Welcome to the Machine

Connor Schumacher's *The Fool* as a case against 24/7.

MA Thesis Theatre Studies

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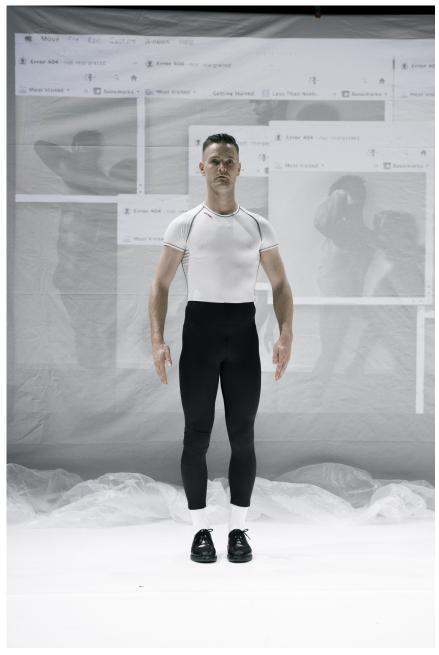
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Figure 1. The intelligent robot The Fool.

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Acknowledgements

Finishing this thesis, I was eventually forced to let go of the subchapter that most spoke to me, titled "Work of the Gods." It discussed the importance of religion within the context of the ritual and 24/7 as a texturising component without which life is worth very little. Despite my staunch atheism, I found myself drawn to the academic and everyday relevance of mysticism and recognised the experience of transcendence from the few times in my life when I was truly lost in art. In the end, it was the most valuable writing to me, dealing with work outside of the context of monetisation, and with faith from a philosophical but more or less secular perspective. I do wonder, if we sterilise (the experience of) the Gods out of our lives, what does that leave us with? It seems arrogant, short-sighted and unfeasible to limit the description of human experience to the visible, the straightforward, the explainable. But for the purpose of this thesis, that will have to do. In his work, especially his earlier work, I have seen Connor grapple with similar questions, from a background much more shaped by the presence

of a God than my own was. Reading Turner, this presence, whatever we may call it, got a more settled place in my life, making me feel more at home with the thought and experience of transcendence around me. Writing this thesis lead me to confront structural issues in my daily life and to embrace the rhythm of the days and years more, as well as to make space to allow for the unexpected, inefficient and social. It lead me to consider the value of work in a more holistic context relating to purpose and to considering the morality of taking the Gods out of the everyday, the play out of work and the work out of play. As someone who once spent over one hundred fifty hours embroidering as a devotional act of love, I wonder if I am everything but secular in an experiential sense. These thoughts, in the context of Turner and Crary, hold a potential for disruption that is very dear to me, but that I am at this time not able to discuss within the structure of this thesis. I will continue to live them and perhaps one day find the words to write on them.

Preface

Pink Floyd, "Welcome to the Machine."

Welcome my son, welcome to the machine.

Where have you been?

It's alright, we know where you've been.

You've been in the pipeline, filling in time.

Provided with toys and *Scouting for Boys*.

You bought a guitar to punish your ma.

And you didn't like school,

and you know you're nobody's fool.

So welcome to the machine.

Welcome my son, welcome to the machine.

What did you dream?

It's alright, we told you what to dream.

You dreamed of a big star.

He played a mean guitar.

He always ate in the steak bar.

He loved to drive in his Jaguar.

So welcome to the machine.

1. Introduction

1.1 - Introduction of the research topic

Connor Schumacher's work has been a point of interest for me for a little over a year now. The performances fit within the trend in modern theatre and dance observed by Lehmann and Primavesi in "Dramaturgy on Shifting Grounds" when they state that "[f]or some time now theatre has mingled with all kinds of artistic practices, including variety spectacles, musical, mime, slap stick and so forth,"[1] or as the team further consisting of dramaturge Maaike Schuurmans and concept developer/designer Luis Rios Zertuche describe their form: "looking at content through the perspective of movement."[2] In their work and the surrounding research, they touch on issues that I observe to be particularly relevant amongst my generation, and that feel relevant to me personally as well. Researching this thesis, I interviewed Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche about their sixth work, *The Fool,* focussing on the conceptual research and questions that inspired the performance.[3]

On November 24 2015, during the Moving Futures festival in Amsterdam, I attended Schumacher's latest solo performance, *The Fool,* in which he proclaims himself to be the intelligent robot The Fool, made from the image of its maker.[4] The Fool does not have a name; his title was chosen after the tarot card, the image of which portrays the archetype of the fool walking on the line where knowing everything and knowing nothing can be seen as the same thing.[5] In the piece, Schumacher moves in a way often associated with robots, both puppet-like and stilted yet at times eerily fluid. The piece also features two more traditional contemporary dance scenes. During the performance, he often employs a very basic form of sign language to illustrate the spoken words. Schumacher performs in front of a projection screen most of the time, which is used to display digital images on a loop, to show a video

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[1] Hans-Thies Lehman and Patrick Primavesi, "Dramaturgy on Shifting Grounds" *Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts*, 14:3, (2009): 3-6.

[2] Connor Schumacher, Maaike Schuurmans and Luis Rios Zertuche, interviewed by Roemjana de Haan, Sietske de Vries and Aster Fliers, on December 14, 2015 and January 12, 2016.

[3] Connor Schumacher, Maaike Schuurmans and Luis Rios Zertuche, interviewed by Aster Fliers, on May 18, 2016.

[4] Dansateliers, "Connor Schumacher - The Fool," filmed during *Festival Moving Futures* in Tilburg, 25-28 November 2015, vimeo video, 29:18, posted December 2015, https://vimeo.com/148210053.

[5] Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche, by Fliers, on May 18, 2016.

montage with voice over at the end of the piece, or to play with light and shadow. The performance takes different approaches to the question of how meaning is made, employing these signs, the voice over and contemporary dance to ask the audience how they experience the making of meaning and what their role is in that process.

1.2 - Theoretical framework

In the process of making *The Fool*, Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche asked themselves some difficult questions about what the use of art should be, and how one can create meaning in dance when the tendency is to associate contemporary dance with freedom and multi-interpretable expression.[6] They translated a lot of this research into the performance, but I feel there is a value in revisiting the questions, looking at the problems that prompted them in the first place, before seeing what answers the performance might have to offer. In order to do so, I will turn to three texts/thinkers that can expand on the thoughts and work of Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche. Reading these texts, I became aware that they not only allow for fruitful new perspectives on the work, but they connect through a shared interest in the different states of consciousness, structuring of vision and the ethical potential and problems regarding the functioning of all media today but more specifically contemporary dance and theatre.

In *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*, Jonathan Crary discusses the eradication of sleep by the military-industrial complex to make us into 24/7 consumers and the effects this has on us,[7] as well as the role technology plays in isolating us from each other.[8] Crary is by no means alone in observing isolation and a profound change in the way society functions, nor in linking this to consumerism and commodification of the individual.[9] Thinkers like Matthew B. Crawford make a similar case in *The World Beyond Your Head: On Becoming an Individual in an Age of Distraction*,[10] and articles like "The World Wide Cage: The Internet

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[6] Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche, by Fliers, on May 18, 2016.

[7] Jonathan Crary, *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (London and New York: Verso, 2013).

[8] Crary, *24/7*, 2-28.

[9] Crary, *24/7,* 40-47.

[10] Matthew B. Crawford, *The World Beyond Your Head: On Becoming an Individual in an Age of Distraction (*New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015).

as an Engine of Liberation is an Innocent Fraud,"[11] and "Embedded beings: how we blended

our minds with our devices,"[12] also hint at it. According to Crary, the structuring of vision and a

permanent stream of visual input are central to creating the half-wake state of 24/7,[13] thus not

only making this relevant to the work of Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche and our

discussion of sleep and advertising during our interview, but also in connecting to Maaike

Bleeker's *Visuality in the Theatre*,[14] as a chance to link Crary's theory more directly to the

performance of *The Fool* as well as the role vision plays in the problems surrounding 24/7.

Bleeker makes similar but more precise observations than Crary does regarding vision

and power, so using the two together seems pertinent, especially because Bleeker continues

thoughts on presence and the connection between seer and what is seen as well as the mirror

stage,[15] where Crary does not. Victor Turner, meanwhile, offers an older but also valuable

anthropological perspective in *From Ritual to Theatre: the Human Seriousness of Play*,[16]

focussing on the liminal phase in a ritual and its cyclical nature,[17] as well as on the political

potential of groups of people experiencing togetherness.[18] I think both concepts of the liminal

and liminoid are relevant to *the Fool*, with it being a ritual performance of sorts, as well as a

liminoid product protesting some of the more pressing social issues discussed with

Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche in the interview. Following Crary, I suspect liminal

aspects to their collaboration might be more potent than a liminoid product in a time and place

where technology is used to almost completely eradicate all different phases and cycles in

favour of one 24/7 state of being plugged in and monetised. Crary discusses the potential of

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[11] Nicholas Carr, "The World Wide Cage: The Internet as an Engine of Liberation is an Innocent Fraud," *Aeon Magazine,* ed. Pam Weintraub, August 26, 2016, https://aeon.co/essays/the-internet-as-an-engine-of-liberation-is-an-innocent-fraud.

[12] Saskia Nagel and Peter Reiner, "Embedded beings: how we blended our minds with our devices," *Aeon Magazine,* ed. Pam Weintraub, October 4, 2016 https://aeon.co/ideas/embedded-beings-how-we-blended-our-minds-with-our-devices.

[13] Crary, *24/7,* 8.

[14] Maaike Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre: the Locus of Looking (*Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

[15] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 120-145*.*

[16] Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: the Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1982).

[17] Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre,* 54.

[18] Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre,* 57-59.

sleep as a resistance to 24/7 because of its nature as a cyclical phenomenon that can never be truly eradicated,[19] prompting me to reconsider Turner's statement that the liminal will eventually always result in a reestablishing of the status quo,[20] when we live in a time where the status quo is inherently non-cyclical and able to commodify even the most far reaching forms of theoretical and practical protest, namely liminoid products,[21] as part of the system.[22]

Turner offers us a view less bleak than Crary, and unlike Crary but like Bleeker, also specifically focusses on contemporary dance and theatre. While his collection of essays was published in 1982, unlike the other texts that were all published post 2008, his work is by no means outdated or irrelevant. Proof of this relevance and further useful discussion on communitas and liminality is found in Ana Vujanović and Bojana Cvejić's *The Public Sphere by Performance*,[23] published in 2015. While I initially focussed on their book because of the final chapter regarding solo dance, thus making it relevant in discussing *The Fool*, an earlier chapter focusses on Turner's work, specifically social drama, communitas and liminality. I will use their work together with Turner's because it provides a great contemporary context to Turner. Turner's positivity, in contrast with Crary's pessimism, has to do in large part with the time of writing, with Crary describing all the political potential that Turner observed in the sixties and seventies as important and powerful but never fully realised.[24] While I am perhaps more inclined to agree with Crary, Turner offers a view that can temper Crary's depressing description of humans today as isolated meat puppets plugged into the giant machine of consumerism. Turner's is a view that can provide an alternative to this feeling of never being able to unplug and connect that I recognise from experience all too well. I recognise in Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche and other contemporaries a wish to go beyond 24/7, and in that context Turner offers a perspective and a description of communitas,[25] that I think is as valuable as ever. Given the centrality of monetised work and consumerism in Crary's

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[19] Crary, *24/7,* 10-11.

[20] Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre,* 41.

[21] Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre,* 33-34.

[22] Crary, *24/7,* 56-57, 115.

[23] Ana Vujanović and Bojana Cvejić, *The Public Sphere by Performance* (Berlin, Paris and Belgrade: Bbooks, Les Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers and TkH, 2012).

[24] Crary, *24/7*, 113-114.

[25] Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre,* 57-59.

text, Turner can offer a more rounded perspective on work and play, which coupled with Bleeker's precise analysis of visual structures in art as they relate to structures of power, will provide a broad but precise picture of the problems and possibilities *The Fool* presents us with and that in turn have informed my thinking on society for the past few months. Bleeker discusses the positive potential for vision as well as its problematic aspects,[26] complementing Crary's negative thoughts further. While I briefly considered also using Crawford to discuss how it is impossible to focus in a time where all visible surfaces are occupied by advertising in service of some abstract economic efficiency,[27] this would probably cloud the waters more than it would focus the theory, even though it would be relevant.

A final note on the texts used: I took care to asses the time of writing of each of the texts. Crary in *24/7* warns that with technology developing at the speed it currently does, any work on it written more than five years ago tends to become irrelevant.[28] I observed this in reading his now three year old book, which is mostly current, but has in part been overtaken by developments in social media and technology. On the other hand, texts like Turner's and Bleeker's, which focus on more permanent cultural structures and phenomena, with Turner starting from the point of tribal culture and Bleeker discussing visual structures across media in the context of philosophy rather than technology, seem to me not to have that same expiration date. With Turner playing a central role in Cvejiić and Vujanović's work,[29] it turns out still to be highly relevant in multiple fields, and I hope to combine contemporary texts on societal tendencies together with a more historical perspective in this thesis, also in the hopes of this history providing an answer to a world in which theory can become irrelevant after a mere five years. To end on a clarifying theoretical note regarding quotation and style: the title of Crary's book *24/7* and the problem it discusses, 24/7, could become confusing to the reader, especially if they are not used precisely. I have taken extra care to make sure that the title and the concept are not accidentally used interchangeably, using italics to denote the book title as is customary in *The Chicago Manual of Style,* with which I have made very effort to comply. I briefly considered consistently subtitling the book title for clarification, but I presume *24/7* is

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[26] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 120-145*.*

[27] Crawford, *The World Beyond Your Head,* 3-31.

[28] Crary, *24/7,* 39.

[29] Vujanović and Cvejić, *The Public Sphere by Performance,* 77-96.

discernible enough from 24/7 not to need to make an exception to the prescribed style. The same could be said for the performance piece *The Fool* and its main character The Fool, or indeed the fool tarot card discussed in the interview, but that difference seemed so self-evident that it is not worth remarking upon. Unlike with my bachelor thesis, this thesis does not hinge on precise semantics, so I trust that the care I have taken in my quotation together with these final remarks will prevent any confusion.

1.3 - Research topic and specification

While this research started out from a very practical point focussing on solo dance, robot-imagery and how *The Fool* fits within Dutch contemporary post-modern theatre landscape, the more I let the performance shape my focus, the more critically engaged and ethically driven my research became. Especially after the interview, during which it became clear that the robot character was more a means than the goal,[30] it seemed logical to focus on questions related to society and culture at large and the way in which the work of Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche (and *The Fool* in particular) offers resistance. My main focus is therefore not a quantifying question, but rather a perspective with which to delve further into the performance. I will look at Connor Schumacher's *The Fool* as a case against the problematic situation described by Crary in *24/7.*

Having opted for this more socially critical perspective, it seemed fruitful further to specify aspects relevant in discussing resistance to 24/7, aspects that are also present in *The Fool*. The interview made it clear to me that a focus on audience address and visual structuring is essential to analyse the effect Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche try to provoke in their audience as well as it being a focus of their research. This leads me to specify my main focus further, by questioning the role of vision as defined by Bleeker in undermining and emphasising the problematic aspects of 24/7, both as Bleeker's theory connects to Crary's and in analysing *The Fool.*

Another aspect that came to the fore in the interview, in the performance and in Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche's fascination with others' work, can be found with Turner. Having discussed the ritual and religion, sleep and the cyclical explicitly during the

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[30] Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche, by Fliers, on May 18, 2016.

interview,[31] the intersection between the resistant aspects Crary elaborates on and Turner's focus on the political potential of liminality made me specify the research focus further in this direction, prompting me to look at Turner's discussion of the ritual's potential for political change, and the possibilities offered by the liminal as a not as easily commodifiable phase often cyclical in nature in contrast to liminoid products.

Lastly, collaboration is obviously an important feature of how Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche work and this does not just inform their making process and performances, but I think also warrants closer look in general, as interpersonal connection is emphasised by both Turner and Crary for its radical potential for change. It is therefore necessary to focus on the process surrounding the performance, so as not to overlook this practical potential that is created in the working process. My final specifying aspect to the research is therefore Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche's collaboration as it relates to Turner's concept of communitas and the ways in which it can be used to undermine the disconnectedness and isolation central to Crary's description of 24/7.

1.4 - Methodology

The research for this thesis will consist of two different but interrelated approaches. First, I will compile my literature review into three chapters, each focussing on another theorist and the theory most relevant to *The Fool* and the working process of Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche. I will place the theory within the context of Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche's work, using the most recent interview I did with them about *The Fool* and our earlier interviews focussing more generally on their collaboration and methods to connect theory and practice. I will not attempt to analyse or explain their working process, but rather share the literary research next to the aspects of their practise I find relevant in light of it.

The second approach will connect this literary review to my case study: the performance *The Fool*. I will analyse its visual structure to see how it directs the audience's attention and if and how it makes the spectator become aware of their own gaze. This will be a very narrow qualitative analysis, using the theory to tease out some of the potential hidden in *The Fool.* My approach will follow Turner's thoughts on participative observation to some

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[31] Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche, by Fliers, on May 18, 2016.

extent, taking my own experience as a starting point without ignoring diverse viewpoints and wider audience reception. I have done my best to discern my own perspective and subjectivity but also, using Crary, Bleeker and Turner, to come to more generally supported observations that go beyond speculation on the experience of *the* spectator. I have, however, presumed that the audience most likely to attend this performance are probably somewhat familiar with contemporary dance and theatre, and will experience it with this perspective in mind.

While the interview with Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche provided a lot of interesting insight into the process and creation of *The Fool,* I will use this analysis to see how far we can push the piece, looking at what I think is its incredibly (political) potential and where it could have been taken further. We briefly discussed this during the interview as well, and I think there is value to be added from my theoretical perspective regarding the research and visual structures of *The Fool*. The second part of this analysis will consist of looking at *The Fool* through the perspective of Turner's work, to see what *The Fool* in that light has to add against 24/7, as a possibly ritual performance made between close collaborators who often deal with topics like religion.

Within the context of the literary review, it seems unnatural to separate forcefully the contextual literature from the interview, because they often discuss the same topics and I focussed on this specific literature precisely because it expands and adds to the artistic/ conceptual research of Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche and not just repeats it. While their research is often times also theoretical, they have a goal of translating it to the stage. I think my lack of such an obligation can add valuable new insight and add to their in my opinion excellent and thought-provoking work. At the same time, just focussing on a theory because I felt it fit with the performance seemed too meagre given the theoretical insight and work done by the makers themselves. Because of the creative end to their research, their thoughts can add to the literature as much as my purely theoretical perspective could add new insight to their practice, so I will incorporate the insights gained during our interview into the discussion of the texts.

