in his secret diary, october 25, 1914
yesterdaynight the message arrived that paris
was besieged

in the beginning I myself was happy too
till I understood that the message couldn't
possibly be true
that kind of unbelievable messages
is always a bad sign
if something really nice had happened
they would have mentioned it
and nobody would invent
something that absurd
that's why for the first time now
I feel the deep tragedy of our
the german race situation
that we can't fight the british
seems very clear to me
the british
the best race in the world can't lose
but we can lose and we will lose
if not this year then next year

the thought that our race is going to lose
makes me very unhappy because I am german
from the top of my head to the bottom of my feet

suddenly we are hit by russian fire
but only one russian plane

that's all
hope belonged to them
but
for the russians
it was important
to know
whom
they belonged to
what dark powers
claimed the right to demand
these people

this is what I said
you do what you want
me
I did not go
with hitler
and napoleon
all the intelligent people
profit
of the situation of
this poor russia
to conquer it
another
time
it's simple

because it's the country
of fiction
which the west
no longer knows
how to invent
look
a country that made
two times
revolution
and that has
two words
for image
obraz
and isobrazhenie
one
for reality, clic clac
kodak
and one
for fiction

he who has learned that
mont blanc is 13000 feet high
and
who checked it up
on the map
says
he knows it
but
in fact
he only put his trust
in it
hoping
they won't infringe on it

learning
is
of course
based on faith
he believes
mont blanc is 13000
feet high
he knows it
he says
he knows god exists
but
no knowing without doubt
and no faith with doubt
as far as fiction is concerned
in 1938
heisenberg and bohr
arrive in front of
the castle of elsinore
this castle
has nothing special
says the german
certainly not, answers
the dane
but
instead of speaking
of the castle of elsinore
they would say
the castle of hamlet

can you imagine

but what if we didn't know that elsinore was the
castle of hamlet

yes, we would have another image
and whatever this would be
it would be final, a past tense object
in the sense of limitation of what I can see
image, something that you
don't need to doubt
obviously we don't need to go into the dark room
cinema or theatre to imagine
this image holds a desire
my desire to recognize
or to be recognized
although in some way
it stands in the way between what I would
take for real
and what is there unattainable as real
do you imagine what people look like naked
do you undress people around you
how can a real naked body seem real
how real is real

have you ever been to a strip-tease bar
the more naked the body
the less sexual, they say
the body of the woman desexualized
when she takes her clothes off
and it even gets a touch of evil
but, what is it
it's not this stupid old belief
what lies there disguised is an exciting surprise

the tension between what you see
what you don't see
and what you would like to see

LE SPECTACLE DE LA PEUR
french national sport

what is in the distance between here and there
of the one who watches
and the other that is watched
pathetique distance like german soldiers in russia
what you were referring to in your wittgenstein diary

*fremd bin ich eingezogen
fremd zieh ich wieder aus
der mai war mir gewogen
mit manchen blumenstrauß
das mädchen sprach von liebe
die mutter gar von eh' –
nun ist die welt so trübe
der weg gehüllt in schnee*

schubert's winterreise that the german soldiers
were singing

the here wants to imagine how it is to be there
the here looks for the answer from there
the here utters something in view of what it will
be recognized as there
the here wants to *have* the there
to complete an incomplete

I would never be able to tell you
the truth, the whole truth
the truth is a whole
one whole thing

I would never have
enough words to say it

I strip
/no big deal, just theatre/
a fearless image
it's just a cliché nowadays
what used to be a way
to reduce what you show
to the most literal
the body the site of action
and then I step forward
avantgarde
I can invite the audience
for whatever they want
harm me, the body art of the seventies
to feel real pain
or, more naïvely, like in the sixties, fuck me
should be pure enjoyment
or it is more likely a scandal
we would always respect the regulations
but even if not
this body exposed as an object of the audience
this hasn't changed life
it certainly changed art
but, now what is the image we make
I make myself the victim of you
so that you become responsible
or do I remain the subject in power
I define the rules of the game
does this image look back
what do I want
and what do you want