1.5 - Outline

Following this introductory chapter, chapters two, three and four will consist of a discussion of the literature. I will start by discussing *24/7*, focussing on the main problem described by Crary first, then focussing on how this results in the voluntary self-commodification of humans into consumers and how this can also be observed in surveillance changing from 'Big Brother' into us all being a 'Little Sister,' and then finally focussing more specifically on the role of vision Crary describes, from the never ending nature of streaming to the reduction of individuals to 'eyeballs.' The following chapter will discuss *Visuality in the Theatre,* first outlining the theory surrounding visuality, then zooming in on Bleeker's discussion of mirroring, as well as discussing the spectator's awareness of their own gaze as it relates to Crary's statement that this is a first step towards combatting 24/7. Chapter four will discuss Turner, both as I see his work in the context of Crary's, and by turning to Cvejić and Vujanović's update of his work specifically for use in dance and with regards to political aspects of the public sphere and working together. I will discuss the liminal in contrast to the liminoid and then communitas as it relates to the collaboration of Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche. Finally I will link the cyclical aspects Turner relates to the ritual/liminality to Crary's views on how sleep and cyclical phenomenon are a disruption of the military-industrial complex's attempt for us to employ our eyeballs in service of consumerism 24/7, thus making any and all interruptions of it inherently political to begin with.

Following this outline of the theory, I will look closer at *The Fool*, to see what the performance itself, and the way it structures vision, can provide in light of the previously discussed theory. I will first analyse the visual structure *The Fool* presents to the spectator and discuss why it is important in this analysis to focus on visuality rather than meaning, as after the interview I suspect that that is where the potential and questions posed by the performance become interesting. I will then use Turner to look at the liminal and liminoid aspects present in the performance to see what potential lies there*.* My conclusion will consist of connecting the literary overview with the analysis to see if and how *The Fool* can be seen as a case against 24/7. I will then end this thesis by briefly looking to the future, to some possible further research.

2. Crary's 24/7

2.1 - 24/7

"Everyone, we are told - not just businesses and institutions - needs an 'online presence,' need 24/7,"[32] Crary notes. "24/7 announces at time without time, a time extracted from any material or identifiable demarcations, a time without sequence or recurrence."[33] There is no presence, only a hallucination of one. At the same time it is a directive, for a life that is monotonous, blurry, everlasting, continuous and yet short because it spans the timeframe of a week rather than years, centuries, millennia or aeons.[34] It is a life from which the rhythm of waking and sleeping has gone. Maybe 24/7 is best exemplified by the image of people waiting in line, formerly a shared condition of humanity, but now, with everyone on their respective smart phones, exemplary of the atrophy of individual patience and shared experience.[35] The weekend can be seen as a remnant of a time before the 24/7 ever-present sameness, but with digital communication allowing for permanent communication and 24/7 as a directive, the weekend as a break from 24/7 is slowly being eaten away at too.[36] There is never a moment when we cannot shop, and so the command for 24/7 can be characterised as the incursion of all aspects of this non-time into our personal and social interactions.[37] "Self-fashioning is the work we're all given, and we dutifully comply with the prescription continually to reinvent ourselves and manage our intricate identities."[38] One could argue that this is a small thing, the acceptance of everyone leaving a phone on the table during dinner, but the cumulative harm sustained is significant.[39] With the world now running 24/7, television never going dark, consuming never having to stop, with next day delivery and the distinction between work and private life vanishing, humanity becomes an impossibility: "24/7 steadily undermines

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[32] Crary, *24/7,* 104.

[33] Crary, *24/7,* 29.

[34] Crary, *24/7,* 29.

[35] Crary, *24/7,* 124.

[36] Crary, *24/7,* 30.

[37] Crary, *24/7,* 29.

[38] Crary, *24/7,* 72.

[39] Crary, *24/7,* 30.

distinctions between day and night, and between action and repose. It's a zone of insensibility, of amnesia, of what defeats the possibility of experience."[40] The world changes into a non-stop work site, with sleep, the only natural barrier that cannot be eliminated, standing in the way of the vision of ever-continuing ever-present sameness.[41]

2.2 - The ends of sleep

The fight to eradicate sleep is well on the way. Discussing the political implications of this change in our society, Crary observes: "The injuring of sleep is inseparable from the ongoing dismantling of social protections in other spheres."[42] Crary opens his book by highlighting a disturbing connection between the military-industrial complex and sleep, naming examples of actual military and government programs trying to combat the human need for sleep or even the darkness of night time in ways that range from unrealistic to outright ridiculous,[43] in an attempt to make humans more machine-like: "[n]on-sleep products, aggressively promoted by pharmaceutical companies, would become first a lifestyle option, and eventually, for many, a necessity."[44] He elaborates further on sleep deprivation as torture, and how profoundly our society has changed in the ways we view sleep, now that the world runs 24/7.[45] "A 24/7 world has the semblance of a social world, but it's actually a non-social model for mechanic performance and a suspension of living that does not disclose the human cost required to sustain its effectiveness."[46] With the banishing of the dark and of sleep and the instatement of a world that always runs without respite, concepts like "long term" and "progress" become meaningless, being replaced by a sameness that is neither truly cyclical, nor ever progresses beyond itself.[47] "An illuminated 24/7 world without shadows is the final capitalist mirage of

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[40] Crary, *24/7,* 17.

[41] Crary, *24/7,* 17.

[42] Crary, *24/7,* 18.

[43] Crary, *24/7,* 2-3.

[44] Crary, *24/7,* 4.

[45] Crary, *24/7,* 5-8.

[46] Crary, *24/7,* 9.

[47] Crary, *24/7,* 9.

post-history, of an exorcism of the otherness that is the motor of historical change."[48] On the whole it results in flattening, of incorporating or making the outsider disappear, a total homogenisation.[49] Any bastion of political potential for change is banished, along with sleep: "[s]leep poses the idea of a human need and interval of time that cannot be colonised and harnessed to a massive engine of profitability, and thus remains an incongruous anomaly and site of crisis in the global present."[50] While hierarchical models in which sleep is understood as more primitive as compared to the more highly evolved mode of waking are nothing new,[51] nor is criticism of them,[52] now for the first time we are witnessing the ends of sleep, and the accompanying never-ending brightness. The implication is that with everything permanently illuminated, the places of resistance, of darkness, the otherness that also must be part of the world, become unknowable in that brightly lit world identical to itself, with a past never extending beyond 24/7, banishing all mystery.[53] Humans in such a world are nothing beyond members of a consumer society: stuck in meaningless always repeating patterns in which they work for money and then work at acquiring consumer goods/experiences with that money.[54] Sleep can never be fully controlled, at once a place where one operates with the least political resistance *and* a condition that cannot be controlled externally. This fits no binary, it operates outside of it.[55] The trend is for sleep to become a privilege, previously in history expecting the protection of the sleeper by the commonwealth,[56] but now needing to buy sleep through medication.

As someone who frequently struggles to get to sleep and shut off, I was particularly struck by Crary's observation that "[i]nsomnia is a way of imagining the extreme difficulty of

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[48] Crary, *24/7,* 9.

[49] Crary, *24/7,* 56-57.

[50] Crary, *24/7,* 10-11.

[51] Crary, *24/7,* 11-12.

[52] Crary, *24/7,* 12.

[53] Crary, *24/7,* 19.

[54] Crary, *24/7,* 19.

[55] Crary, *24/7, 24.*

[56] Crary, *24/7, 25.*

individual responsibility in the face of the catastrophes of our era."[57] I realised that I often avoid sleep as a way to avoid thought, to remain plugged into the distraction that I at once hate but also cannot stop. The subject of sleep was also a central part of my interview with Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche, when we turned to one recent work that they found both excellent and highly political: *Schwalbe Speelt Een Tijd* by performance collective Schwalbe, which I saw on September 17th 2016 at Theater Kikker in Utrecht. Schwalbe's work is often durational or exhaustive and physical. Many of the performers have a background in mime. In *Schwalbe Speelt Een Tijd,* five women build and then break down stage designs from other theatre productions in front of an audience. The performance in the original incarnation that Schumacher and Rios Zertuche saw, started at midnight, lasting until six in the morning. We ended up discussing how radical it is to be given time to sit, time to think. As Rios Zertuche put it: "[T]his is why I find *Schwalbe Speelt Een Tijd*, like, the fact that they, in a very quiet way, because they don't talk about it all, ever, they give you space to think, they give you time to sit, they give you silence…" Schumacher added: "They give you time to *sleep*, you sleep when you wanna sleep." Rios Zertuche: "They give silence, they give you a dekentje to sleep. […] You're given six hours to be with yourself in a way, and I find that a very political statement in itself. But it's like silence is the new loud."[58] In our discussion, it seemed we reached an agreement on how we feel so numbed by the noise that surrounds us, that the silence simply to be or sleep has become immeasurably valuable and political an sich.

2.3 - Little Sister

While a lot of digital positivists would argue that with the speed at which technological change happens, and the great leaps it has taken, new possibilities for radical change constantly manifest themselves, Crary observes that in fact not much has changed. He argues with Marx that these new technologies simply continue old power structures through new technologies and in new media.[59] Currently, technology is becoming more and more linked to the body, responding to gesture and informing the body through sensations rather than just visual

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[57] Crary, *24/7,* 18.

[58] Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche, by Fliers, on May 18, 2016.

[59] Crary, *24/7,* 39.

cues,[60] but he observes that these new technologies still continue the "banal exercise of non-stop consumption, social isolation, and political powerlessness, rather than representing some historically significant turning point."[61] "The form that innovation takes within capitalism is as the continual simulation of the new, while existing relations of power and control remain effectively the same."[62] With these developments, there is one significant change, however, and that is a change in the way this power and control are exercised. Since the 1990's emergence of Google and Microsoft etcetera, new more flexible ways to enforce the old power structures at increasing speed have meant an increase of control. Reading this, I was reminded of the first article that got me interested in mass surveillance and the political aspects of technology and data.

Dutch independent journalism website *De Correspondent* posted an article in 2014, which was translated to English by the Dutch digital civil rights foundation Bits of Freedom. The article discusses how security agencies mine the metadata we all willingly provide by carrying our phones, while the agencies claim there is not much harm in collecting these data because it is the when and where of messages rather than their content, even though these data simultaneously disclose our most personal information, location and interpersonal connections at a cursory glance.[63] In actuality there is an imposed an inescapable uniformity to our compulsory labour of self-management. These kinds of surveillance, using data the *user* provides, are now increasingly used for marketing purposes as well. "Passively and often voluntarily, one now collaborates in one's own surveillance and data-mining."[64] Control is no longer institutionally enforced, but rather enforced by the individual themselves.[65] To borrow a metaphor from a workshop given by Bits of Freedom on privacy I attended some years back: Big Brother has turned into a Little Sister. Crary further states that unlike with modernism, the expansion of this control is no longer linear, but exponential. Yet to opt out is not an option:

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[60] Crary, *24/7,* 39.

[61] Crary, *24/7,* 40.

[62] Crary, *24/7,* 40.

[63] Dimitri Tokmetzis, "How Your Innocent Smartphone Passes on Almost Your Entire Life to the Secret Service," Hans de Zwart trans., *De Correspondent,* July 30, 2014, https://www.bof.nl/2014/07/30/how-your-innocent-smartphone-passes-on-almost-your-entire-life-to-the-secret-service/.

[64] Crary, *24/7,* 48.

[65] Crary, *24/7,* 42.

not having a smartphone makes for being cast out of large parts of social interaction and work. This is both a local phenomenon and a more global one.[66] To me, the suicide nets outside the Apple Factory illustrate this inequality and divide between people belonging to different 'technological classes' the most starkly.[67] We like to think that the convenience and prestige associated with technology will be possible for the entire planet,[68] that everyone can participate in the culture of briefly current shiny semipermanently prestigious disposable technology-objects,[69] whilst this is actually undoable on the planet environmentally if it were to become a reality.[70] All of this results at least in our western sphere of experience and technological reliance into the standardisation of experience coupled with a loss of subjective identity and singularity: everyone voluntarily fits themselves into the mould provided. This can and should be considered existential damage.[71] This damage is not so much a true loss of individuality, as it is that modes of attention have become homogenised.[72] Everyone is trapped in their own micro-world of highly specific chosen media, yet the isolation and parcellisation resulting from this is in fact a shared experience.[73] Two people sitting next to each other can inhabit vastly different isolated universes, though these have a monotonous sameness in their temporal patterns and segmentation.[74] We have come to live in a world where personal accomplishments may give satisfaction, but in the end, nobody beats the system.[75] In short, and in compliance with this self-surveillance, the homogenisation also consists of experiences flattening: managing your bank balance and maintaining a friendship have become roughly similar digital interactions. The brain becomes a simple input output model resulting in

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[66] Crary, *24/7,* 44.

[67] Gethin Chamberlain, "Apple's Chinese workers treated 'inhumanely, like machines'," *The Guardian,* April 30, 2011, https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2011/apr/30/apple-chinese-workers-treated-inhumanely.

[68] Crary, *24/7,* 49.

[69] Crary, *24/7,* 44-45.

[70] Crary, *24/7,* 49.

[71] Crary, *24/7,* 51.

[72] Crary, *24/7,* 52.

[73] Crary, *24/7,* 53.

[74] Crary, *24/7,* 54.

[75] Crary, *24/7,* 58.

"homogenisation of inner experience and the contents of communication networks, and an unproblematic reduction of the infinite amorphousness of mental life to digital formats."[76] As our offline world atrophies, one truth remains standing: online there is always something better.[77] I am with Crary: disciplinary forms of power did not disappear as Deleuze argued, but changed shape into additional forms of control alongside still functioning older forms of discipline. As prisons are more crowded than ever before, the rest of us have integrated ourselves into a global spectacle from which there is no escape.[78]

Crary states that "Committing to activities where time spent cannot be leveraged through an interface and its links is now something to be avoided or done sparingly,"[79] which reminded me of another aspect discussed with regards to Schwalbe and art in the interview. From Schwalbe, we got to discussing the omnipresence of advertising, and how we all felt drawn to quieter, toned down art and advertising rather than work that 'shouts' at you, because it stands out through its muteness. Rios Zertuche: "[T]here was a McDonalds advert series that was fantastic." Schumacher: "It was so silent it was scary." Rios Zertuche: "It was just vector images, like silhouetten, really minimalistic. It was like a blue, a beautiful blue background and you would just get the form of the frietjeszak, like red, and then just with rectangles coming out of it in yellow, and that was it. No logo, no nothing." Schuurmans: "Talk about making meaning!" Rios Zertuche: "Also because you […] become aware of how much they are in your system. They don't even need to put the logo. And I thought it was so elegant that they did that." Schumacher: "[Y]ou can get into like personal associations. Like, 'Oh I used to go to McDonalds with my family. I hate McDonalds, it scares me that this thing makes me think of McDonalds…'" Rios Zertuche: "I hate that I love it, this specific image."[80] It is telling that we have reached a point where we can outright disagree with something, resent it and the effect it has on us even, but still find solace in its simplicity and the lesser demands it places on our attention compared to other similarly demanding works. In discussing *The Fool* later in this thesis, it is important to keep this in mind, as a large part of the work of

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[76] Crary, *24/7,* 98.

[77] Crary, *24/7,* 59.

[78] Crary, *24/7,* 73.

[79] Crary, *24/7,* 46.

[80] Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche, by Fliers, on May 18, 2016.

Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche deals with how much concrete information the audience is provided to form a story versus the space they have for their own interpretations, as well as the ethics surrounding that.

2.4 - Eyeballs

In short, with the coming of Little Sister, our world turned into an attention-based economy dealing in the finite currency of 'eyeballs.'

> One of the goals of Google, Facebook and other enterprises (five years from now the names may be different) is to normalise and make indispensable as Deleuze outlined, the idea of a continuous interface - not literally seamless, but a relatively unbroken engagement with illuminated screens of diverse kinds that unremittingly demand interest or response.[81]

There will never be enough of a break from this being plugged into the machine to focus truly on anything else, to think.[82] It is both telling and ironic that I am typing this "plugged into" the glowing computer screen, and find myself often unable to turn to this document, instead putting on yet another highly addictive television show. Point is, that within this state of being and looking, we are not exactly focussing on the things we see. Finding meaning in what we see and focussing on the thing seen has become irrelevant, as the term 'eyeballs' as a measure of a television program's success denotes. How many eyeballs a show gets is not about the activity of looking or the engagement with the material, but rather the motor activity and physical state, to train the eyes to the screen and nothing more.[83] Television is the first major change in the way attention is structured, because it starts to form more homogenous and habitual behaviour around culture,[84] exemplified by the water cooler moment discussing last night's programming the next day at work as a way to belong and interact in the

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[81] Crary, *24/7,* 75.

[82] Crary, *24/7,* 75.

[83] Crary, *24/7,* 76.

[84] Crary, *24/7,* 80.

workplace. It is also the place where the attention economy based on the eyeballs started.[85]

"Instead of a television-saturated culture diminishing individual agency, its pervasiveness made clear that agency itself is a mutable and historically determined notion."[86] Television has become a part of the shared experience, in the beginning aligning with sleeping patterns, though the test pattern could be seen as a foreboding and of the 24/7 yet to come.[87] It is not that these forms of viewing and the familiar presence of images are now fully gone, but rather they have been absorbed into new technologies.[88]

The thought that 24/7 just consists of the ruination of sleep in favour of the permanent basking in wakefulness is a false one: 24/7 consists as much of the extinguishing of the darkness and obscurity as it is a killing of the day. "It coincides with an omnipresent field of operations and expectations to which one is exposed and in which individual optical activity is made the object of observation and management."[89] And simultaneously "there is a concealment of the most important techniques invented in the last 150 years: the various systems for the management and control of human beings."[90] So while seeing has become more structured and objectified than ever, this structuring is more hidden than ever before. Television is no longer something that someone catches in an attentive manner, but rather it is "instead provisionally treated […] as a source of light and sound to which one is exposed," a "stream of luminous stimulation," related to technological addictiveness.[91] Living always with the knowledge "that one can return again and again to a neutral void that has little affective intensity of any kind."[92] With new technology in all our pockets providing us with, among many other possibilities for escaping the physical reality, 24/7 television, the shifts between this void and daily life have all but vanished. "Interhuman basis of public space is made irrelevant to

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[85] Crary, *24/7,* 79.

[86] Crary, *24/7,* 82.

[87] Crary, *24/7,* 82.

[88] Crary, *24/7,* 84.

[89] Crary, *24/7,* 33.

[90] Crary, *24/7,* 36.

[91] Crary, *24/7,* 86.

[92] Crary, *24/7,* 87.

one's fantastic digital insularity."[93] More than anything, this problematic state of being is characterised by the thought that salvation is always one more click away and the resulting loss of daydreaming and introspection that would otherwise happen in slow and vacant times.[94]

Central to all of this is a changing relationship with vision in general, from activity to eyeballs, from externally controlled to internally regulated to conform with roughly the same structures of power. In short 24/7 results in the ultimate and endless financialisation and commodification of the individual and of social life, in which the understanding of the difference between the hyperbolic nature of imagery and the nature of daily life has vanished.[95]

> Most of the historically accumulated understandings of the term 'observer' are destabilised under such conditions: this is, when individual acts of vision are unendingly solicited for conversion into information that will both enhance technologies of control *and* be a form of surplus value in a marketplace based on the accumulation of data on user behaviour.[96]

In other words: where we used to have a fairly straightforward relationship of watching and being watched by Big Brother, we are now all together employing our eyeballs in favour of Little Sister, who in the end still reports all our voluntarily provided data back to Big Brother, providing him with information more all-encompassing than he could have ever sourced himself.

Before going into some radical political thought from the 1960's and its relevance and potential, both as seen by Crary and supported by Turner, I will spend the following chapter discussing vision in more detail. Looking for alternatives to the frankly saddening and distressing situation he sketches, Crary comes to an interesting conclusion. The problem is in large part related to how vision is controlled and structured, so the only possibility for change starts there as well. Only with a perceptual act, "a non-habitual mode of looking," can we

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[93] Crary, *24/7,* 89.

[94] Crary, *24/7,* 88.

[95] Crary, *24/7,* 99-100.

[96] Crary, *24/7,* 47-48.

overcome the pitfalls of not-acting and transcend problematic ways of looking at class struggle, to recognise "a condition of commonality and interdependence."[97] Until the situation becomes visible to us, we are stuck within its structure without hope of escape. This is where Bleeker's view as visuality being between the one seeing and the thing being seen in a specific cultural-historical context becomes relevant.[98]

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[97] Crary, *24/7,* 118.

[98] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 1-2.

3. Bleeker's focalisation

3.1 - Visuality in the theatre

As I have stated elsewhere,[99] Bleeker's concept of visuality takes into account the role audience address/positioning plays in the construction of a story and its meaning.[100] Visuality is not a static concept, but rather something that happens,[101] where seeing is an action.[102] Bleeker defines visuality as the relationship between the one seeing and the thing being seen in a specific cultural-historical context.[103] Discussing the post-modern nature of plays that could benefit from her approach to audience address, Bleeker highlights confusing ambiguous experiences as well was self-critical reflections,[104] which makes the theory not only applicable to my case study, but as I will later elaborate also connects to the ethical aspects of vision discussed by Crary. Visuality makes a point of content being shaped by the cultural/historical context it is a part of, and focalisation offers us the opportunity to take into account the subjective spectator's experience and the context in which it takes place, because it concerns looking at how audience positioning/address mediates between subject seeing and subject seen.[105] To get a better analytical grip on audience positioning, Bleeker uses the concepts internal and external focalisation. Internal focalisation is the person, visual cue or object that invites the spectator to abandon their position of sitting in the chair watching,[106] to step inside of the performance they are seeing.[107] In the chapter "Step Inside!," Bleeker analyses a moment in William Forsythe's performance *Artifact* (1984) where a character beckons the audience to identify with her and to come and interpret the performance.[108] The moment of

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[99] Aster Fliers, "Actual Cannibal Shia LaBeouf: Différance in Rob Cantor's performance '*Shia LaBeouf'* Live," (bachelor's thesis, UU, 2015), 10-11. [unpublished].

[100] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 9.

[101] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 2.

[102] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 17-18.

[103] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 1-2.

[104] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 8.

[105] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 9-10.

[106] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 27.

[107] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 19-40.

[108] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 26-27.

stepping inside is linked to absorption in the piece the spectator/seer is experiencing. Absorption happens when the spectator loses themselves, as it were, in the performance.[109] Bleeker explains external focalisation by discussing how during the second act of *Artifact* the sudden crashing down of a safety curtain makes the audience aware of their position as spectators again, by in that moment making them become aware of their own physicality and position of spectator/seer in the chair.[110] This mode of address, where the spectator's own position as spectator becomes visible so they are no longer being absorbed in the play, is referred to as theatricality.[111] Bleeker explains visuality as something that is shaped by the spectator's own personal experiences by comparing it to perspective,[112] and focuses her research on focalisation as mediating between the seer and the seen.[113] Meaning, in Bleeker's argument, is thus always shaped by how a spectator/seer is addressed.[114]

3.2 - Mirror/screen

In the chapter "Disorders That Consciousness Can Produce," Bleeker, by using some illustrative stories, discusses how seeing and being seen can become intertwined, focussing on physical grace and dance in particular.[115] While the discussion of dancing puppets in relation to Schumacher playing a stilted robot is undoubtedly interesting,[116] my focus will be on visual structures and the mirror as a concept, so I will step over details that I feel distract from that focus, even if they are interesting and in another context highly relevant with regards to *The Fool*. Mirroring within a theatre environment consists of two bodies: one seeing and feeling in the auditorium, another seen as a spectacle on stage. The gap between the two is bridged by mapping of one on stage onto the other in the chair, mixing self and other in this fallacy of

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[109] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 22.

[110] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 31.

[111] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 21-22.

[112] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 9-10.

[113] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 2.

[114] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 22.

[115] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 120-121.

[116] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 122.

aligning the visual and corporeal.[117] In Lacan, (mis)recognising the image in the mirror as one's own body serves the constitution of the self.[118] John Martin uses the principle to bridge the gap between the two bodies in the theatre, so the feelings of the body seen become that of the body seeing. This conflating of visual and corporeal muddles the line between self and other and leaves little space for interaction and different positions,[119] let alone for how this action is deeply shaped by the context it takes place in.[120] Bleeker's discussion of inner mimicry, how in seeing dance there is connecting between seeing movement and feeling it,[121] highlights that this is not straightforward and unproblematic, because we do not all experience it the same. It is neither universalist nor a direct translation.[122]

To remedy Lacan's (mis)recognition, Bleeker uses Kaja Silverman's concepts of "exterioperceptive" and "proprioceptive" ego, the first one aligning more or less with Lacan's mirror image, the second denoting the internal sensational dimensions of the ego from which we position ourselves in relation to other people and things.[123] The sensational body that now also plays a role besides the exterior image thus becomes specific, with it involving a total non-visual mapping that gathers together all disparate and scattered sensations into what, according to Silverman, has by some unfortunately been called "presence," or what she calls "ownness."[124] The reason Silverman calls the term unfortunate, is because presence implies some independence, when in fact proprioceptivity is always shaped within a culture, where the body is marked by gender, race, sexual preference etcetera.[125] Elaborating, Bleeker with Silverman proposes Lacan's screen as an alternative to the mirror, which is where the theory becomes particularly relevant in the context of *The Fool* and Crary's description of 24/7. The fact that the body as seen in the mirror is more attractive than the internal sensation of it, is

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[117] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 156.

[118] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 126.

[119] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 126.

[120] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 17.

[121] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 124.

[122] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 125.

[123] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 126.

[124] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 126-127.

[125] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 127.

crucial for wanting to make the image into a constitutive part of the ego, yet it is not merely idealised: it has to be the child's own body seen in order to be recognised and constitutive.[126] The screen meanwhile allows for more space to look at how this relationship between body and image is mediated by culture: "The screen makes visible what culture admits, and blocks out the rest."[127] The image on the screen is not just a mechanical reflection, the images on it are the result of cultural intervention.[128]

In the case of the screen, the image also has to be idealised to some extent for the individual to want to identify with it. But unlike the mirror, the screen functions three-way rather than two-way.[129] This being seen by a third, and our (self)image being validated through it or not, has a profound effect of how we become aware of our own bodies. We become aware of our self through the looks of others, through the gaze.[130] "Silverman describes the Lacanian gaze as something that impresses itself upon us through the sensation each of us at times has of being held within a field of vision, of being given over to specularity."[131] The gaze is everywhere and nowhere, becoming felt more in effect than through a discernible source.[132] Bleeker discusses how the gaze has been criticised from a feminist perspective, but also how thoughts of a "pure subject" and Sartre's description of someone who functions as a spectacle as "fallen" is inherently problematic.[133] The gaze and the way vision is structured is not as hegemonic within the theatre as it can be in film, first and foremost because there is no such structuring apparatus present as the camera. Especially in contemporary theatre, these relationships are often questioned and inverted, for example when the direct relationship between audience and actors is made explicit. "They [the actors] look back at the audience, showing that they know that they show."[134] This theatricality does

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[126] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 129.

[127] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 129.

[128] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 129.

[129] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 130.

[130] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 131.

[131] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 131.

[132] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 131.

[133] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 133.

[134] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 133.

not necessarily undermine the experience, but rather questions the possibility of seeing things 'as they are' that we presume when absorption occurs.

Both literal and metaphorical mirrors were part of the interview with Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche. We discussed the function of art as a mirror to society, coupled with the tendency in modern dance to avoid any statement that could function as such in favour of multi-interpretable movement and free audience interpretation. As Schumacher put it: "[Y]ou can hide as an artist, saying that you're being a mirror of society when actually you are something that has a slightly reflective property. [...] But you have to work so hard to see your reflection [...], instead of through the craft and the decision of the people who make a mirror as clean and as clear as possible."[135] Taking into account focalisation and its relation to making meaning, I would argue that while Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche made *The Fool* to discuss how meaning is made within a performance, the real power of the piece lies in how it approaches its audience and structures their attention, highlighting this structuring for them to consider that very principle. This is, albeit in more theatre-specific terminology, precisely what Crary argues as the perceptual act that is the first step in dismantling 24/7. Within 24/7, meaning has become largely irrelevant and interchangeable, but the monolithic way in which it is created and the fact that we are oblivious to the visual structures behind and omnipresent control surrounding it is not. In order to employ this in my analysis, I will lastly turn to Bleeker's thoughts on the audience becoming aware of their own positioning, so I can look at these moments in the performance as the first step towards radical change.

3.3 - Becoming aware: exposing the audience

Bleeker describes a play in which the speaker on stage loses authority when the puppet, previously only present as object not participating in the conversation, steps out and thus exposes what seemed a demonstration of truth as a nervous attempt by the speaker to keep going.[136] Lacan allows for a similar unmasking of the seeing body in the auditorium, unmasking it as also being under psychological and cultural pressure just like the body seen on

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[135] Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche, by Fliers, on May 18, 2016.

[136] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 138-139.

stage.[137] In the act of seeing, a host of factors play a role leading us to confirm what we see is reality, when in fact what we perceive as reality is actually a "dominant fiction." Dominant fiction means that it can be exposed as such and replaced by a different more or less dominant fiction or fictions, which would be a second step to Crary's perceptual act, unmasking 'reality' as fiction and seeing the body of the seer as being under the pressure that it is. Where Bleeker and Crary agree and are less naive than Turner sometimes seems, is that they state the problematic but unavoidable nature of dominance. Different fictions are possible, but not all of them have equal access to the reality status.[138] Or to think back to Crary, we can all live in our own media-bubbles, but the sameness of our experienced isolation within them and the compliance with Little Sister to maintain a 24/7 reality is not optional. Bleeker counters that we need to realise that the story is as much about the one seeing, as it is about the one being seen.[139] Personally I am fascinated by Bleeker's "looking back at Lacan" and recognised a lot of the chapter in my own experience of self, with my proprioceptive ego often clashing with the external image and the gender, ethnicity or class that others presume me to be based on that image. I mention this because the fact that Schumacher plays with assumptions about his own body and our perception of it, was what first drew me to his performance when I saw *Boy Oh Boy 2: God's First Creature* on April 24th 2014 in Theater Kikker in Utrecht during that year's edition of the Moving Futures festival. This play with perception will be relevant when discussing an externally focalising moment in the analysis. For me, like very few if any others, Schumacher manages to make felt this idea that unity itself is a cultural ideal signifying physical health rather than some given,[140] though in discussing this in the analysis I will of course remain critical of Schumacher's ways of structuring vision as well.

Bleeker relates the view of a holistic ego associated with health through Walter Benjamin to the essence of modern life, once more coming back to thoughts also expressed by Crary. The essence of modern life is shock, as Benjamin says. "The technologically altered environment of modern city life, the factory, and modern warfare, expose the human

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[137] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 139-140.

[138] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 140.

[139] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 140.

[140] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 142.

sensorium to physical shocks that have their correspondence in psychic shock."[141] Crary would probably agree that we have built up immunity against it, becoming numb in order to survive, and I would say that our earlier quoted discussion of the McDonald's advertisement exemplifies that we have become so overstimulated that the only thing that truly shocks us is silence. Bleeker argues further to Crary on a more personal level, not just a societal one, that our online presence and technological integratedness also alters our self as an embodied being. Bleeker by way of Susan Buck-Morss echoes Crary's point on self-commodification, "the ever-more sharply developed capacity to see oneself as an object." [142] Bleeker identifies this immunisation against the onslaught of 24/7 images, and states that "[a]s a result experience becomes impoverished," quoting Buck-Morss, on how with technology, "the physical system becomes one of anaesthetics rather than synaesthetics, as the synaesthetic system is permanently working to parry technological stimuli."[143] I would argue that in this sense what Crary argues is widespread cumulative eating away at experience and a global (political) problem, is equally a crisis of physical and psychological experience of the ego in crisis. Or to put it more accurately, Bleeker here approaches a similar topic in very similar words from an individual philosophical/art historical perspective within the context of performance studies, whereas Crary comes at it from a larger scale, focussing more on historical development and current global trends. The desire for the more classical mirror-stage oneness of the ego is a symptom to fight the technological threat the body is under. "It is through looking that modern individuals are understood to gain insight into themselves and the world, to such an extent that the 'I' of the looker and his or her eye almost become conflated."[144] In other words: if the act of looking has been flattened into the mechanical use of eyeballs, and with the two conflating ever more, the I of the one seeing becomes eye becomes the object of the eyeball, reducing experiences of vision to the flat, the impoverished, the monotonous also so as to deal with the overwhelming amount of images hurled at the seer, this problem being both a global public one and a personal crisis. To fight what according to Crary is at the core of 24/7, Bleeker ends on the possibility to use one's own body to understand that of the other rather than the

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[141] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 143.

[142] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 143.

[143] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 144.

[144] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 144.

more straightforward translation of experience supposed in inner mimicry. It is a proposition to look beyond the visual.[145] I therefore think that it is most important to keep in mind Schumacher's history as a dance maker and dancer rather than text-based theatre director, thus allowing him to combine these physical possibilities for new perceptual acts with the possibility to become aware in steering the audience's vision.

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[145] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 144-145.

4. Turner's liminality

4.1 - The ritual

To discuss Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche's work and *The Fool* as a case against 24/7 further, I turn to Turner's view of the ritual/ritual performance and the phases within it. Vujanović and Cvejić in the section of their book about ideology and mass performance, discuss Turner's social drama as a way to consider, breach and change social order: social structures collapse in the space 'betwixt and between.' "The normative structure represents the working equilibrium, the 'antistructure' represents the latent system of potential alternatives from which novelty will arise when contingencies in the normative system require it."[146] Vujanović and Cvejić give an oversight of social drama, focussing in particular on liminality and communitas,[147] which I will do in this thesis as well. They revisit theory that is sometimes thought of as dated,[148] though I, with them, would argue that it is as relevant as ever. With Crary revisiting political thought from the 1960's as potent and never fully realised, and with Vujanović and Cvejić linking the unfashionability of social drama in part to the emergence of neoliberal thought in performance studies during the 80's and 90's,[149] I with Vujanović and Cvejić think it is important to turn to Turner for the socio-political potential of his thoughts. In line with Crary's thoughts on control, because of technology and social structures changing but the control itself not, I think Vujanović and Cvejić discussing the relevance of social drama in a post-dramatic era come at the same problem as Crary does but from a different perspective. It correlates with what Crary observes: the pluralism we pretend to value so highly as a society, like the breadth of media we could consume at the click of a button, is not so much true pluralism as it is a universal experience of isolation and sameness within 24/7. Or as Vujanović and Cvejić put it: "Although neoliberal capitalist society performs, more or less consistently, pluralism in public, it does so only when its basic structural premises of (neo)liberalism, democracy and capitalism go unquestioned."[150] This sounds to me suspiciously like the

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[146] Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre,* 28.

[147] Vujanović and Cvejić, *The Public Sphere by Performance,* 77.

[148] Vujanović and Cvejić, *The Public Sphere by Performance,* 77.

[149] Vujanović and Cvejić, *The Public Sphere by Performance,* 78.

[150] Vujanović and Cvejić, *The Public Sphere by Performance,* 90.

inescapable compulsory nature of 24/7 as described by Crary, dealing with similar issues of self-enforced control and uniformity. Vujanović and Cvejić want to use social drama as a starting point to re-politicise performance studies,[151] to focus on some kind of common good, as Crary does when he focuses on sleep or the night sky as a commons. I will attempt to do the same here, using Turner to further the political potential of Crary's discussion whilst connecting it to Schumacher's work, to discern what political potential *The Fool* holds when seen through the lens of these interrelated theories. To that end I will discuss liminality and communitas before analysing the performance, focussing on the potential these concepts hold in the context of 24/7.

4.2 - Liminoid vs. liminal

Parts of Turner's research have not aged well. He, like his contemporary Erving Goffman, espouses shockingly racist and colonial viewpoints at times. Then again, the concept of not just "studying primitives" but also turning to our own "'advanced' civilisation" to study it,[152] would in other words in a different context and time be an unremarkable proposition. It is in fact precisely what Crary does throughout *24/7*. Turner uses traditional anthropological methods of studying ritual performance and connects them to contemporary theatre and dance, combining his academic background with an interest in theatre inherited from his parents.[153] In this context, he goes beyond linguistic approaches, looking at a bigger picture than language and semantics and more closely at non-verbal symbols in ritual and art. The goal is to investigate cultural genres as they are involved in social and psychological processes, rather than in abstraction from human social activity.[154] It is an approach that speaks to me and that I, in connecting this performance to *24/7* and its socially critical tone, am also attempting.

The term liminal is primarily used for the phase in the structure of a rite of passage where one thing becomes another.[155] The liminal, referring to the Latin word limen or

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[151] Vujanović and Cvejić, *The Public Sphere by Performance,* 90.

[152] Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre,* 23.

[153] Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, 7-8.

[154] Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre,* 21-22.

[155] Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre,* 29-30.

threshold, was first employed by Arnold van Gennep and later expanded by Turner into a broader methodological concept. It denotes a "'moment out of time' a state in which a society is restructured, reclassified and where social positions, roles and statuses are redistributed."[156] It is associated with a break with the status quo, new possibilities in undermining rather than emphasising "the superstructure of the social structure."[157] In the 'carrying out' that is the (ritual) performance, something new may be generated in a flow of action/interaction between the play and the frame in which it is contained. "The rules 'frame' the ritual process, but the ritual process transcends its frame."[158] Within the ritual, which is not just social and complex, there is also space, an abyss. With van Gennep, Turner postulates a unidirectional move from the 'indicative' mood of cultural process, through culture's 'subjunctive' mood, back to the 'indicative' mood, though the latter is of course transformed by the subjunctive; this roughly correlates to preliminal, liminal and postliminal phases.[159]

> Clearly, the liminal space-time "pod" created by ritual action, or today by certain kinds of reflexively ritualised theatre, is potentially perilous, for it may be opened up to energies of the biopsychichal human constitution normally channeled by socialisation into status-role activities, to imply the unwieldy jargon of the social sciences.[160]

Stepping outside this jargon and into Crary's, we could say that true liminality, while perhaps mostly lost in the world of 24/7, is now more needed and powerful than ever, because while we can write many a subversive (liminoid) manifesto only to have it become part of the new status quo, we can only combat the 24/7 by embracing the cyclical, the physical, the textured, the present, which cannot as easily be made to conform.[161] Post-industrialised liminal practices, are more often liminoid than liminal:[162] "in liminality is secreted the seed of the

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[156] Vujanović and Cvejić, *The Public Sphere by Performance,* 81.