or you prefer to be the weak witness
at a lonely distance
with remote control
I want it/I don't want it
I can choose for myself
when the real is overwhelming
let's say
if we would fuck here
even in a weak way
with your dick
long and not hard
people vote nowadays only
when they know they
can overthrow the president
sacrifice him
and continue
a grand trash failure
the boy
pushing his dick into a chicken
or the chicken on the dick
goes on and on
because he doesn't care
every time the dick breaks in an arch
the beak of the bird scratches his stomach
and there's even blood
so gross
geen geziecht
because you want to see what you would never
want to do
you can't picture it
the image stripped of reality

and now
what is stronger
the image can be brutal
but the spectator is safe

don't worry
I have never been to a striptease bar
or shall we put out the light
I undress, and you imagine me being a 26-year
old girl with thick curly hair
but we keep the lights on
why do people close their eyes when they listen to
music
because they think they can hear better
or more precisely
they can imagine the sound better
the world of the composer
do I close myself in when I think that I think
better when I close my eyes

why do I want to think that I can think differently
than I can think
why, how can I change the system disk

I am addicted to the notions of
the spectacular and the sentimental
I give myself very little hope
it's engraved in
every grain of my brain
the rain stays fairly in the plain

why don't I leave you alone
is this my way of making war

and call it love

I sometimes stay
in a friend's house in france that is situated
in the middle of the vineyards
one day, I realized
that cultivating
wine
is completely different from cultivating
potatoes
or let alone
meatcows
I mean how this must influence differently the culture
of the farmers
what alcohol is to the wine farmer
is blood to the slaughter farmer

for blood and wine are red
and blood and wine were on my hands
when I found them with the dead
the doctor says that death is but a scientific fact

oh, doctor I'm in trouble

imagine
the image of the crucifixion
you know it
golgotha and so on

slaughter and blood colour my brains
gone is the pleasure of wine

a farmer goes to confess and says

pastor, I hid a jew during the war
yes, the pastor answers
but we don't call this a sin
the farmer says
but I made him pay me every day 300 belgian
francs
yes, the paster replies, that's quite a lot of
money, 300 francs
but the man proved he
could pay it
yes, the farmer continues, but I haven't told him
that the war was over

where are my cows to be butchered

images infect us
can you imagine
instead of the image of a crucifix
we would have that of a drunken maria
or a fucking couple
now this horrible death infects us
nicknamed the salvation
as if it gets wings by this

is this humour
or perversity
two states of being
between which we are used to navigate
and that describe
the tragedy
of the dead
who
in the generation of my parents

were killed
the perversity of the extermination
and the humour of the jews

the image
a crucifix
the crucifix
a crusade
the crusade
a child
the child
a soldier
the soldier
a butcher
the butcher
sells meat

you said you come from the generation whose
parents died in the night of the crystall
all that you say is yourself
where the crystall is spectacular
and the smoke, artists coughing
is sentimental

yes, I know
even my tremendous and horrendous fight against
the sentimental and spectacular
is spectacular itself
why do I want to fight against it
because deep deep in my body
I feel attracted to it
when there is not for months whatever kind of
great disaster happening in the news

I become bored

and I feel the urge, the need
as someone who is very much addicted to it
that something spectacular would happen
and it is not only the spectacularity that attracts
me
but also its counterpoint, the sentimentality it
always produces that attracts me
but I know this is wrong
this is the easy way to have yourself fucked up
and then cry over it
to make the boring side of life change into excitement
body-excitement
brain-excitement
and then be angry about it
about the injustice of the disaster
and about yourself, enjoying the suffering of
others
this feeds my addiction to guilt perfectly
and then I pray
I make myself small and emotional
I want to suffer myself, I want to pay with my
suffering for their suffering, to pay my excitement
about their suffering by suffering myself
and that's what I call compassionate
I have sympathy
this chain of substitution drags me straight into
depression
I know these are cheap processes, I know that
the market uses spectacularity and its product
sentimentality to suck in an easy way money out
of our pockets because we want to make

ourselves the victims of these mechanisms
it's leni riefenstahl that used it
it's hollywood that uses it from spartacus to
titanic
we live in the culture of fireworks
so you see
these are my cows to be butchered