[157] Vujanović and Cvejić, *The Public Sphere by Performance,* 81.

[158] Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre,* 79.

[159] Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre,* 82.

[160] Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre,* 84.

[161] Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre,* 84.

[162] Vujanović and Cvejić, *The Public Sphere by Performance,* 81.

liminoid."[163] Liminoid does not refer to a phase with its own specific rules and characteristics in relation to the everyday functioning of society, but rather to products made by artists, people whose work it is to produce those, thus professionalising human play.[164] University is par excellence a liminoid setting, being as it is somewhat separate from the larger whole of society and generating ideas/producing intellectual products often critical in nature.[165]

In defining the liminal, Turner makes three related points that I think are central to this thesis, also in how they connect to Crary's work. First, the liminal is cyclical, has to do with a social-structural rhythm and the calendar. Second, the liminal is integrated into social projects, whereas the liminoid can spring from collaboration but is often an individual product. Third: the liminal is in concept free from economics, not part of 'the market.'[166] The first point echoes Crary's observation that sleep is the last remaining bastion of recurring natural refuge in a 24/7 world, a vestige of a previously existing cyclical world that the military-industrial-complex never quite manages to eradicate or commodify. The second echoes his ruminations on the common, and the association of sleep with social cohesion and the importance of dreams pre-Freud.[167] With regards to the third point however, Crary's stance on the possibility of a space or time or a physical/mental state incorruptible and separate form the market has suffered from thirty years of neoliberal policy and the expansion of socio-economic control. Or at least: I think Turner's view, which has a lot of radical potential, at this point could benefit from Crary's sometimes crushingly pessimistic view that not even sleep and the night sky are safe from commodification and eradication by the market, just like Crary's can benefit from Turner's more hopeful stance. It is important here to spend some time on the differences between the liminal and liminoid, not just for academic precision's sake, but also because it will be central to my analysis.

The Fool, as a liminoid product, has some potential, but I would argue that in a time in which everything including the night sky can be co-opted, liminality is a far more powerful starting point to look at resistance and subversion than a liminoid product can ever be. Like

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163 Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre,* 44.

164 Vujanović and Cvejić, *The Public Sphere by Performance,* 81.

165 Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre,* 34.

166 Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre,* 54.

167 Crary, *24/7,* 107-110.

Vujanović and Cvejić point out, liminoid products are often complicit. A liminoid product may provide some false or even true sense of liminality but it tends to fizzle out before change can occur. These liminoid performances are in the end always 'part of the system,' dependent on subsidies and support within that structure.[168] In that sense I would on the one hand voice criticism about the resistance performances like *The Fool* or indeed *Schwalbe Speelt Een Tijd* can offer, being as they are implicated within the system they critique and are in their relatively small circle of artistic liminoid practice perhaps not seen or appreciated by society at large. But, as I will argue with Bleeker, in the new ways of looking they can inspire and by having the audience sit down in a space somewhat separate from a world that runs 24/7 for a while, the potential for resistance is highly valuable. Especially when we look more closely at another potentially disruptive aspect to some of these performances and the process of making them: working together.

4.3 - Communitas and collaboration

Communitas is a form of community that naturally emerges from/in liminality.[169] There are strong connotations of togetherness and equality and it offers resistance through the inclusion of those people that are otherwise usually marginalised.[170] "As a rudimentary proto-community, communitas is always seen as a danger brought into the society through 'powers of the weak,' of the precarious, of the inferior who don't fit well within the social structure."[171] I recognise elements of communitas in the collaboration between Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche and communitas is an excellent point to approach their collaboration to see what power is present in their working process. Communitas also combats one of the more heinous issues regarding individuality and isolation resulting from 24/7: "24/7 is about the individual at the expense of others."[172] Turner distinguishes three forms of communitas. First, there is spontaneous/existential communitas, starting naturally and confronting the status quo. It arises immediately and is short-lasting, its power consisting of the experience of participation.

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[168] Vujanović and Cvejić, *The Public Sphere by Performance,* 81.

[169] Vujanović and Cvejić, *The Public Sphere by Performance,* 81.

[170] Vujanović and Cvejić, *The Public Sphere by Performance,* 81-82.

[171] Vujanović and Cvejić, *The Public Sphere by Performance,* 82.

[172] Crary, *24/7,* 41.

Second, there is ideological communitas which arises from theory and the history of previous communities, by following a utopian model. In light of my research focus and interests, this is not relevant to my discussion of Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche's collaboration. Third, there is normative communitas, which is slow and longer lasting because it attempts to put the experience of existential communitas into a social system/workable form. While it may be more durable than existential communitas, it also loses some power in that it does not spring forth spontaneously from wild inspiration. Communitas is also echoed in the work of thinkers like Giorgio Agamben,[173] but for the purpose of my analysis, Turner will suffice. Turner seeks the radical possibility of communitas in liminality more through ludism, playfulness, something that cannot be captured in words and ratio alone, rather than in romanticism or a return to childhood, as other thinkers tend to do.[174] Turner's view is especially relevant in the context of Crary's discussion on communal living. Crary describes the communal modes of living more widely explored during the 1960's as failed, while still having incredible potential and bite although these forms of living never got the chance to take root. Furthermore, I feel obliged to add that for some members of these communities, especially women and people belonging to minorities, living in these communities was anything but radically accepting/ progressive or an idyll,[175] though my personal experience with a more modern form of communal living contradicts this in our focus on equality, inclusion and feminism and in the possibilities it creates for a diverse group of women the collective consists of. But returning to the 1960's, even in their unfinished forms these alternative ways of living (together) displayed a threat to the status quo. As material poverty is made shameful again, the thought that happiness need not be connected to property is still highly dangerous,[176] so much so that some neoliberal regulations in America criminalise giving food to the homeless and portray communally spirited practices like hitchhiking as inherently risk-filled and quite possibly lethal.[177] Again, I feel obliged to mention that for some people this danger is in fact acute, or

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[173] Vujanović and Cvejić, *The Public Sphere by Performance,* 79.

[174] Vujanović and Cvejić, *The Public Sphere by Performance,* 87.

[175] Megan Heuer, "Who Sleeps? Jonathan Crary's '24/7'," *Rhizome,* September 17, 2013, http://rhizome.org/editorial/2013/sep/17/who-sleeps-jonathan-crarys-247/.

[176] Crary, *24/7,* 112-113.

[177] Crary, *24/7,* 114.

at least much more so than it is for others, but the general premise that scare mongering about the decline of our society/world is more prevalent than any actual decline is supported by statistics.[178] In any case, communal living is cast in the scariest light possible to prevent people seeking it out,[179] as according to Crary the trend of 'dropping out' of society and to experiment with different ideological forms of living in the 60's was much wider spread and effectively dangerous than it was and still is portrayed.[180] "One of the main forms of control over the past thirty years has been to ensure there are no visible alternatives to privatised patterns of living."[181] While I would perhaps not suggest that in their collaboration Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche are living in some utopian separate-from-but-part-of-society postliminal communitas, I think these forms of collaboration and cooperation and the fact that Crary emphasises their power are essential in understanding some of the bigger goals I observe in Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche's work and the work that interests them.

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[178] Rutger Bregman, "Vooruitgang in tien grafieken," *De Correspondent,* December 31, 2013. https://decorrespondent.nl/578/vooruitgang-in-tien-grafieken/31795588682-4a52b8be

[179] Crary, *24/7,* 115.

[180] Crary, *24/7,* 113.

[181] Crary, *24/7,* 115.

5. *The Fool*'s proposition

5.1 - Analysis outline

I will start this analysis by taking a closer look at audience address in *The Fool*, briefly summarising the performance before discussing focalisation throughout the piece. I will then spend some time on the relationship The Fool develops throughout the piece with his audience. I will end this first part of the analysis by focussing on the final section of the performance, as I suspect it holds the most significance in the context of my chosen theory, before looking at *The Fool* in the context of Turner as a liminoid product, and how it deals with its own complicity. I will then briefly discuss liminality within the piece and Schumacher's earlier work, before ending the analysis discussing communitas in the context of the collaboration and artistic process of Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche as well as the liminal potential they seem to be drawn to in other artists' work. In the conclusion I will take a final look at theory and analysis to discuss the ways in which *The Fool* can be seen as a case against 24/7, especially the most existentially damaging aspects. I will conclude the thesis by looking further to possible topics that I did not get a chance to discuss or that I would like to continue on, in the hope it might inspire others for future research as well.

5.2 - Summary of *The Fool*

The Fool opens on an empty stage, a screen in the back showing projections of browser windows which each feature a loop of the same male body moving, jumping (see *fig. 2*). Easy listening music is playing. The Fool walks on, introduces himself, and introduces his five settings: "Count, talk, mooooove, feel, connect."[182] His movements are fluid but stilted, puppet-like. He introduces himself. "I am the intelligent robot The Fool. What? Yes, It's true. I am a robot,"[183] before discussing the inspiration that lead his maker to this performance. He tells us that he is made from the image of his maker. During his monologue, he uses gestures to illustrate his words. While the gestures were created by Schumacher, some of them are incredibly similar to the Dutch version of simplified sign language for non-verbal people,

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[182] Dansateliers, "Connor Schumacher - The Fool."

[183] Dansateliers, "Connor Schumacher - The Fool."

Figure 2. The Fool welcoming the audience in front of a projection showing looped images of fragments of a male body jumping. The loops are displayed in browser windows.

prompting me to question if they were in fact the American version of the same language. They are not, but instead are something in between language and dance.[184] The Fool explains that when his five settings do not work, he explodes. A blackout follows the first setting, and when the lights come on again, the soundtrack changes to a song whose only lyrics are "Work with me."[185] He dances, still robot-like, the screen in the background changing to abstract images of coloured ink or paint, indicating at the end that this was his demonstration of setting

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[184] Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche, by Fliers, on May 18, 2016.

[185] Dansateliers, "Connor Schumacher - The Fool."

Figure 3. The Fool demonstrating his third setting: move.

three: move (see *fig. 3*). After the scene/setting featuring dance we return to a white

projection screen, no soundtrack and The Fool holding up two fingers, indicating that he will

now display setting two: talk. He banters with the audience, explaining that his name is merely

a representation of his character, the beginning and end of understanding. He says "Knowing

everything, and knowing nothing look quite similar. You could be a barbarian to me. I could be

a barbarian to you."[186] He addresses a spectator, and after discussing the proper etiquette of

speaking with someone in the least threatening way possible, as well as discussing the body

language of a variety of animals, he tries the spectator's name on for size:

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[186] Dansateliers, "Connor Schumacher - The Fool."

I am the intelligent robot Alisha. What? Yes, it's true, I am Alisha. I have become a

research tool in the attempt to find meaning and value in communicating clearly and

humanely in order to connect and relate with others. Is it working? Am I like you now?[187]

Another black out, followed by setting four: feel. The Fool dances to intense music, opera with

ambient sounds and applause added to the song, displaying emotion in his dancing. During the

Figure 4. The Fool demonstrating his fourth setting: feel. He dances to
opera music that also features ambient sounds, applause and cheering.

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[187] Dansateliers, "Connor Schumacher - The Fool."

dance he sometimes slaps himself, and some of his movements make a noise that blends with the soundtrack. Sometimes his movements are fluid, sometimes impressive in their power and speed, other times more graceful and reminiscent of classical ballet (see *fig. 4*). During the

Figure 5. Projected image of entering the water slide; the opening image of setting five: connect.

Figure 6. Outline of The Fool visible in the projection of the second part of the water slide, featuring coloured rings moving at a high speed to create a psychedelic absorptive tunnel.

blackout he retreats, leaving us with an empty stage for the final setting, his fifth setting: connect. With his body visible as an outline in the projection, we see a light show, best described as a disco-strobing waterslide, with the camera gliding at high speed through the slide featuring a whole range of colours (see *fig. 5 & fig. 6*). A voice over, in a distorted, digitally altered tone, speaks to us: "Imagine you are in a theatre. You prepare yourself to see something happen. You bring with you, your memories, your philosophies, your culture and your physical state to mention a few."[188] The voice over continues to ask questions, about what

Figure 7. Outline of The Fool in a spot; the final image of the show. This image shows him just before he waves goodbye and the piece ends with a black out.

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[188] Dansateliers, "Connor Schumacher - The Fool."

we experience, what we see, what we think it means. After a while, the light show changes into images of space, planets, and because of the change in lights we see The Fool through the now partly transparent screen (*fig. 7*). We end on an image of him, turning around his own axis, waving a last goodbye before the final blackout.[189]

5.3 - Internal and external focalisation

While I am sure a precise analysis of the symbolic meaning behind word choices and questions, using deixis according to Bleeker,[190] would also provide a fruitful starting point for the analysis, for now, to determine if and how *The Fool* can be seen as a case against the problematic aspects of 24/7, the focus must be on how the performance deals with audience address, and then on the potential of the mirror/screen as it presents itself in the performance and process. An analysis of the screen and projected images, especially the cutting up and looping of a male body as an inversion of the traditionally female body by the male gaze, is but one example of visual structuring that warrants further research, but that I will leave for now in favour of focussing more closely on Bleeker's discussion of visual structures as they relate to 24/7. As earlier stated in the chapter on Bleeker, audience address plays a crucial role in making meaning. *The Fool* deals with making meaning explicitly, and is a classical example of Bleeker's theory, both in its nature as a contemporary interdisciplinary performance merging amongst other disciplines dance, mime, theatre, gestural language and projected images, and in its attempt to make the audience self-aware. It does indeed provoke the sometimes confusing and ambiguous experiences Bleeker emphasises when discussing contemporary post-dramatic performance,[191] without this confusion and lack of absorption being disruptive to the experience.[192] The multitude of referenced media in the piece provide meaning through their connotations and background as well, but delving into these connotations would be yet another analysis entirely. Since *The Fool* questions how meaning is made rather than providing the audience with one uniform story, I would argue that visuality and audience address are more interesting points to focus my research on than on deconstructing some kind of hidden

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[189] Dansateliers, "Connor Schumacher - The Fool."

[190] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 19-22*.*

[191] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 8.

[192] Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre,* 133.

meaning is in *The Fool* or on what the precise teachable moment is that the makers are aiming for, especially because implying there is such a moment is an oversimplification of the piece. This is especially important because the makers actively encourage the audience to (re)consider the process that allows them to make meaning within the frame of the performance. If anything about meaning is central to this piece, then it is the fact that this happens between robot and audience, as highlighted by the audience interaction. It is neither up to the audience, nor something inherent in the play, but happens somewhere in this connection between seer and seen. The temptation is of course also to focus on the nature of the robot, be it as a character or some post-human archetype, but as we discussed during the interview: he is a means to an end rather than the goal. He was not chosen for his intrinsic robot-ness or the philosophical implications behind that, even though such things of course do play a part in how an audience receives the character.[193] But since the character *as a robot* is not my point of focus either, I will therefore remain aware of these connotations and influences without focussing on them too intently, looking instead at the audience interactions the robot allows rather than at the character in isolation. In this I will follow the makers: I will look at the possibilities he offers rather than his 'nature.'[194]

Like Bleeker describes with Forsythe's character's invitation to step inside and come and interpret, The Fool, as the only character on stage in this solo, asks us to behold him, to identify with him. Everything, from music to costume to light and video is there to create an environment to make this happen, to draw us in, yet at the same time because of his nature, The Fool is not an unambiguously absorbing character. In his stilted movements, his mechanical intonation, his squeaky clean high tech streamlined look, we are constantly reminded that he is like us, but not like us, created to try and communicate clearly and connect with others, but created rather than born. While his naivety and seemingly honest attempt at communication is charming and inviting, there is also a permanent artificiality that creates unease. A clear illustrative example also mentioned in the interview is the scene in which The Fool takes on the name of a spectator, specifically in how he approaches that spectator. Approaching her, he discusses how his physical positioning, facing her head on and

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[193] Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche, by Fliers, on May 18, 2016.

[194] Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche, by Fliers, on May 18, 2016.

standing straight, is impacting her experience of him. He discusses how this can be perceived as threatening, unlike approaching her at an angle whilst making himself slightly smaller. He informs us that this is called body language, which animals also display.[195] By approaching a topic often naturally a part of interaction, the presumed 'as is' nature of it becomes fractured: nothing is quite as unnatural as a robot/person discussing the most natural way of approaching an other and then literally putting that into practice for the benefit of that other, exposing the form without enacting the principle behind it. The invite to identify, by directly addressing this one specific spectator, going so far as to intrude into her life by taking her name, and then the attempt to make her as much at ease at possible, accomplishes the opposite of what The Fool's claims to be his intention. In purportedly researching how best to connect, he shows us the difficulty inherent in connection, whilst simultaneously establishing this multi-faceted link to the audience by first directly addressing them as a group and then addressing just one member. Discussing the character with the makers and placing this next to my experience of the performance and the performance from the larger perspective of focalisation, I suspect that while the character's robotic nature/strangeness means he can redefine some parameters of human interaction, it also seems to be a failing: many spectators do not go beyond the thought that he is a funny robot to be looked at. At some point the trick is so visible as to become distracting, the unease of the character inhibiting rather than stimulating reflection on topics such as body language. Sometimes amusement takes the overhand and while the joke is often intentional and supportive of a dynamic of self-reflexivity, it can remain too much in the territory that Rios Zertuche discussed just as I had turned on the microphone: "Most people are talking about, like: 'The robot, the robot is so funny.'" In that sense, I think as a focaliser, The Fool is incredibly effective to some, but will remain two-dimensional to others, or will be one or the other at different times during the performance depending on the balance between absorption and theatricality created by The Fool's audience address.

In his address, The Fool connects his invitation to step inside with a permanent reminder of our own presence, providing external and internal focalisation in little arcs that go from seductive pull to sometimes unexpected push. When done right, the laughing because of amusement or discomfort is part of it and an illustration of this being attracted and then

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[195] Dansateliers, "Connor Schumacher - The Fool."

unsettled, leaving the spectator intrigued but self-aware. During the dancing sequences, there is a chance to focus on the character without his narration, but especially in the second dancing sequence to the opera music, I was constantly pointed back to my own questions regarding the classically inspired melodramatic ambiance and why it is that this is equated with 'feeling.' In different ways, during each setting, The Fool sets the spectator up for an invitation, but then complicates it, like he does when he tells us that it is true that he is a robot when we all know he is a performer portraying one, and so on. This starts immediately in his way of moving, walking and later dancing, which can only be describe as slightly off, as not *quite* human but something eerily close to it. While, as previously stated, the robotic nature of the character is only relevant to this analysis in the effect it produces, it does in this way allow for a multi-layeredness that a human character giving the same talk, doing the same movements, enacting exactly the same performance, can not. As Schumacher put it:

> Meaning is really fucking difficult to pin down. You go through this scale of: "Everything has a meaning." And then you like hit the other side where nothing has a meaning, so what the fuck. And to find this balance of acknowledging the two in your own life or in a performance can be really difficult. And I think that's also why this robot character became very fascinating. It is [a robot], but it isn't, but we're gonna believe that it is, but then it's not gonna be there sometimes. You know that I'm not a robot. Like, you know that I am Connor Schumacher and that I am not a robot. But then at some point you start believing that I am a robot. But at some point I also drop the robot and it becomes this everything and nothing joke. This robot is everything but actually it is nothing. It doesn't mean anything, but it means a lot when it comes to talking about how we work as people, or how our brains work as computing devices.[…] [A]s the robot you can point out a lot of things a lot dryer about life […] to just be something that brings awareness to the context that you're in.[196]

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[196] Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche, by Fliers, on May 18, 2016.

 In this sense, the final setting teaches us most, because it is at once incredibly absorptive by drawing the spectator into the tunnel-like projection around The Fool's body, yet featuring a disorienting voice over that does nothing but discuss our individual position as spectators.

Before going into this final scene and the voice over, the specificity of The Fool needs to be discussed. Bleeker's discussion of Lacan's screen/mirror deals with bodies and specific representations of them, and the mapping of the other onto the self within the activity of looking. While text is a huge part in directing the audience's gaze within *The Fool*, Schumacher's background as a dancer and dance-maker means that he employs notions regarding physicality very precisely, not naively making this mapping of the 'spectacle' onto the 'spectator' universal or presenting himself as some 'neutral.' It would have been all too easy for The Fool, who as a robot with a white male dancer's body is close to if not exactly the platonic ideal society has deemed worthy of neutrality, to use that unmarkedness to make a point or not to remark on it at all, thus perpetuating the very things Bleeker argues against when favouring the screen over the mirror. But in addressing the spectator, and in directing their gaze, Schumacher through his character emphasises his specificity, defining The Fool as the "I" to the spectator's "you." I could argue that Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche's assertion that in the end we are all just human is dangerously universalist. We discussed this during the interview, Schumacher stating:

> If someone approaches us with a political topic, we will, like, go before the political topic and say, like: 'Ok, we can't even address this, we need to address this very basic human need that has been the root of how this ideology takes hold in society. Because it always has to do with people who don't fit in with the ruling ideology in almost all cases.[197]

While one can twist this view and argue that it doesn't take into account specificity enough, I would in the context of *The Fool* counter that in Schumacher's choice of words for human needs and ruling ideology, it is anything but universalist. First, because the statement addresses issues similar to dominant fiction and access to reality status by discussing ruling ideology rather than claiming a universal solution or experience, though Schumacher justly

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[197] Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche, by Fliers, on May 18, 2016.

emphasises commonalities in the experience of not fitting in with said ideology. I would actually argue that their view of human nature corresponds closely to Crary's discussion of a perceptual act that creates awareness, both in the performance and the statement from the interview recognising something similar to the "condition of commonality and interdependence" Crary speaks of.[198] Secondly, they avoid sloppy universalism when they refuse to erase The Fool's character in relation to his maker, as well as his subjectivity in using "I" to address the spectator. With the explicit description of The Fool as male, as a character looking and attempting to connect as a self to an other, a character aware of looking as well as being looked at in how he approaches the spectator he talks to, the performance at the very least avoids the most heinous issues Bleeker associates with non-specificity and the false presumption of the direct translation of the image on stage into the spectator's experience. Taking the spectator's name is merely an illustration of the principle, not an honest or sentimental attempt to become her or ask her if he truly is like her now.[199] Schumacher goes

Figure 8. The Fool during the later part of the voice over, outlined in one of the planets.

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[198] Crary, *24/7,* 118.

[199] Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche, by Fliers, on May 18, 2016.

further, connecting the theatrical structuring to issues of specificity and politics in the outside world when The Fool discusses his lack of a name and the meaning behind his given 'title.' As earlier stated in this thesis, he concludes "Knowing everything and knowing nothing look quite similar. You could be a barbarian to me. I could be a barbarian to you."[200] He emphasises how different positions produce different knowledges, and how from one's point of view the other could seem 'a barbarian,' but the opposite can simultaneously be equally true. Both poles of these irreconcilable truths are given equal value, and as we discussed in the interview, trying to deal with these issues was a point of focus when developing the performance.[201] In emphasising these positions relative to each other, The Fool does not presume one universal truth or way of looking, but rather complex interrelated questions of meaning, truth and humanity where nobody holds the answer and all points are interrelated.[202] And with everything, from reflecting on the approach of the spectator, to responding to the current affairs of the Paris attacks,[203] to discussing the baggage we entered the theatre with,[204] Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche make sure this complicity and specificity is not lost. Thoughts like these were also discussed at length during the interview and were incredibly inspiring to me. Therefore it seems a shame that what becomes so clear when talking with Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche and what on closer reflection also unfolds within the performance, was not always apparent when watching the performance, meaning that a fair amount of the spectators will have left the theatre merely entertained when the piece can offer so much. This is something to keep in mind when assessing to what extent The Fool can be seen as a case against 24/7, taking into account how much it is a case against it and to what extent it has the untapped potential to unfold as one by looking at it from this theoretical perspective. But to relate this to more specific aspects within the performance, it is necessary to discuss The Fool's final setting: connect.

Following the waterslide, setting five has The Fool standing behind the projection screen, between beamer and sheet, so his outline is visible within the images projected, while

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[200] Dansateliers, "Connor Schumacher - The Fool."

[201] Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche, by Fliers, on May 18, 2016.

[202] Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche, by Fliers, on May 18, 2016.

[203] Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche, by Fliers, on May 18, 2016.

[204] Dansateliers, "Connor Schumacher - The Fool."

Figure 9. The Fool visible through a partly translucent screen during the voice over.

the voice over talks to us about meaning (see *fig. 8*). The overwhelming imagery, intricate play with lights and the sometimes partial visibility of The Fool when the screen becomes translucent (see *fig. 9*), make it an overwhelmingly absorptive experience. The movement of the light means that our gaze is automatically trained to the screen and to the outline of The Fool, but this singular visual focus is complicated by the voice over, both in warped, mechanical sound of its voice and by the text. By asking us to imagine ourselves in the theatre, having brought the world outside, our specificity and history with us into this space, we are reminded of the situation we are in, the chair we are sitting in, who we are and where we came from. Mostly, we are reminded of how all this baggage is shaping our current experience. After telling

us that we are expecting to understand what is being shown to us, the voice over asks us if we think it is happening for a reason, implying that because it is on a stage, it must be happening for a reason. "Is it attempting to communicate with you?"[205] The voice asks if it were possible for us to understand nothing of what we see, but answers no, because the human brain cannot help but make sense out of whatever it is presented with regardless, whether meaning is (intended) there or not. The voice continues to discuss the psychological phenomenon pareidolia, where one perceives a familiar pattern where none exists.

> When none actually exists. None. Common examples are the tendency to see image of animals in cloud formations, or hidden messages in recorded music that is played backwards or slowed down. When non actually exists.[…] We are in a situation that requires the art of persuasion.[206]

During the performance I felt myself at once seduced by the stimulation of the projected images and lights and the beautify of it, as well as reminded of how this was shaping the way my gaze was being directed, of how I was sitting there, that *I* was sitting there, creating this performance, making this meaning, and consequently considering how much of that was inherent because of human thought and because of being persuaded, how much of this was dry meaning present in the piece, if such a thing even exists, ultimately wondering if my fellow spectators were going through similar movements. And this principle is much more significant than simply because it features in my subjective experience. Because it is precisely what the performance invites in all its spectators, what it wants to provoke, allowing the spectator to position the self to the other after having mapped the other onto the self, without dichotomising the two. Rather it emphasises an understood similarity between them, the opposite of Crary's self at the expense of others, and then shows the spectator how this is a question of responsibility and choice as well as persuasion and invitation. It does so when The Fool tells us that we can all be barbarians in the eyes of others, and it does so when it asks us how our histories help shape this performance, help shape how we make meaning in general.

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[205] Dansateliers, "Connor Schumacher - The Fool."

[206] Dansateliers, "Connor Schumacher - The Fool."

As the piece prompts us to follow the images, to get sucked into the tunnel of lights, it reminds of our role in shaping them at the same time. So the spectator is left focused on themselves in the context of a specific life, history and body in a theatre seat, on their proprioceptive ego as it relates to what they just saw. While the giggles indicate that this might not have happened the entire time for everyone in the audience, or that it was an unnerving experience to some, I feel confident concluding that by pointing us to our histories and lives outside the theatre, by asking us about our thought process and how we create meaning, *The Fool* directs our attention not like the fire curtain coming down with Forsythe throwing the spectators back into their seats, but rather by softly seducing us from the screen back into our (personal) experienced reality, never denying that the same is happening on the stage to the performer, to the person in the chair next to us, to everyone. Where we enter the performance with the expectation to see something happen, we end up where we started, wondering if anything consequential did happen, but now very much aware of our own presence in the space. Of our role in what happened or what didn't happen, and by extension perhaps with a similar awareness for what will happen now, beyond the framework of the performance. *The Fool* makes us aware of our position as spectators, creating what to Crary is the very first step in combatting 24/7: the awareness of such a position and of the direction of our gazes.

5.4 - Liminality and communitas

Looking back at my discussion of 24/7, and forward to the possible conclusions I can draw from this analysis, there is one moment I would like to highlight within the performance, outside of its relevance to focalisation and liminality. During the performance, The Fool introduces himself, contextualising where he came from inspiration-wise, but also explicitly naming the cultural institutions allowing for his/the performance's existence.

> With the help of Dans Ateliers and the EU project Dancing Museums, I have become a research tool in the attempt to find meaning and value in communicating clearly and humanely in order to connect and relate with others.[207]

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[207] Dansateliers, "Connor Schumacher - The Fool."

Having already discussed the audience-performer-connection, I wanted to point out the importance of acknowledging its own implicatedness as a liminoid product. It names the culture it is indebted to, which inspired the maker to create The Fool: Tino Sehgal, a character played by Majon van der Schot in another performance, and a science fiction television series. But further to that, it names the institutions that paid for it.[208] It seems that in the context of a (theatre) performance, this is not an obligation unless it is through a logo on the flyer. But it is precisely the kind of thing that would happen at a product launch of an intelligent robot created with a specific purpose. In the context of the performance, the outside system financing it is made part of the world on stage even though the makers have no obligation to do so. By stating it forthright, it makes the spectator engage with The Fool as a product within the context of the piece, but also with *The Fool* as a liminoid product implicated in the very structures it critiques. It attempts to deal with the purpose of art, with the meaning of it, in a different way to other often more multi-interpretable contemporary dance performances,[209] but despite criticising those, with disclaimer the subsidisers and its inspirations it places itself within the field and tradition it criticises. It thus not only asks self-awareness of the spectator in how they are sitting in their chair and with what mindset and socio-cultural history they entered the theatre space, as was addressed in the previous subchapter, but it holds its makers to the same standards that it does its audience. And I would say therefore that it holds itself to a higher standard than some other works unwilling to create a modicum of clarity or transparency, unwilling to admit a dependency on the institutions financing them for more or less compromising or idealistic reasons. If one of the pillars of 24/7 is an inability to connect while upholding the illusion of self-sufficiency and one of the problems with the liminoid in combatting that is the fact that it will always remain part of a problematic system perpetuating these illusions under a veneer of political action, then naming this principle is at the very least another way to start looking at it rather than avoiding or obscuring the issue.

It might be possible to make the case that, in the journey *The Fool* takes us on through the voice over and psychedelic use of lights, there are ritual aspects and a liminal phase in the performance. As I concluded earlier using Bleeker, in the way *The Fool* attempts and in part

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[208] Dansateliers, "Connor Schumacher - The Fool."

[209] Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche, by Fliers, on May 18, 2016.

succeeds in creating self-awareness, it by extension creates a possibility that this new awareness will live on outside of the theatre, beyond the framework of the performance. Or as I would put it in Turner's rather then Bleeker's terms with regards to this specific performance: ideally, we leave the 'subjunctive' mood of the performance with an awareness that was not there before, an awareness that will remain with us back in the 'indicative' non-liminal space of the world, which is now transformed by the subjunctive of the performance. The tunnelling visuals during The Fool's demonstration of his final setting, for example, are not just personally transformative with regards to the connection between seer and seen, but also have potential for change in the context of ritual performance and transformation on a larger scale. But that is a discussion for another time and to do it justice it would require more research on my part into the merging of liminality and the liminoid: liminoidity.[210] Earlier work of Schumacher's, namely the first four dealing explicitly with ritual, religious experiences and God, are also very interesting in that context, but they are not my point of focus in this thesis. It is interesting to note that Schumacher's work explicitly deals with questions of light and darkness as well as religion and the presence of God, subtitling *Boy Oh Boy 2* "God's first creature which was light." According to Turner, contradictions like light and darkness are aspects that are always relevant in the liminal phase. And both in the fascination with the occult through the choice of a character inspired by a tarot card, and in making it a creature "from the image of its maker," connotations of religion, ritual and liminality are present in *The Fool.* In general, the connection between robot and maker as well as the nature of 'the maker' as an invisible character still present on stage are interesting in this context. So Schumacher's work deserves to be revisited more in depth from the point of view of Turner in future, because for now these topics are too vast to discuss. Having said all this, when looking at the possibility of the liminal to change, to transform, my thoughts immediately turned to Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche's collaboration, because throughout the interview it became clear that their artistic force is first and foremost a collaborative one. In their working together there is an attempt at an alternative to the ever-ongoing individuality characterising 24/7. Also in the work they find interesting and transformative, like *Schwalbe Speelt Een Tijd,* there are aspects that fit neatly within the theory of liminality as disruptive, communitas as anti-24/7, though the point of the

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[210] Vujanović and Cvejić, *The Public Sphere by Performance,* 79.

complicity of liminoid products needs to be mentioned here again. Nevertheless, in explicitly discussing sleep, in their fascination with the ritual and meaning, the themes they turn to are distinctly liminal. Discussing *Schwalbe Speelt Een Tijd* Rios Zertuche stated:

> [W]hen you're there for six motherfucking hours, you realise how deep it is. And it is through being there that you realise this. […] [B]ecause it's six hours of you sitting and *thinking*. Just, it's like going to church the way it was supposed to be meant.[211]

Schumacher added:

> But that is the ritual of theatre, the ritual of religion, the ritual of performance. Like, whether it is a religious performance or a theatrical performance, a conceptual performance, visual art performance, it all entails the same amount of self-reflection into a thing that's being objectified.[212]

Further to this interest in specifically liminal concepts and performances, I would argue that there are aspects of both spontaneous/existential as well as normative communitas to their collaboration. Schuurmans said to me, after the interview when we walked to the station together, that some people have a tendency to zoom in on Schumacher, because it is his name on the poster, his body on the stage and in the spotlight, which is a position neither she nor Rios Zertuche aspire to. This can be annoying, with people assuming it is all about Schumacher, when their process is collaborative in nature. Each has their own strengths, but the work is worked on together and collaboratively discussed.[213] As I previously stated when discussing communitas, I do not mean to romanticise this kind of working together, playing together, living together, because as someone also working in close collaboration with others on a day to day basis, I can attest that it takes work maintaining these connections. Furthermore, some of the problematic aspects of 24/7, the disappearing of respite and sleep,

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[211] Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche, by Fliers, on May 18, 2016.

[212] Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche, by Fliers, on May 18, 2016.

[213] Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche, by de Haan, de Vries and Fliers, on December 14, 2015 and January 12, 2016.

the erosion of the weekend and free time, can be exacerbated by a merging of living and working, of professional and private. However, in the context of 24/7 and communitas, working at maintaining and expanding spontaneous connection within the creative process to a more lasting collaboration, i.e. transforming existential communitas into normative communitas as best one can without losing all of the wild inspiration associated with spontaneous communitas, seems to me to be vital in combatting the isolation at the core of 24/7. To sit, as we did, for an hour or two in the interview, or in the case of Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche to work in the studio, around a kitchen table, whenever there is a need, to focus on shared interests and research, to connect in order to work, to write together, the potential of that should never be underestimated. Like the existential damage of putting a phone on the table, I would argue that the cumulative value of these kinds of meetings is equally important to consider. The work Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche do is not only work in the monetised commodified sense, but work towards a greater purpose and personal fulfilment as well. And this communitas, as emerging from liminal practices, paired with a willingness to face one's own complicitness, be it in discussing enjoying the silence of a McDonalds advert or by naming one's sponsors on stage, I would posit is as valuable in combatting 24/7 as anything can be.

6. Conclusion

6.1 - Embracing our nature

Having analysed *The Fool* I am inclined to conclude that in the way it directs audience attention, it is indeed a first step in dismantling 24/7 by creating awareness in our modes of looking. I would not conclude that *The Fool* should be seen as *the* case against 24/7, but I feel more than comfortable concluding that in the performance and in their process, Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche grapple with issues central to 24/7 and build a case against those. It offers resistance to some if not all of the problematic aspects of 24/7, drawing attention to humanity and connection in a world running on the monetisation of isolation and eyeballs/attention. In a world predicated on 24/7, a short-term never-changing everlasting sameness filled with streams of images that prompt us to buy, anything prompting self-awareness, in the spectator through a performance or within the working process in the makers, could be more disruptive than it seems at first glance. Crary would state that anything approaching the formulation of an alternative, of resistance, is at once feared yet often ultimately powerless. Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche confront issues central to the problematic nature of 24/7 head on, moving to elements that are included in liminal practices, both in their larger body of work and in their collaboration and shared interests. They confront issues like the positioning of the self versus the other, uniformity in the tiring, deafening noise that surrounds us all, the need and (in)ability to make sense of this world and the erosion of humanity from it. By tackling how meaning is made within the spectator in relation to what they are witnessing, having a robot attempt connection with said spectator, I would conclude that *The Fool* is a sometimes ambiguous or perhaps not always effective but none the less in concept strong and multi-faceted case against 24/7. It was of course not made as such, with the idea of 24/7 present in the minds of the makers during the creation process, but their performance is as much a fruitful perspective on 24/7, against 24/7, as *24/7* is a fruitful start to an analysis of *The Fool. The Fool* could without a doubt have made a much clearer case against 24/7. The Pink Floyd song "Welcome to the Machine" that I opened this thesis with could, for example, be considered an example of such an unambiguously clear case. But the richer, textured, less straightforward case that *The* Fool constitutes is not

necessarily weak by comparison. Because in the care Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche take to highlight questions and specificities, these can less easily be coopted into grand sweeping statements of resistance which in turn can more easily be commodified or corrupted as the liminoid products they are a part of. Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche's is a textured work with commitment to their performances and each other, with all the questions and struggles as well as the fulfilment that entails. In a world that tries to make us into always-functioning zombies employing our eyeballs to consume mindlessly, I am glad for work asking rather than telling. And I see incredible potential for future research and performances by Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche that engage and reawaken the audience. In their collaboration, which goes beyond the neoliberal definition of monetised work, whilst staying accountable for their background and their being part of 'the system,' they go about as far as I think one can. At least as far as I can see one going in the context of this thesis. I see in their work a successful case against some of the perceptual tactics of control at the heart of 24/7, as well as a refusal to be isolated in a world that attempts to lock us all in our own insular pop-culture news-saturated insular media-landscapes. In their collaboration and the focus on the creation of meaning within *The Fool*, I also see the seeds of something bigger, a less individual case against 24/7, thought I think it is not yet as fleshed out as it could have been. *The Fool*, while excellent, was not a performance that touched me profoundly, like *Boy Oh Boy 2* did. But it was a performance that made me think deeply. And while that may mean I would not describe it with the fervour I would describe some of the more transcendental theatre experiences I have had, following Crary, Bleeker and Turner I conclude that *The Fool* makes an actual case for connection, complexity and the importance as well as relativity of meaning. It is accountable both for its chosen language and the specificity and identity of its makers and it questions the audience and itself. It does so without leaving the audience to fend for themselves, never leaving them to drown in overstimulation, but rather attempting a connection whilst simultaneously questioning that connection. It pulls and it pushes, but it never lets go, and at the end of it there is an awareness that was not there before. An awareness that will always be the first step towards change, towards combatting all monolithic horrors like 24/7. And in the sense that it also tries to establish a connection that attempts to transcend the body in the chair and the body in the auditorium without falling into

the traps of Lacan's mirror, *The Fool* is an excellent, if sometimes subtle, multi-interpretable case agains 24/7.