what you are saying is frightening
even fascistic this mass image psychology
and I don't see anything problematic
the boy desires to forget his desire
except that despite all your efforts
you keep this strong sense of I
the center of what is obvious, apparent
normal
where is your european sense of self-mastery
a multiple individual that harmonizes
all passions within himself
and invents an art of living
enjoy the freedom to do what you want to do
to make something different and not to have to
fight for it like in the sixties
I have the opportunity to say whatever I want
but I just don't know what to say
it feels uncanny when it comes to making choices
I know I have to be specific
I know I have to be specific
but how can I be specific
I had no unhappy childhood and my body is white
and transparent just like my transatlantic english
I have no experience to narrate
just just just that I am myopic

that is, shortsighted
do I have to be more specific
why is everything I do arbitrary
why does it seem so irrelevant
do I have to have a lack
do I have to have a problem
do I have to have a need, a necessity
I can always be personal
the authors are dead, the great fathers, and now we
little sisters can be personal
it's indiscreet to reveal what is the
same in every person
no, the task is to change, to be able to change

change focus, change faces, change identities
change body, change sex, change cultures
change cities, change homes, change friends
change languages, change institutions, change
networks, move, move, move, run, decentralize
de-individualize, de-moralize, a lot of words
I want to say, yeah mmm aha aha? do I change
something
no, not to change what, to change
it's pathetic to think that something new or
better could happen
I can do it for myself, change my own opinion
enjoy yourself because you can't change anything
anyway
why do I do it, why do I want to live in this failure
I love failure, I live the failure of my parents, I love
the strategy of failure, I like to be small
small is beautiful
I have a fascination in being small, hide underwater

or anywhere so undisturbed you feel the jerk of
pleasure when an idea comes
it is for my own pleasure of improving myself
to be a project of oneself, I am a project of myself
you are a project of yourself, he is a project of himself
she is a project of herself
we all need scholarships
I just don't want any pressure on me, please
leave us all alone in our little niches
everyone for oneself
please, please
no theory, just therapy

one good thing about alzheimer disease is
that if you get it
you can hide your own easter eggs

do you think poverty endangers fucking
do you think an elite is inevitable
spending too much time on self-improvement is
immoral
when sex becomes the public urge
out walks political activism
you are convinced that one is doing their best for the
world
if one pursues their own way
do you call this socialism or liberalism
do you think that your little discoveries
your little ideas are worthier than for your use only
still you act according to the belief that your actions
are pointless if no one notices
when the power of relations confuses your intellect
you prefer to stick to your experience

MACHT KAPUTT WAS EUCH KAPUTT MACHT
he was desperately looking for a secret
to be crazy
to do crazy
to believe
to mean
to express
to show
to please
to conquer a stage for himself
MACHT KAPUTT WAS EUCH KAPUTT MACHT
what made him crazy
was a desire
an absolute lack
the thing
imagine
an enormous undifferentiated object
hard when you touch it
soft when you want to crush it
it was all one smell
one room of smell
one deep colour, and in one flow
with breaks that were written on it
thousands of lines
thousands of traces
thousands of quantities
micro-lives
one strong intensity
positive
potential
not struggling with others

no attraction
no repulsion
you enjoy
a feeling so close to the matter
the thing
that's it
the field
at the very point where the lack was lacking itself
this place I can imagine empty
but I cannot imagine the thing without the space
right
this is what I said
that's what you were fighting for
isn't it
like a romantic
build a dream
on one assumption
would there
would there be
would there have been another
if Kennedy no Vietnam
if silent movies no narration
instead of saying to you:
yes
it was cold
yes,
it was freezing
and there
yes, there
you were wanking me
saying to me
jee
what a big prick you have

yes
why didn't I say
you idiot
it's just me
me
shitting
but what the boy thought
what The boy from the sixties really thought
the master-voice
can you start a history with no repression
so there's your zero degree
and it's cold
it's me that says
I am cold
as a matter of fact,
that's what we all said
making is unmaking
mais voilà
so it's easy
dirty old one
undoing
stripping
peeling the onion
and then you were happy
when there were delusions
to dismantle
and now
qu'est-ce que je dois faire
qu'est-ce que je dois faire
what should she do
what should she do
what should she do
my feminine ending

my reductive machine
that invents and solves
conflicts within herself
salut comrade
hi neighbour

with thanks to

björk
roland barthes
jean baudrillard
manuel castells
gilles deleuze
jean-luc godard
boris groys
jenny holzer
james joyce
jacques lacan
annie lennox
riccardo petrella
arthur schopenhauer
franz schubert
lars von trier
peter verburgt
oscar wilde
ludwig wittgenstein
slavoj žižek

**The following texts were presented
on an evening about the work of Jan Ritsema,
on 18th February 2002**

Samuel de Bruin and Moses van Dalen, two young dramatists, are
sitting on the train.