6.2 - Embracing the machine

Before discussing possible further research, I would like to remark on a text that is highly relevant with regards to the work of Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche, specifically *The Fool.* The concept of pareidolia, of seeing patterns where none exist because this is how our perception is wired, connects to Cohen Ambrose's text "Transferring Belief: the Stage Presence of the Spiritual Meme."[214] It discusses a neurological predisposition towards faith and religious experience, the human brain being hardwired for it, which did not fit within the structure of this thesis, but seemed relevant in light of Schumacher's work and the discussion of pareidolia as the brain being wired for making meaning as well. It also seemed relevant in the context of my earlier thoughts on doing the work of the Gods even when one is certain of their fictitiousness, but having forgone that subchapter, Ambrose was no longer useful despite the relevance. The same was true for some parts of the interview that sideways connected to the text in the thesis or that are worth reading in and of themselves. To that end, I have added the transcript of our interview as an appendix, so it can provide context to this thesis and inform further research as well. Throughout this thesis, I have avoided going into the deeper philosophical implications of *The Fool* as a robot, a machine, be it as that relates to 24/7's demands for humans to identify with the machine and become more machine-like, or to more positive post-human readings in line with Donna Haraway.[215] Thinking on Haraway, the choice for a non-human character to get at the core of humanity's need for meaning would have been an interesting perspective that I wish I could have explored, because in such an embracing of the machine, there is as much potential as there is in an embracing of the liminal and human/ animal. Similarly, throughout this thesis I have used words like structure and power and control most often with a negative connotation, following Crary's observations with which I almost wholly agree. But at the same time I realise that not all structure, not all technology,

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[214] Cohen Ambrose, "Transferring Belief: the Stage Presence of the Spiritual Meme," in *Theatre Symposium: Ritual, Religion and Theatre Volume 21,* ed. Wallace E. Bert, 26-34 (Alabama: the University of Alabama Press, 2014).

[215] Donna J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: the Reinvention of Nature* (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 1991).

not even all structuring within or by technology, should necessarily be seen as a negative thing. In the back of my mind, warnings about the mutability of agency and my willingness to commodify myself and feed myself to the machine start to make themselves heard. But then I was more than grateful for the possibilities awarded by technology during my last (long-distance) relationship and at times I felt a stronger connection to someone living on what is roughly our antipode than I have felt falling asleep next to others. I was also reminded of an article by Google's design ethicist, Tristan Harris.[216] While I find the 'digital detox' projects he is connected to worrying and ridiculous, they do illustrate the extent of our technological addiction.[217] What spoke to me in the ethicist's article was his insistence that while right now, most apps treat us like players at a fruit machine eliciting us to pull the lever for an update and to invest attention as often as possible whilst making the experience highly addictive, thinking on these kinds of interfaces and ethically designing them so that they add to people's lives and avoid becoming addictive is a possibility that Crary's view could benefit from. Just like Bleeker warns of the direct mapping of the self onto the other and vice versa, she also highlights the possibility for connection between seer and thing seen, and argues for the wonderful potential therein. I would with our ethicist argue the same to be true for technology and technological interfaces, even if he is probably partly responsible for the ease with which Little Sister does her job. Another thinker I would have liked to turn to, to flesh this out, is Hito Steyerl,[218] more specifically her discussion of the internet as a physical structure, the web made flesh so to speak. She argues that while this has many problematic aspects, it has also created new forms of agency and expectations that can be used for their pre-internet-era unprecedented radical potential.[219]

In researching this thesis I have come across a few texts, art projects and a video merging the ritual with the digital, pieces that often use those exact words to describe their subject. A personal favourite was Node Center's project on Prophecies, featuring an interactive

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[216] Tristan Harris, "How Technology Hijacks People's Minds — from a Magician and Google's Design Ethicist," *The Startup*, May 18, 2016, https://medium.com/swlh/how-technology-hijacks-peoples-minds-from-a-magician-and-google-s-design-ethicist-56d62ef5edf3#.hnbodw9n4.

[217] Digital Detox: Disconnect to Reconnect, "Hurry Up & Slow Down," last visited September 1, 2016, http://digitaldetox.org/about/.

[218] Hito Steyerl, "Too Much World: Is the Internet Dead?," in *The Wretched of the Screen: the Films of Hito Steyerl,* ed. Nick Aikens, 30-40 (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014).

[219] Steyerl, "Too Much World," 30-40.

tarot cut from images in films that display tarot reading.[220] I ended up with James Bond

drawing The Fool, which in the context of this thesis became meaningful in that thoroughly

random way meaning can spring forward from coincidence. While I have in this thesis implicitly

displayed a contrast between Turner's ritual and Crary's technology-driven 24/7, that does not

mean that the two are mutually exclusive. I came across a thought provoking video by Mike

Rugnetta of PBS' Idea Channel on spellwork and eBay, back when the company had just

banned the sale of spells on their platform because of the difficulty in dealing with customers

who were upset with the quality and effectiveness of the product delivered/spell cast. The

video discussed the similarities in 'filetype' between magic spells and mp3 files that became

apparent in the digital economics surrounding them and went on to discuss how those

economics relate to ideas of the commons,[221] leading me to think further on older structures

taking root online and the issues and possibilities that become apparent regarding intellectual

property, monetisation and sharing when they do. It is the opposite of Steyerl's internet

incarnate, more of a life taking root online, with in both cases equally interesting possibilities

through the shift between or rather merging of digital and physical. At the very least it

prompted me to consider that in further research on performances like *The Fool*, it might be

fruitful to look more closely into mediality and filetypes as they have evolved throughout

different times and contexts to see what these transmutations and related new viewpoints can

offer us in analyses. Which brings me to image files and angels. One text I came across, Boris

Groys' "Religion in the Age of Digital Reproduction,"[222] explicitly links the digital and ritual,

discussing repetition as inherent to the ritual, relating faith to the internet, and concluding that

it is more present here and now than ever. He comes to this by discussing the spread and

individualisation of faith that the internet allowed for culturally, as well as by discussing the

nature of digital images and the characteristics they share with angels.[223] Since the theory did

not add to Turner's and at times unnecessarily complicated it, as well as it being of absolutely

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[220] Lauren Reid, "The High Priestess, the Magician and the Fool: Tarot on Film," *Node Center for Curatorial Studies,* August 31, 2016, http://www.nodecenter.org/the-high-priestess-the-magician-the-fool-tarot-on-film/.

[221] PBS Idea Channel, "What do MP3s and Magic Spells Have in Common? | Idea Channel | PBS Digital Studios," YouTube video, 7:52, posted September 26, 2012, https://youtu.be/3tDMqO7zgqE.

[222] Boris Groys, "Religion in the Age of Digital Reproduction," *e-flux journal* 4, March, 2009, http://www.e-flux.com/journal/religion-in-the-age-of-digital-reproduction/.

[223] Groys, "Religion in the Age of Digital Reproduction."

no use in the context of *24/7,* I let it go. But for further research, I think Groys' discussion of the image file, the digital and repetition might add a great deal to an analysis of *The Fool* or performances like it. Not wanting to go into issues of fundamentalism and mechanical reproduction within capitalism as a spiritless faith and therefore a fundamentalism in and of itself, even though it related sideways to 24/7, I shelved Groys' text. But looking forward it seemed relevant. Because if a connection between the digital and the ritual is more easily made than this thesis at times seems to suggest by portraying them as a (false) dichotomy, further work would benefit from Haraway and Steyerl next to Turner or by providing a further depth to Crary with Groys together with the depth Bleeker and Turner bring. At the very least, I hope someone discusses "the digital image function[ing] as a Byzantine icon" in a useful and productive context at some point,[224] because it seems a shame I did not get to.

(19579 words)

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[224] Groys, "Religion in the Age of Digital Reproduction."

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Summary

This thesis focuses on the case study of Connor Schumacher's 2015 performance *The Fool* from the perspective of Jonathan Crary's *24/7: Late-Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep.* In *24/7* Crary discusses 24/7 as a problem at the centre of a society that never stops, predicated on the eradication of sleep. This creates permanent half-wake state in which natural cycles are phased out, a society in which there is no space for resistance and where commonality is lost. 24/7 is about the individual at the expense of others. The problem is characterised by technological advances that ultimately do little besides finding new ways of perpetuating old structures of power, structuring attention in favour of consumerism. By looking at the way in which *The Fool* structures its spectator's attention, focussing in particular on how it creates self-awareness using Maaike Bleeker's focalisation, and by discussing liminality and the ritual as well as collaboration and communitas as possible modes of resistance to 24/7 following Victor Turner, this thesis posits that *The Fool* can be seen as a case against some of the problematic aspects of 24/7 that Crary discusses. This thesis analyses *The Fool* and discusses the collaboration between Schumacher, his dramaturg Maaike Schuurmans and his concept developer Luis Rios Zertuche as well as the potential to resist 24/7 in their working process and collaboration. This thesis concludes that while the Fool is a sometimes subtle or ambiguous case against 24/7, it does direct audience attention in such a way that it creates awareness of some of the more heinous aspects of it. Furthermore, Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche also offer resistance in how they choose to work and in the themes they are drawn to.

Appendix: Transcript Interview 18/05/2016

Following is a transcript of the interview with Connor Schumacher (CS), Maaike Schuurmans (MS) and Luis Rios Zertuche (LRZ) on May 18, 2016 by Aster Fliers (AF).

LRZ: "Most people are talking about, like: 'The robot, the robot is so funny.' Ok. The second part is what Maaike was saying right now, which is… What did you say? You said it really well."

MS: "How to communicate with dance."

LRZ: "Yeah, the communication with dance and stuff like that. And to me, my personal fascination is in the third layer. And that's how there's so much meaning that you can get out of the choice of language. So it's basically, [in *The* Fool] we have at least four different… Let's see. We have Connor talking. Connor doing this really simplistic almost parody-dance, like, the first one. Then we have Connor talking again. And then there's another type of dance, completely different type of dance also communicating on a completely different level. And then you have a video. Which again completely communicates on a different level. So in a way it's just one big collage of communication and how you can get different meaning. To me that's actually the most interesting part. Because it just kind of appeals to a different part of your person, every time you look at, like, this different style. Like, if you look at a video you react so much differently than if someone's just standing in front of you, talking to you."

MS: "Ik geloof dat we in die laatste scène… Daar zou je die tekst misschien eens moeten uitschrijven."

AF: "Ja, dat heb ik gedaan."

MS: "Ah, dat heb je gedaan. Dat zegt het eigenlijk. Dat is de scène die we gemaakt hebben om iets te zeggen over hoe betekenisgeving plaatsvindt. How does meaning appear."

AF: "It's the one with the, uh, the [pareidolia], right?"

CS: "The what?"

AF: "I don't know, it's the Greek term for seeing faces on the moon."

CS & MS: "Yeah, yeah."

LRZ: "I don't know. Because you saw the registration of it."

AF: "Yes!"

LRZ: "We changed it."

AF: "Ah. How's it changed?"

LRZ: "A couple of things changed."

MS: "A couple of things changed."

LRZ: "Scene one."

AF: "Because the registration wasn't the performance I attended."

CS: "In Tilburg."

AF: "No, it was at Moving Futures."

CS: "In Tilburg."

AF: "In Tilburg? Then it was a few weeks after I attended."

CS: "But had it…"

LRZ: "It's already with the new? With the…"

CS: "With the new music?"

LRZ: "With the crowd in the music?"

CS: "Yeah."

CS & MS & AF: [inaudible]

LRZ: "Oh then I haven't seen that registration. I would like to see it. Was it nice?"

MS: "It's basically the same set up, but then we have the talking scene."

AF: "Yeah."

MS: "And then we have a talking scene. And then dancing as a robot. And then dancing."

AF: "Because you go three when two hasn't been there yet. Right, yeah? Ok."

CS: "And now I have a little bit more fun with two."

AF: "Because what my first and simple… It's not there yet, but the very first conclusion I came up with after I re-watched it, was that it in a sense makes visible or makes felt the creation of meaning. When you read about it, it is very difficult to communicate because it's always abstract. And by constantly questioning the audience and positioning them in a different way *The Fool* does manage to make this whole, sort of, the birth of meaning as a process in the human mind, it makes it visible or at least it points our attention to it. And that is something that isn't often done in media."

CS: "This is why we like having people like you over, haha."

LRZ: "That's very nice to hear."

MS: "If we'd had more time, we would do it. I would love to try to get this step clearer to the audience more. Like now it was sort of…"

LRZ: "It's still subtle."

MS: "It's still subtle. I feel like with the last scene, we just started with what we actually want to discuss here. And that is talking about how does meaning appear. At a certain level I would like to have pointed out to the audience that they are sort of crucial to this creation of meaning, because it's not just what we do on stage but it is also what we do as an audience when we see it."

CS: "Hmhm."

MS: "But we only just go there. It's a little subtle now, to really have that clear. Probably. But I'd love to have like another three scenes to really confront [the audience] with that. I would love that as a dramaturgical challenge."

LRZ: "And to get it out of the theatre also, conceptually speaking. That's the only thing. We're way too far away from [doing] that."

MS: "It's also a vulnerable question for me, because I do it too. Sometimes I see performances and I'm like: 'Ok, I am really focused on what did they [have] in mind when they made this. So what are they trying to tell me.' [...] But it's also what you read on it. And sometimes somewhere in there I find that good. And sometimes I'm, like, disappointed. I'm like, you didn't [have] a really good plan or a [good] thought."

AF: "The audience gets to do all the work?"

MS: "And I'm just: 'Whatever!' And I want to talk *about* that. Not filling it in, but talk about it. And how far do we create on stage and how far do we create up here as an audience and can we discuss that?"

AF: "Yeah, because there's… There are a few articles on neuroscience and theatre that deal specifically with the creation of meaning. And also with the existence of God, so there was more religion. But, uhm, their idea is basically that we have to create meaning otherwise we cannot deal. And it's hard-wired into our brain. But it's not something that's often discussed, I think."

MS: "Not as a topic."

AF: "If you don't consciously discuss it, in theatre more specifically, then you end up with a deal where someone can say: 'Oh, but you can make your own meaning.'"

CS: [emphatically] "Yeah!"

AF: "You will make your own meaning. That's what the brain does."

CS: "That's the only thing that you're capable of. Like, you have so much of your own personal history and experience and each object that we all see every day has different connotations to every single person. Like, there's no way to point to an exact meaning, but you can only kind of, like, focus the group to open up to their associations on a, uh, pen cap."

LRZ: "You guys heard about this thing that I read? About advertising lately. Basically, kids today are really media-savvy, like super media-savvy. And that makes them really, like, they can read right through you as a marketeer if you're trying to sell them something."

AF: "The eight-year-olds are striking back?"

LRZ: "Kind of, yeah. But then, of course…"

CS: "I feel like you did actually mention this one of the times that we met…"

LRZ: "Marketing knows better always. Marketing knows better. So then they started working with things that just wouldn't make sense. So then the children, or the kids, when I'm talking about kids I'm talking about pubers…"

AF: "Ok."

LRZ: "…they would look at it with complete fascination. That finally somebody made something that they couldn't crack the code. They didn't know where it came from. But that was because the marketeers really looked for stuff that had zero things to do met elkaar. And then that, basically, that became a new way of communicating with [the kids] because they just made them think long enough that they would appreciate that it was being done at all. Because they… It's like when you go to a psychologist and it's just not a very good one and you can really be like: "Argh, I know where you wanna go. It's not that.' I found that very interesting, because, I don't know, this relates to it, what we're talking about, but I'm not sure exactly where."

AF: "Yeah, because, the creating meaning. When you first set out to discuss it, what was your goal?"

LRZ: "With me?"

AF: "Well, with all of you. When you started to work on *The Fool*."

LRZ: "We were angry, because dance doesn't mean anything most of the times, if you're really honest. Hahaha. And that's ok, but I think at the time we were really angry at the fact that it was like that, and that if you read all these programmaboekjes, and you like see all of these erop geplakte betekenis… And I think we just got really fed up with this. That it was like…"

MS: "And also with this idea… No, also with this feeling that some performances do act like it's very huge, that they're dealing with world issues here and giving you all this really vague or sometimes even simplistic [performances] with the attitude that it is really important. And then you try to reach out and you're ending up with a little bit of disappointment. At least I was. It looked all like this was the best or the most important piece for years talking about world politics, and then it's not that in the end, or at least I can't grasp it. And from that frustration we started talking about how far performance or dance or theatre can communicate clearly or not. And how it works."

CS: "Yeah, is it, especially with dance, how… Is the power of dance to be vague? It is… Is the best form to be abstract? How, what is the capability of the body to just, for you to understand it. Instead of being intuitive. 'Oh I had a feeling. It made me feel something, I can't really say what it was, but you really moved me.' Like, to see if it was possible to just be clear. In the process I found that there *is* something very useful about abstraction and the irrational moving of an audience. But, ehh…"

MS: "Maybe I had another observation too. It's that there where we found clear meaning in movement, it sometimes becomes another genre. That it becomes mime, kind of. Or it becomes theatre. Or it becomes performance. Or even maybe opera or something like that. It becomes, it moves away a bit from dance."

LRZ: "This is what we were talking about. Yeah, [inaudible]."

MS: "This is what happened a bit after this whole process, […] that we concluded that a little bit. Or at least I did. We did."

[The interview is briefly paused as tea is made and brownies shared.]

CS: "Meaning is really fucking difficult to pin down. You go through this scale of: 'Everything has a meaning.' And then you like hit the other side where nothing has a meaning, so what the fuck. And to find this balance of acknowledging the two in your own life or in a performance can be really difficult. And I think that's also why this robot character became very fascinating. It is [a robot], but it isn't, but we're gonna believe that it is, but then it's not gonna be there sometimes. You know that I'm not a robot. Like, you know that I am Connor Schumacher and that I am not a robot. But then at some point you start believing that I am a robot. But at some point I also drop the robot and it becomes this everything and nothing joke. This robot is everything but actually it is nothing. It doesn't mean anything, but it means a lot when it comes to talking about how we work as people, or how our brains work as computing devices."