Samuel says to Moses,

Let's take the risk of no longer being led by stories

Let's take the risk of no longer being consoled by empathy and
sympathy

Let's take the risk of no longer wanting to mirror ourselves

Let's take the risk of no longer finding pleasure in aesthetic beauty

Let's take the risk of no longer letting our experiences be
manipulated by other people's strategies

Let's take the risk of no longer gearing what is shown to the
degree to which it forces to be admired.

I'm going to Lemberg

But why did you tell me that? asks Moses

Let's take the risk of seeing the performance as a proposal, a
promiscuous proposal of adultery with the possibilities

A performance that always avoids to represent what it proposes

But why did you tell me you were going to Lemberg if you really
are going there, unless you told me so as to make me think you
were going to Krakow?

Steven de Belder

When all the theatrical tricks have been removed: a message, a coherent, meaningful text, a certain image with visual qualities, where do we end up? When the acts of performance, be they acting or dancing, refuse to be covered by a single paradigm, and do not strive to overwhelm you with fragmentation bombs of endless meanings and references, where do you end up? What is left to do, what is left to see or hear?

At first sight, the answer is: not too much. The performances of 'April S.A.I.D.' and 'Verwantschappen' I saw were pretty empty of content. Basically, it was a bunch of people in a small space trying to behave according to the rule that one should not seek a roof, that is, flee into the security of stories, roles and identities (personal or fictional). But neither into goal-oriented activities like 'waiting' or 'doing nothing for the sake of emptiness as a kind of concept or sign' (an actor never does nothing, he just acts that way). Nothing special in the true sense of the word: nothing specific to be found, to be told, to be experienced. In 'Weak dance strong questions', there was movement all the time, but without a singular direction or a structure of directions, nor without absolute stillness or explicit loss of control, which would again, within the framework of a proposal to an audience, 'signify' too much.

This unspecified behaviour, not a 'pure' but more of a 'simple' presence or a juxtaposition of 'presences', was trying to be free of past routes and future expectations, with the hope of leading to an open interaction, first of all between the players, on a second level between them and the audience. This opened up a space for flexible, sharp and unpredictable exchange, that "moves, changes, stays alive, behaves more like a wave or the weather", to quote from the Verwantschappen website. And this, I would like to

argue, and this is at least what fascinated me about the experiment, approached the condition of ordinariness, while it nevertheless only rarely achieved it, because of its huge ambition.

In order to explain what I mean by ordinariness, I will quote a bit from Maurice Blanchot's text 'Everyday speech'. "The everyday is platitude, what lags and falls behind, the residual life with which our trash cans and cemeteries are filled: scrap and refuse. But this banality is also what is most important, if it brings us back to existence in its very spontaneity and as it is lived – in the moment when, lived, it avoids all speculative formulation, perhaps all coherence, all regularity. Now we evoke the poetry of Chekhov or even Kafka, and affirm the depth of the superficial, the tragedy of nullity. Always the two sides meet: daily life with its tedious side, painful and sordid, the amorphous, the stagnant, and the inexhaustible, irrecusable, always unfinished daily life that always avoids forms and structures (particularly those of political society: bureaucracy, the wheels of government, parties). Whatever its other aspects, the everyday has this essential trait; it cannot be grasped. It escapes. It belongs to insignificance, and the insignificant is without truth, without reality, without secret, but perhaps also the site of all possible signification. The everyday escapes." This seems at first sight an antidote to all that theatre as an art form stands for. Theatre is what people want to do or want to watch in order to escape their everyday lives, even if many of them want to fill this with watching other people's everyday lives, which I do not think is the case here, since the works have no specific sociological object in mind. What I saw in these performances were attempts to get into a state that is both boring and subversive, where nothing happens while a lot is going on. You witness, and to a certain extent participate in, a being-

together and being-for-you by a group of people for just the sake of that and nothing else.

Ritsema's own formulation of his proposal is not so far from Blanchot's elaboration of ordinariness. "A performance that does not present anything at all, except itself. A performance that is active whenever someone wants it to be, but passive because it only has to be what it is. A performance that does not represent, nor imitates whatever anyone would like to call 'reality'." This is performance below theatre, below, from a psychoanalytical perspective, the level of the subject as the result of theatrical tricks. Like many artists in different fields before, Ritsema has retreated to the borders of his discipline, reducing its distance to the non-artistic, the non-transformed, the everyday. And maybe in 'TODAYUlysses' he will come back from this journey and make a similar kind of work, a similar kind of communication, interaction and proposal with pre-determined content.

An objection that is often raised regarding the relation between art and ordinariness is that the everyday is necessarily transformed and therefore destroyed when it is put into an artistic context, even if there are no transformations visible. This would indeed be the case if there was something of a pure, substantial state of ordinariness - some Real, original state that is under threat of the systematic, the structural, the rational and the aesthetic. This is a romantic and again essentialising notion. Nevertheless, I think that for example 'Verwantschappen' suffered a bit from this ideal, and therefore balanced continually on the verge of not achieving its goals. Let me explain this.

In my view, 'Verwantschappen' searched for a behaviour or interaction (both on the first level, between the performers, and the second, with the audience) that was anti- or at least non-theatrical. All the explicit markers of theatre had been removed,

not in the least by the joking opening proclamation 'for tax reasons, this is not a performance', and the fact that it took place in the rehearsal studio. Analogous to Erving Goffmann's use of the theatre metaphor, you could say that the theatre retreated into the backstage area. Recently, the opening of the backstage space has become a cliché in itself, but now everything that reminded us of front stage behaviour was cut. According to Goffmann, backstage is the space where one can temporarily take off masks and preprogrammed behaviour, in order to prepare or adjust the public performance: arrangements and power structures become very clear before being concealed again in front of the audience, where everyone agrees to impress and be impressed. It is a space for a more informal behaviour, behaviour that should not be seen by everyone, only by the members of the so-called 'team'.

But, does this area 'before' or 'outside' playing, lying and constructing, exist in itself? Can we ever stop playing, deceiving or wanting to be deceived? For oneself, let alone in the presence of others? 'Backstage' is in the first place the *negative* of 'stage', not a place for substantial and autonomous behaviour, only for preparation, making agreements and preparing masks and make-up. In 'Verwantschappen', the players very often stepped out of their 'non-role' back into their roles, theatrical tricks and their related codes; and sometimes they stepped out of the interaction, as if the field backstage could not offer them substantial space or potential for action and being. On the other hand, when the interaction did work in the open and informal way that seemed to be intended, the turning over in 'too much theatre' was still very close. This became clear from the evaluations afterwards, when moments that the audience enjoyed for their swiftness and beauty were termed 'too much theatre' by the participants. So, is this non-theatrical backstage behaviour possible at all? This cannot be

denied, but it is clear that this space cannot stand by itself: it is a precarious zone that does not endure longtime autonomy – man's theatrical instinct is too strong.

Everyday behaviour and interaction is connected to a sense of intimacy, which is not the same as comfort. It can take time to dwell, to explore different paths, whereas the greatest part of our communications and interactions, both on stage and in the world, aim at economy, functionality and understandability. In my view, the performances were aiming at a kind of intimacy: not in the sense of being sweet and lovely to one another, but in the sense of trust, honesty and communality. Sometimes this worked. And it was not just a simulation: at times there was in the audience a feeling of shame as if one were suddenly listening to private conversations which one prefers to stay outside; and on the other hand the *invitation* to the audience to think through the performance instead of doing as if they were not really there, really worked in an unobtrusive way (that's the difference from many so-called interactive performances). This became clear when looking at the status of the moments of silence. Silence can be a sign of something else. Or it can harm interaction: then it is annoying and shameful for the participants: they seem to have nothing to say or do to each other. But silence can also work positively, as silence, as a substantial element in the gathering that puts no pressure on anybody at all. In real life, this is only possible with lovers or at least very good friends: it demands a huge amount of trust, the radical suspension of self-interest, and letting time and space play their function as binding agent between people. Surrendering to this in the artificial frame of the theatre is extremely difficult, and intimacy can easily feel like rape. Paraphrasing from the 'Verwantschappen' website: "Can we make a performance that is an act of love but wouldn't be an act of