AF: "Did you [in researching] go into Baudrillard and the hyperreal?"

CS: "No. Hehe."

LRZ: "We were really busy at some point with really practical stuff. One of the things I discovered during, a thing that I hadn't thought about at all, is that you're suddenly talking about this interaction between… I mean, because that's the other thing we were dealing with. How much should this robot interact and what is he saying to people."

CS: "And what is interaction with an audience."

LRZ: "And what do you wanna achieve with this interaction. And then you realise, I mean, every actor is a robot kind of, because you have a script. So this interaction is completely artificial. Or is it? And how much artifice is there? Like, if I'm going to look at the audience and go like: 'What do you think?' And then they say 'Blablablablabla.' And then I say 'Blablablablablablabla.' And like that's completely… I will say it every night, so I'm a robot. So how real is my connection really? And is it unreal because it is artificial? Because when an actor talks to you even if it is part of the script and you connect in the moment, it doesn't mean you're not having a real moment."

CS: "But this also goes back to what happens in a ritual. Just because it's a set number of tasks that you go through every day doesn't mean that it doesn't mean what it meant the first time. Then you would only have to do communion once and then you'd just, like, never do it again."

LRZ: "I mean, you can also, like, relate it to when you are a teenager and you have like witchcraft rituals. Like, a lot of people at least in Mexico in the '90s were into this, what's it called, Wicca…"

CS: "Yeah."

LRZ: "Witches of the natural world."

MS: "Hahaha."

LRZ: "There were all these rituals and nobody really believed it, but they all kind of want to believe it. And that doesn't make the ritual any less real. It's kind of playing, but it still has a very, it can often have a very real effect on you emotionally, or… I don't know. Especially this idea of how much is the actor, or how real is the actor or how real is a character."

MS: "Or how real is the performer. Because that's also a little bit involved here. It's that lots of times with dancing we see, when they're doing this, I don't know… At least I see it that way. It's like with what you see on television. If the dancer is doing really intense, then we perceive it as sort of realness. 'He went totally in it,' or something. While sometimes I can see it as an absolute act. Like: 'I need to give it my all.' Like, it's not at all 'giving his all,' it is doing as if you give your all."

AF: "When people go 'It's so raw?'"

CS: "Yeah."

AF: "How do you know?"

CS & MS: "Yeah."

MS: "And that's also a little bit within that dancing, where the dancer's taking the stage. Like, you even feel as an audience that you want this also a little bit. You want this Hollywood movie. You want [them to get back] together or the sort of 'Aaaahhh!'"

CS: "Yeah, you kind of want a cathartic moment."

MS: "Yeah, you want the cathartic moment, or you want this… I don't know, like, with the students when we had this test. Then they felt, they even said it, that you were the most real in this…"

CS: "Oh, uhm."

MS: "…dancing part."

CS: "With Codarts you mean?"

MS: "Yeah. They came in and even when they, even five minutes before they came, we decided: 'Ok, let's just…' Because we were just setting the performance. Ok, [let's] just do this one dancing part that you know from another performance and do that then. That fits with the idea we have, what it should be. And it wasn't, like, it wasn't at all… It was really the thing that we put the least [effort into]. And you know, most of them, not all of them, but some of them, and they were really dancers of course, they saw that as the most free. 'That's where you were the most free.' Well, I think he was in the robot character more free. Because I saw you improvise like, everything."

CS: "Hmhm."

MS: "And in that part I really saw you, like: 'What was it [again]?' And doing this expressive dancing but you did not…"

CS: "But this is where you already get into, like, what happens in people's brains when they use their own associations or their own experience. Like, one, because they're a group of dancers. I know like 85% for a fact that if you're a dancer and you watch a phrase from Itamar [Serrusi], which I did in front of these students, a phrase from another choreographer that I danced for for years, like, it makes you want to dance, like, it makes you want to move. And you think that this person is just being a very impressive human. And so they equate that with being themselves and being free to feel their own body or something like this. And this is where you're working with other people's personal histories. Like, not mine, because I don't feel free in that anymore. I feel free, now, acting like a drag queen on stage. Like, that makes me feel the most free, the most human, the most myself."

LRZ: "Because you're also dealign with not just like… In a horror movie you will now always find a big mansion, because of the idea of the spooky place. It's not that it's actually spooky, because it could be a five star hotel, but it's 'big old mansion' and then you see ouwe speelgoed. 'Oeoeoeoeoh, ouwe speelgoed.' Like, look at Benicio Del Torro's work, movies. Benicio? Guillermo? Guillermo! Guillermo Del Torro.

AF: "Yes."

LRZ: "*pan's labyrinth*."

CS: "Creepy doll with one eye."

LRZ: "They can be very beautiful, but none of the movies actually evoke what he's trying to evoke. They're all the idea of the idea of the idea. It's like the idea of fantasy, and then it's like this chewed over chewed over chewed over… It's, like, I find that almost fascinating to a point that I like it. Because it's just cliché after cliché after cliché. It's so cliché that even when he tries to step out of the cliché, he falls into a whole new cliché. 'I don't want schattige fairies from the forest, I'm just gonna make them skeletons with wings!' I'm like, ja precies. Anyway…"

AF: "But what was in the [inaudible] the original inspiration for the character? Because you could have gone a lot of different ways. But you went with a tarot card and a robot, made in the image of its maker."

CS: "Because The Fool was originally not me, but another performer [Majon van der Schot]. And this girl can really be…"

LRZ: "Ah, you haven't seen the first *Fool*. You haven't. It was really annoying."

CS: "It's really annoying. It's really pretentious."

LRZ: "*Really* pretentious. But it was an interesting trial."

CS: "Yeah."

MS: "It was."

CS: "This girl is a very very good performer and she's very good at letting you into her vibe. And we wanted, I wanted to see if I could make her doing nothing mean something by doing a tarot card reading while we watched… Like, we're gonna do a tarot card reading for what she's going to show you, for what you're gonna see here in this performance and basically see if you can find the connection with the cards and what she's doing. And she was on roller skates, hanging from like a harness on the ceiling and just swinging."

AF: "Yes, this part I remember [from a previous interview]."

CS: "And, like, of course you hear the rope going [makes creaking noises] and then you pull the death card and they're like 'Aha! Ahahaha!' Or you pull the strength card and she's, like, really, like, out of breath and sweating. I mean, it's very easy."

LRZ: "The reality of it, what was fun was more when you would talk about it. He didn't just pull cards just like that. It was like: 'This will be the meaning of the performance right now.' So, like, *The Fool* performance, The Fool image."

MS: "And then also somebody from the audience could grab a card."

CS: "Yeah, I mean, it was by chance, really was at random."

LRZ: "Yeah. But very often the cards aligned in this hilarious..."

CS: "Yeah."

MS: "But then it also happens that, of course, we didn't [plan] the cards, so the reactions on stage were also sometimes real. Because we didn't, like, 'Ah, this one. Funny that this one shows up.'"

CS: "And then sometimes you'd realise that it *was* rigged, because she would hide some of the cards. Like, she would keep some of them. She was just like: 'I'm gonna keep this one.' Like, we never pulled the fool because she had always had it with her."

MS: "Aaaaaah. Hahahaha. Really?"

CS: "Yeah. We never drew the fool."

LRZ: "She decided that."

CS: "Because she was like: 'Yeah, it's mine.'"

AF: "Ok."

MS: "She's so funny."

CS: "She breaks the rules all the time. Hahaha."

LRZ: "I mean, that concept. I think it would still be fun to try to figure out a way to elegantly finish it. Because it was so funny, with this what you're talking about, the process of meaning, there it was even… There it was super clear. The promise that…"

CS: "It was almost like performance lecture."

MS: "Yeah."

LRZ: "Yeah, yeah exactly, it worked really well as a performance lecture."

CS: "We could do it on TED Ex."

AF & MS: [laugh]

LRZ: "It was so funny. Because yeah like it just had this… I mean, we would have to look at the reenactment again. Because there was something about how well the cards started pointing to this girl doing nothing. It was so funny because we were all together at it, we were all playing also, because [it] was very interactive without it begin annoying-interactive. Just like: 'Pull a card.' I don't care, that's good enough. That is not too interactive. I'm not pro-

interactivity. That's ok. 'Pull a card.' Yeah, I don't know. There were also people who were like doubting, like: 'Is this…'"

CS: "Is this staged?"

LRZ: "'Is this a trick? Is this all staged or not.' It reminds me, there was a woman who did a PhD on toeval. And she had another colleague from the other side of the world and he also did some crazy things on toeval."

CS: "It's destiny?"

LRZ: "And they had to give a reading together."

CS: "Is that toeval? Destiny?"

AF & MS: "No, coincidence."

LRZ: "And these two were kind of colleagues in the field and they got together and they all had their lezingen, their readings. And then just before they started, they were both really nice, like, because they were both really busy with this. So they we're like 'Why don't we, like, why don't we just: you read your first paragraph and I'll read my first paragraph. And you read your second and I read my second.' So they showed up and they said 'We just decided, just now, that we're gonna do this. And we're just gonna read each other's paragraphs.' Or whatever. And it was perfect. It's also, like, they say that, well, I didn't actually hear [the talk], but she tells the story that the whole thing interlaces beautifully and that at no point do you feel like this wasn't planned. Like, that it looked completely artificial. That it did not look like coincidence. It looked completely put together. And nobody believed that they had just done it. That's also very funny. Also, I mean, I see it when I'm working as a graphic designer. I put a lot more energy making things look messy than making things look arranged. Cause when you want to make something look arbitrary, you have to put a lot of brain into it. If you draw points, if you have like an A4, and you want to put points spread out evenly on an A4 that look like a normal starry sky, it's really hard. Because before you know it, you're making a grid or you're making like a line of dots. It just appears."

AF: "But then how difficult was it for *The Fool* to remain at least in some ways multi-interpretable?"

CS: "Actually I wasn't, I mean, to get back to your first question how we ended up with this robot…"

MS: "Ah, ja."

CS: "…I actually was looking for it to mean one thing. Like, eh, for it to not be open to interpretation, but for it to be open to opinion. And when Majon, when she got a big job, and she had to, I had to let her go get that big job and it ended up being just me again, because I don't know anyone else yet who I'm ready to make a performance with, […] I realised that why I was so fascinated with her, being this character of… She kind of innately understands the context of a situation and she knows when she can break the rules and get away with it and when not. Like, this is kind of the overall description of the fool tarot card. This childlike intuition and creativity and being able to kind of be a crazy fool an get away with it and that there's a wisdom in that, or something. And I chose her because I didn't feel that I had those talents at all. Like, I am saying that I am more the hermit card. You know, I can… I more amass knowledge and then just, like, keep myself away from people because I can't handle all the rules and all, like, the codes and the context. And then I was in Italy and I pulled this robot character out of my ass to finish a task that had been given to us for this Dancing Museums project: a guided tour of a museum.[225] We were supposed to write it down on paper and then I didn't because I was lazy and then I showed up that day."

LRZ: "Was this because two or three weeks earlier you had seen Jan Fabre's, was it Jan Fabre? No, Tino Sehgal."

MS: "Tino Sehgal, *Babel*."

CS & LRZ: [inaudible]

CS: "Well, all of the things that I say in the show. I saw a video of Majon being a robot. She is a character in a piece from Sidi Larbi with gestural language. Where, eh…"

MS: "When you see it it's really familiar."

CS: "But it, yeah. And it's so beautiful. And then I watched this TV show called *humans*, which…"

AF: "I googled it."

CS: "It's a fun show. And then I saw this Tino Sehgal thing with this like 12 year old girl acting like a robot, saying this monologue and interacting with an audience. And so I just kinda put

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[225] To quote their website at the time of writing: "Dancing Museums is a new partnership project bringing together five European dance organisations and eight internationally renowned museums to explore new ways of interacting with audiences."

those three things together and in a day gave a guided tour through a museum that could interact with the people, like, could adjust to them. It was just funny and as the robot you can point out a lot of things a lot dryer about life and things like this, like 'Why is this bannister knob on top of this staircase shaped like that?' To, again, to just be something that brings awareness to the context that you're in. So I just walked around the museum and just pointed out all the things that were really odd."

LRZ: "And it was kinda a second step to the bubble,[226] just without the bubble. Or in a way it's still the bubble. It's this character in a museum pointing out the obvious."

MS. "Yeah? Yeah."

CS: "Is it? A little bit."

LRZ: "Like, the activity of it, I found it very similar. Like, the brain process of you with the people, that's what I mean. 'You are a man. You are standing in front of me. I'm looking at you.' This kind of thing that's very obvious but, like, people forget."

CS: "So I made this character, I came back [to The Netherlands]. I was struggling to find a form for *The Fool* that I could do myself and then Luis was just like: 'Well, you have this robot and, like, it works perfectly with…' Because I started developing this gestural language, also because of the language barrier in Italy. Like, I started having to be as clear as I could with sign language, with the body. And then it started fitting into how to create meaning and clarity with the body and how to communicate with others with just posture and gesture. And then it also becomes this character that can get way with anything. Because a robot can say: 'Ok, now I'm a robot doing an impression of a Jazz singer. I'm a robot doing an impression of a dog. Now I'm a robot doing an impression of my maker. I am a robot doing an impression of Bob Fosse dance.' And then that helped me become the character that Majon was in the beginning. That helped me to access, helped me to break the rules of the context."

AF: "Very quick question in between. The sign language. Where, how did you get it? Because I didn't recognise it the first time…"

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[226] The bubble refers to the performance *I Trust in This Life We Will Have Another Moment Alone*, which Schumacher, Schuurmans and Rios Zertuche made prior to *The Fool* as part of the Performing Gender EU program. The piece was performed in het Bonnefantenmuseum in October 2014. It featured an amorphous black blob made of trash bags that inflated and interacted with the audience, and then deflated it's inner black layer to leave the remaining transparent plastic outer layer, giving birth as it were to the performer inside the black bubble. I wrote an essay on it, about the dynamics it provoked by interacting with the audience, for the 'Who's Afraid of Representation?' course.

CS: "I mean, it's not actually… I just made it."

AF: "You made it? Because some of them are actual signs."

LRZ: "Are they?"

AF: "Well they are…"

CS: "Like, this I think is sorry [mimes sorry] and…"

AF: "Yeah, you did not implement… Ok. Because they look an awful lot like the the sign language you use when people have disabilities and they need to learn language quickly."

CS: "Ah."

AF: "Things like this [mimes hashtag] are very present in those languages."

CS: "This was just a hashtag. Hahaha."

MS: "Yeah, patterns."

AF: "Ok, because I think it's also pain in some gestures and I kept looking like: 'Are they correlating or not.' But then I will stop looking."

CS: "Yeah, hahaha."

LRZ: "Well, have fun with it actually."

MS: "That's funny."

CS: "And because they were words, there are words that are very specific, that come from the same 'root' I would say. Like, or to me in the script, the idea of the brain and the idea of ideas and…"

MS: "And the body. And this one [mimes] and then you have 'I' [mimes I]."

CS: "Yeah, I mean some things, some symbols…"

LRZ: "Dancing came from Bob Fosse. Dance. Dance! [mimes dance]"

CS: "I just mean there's symbols that have more than one specific word attached to them."

LRZ: "That's true."

CS: "I have like 'where' [mimes], 'here' [mimes], things that have to do with places are just me pointing in the space. This type of thing. Yeah…"

AF: "No, my mind was going 'Is the American version of [simplified sign language] very different to the Dutch version?'"

MS: "Ooooh, hahahahaha. Funny."

AF: "Apparently not. Just *yours* is different…"

CS & LRZ: "Yeah. Yeah, yeah."

AF: "Just not so different…"

LRZ: "Funny."

CS: "Yeah in Arnhem there were some girls that are sign language interpreters, that were like fascinated by how I, like, got to this point, like that. I didn't actually have enough time to speak with them, or to speak with them more about it. But also it gets like too, if it was real sign language, it would actually become too complicated and not universal enough because then it get into a specific niche of language. And it would have to be Dutch sign language or American sign language. This gets very confusing."

LRZ: "And this one was also like, we also designed, [it] as an aesthetic thing."

CS: "Yeah, that's true."

LRZ: "It's more like a dance language, actually, funnily enough. Because they are signs, but they're all kind of made so that he also makes himself into silly [inaudible]. I mean, we talked a lot, a little bit about it, that it's a little dansje that he's doing. And then he actually does it and he just repeats it but then with music. In the actual first version I remember that it was just him, just doing that but then with music, right? Like really early, so it was like the process…"

CS: "But so is… The first dance with the techno music is actually just…"

LRZ: "That's what I mean."

CS: "Like there's…"

LRZ: You wouldn't even move the first time you tried it."

CS: "Oh yeah."

LRZ: "That you would just repeat it exactly the same. That looked like a little dance and then that is where the first dance came from."

CS: "That was too hipster, so…"

AF: "For some reason I wrote down cyborg Jesus, which in retrospect doesn't make any sense."

CS: "I love when that happens."

AF: "Yeah, oh, practical questions all the way. Is there anything… We already discussed [in the previous interview] that there was more to be developed in [*The Fool*]. But I also had

questions about [whether] this is your last project where you do a solo for the foreseeable future?"

CS: "For the foreseeable, for the plans for the next two years it's the last solo, besides the things that I do in Dancing Museums."

LRZ: "So strange…"

MS: "So strange, yeah…"

CS: "But the next thing will be, or the next work that I really look at as being really *our* work is a duet with Majon, with the girl that we didn't get to finish with before. And actually that one is set up in a way that depending on what happens, I will either be with her on stage or it will be a solo for her. It's made for, it's a duet for the performer and the maker, whatever that means."

MS: "Yeah. So we'll figure out…"

AF: "So then that's like the line continues. This is not the end of…"

CS: "And I think I'm stretching myself in the next two years to see if can develop skills to work with other people, cause it's being asked of me a lot. And I mean, there's a practical side of how much it can take out of me to be a[n] independent dance artist or something like this. To deal with the practicalities of a performance. Like it's a bit more exhausting than being able to stay on the organisational side or…"

MS: "I don't know how to relate to it yet either, because I completely understand that how we worked with *The Fool* was complete brain work, so we never really… Connor did it by himself, practicing his sign languages and his choreography. But I wasn't really interested in that. I think from the beginning till the end we discussed what we just discussed about creating meaning or understanding and how it works and we constantly tried that; like, switched scenes, switched other things, looked what happened. So that's what we can do with Connor when he's there, so we can decide: 'Ok, no no, if we wanna make that clear then we have to do it like that and then he can improvise that immediately."

CS: "I think only now after these past two performances in the Schouwburg [in Tilburg] would I be ready to open the whole thing again and go further. To like, it's like this… It hasn't fully opened."

MS: "So I don't know how we would do that with somebody there as just performer. Then maybe they're going to be a maker too or work that way or we're going to need to work differently. Which would probably happen when we work with other people."