rape?" How do you convince a stranger to love you, how do you balance on the tightrope between embarrassment and violence, when even in the bulk of intimate interaction outside the theatre space it is so difficult to escape the set of codes without lapsing into their opposite, the hysterical emphasis of authenticity?

In this respect it is striking that there was some unease in the role of the body in this intimate situation. Ritsema seems to be convinced that the route of physical contact is too fast, because it creates comfort: a premature and illusory idea of intimacy, and thus he explicitly forbade it. Refraining from the physical indeed means obstructing the repertory of physical codes that one uses to 'give oneself a pose': the pose is a safety lock on parts of one's thinking. Smoking cigarettes is another such code, but that was allowed. This situation more quickly revealed the unease of the players and audience alike, but also made it harder to overcome.

So, was 'Verwantschappen' fascinating because it was an anthropological study? (Yes, I was fascinated. I did not go seven times to see something I did not like). I certainly did not look at it as a representation of interaction in the so-called real world, laying bare what usually remains invisible. In that sense, my comments were certainly not meant as criticism for being 'not real enough' – that would be a stupid thing to do. They are not criticism at all, but questions disguised as statements. Rather it was a testing ground for ordinariness, within and, who knows, perhaps also outside the theatre, because rare are the opportunities when time can be taken to rehearse interactions. In that sense, it was indeed a backstage, at the back of the stage in real life and in theatre, proposing ways of dealing with time and with people, and failing more or less whenever the always dependent, relative and invisible zone of ordinariness was supposed to be an autonomous realm.

The everyday is always at the border; it is the border of the system, the spectacle, influenced by it yet escaping its complete hold.

Jan Ritsema

The different theatre I (a theatre of difference)

It seems at first glance to be an indifferent theatre, a theatre that does not want to lead or be led. Because 'everything and nothing else' has to be possible at every moment. The quality of the intensity of the experience is completely in the hands of the spectator. It is necessary that there are no secrets to be offered, nor to be revealed. Everything is what it is and nothing else. There is a lot of information, juxtaposed, superimposed, dissolved, interrupted, cut, stammered, deconstructed and so on. In general it is a theatre that keeps a delicate distance to everything. A place for offerings, proposals, propositions, attempts.

Our theatre is rather a talk, a conversation, not necessarily literally a conversation, but the quality of the conversation depends half on the thinking participation of the spectator himself.

The only reason to attend an event like this is that one is extremely bored with one's consuming position, with the irresistible bombardment of images (invitations to desire or for consolation) and the loss of critical distance and the hostage-like power relations, in which one is trapped in almost every social situation and relationship. Why should we continue these repressive attitudes in theatre?

And it is necessary to eliminate all the techniques, strategies, aesthetics, manipulations of the old theatre that are aimed-at-one-effect, because they are implicitly made to be used to suck the audience in, repress them, and that is not what we want, we embrace a critical distance between what is offered from the stage, and the audience.

This does not mean that lights, sets, costumes, narratives, representations, expressions and so on cannot be used, but this must always be in such a way that they are juxtaposed, superimposed, deconstructed, stammered or interrupted so as never to support any other object or subject but always from their full being-there as one of the proposals, attempts, propositions that are offered in order to keep in existence all possible combinations with all the other objects and subjects that are presented.

Two citations:

And that I listen and watch (*et que j'écoute et regarde*) Godard
Was haben sie gesucht Ideen oder Gefühle? Brecht

The different theatre II

The contents.

Since stories of social or psychological interest or the representation of whatever situation is out of order, the content can be everything and nothing else. Short stories, descriptions, as well as more informative or theoretical texts can be uttered if proposed in a frame of a discourse. This is not something new. But what is new is that the texts are not embedded in aesthetics, pre-conceived forms and directorial strategies in order to manipulate the audience as an anonymous black hole in certain directions, to make them experience, to make them feel, conclude, admire more or less all in the same way at the same time, and thus substitute a reality which accords with one's desires or needs. This is putting the audience in front of an absorbing screen.

We want to present a discourse, but a meandering, whimsical one. Based on an association of ideas. Means limited by its subjects (not that anything goes) and limited by the principles of the making. As there are: a disjunction of information (material or immaterial), delivered in an atomised structure, juxtaposed, dissolved, interrelated, interrupted. Proposals to be combined. Proposals for combinations, for an active process of thinking (Wittgenstein: Objects contain the possibility of all situations. Each thing is, as it were, in a space of possible states of affairs. This space I can imagine empty, but I cannot imagine the thing without the space.) Floating propositions. No conclusions. Perhaps short conclusive thoughts only to become premisses for new thoughts. Brought in a detached way of acting, performing utterances, no interpretations. No hierarchy in the use of the (theatrical) means, the objects and subjects. Everything, words and things, are equally important. No secrets. Nothing to be revealed. Everything is what it is, means in all its possibilities. Isolated or detached, so that everything can become an object for thought. And at the same time everything is related to all this; the thing, the 'ici' is related to the 'there' the 'ailleurs'; to avoid looking at things mainly from the position of what they mean to you, the 'I', the 'ici', because there is the thing too, or the subject, the 'ailleurs'. In what way is the 'I' that watches involved with the thing that shows or is shown. And what has the thing, the 'ailleurs' to do with the 'I', the 'ici' that watches.

Nothing has to be understood nor judged, it is the mere enjoyment of relating/juxtaposing/superimposing of yours, your thoughts with the ones offered on stage. Both stage and audience are active and passive at the same time. And what is important is what happens *between* the active and the passive, the ici and the ailleurs. That is the non-conclusive area, the area where it moves,

the area that goes beyond truths or fixed positions, but unlike the position of the absorbing screen, where there is a lot of movement too, the movement here is not a one-way one but some whimsical vice versa, to and fro.

Bojana Cvejić

Landscape: TOUT ET RIEN D'AUTRE

Do you see that box? Do you see it? Well, it doesn't see you.

What makes a difference between a chimpanzee and a child of the same infant/baby age is that the child recognises itself in the mirror and plays back to its image, the child looks at itself looking back.ⁱ

What would the world be if things could look back?

Since this suggestion is unthinkable, as things exist within the field of 'I', the subject, I mean, "I am my world" or "the limits of my language are the limits of my world" (Wittgenstein), perhaps we could try to imagine the opposite. What would it be like if we could adopt the position of things: objects and places? Not as slaves of the will of someone or something else and not surrendering to chance, indeterminacy or the unconscious, which are also structured, but as a way to shift your interest. When I look, my gaze moves like an elevator in disorder, always somewhere in between the floors. Or like zapping from channel to channel, it gets stuck somewhere in between, stops when it recognizes something, when it meets itself in the mirror. The image that one sees is a potential image of oneself. *What can be seen is good, and what is good can be seen*, imposes the compelling positivity of all the images already there, mediating the social relations between individuals.ⁱⁱ How to go out of this deadlock – the tacit contract of mirroring between the two sides in theatre? Of the life that has never returned to theatre what it had stolen from it? Of the society of spectacle in which theatre plays the role of a sympathetic accomplice, never to assume that it could always restart from an open concept?

To put oneself in the position of a place or an object does not imply only silencing desires and needs – and silencing is the wrong word as it conjures up the Zen heritage and its applied New Age home-philosophising – it involves, most importantly, employing oneself in an endless, complex, intricate web of relations going about in multiple directions. And to use the ability of intelligence to see oneself and look from a field where each relation is a possibility to be thought. A possibility only momentarily excludes everything else, but it is important that it emerges and disappears as a possibility, something that can be replaced. When I think of something, I am actually thinking about something else. What I say is different from what I think, too. I would like to speak not 'on' things, on topics, themes, subjects, issues, but about them, of them. *Parler pas sur les choses, parler de choses* (Godard).

The concept+work we are proposing is an attempt to set conditions for an economy of thought on stage by which one is at work with the 'demand' not to have demands, desires and needs to see 'in'. What is offered is rhizomatic travel on diverse thinking-routes uttering speech-acts that do not point to the outside by way of pictures but to the world of the words themselves. A situation where the overproduction and overdetermination of utterances reach a state of openness where one can experience the possibility as such. Or where one (both the performer and the spectator) resumes the attitude of considering one's own thought-articulation in chains of possibilities. As Hans-Thies Lehmann wrote about a theatre of possibilities, it "could be read as the transformation of what is given into a trail that points to other things. The possible 'other' is not formulated here but it indicated."ⁱⁱⁱ The strange thing about this theatre is that there is not much to see. And the possibility is not to be staged, it is not about doing and showing all kinds of things, making it visible, represented and expressed –

that all can be there - fireworks. Because whatever is shown, shown as a form (a form - with the purpose, *telos* - not a shape, everything has a shape), cannot be doubted, you can only point out to it and translate it to your understanding, which is, of course, amidst an existing language. Nor is this place we would like to draw a so-called neutral place of nothingness where anything goes. It is somewhat similar to a landscape, I would like to use Gertrude Stein's term 'dramaturgy of landscape'. A different sense of time and place, of disinterested but curious travel. As on a train journey, things are passing by you so fast that you don't have enough time to capture what you would call a beautiful view. You can decide to wander off in your thoughts, be passive, sleepy, again with yourself, or you can let everything in, sharpen your observation, develop your tools for connecting and differentiating things, opening yourself to triggering by an outside element and yet 'work' to understand where, what and why you jump from what you see and hear to what you think. So it is about creating a situation or even an event where you can never forget yourself - submitting to someone else's plan. You can only deliver yourself to thinking, but which doesn't allow for daydreaming. When I daydream, I don't move anywhere. The same goes for astonishment and admiration of the overwhelming. When it is sentimental, 'about life and people like us', then I just console myself with the representation of what I do not know that I lack. Interpassivity (Žižek): I am saving my time by recognition/identification, fulfilling my need to laugh/cry through a stage-representative. And when it is spectacular, fantastic, larger than one can see or have, then I am again fooled into thinking that I compensated for this lack. I never get to experience the radical meaninglessness of this position, I never get to know that place of lack which I (like to) think makes me afraid or lonely. I don't get

to be 'independent'. Independent when in the collective, and strong on my own. What happens in theatre often looks like what Lacan explains about the investment of love (paraphrased): In you there is more than you. In you, I love something that I believe I lack and I complete it. In that way I am persuading myself that I should continue not knowing what is missing.^{vv}

Of course, the lack is not something to be discovered or improved, we are deadly and sexual, that's it, but it would be different if one could be strong by oneself in thinking. In seeing beyond falling under the attractions of already inscribed social relations between things and images. I hear a squeaking door and like the dog in Pavlov's experiment I have a set of fixed thoughts, the window's going to break, something bad is going to happen, the rifle in the first act must shoot in the last. As in the most banal examples of "what's next", "where am I driven to" and "what am I supposed to understand", this applies to all the concepts and aesthetics that necessitate a signifying economy of one response, tests with the questions that already contain all expected answers. If "there is no compulsion to make one thing happen because another has happened" (Wittgenstein), how do we proceed? What thinking activity could occur in spectatorship?

Thinking does not only mean being triggered by this or that, the one or the other content of the act of thinking, but being altogether urged by one's own receptivity, so that in every thought one experiences the pure possibility of thinking (Agamben). Does the experience of the possible emerge when a fissure opens up, an uncontrolled process of meaning? Something triggers something else, and what happens cannot be captured by the intentions of the performer and the spectator.

- ¹ Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, Éditions Seuil, Paris, 1966.
- ² Guy Debord, *La société du spectacle et commentaires sur la société du spectacle*, Éditions Gallimard, Paris, 1992.
- ³ Hans-Thies Lehmann, "Fragments on Considering Theater as a realm of Possibilities", *Theater Etcetera, Spielart*, Muenchen, 2001.
- ⁴ Jacques Lacan, *Le séminaire livre XI, Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*, Éditions Seuil, Paris, 1973.

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