AF: "And each of you, if you think of opening [*The Fool*] up again and making it grow in a way and this would be the time, what would you… How would you see that? Where would you start or where would you like it to go?"

CS: "*The Fool* in particular as the solo with the robot?"

AF: "Whatever question appeals most to you…"

CS: "I don't know. I think that one catchphrase that's been spinning around is to be the philosophy instead of speak of the philosophy. And, like, I feel that this time I was very literally trying to speak to the audience about how the brain works and how meaning works and how we relate to each other and read each other in different ways. And I would like to flesh out both ways, like, making them feel it and then helping them understand how it works."

LRZ: "In a way Ivo Dimchev's *I-cure* does that."

CS: "Yeah, shit!"

MS: "Hahaha. We found the performance that is sort off what we wanted to say. Probably, but…"

LRZ: "We were halfway through ours, and then this fucker comes up."

AF & MS: [laugh]

LRZ: "And he's perfect. And that was it, it was like: 'Finished. Ok, fine!'"

CS: "Or it was two performance that were like…"

MS: "I agree on, like, what Connor just said and then we could probably work out both ways, although I am not that interested in that anymore because we already sort of did that."

LRZ: "Yeah."

MS: "We could do that way better of course, with a lot of budget probably, or something. But what helped me was that I did not [shy] away from working this conceptual on a dance piece. Like, I would maybe… I was afraid also when we worked with Majon on   the first things that it was a too conceptual thing. Like, well, a little bit like: 'Maaike, figure this out [and] then maybe write an essay and do some writing stuff.' But anyway, I like that we really put such a conceptual question on a making process. And to really try to do that. [It] really helps you to

get somewhere. It can really be a dramaturgical thing to put in the making process. I feel like lots of times like: 'That's for scientists to think of, it's not for us in our making, we don't feel it, we can't grasp that as makers.' But you can. And it can help you or can bring you somewhere. It can also [inaudible] you. You need to balance it out. It's difficult. It even got me that we should try to look further in this. Maybe not always, not for every project, but for some projects we could even stretch conceptual working. Like now I'm constantly, because Connor told me that he's going to work in a museum, maybe in the performance of another artist, I am constantly thinking that another conceptual thing that is probably really good for making a performance is transparency and how we deal with ownership of artworks. Especially when you compare dance with the art world. Like, there are lots of people even working on cases with art pieces, like who they belong to, what the rights are, who the owners are and then in our days with the internet and seeing everybody, and I don't know. Beyoncé doing Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker, we looking at everything and not even knowing sometimes that we take things with us. Like, how far can you stretch this idea of ownership, or, how do you call it…"

CS: "I mean, you know that this is like…"

MS: "And I would like to work, like now we did this about communication, now I would like to work on something like that. Or even other subjects that are probably very scientific or very conceptual or very also maybe interesting for writing cases, or I don't know, to try and take them into the making process of dance or performance. That don't take the audience for granted. That they will feel a lot, they will get a lot."

CS: [laughing] "Hmhm."

MS: "But they can also be challenged a bit or something. I would like that."

CS: "I mean, the piece, the short piece that's supposed to be on De Parade,[227] and turn into an evening length piece and is about cultural and artistic appropriation, like, is suppose to be solely about this topic of authorship, incorporation, inspiration, appropriation. And I mean… But we've been talking about it ever since my first performance, I mean, with Joris [van Oosterwijk], and using his visual art research ['The Stamping Project']. I mean, another question was if I could just put a solo from Itamar on stage and say: 'This is a solo from Itamar and this is what it means to me.' Like, it's always been a topic."

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[227] An outdoor theatre festival in the Netherlands that is held in its four biggest cities every summer.

MS: "Copyright is an interesting topic."

CS: "Copyright, intellectual property."

MS: "Like even when… Yeah. Constant Meijers was giving this little lecture on the dance week here. About Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker. And he really put this Beyoncé thing as a sort of the end of his [talk] about Anne Teresa, in I think this a little bit old fashioned way of putting somebody's career within described performances."

LRZ: "Hahaha. Hm."

MS: "He started with where she started, like started with what we know best of her, what we already know or what we are not even aware of that we know. And then he put Beyoncé in the end, like, and she got… Like Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker got stolen. Like: 'Here you see where higher and lower culture meet,' or something. I was falling off my chair. It was, like, really? To me it would be so cool if Beyoncé would [have] picked you up, maybe? Like, I wouldn't put that as higher or lower or 'she got stolen'-phrase. I feel there's something to do there or at least interesting."

CS: "Even Anne Teresa didn't make such a big deal out of the fact that Beyoncé used the choreography. She made a big deal out of the fact that she didn't ask."

MS: "Got mentioned."

CS: "Or she wasn't asked, or that she didn't say 'inspired by.' And that it, like, that it was a copy, like, a copy from somebody who couldn't do it very well."

MS: "Hahaha."

CS: "But that it *looked* exactly the same."

LRZ: "I mean what I like about her [de Keersmaeker], is that she said that she found interesting about it is that it took them 25 years to do it. To me that was, like, what stayed behind, for me. Ah ja, you made that 25 years ago."

MS: But what [I] also found interesting was that all what he mentioned about Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker and of course was really really wide establishment. She was inspired by, it was opera, and the Greeks, and it was like all of the big names and even ones we got [taught] by, like, when you are at university. And what we do nowadays, like, I'd love to take us to study some Greek opera, but we are sitting in front of the computer…"

LRZ & MS: "…and watching YouTube videos."

MS: "And we do like a lot. Like, I don't know how… We can't do it like that, or we probably will not. What does that mean? Questions, I'm asking these things myself. What does this mean? Like, how do we [create]? It says something about who we are also and what we are informed by. But it felt also so slow, everything he told was such a slow process. You see what I mean? They really got to the theatre to see Pina Bausch and then that was sort of…"

AF: "I had this exact same conversation with, earlier today, with a friend about Tumblr. Because we stumbled across a post that mentioned 'the Jesus-fandom, or as they prefer to be known: christianity' and then we had this moment where we realised that there's now thirteen-year-olds out there for who, well, christianity is on par with being part of, I don't know, the Doctor Who fandom, the Sherlock fandom. It's all interchangeable. I mean, for a lot of thirteen-year-olds it will be a big thing, which is in their daily life and religion is still 'real,' but for another [group] everything has become one giant collage."

CS: "Yeah, I mean, in a religious term they'd be called idols, like your false Gods and things like that."

AF: "Yeah. But it's very weird that for a lot of people any distinction has vanished or at least for me it's weird because I was brought up with the idea that faith is part of my family's history, but we're not there anymore. And we're not there anymore with anything because you could just as easily intercut…"

LRZ: "Yeah, I was still trying to figure out how I would answer your question of how I would like to work. Because I realised that I don't have any… But, I mean, on this note, I think I was kind of thinking along the lines. I really find interesting this thing, the medium is the message is becoming ever so apparent. Like, it doesn't matter what invisible being that doesn't exist or character or spaghetti monster you believe in. Like, now the new generation see it all as the same. Yeah, you believe in something that doesn't exist. It doesn't matter if it's a cat or spaghetti or if it's Jesus. Like it's just the same action. But I have this with performance now. I am interested in meaning that comes through its most basic. The action is already the meaning. The whole thing is one thing. I find it interesting when you hear for example [Benny Claessens] is going to do a whole piece where he will reenact scenes from the movie Scream one, two and three.' This happened. And I thought, that's fantastic. I saw another piece from him, but what's interesting is that before the piece, like, this is how fast somebody can

describe to you what the whole piece is about. And it is exactly that. And in a way you get into this really interesting thing where you just sit there knowing what is going to happen and it happens, which in itself becomes a very interesting human ritual. Like Jan [Martens] has that [with *The Dog Days Are Over*]. 'People are going to jump for an hour, the end.' And that is what happens. But while you sit there, there's a couple of things that happen that I find very interesting. The first one is that you become part of a human ritual of what we are doing. Like, you become very aware of that, because by now you know how it begins, how it ends and everything in between. The concept is so quick. The next thing is that you realise how layered it is. I mean, I had that with *Schwalbe Speelt Een Tijd*. We watched it. It's so simple to describe. They're gonna to build up and build down twelve decors throughout the next six hours. And it starts at midnight and it ends at six o'clock in the morning. Klaar, supersimpel. But when you're there for six motherfucking hours, you realise how deep it is. And it is through being there that you realise this."

CS: "Well, I mean, it's interesting that you say how deep *it* is, because that's not what I felt."

LRZ: "How deep it becomes, maybe?"

CS: "How deep you go into what Anish Kapoor said in the video, like, the psychic relationship between you and the object."

LRZ: "In this case it's that it's happening. It's the ritual of doing it, it's the object. That's what I mean…"

CS: "Yeah."

LRZ: "…I could write a book what happened those six hours, or like a thesis. How layered it was. I mean, you can go… Because everything gains meaning. I mean, because it's so simple and it's just like een paar kaders. And you just have enough time to realise how much depth there is. To realise that, for example. it's the first time that you see de technicus as the character. And that nobody ever cares about them. And all the emotional entailments of that. Just that. When you have six hours you can think about this technicus. How many times have you not maybe told them that they did a great job tonight? And fuck, like so many things. And that's just on that part. The next thing […] you notice is that it's five girls and then you realise how much, even if you're a feminist, you don't really see girls building very often and that you think it's kind of strange because they're all kind of tiny girls and then you think about all the

entailments of what it is to be tiny, forget about the girl-part. Just like: 'Oh, yeah that's so funny. She's carrying really gigantic stuff so she's not that tiny but I just see her as tiny."

CS: "But actually her stature makes it better structurally to handle some of these object than the other people."

LRZ: "And then you think about what light does to the decors, when they turn it on for just a couple of seconds and then turn it back off. And maybe the decors are all mainly light, because it's all construction until they turn on the couple of lights that go into the decor. And then you're like 'Oh, it's *af*!' And it's just a lamp, really. The rest was just being built already. You know and all of these things. I mean, you should go and see it if you can because it's six hours of you sitting and *thinking*. Just, it's like going to church the way it was supposed to be meant."

CS: "But that is the ritual of theatre, the ritual of religion, the ritual of performance. Like, whether it is a religious performance or a theatrical performance, a conceptual performance, visual art performance, it all entails the same amount of self-reflection into a thing that's being objectified."

LRZ: "And of course in those six hours you, of course, you also have all the basics, no? Like you think about love, you think about life, you think about death, you think about friendship, you think about teamwork, you think about society, like, those are the basics. Those are 101. In a way I find [it] more complex to think about the emotions of the technician then to think about love and life and death."

CS: "But those are all the gateways into human experience and like it only gets more complex the more walk-in closets you get into, that have clothes in them, that have buttons on them, that have colours on them. You know, like, eh, you eventually get into like the really sketchy corner of the house that holds all the secrets."

LRZ: "Really, I mean, the smallest things. The smallest things. I have a fascination for that lately. About space. And I don't mean space as in ruimte but as in the concept of getting enough time or enough, yeah, mainly time, space as time. To get space to process, emotional space." [laughs]

MS: [laughing] "Because I am completely done with the word 'ruimte.'"

LRZ: "Yeah, of course, but I mean space as in…"

MS: "Tijd en ruimte, I mean…"

LRZ: "dat je de ruimte kan nemen, zo, zegmaar. Not about… Like, to exist. What do I think about the fact that they put the little window there [in *Schwalbe Speelt Een Tijd*]? Or like it's funny that that window can be opened and closed. I wondered if they used it in the original play."

CS: "I mean it's funny because, like, I completely agree, but then there is also the opposite. Like, we also need to give time, like, to give time and space to not overanalyse every part, every process that we go through with people. Because…"

LRZ: "Yeah, of course."

CS: "Because it is killing me. [laughs] That's why, hahaha."

LRZ: "In a way, a piece like that, or a piece like Jan's, they don't force you into thinking about all of these things. These thoughts just kind of happen. I mean, a good example was what Connor said. One of the decors was one giant inflatable baby. It's from Toneelgroep Amsterdam. I don't know. But then they inflate it and then when it's done they always look at it like "één Mississippi, two Mississippi, three Mississippi,' and then they bring it back down. But in the case of that they just opened the valve and they, like, let the air out, but that takes forever. But then that's super interesting, because then you start wondering, and this is what Connor was telling me. Yeah it's so funny, when does it stop being a baby and when is it plastic again? And you're just staring at it, thinking about this for so long. Like, I wonder when they're gonna roll it up. It can also be a practical question."

CS: "But it's funny how the two realities go right next to each other. Because like I am sitting there watching a baby decompose. Like, I am sitting there watching a baby completely go through the process of death and then I'm thinking, when is it going to be material again. Like when… And it really, it almost never does. Like, uh, yeah, at some point it becomes deflated piece of plastic that you know was a body. And, like, you kind of can't separate the two."

LRZ: I think a similar process happens with me and Jan. Or with this guy that I was talking about, [Benny Claessens]. You walk into his [inaudible] and it's just a bunch of stuff. Like, he starts out by cheating. Cause he, he's very charming and very annoying at the same time. He's like this really fat guy, annoyingly fat guy. And he starts by telling you guys: 'Ok, this is, like, stuff I brought with me. I have a chair here, it's just red, I don't need you to think, oh blood or

life or whatever. It's not about the countryside. It's just that I like this chair, so that's why I have it. And I have like this sign that I got there, [sounds of Luis rearranging some furniture in the dining room] it's from a friend of mine. I really like it, it says 'hope' as you can see, but it's not like: 'look at the contrast between hope and that this is gonna be really sad and that is hope, no.' It's just that it's nice and shiny.' Of course he's right, but he's also cheating because of course all of those things are still happening. Of course you still think of the countryside and of course you still think the contrast with hope and blablabla. So it's really fun, because it reminds you of this thing, like the medium is the message. You can't take it away."

CS: "I mean, and this is why, like, we, at least Lewis and I, are completely in love at the moment with this one drag queen called Bob the Drag Queen…"

AF: "*Bob* the Drag Queen?"

CS: "And he was just crowned America's next drag superstar, two nights ago."

AF: "Should I be watching this?"

CS: "I mean he makes some…

LRZ: "It's really interesting."

CS: "…incredible performances."

MS: "*Bob* the Drag Queen?"

LRZ: "Yeah."

AF: "I'm gonna google him now."

CS: "Yeah, he makes incredible lip-syncs to monologues. Yeah, from anything, and then mashed up with performing lip-syncs to songs."

AF: [having googled] "Oh, wow."

CS: "He's this big black guy dressed up as a black woman and then he does a lip-sync to Britney Spears' 'I'm a Slave for You.'"

AF: [laughs loudly & uncomfortably] "Ok."

CS: "Yeah."

LRZ: "And then you realise what the song is saying when he's singing somebody else. And, like, I never realised also, I hadn't heard a black person sing this song before because fuck it's uncomfortable."

AF: "For obvious reasons."

CS: "Not good…"

LRZ: "But so funny also. And it's again, he doesn't need to say any more than that."

AF: [after googling] "Yes, I've seen him."

CS: "And, like, even, yes, even in that performance he does a monologue from a white TV chef, Paula Deen, who used the n-word and she, like, had a themed party that was very white supremacist and then she was being judged for it and, like, she was crying and very ignorant about it and then also in the performance he does a monologue from Chris Rock where he's explaining like the only time a white person can say the [n-word], and it's so *funny* and he's such a good performer and you never let go of the fact that he is a man in a dress or a leotard and a wig and that's basically it, doing impressions of people. And this is what we started to talk about with *The Fool*. It's the same. It's just an excuse to be able to talk about things. And that you set up this character so that you can tell a bunch of jokes that have a cathartic point. And that laughing about them helps you enter that catharsis or something like this."

AF: "And what was the point, be it cathartic or not, for *The Fool*?"

CS: "For me, I thought the most real-world cathartic moment for me is when I take the person's name. Not because of this, because of actually taking their name, but because of the process that I tell them about in that scene. Like, when I come at you with my body it already means something. Like, you are already scared of me, like, although like you know you're completely safe, like, there is an intimidation just because of another physical person. What it means when another object comes straight at you. And [it] is like trying to break down this code of how people can interact with each other in a more aware way while getting a laugh out of it, I think for me was what I wanted to be the most cathartic moment."

AF: "And: am I like you now?"

CS: "That's not in it anymore."

AF: "Why did you take it out?"

CS: "I found it a little bit too explanatory and a little bit too petty in a way."

LRZ: "It's a bit cheesy, no?"

CS: "Yeah. We made a lot of changes when the attacks in Paris happened,[228] because of the way that people were reacting to the attacks in Paris. Using this word 'barbarian' a lot. And that people don't really realise that the way the associations that they have that a lot of these radicalised muslims have of the west are also that we are also barbarians. And it's just a manner of perception and meaning and association. And how do we accept and move past this with some kind of awareness of each other, or something."

AF: "So what did it become?"

CS: "What did *The* Fool become, after?"

AF: "Yeah because I did see the one…"

CS: "After."

AF: "…the registration where it is 'Am I like you now?'"

LRZ: [inaudible]

CS: "No, all of that was put in because of the attacks. There is no registration of what it was before. It was much more just about theatre. We didn't bring in anything that would really get you to the outside world. The cheering and the fireworks and the song, stuff like this."

MS: "It was all after."

LRZ: "Yeah."

CS: "It was just this sad dramatic song with no cheering, screaming, fireworks, ambient sounds. That only came afterwards. I mean, we also couldn't make it some political piece all of a sudden. We went through a difficult time with this process, with trying to put it together, and in the time frame, and then that happened and we, I felt a little bit pathetic to be speaking about communication and to hold it inside of the theatre, to hold the concept inside of creating meaning in dance or the body or something like that."

LRZ: "It felt a bit decadent to not react. That was mainly, I think, the thing. Because we had to perform this, the day after the attacks and it was just so embarrassing to be there, in general. Like: [sarcastic] 'Yeah, yeah, we're the arts, we care, of course we care and then we go and…"

CS: [sarcastic] "We're the mirrors of human society."

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[228] The series of attacks that took place in Paris on November 13, 2015, where three suicide bombers attacked during a football match. These were later followed by mass shootings in café's and restaurants. The biggest mass shooting took place in the Bataclan theatre during a concert. In total, 130 people were killed, 368 injured, the most in France since WWII. The attacks were claimed by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

MS: "Also the whole set up…"

LRZ: "And the whole evening…"

MS: "It was like a party evening with performances."

AF: "Yes, I was there, I saw the one right after the…"

MS: "Ahh…"

CS: "In Amsterdam."

AF: "Yeah."

MS: "We were a bit worn out."

AF: "You said it didn't work. Everyone kept laughing. It was very strange, the entire time."

CS: "It just was also just not such a good performance. But yeah, people laughed…"

MS: "And that's ok…"

CS: "Yeah, it's a funny thing…"

MS: "It was just weird."

LRZ: "That was the [evening] that the girl fractured her foot."

MS: "Yeah."

AF: "Yes, oh."

CS: "She had just come out of Paris. She had just been through Paris and like that's why she was really late, and she only showed up for the performance, because of all of the security checks. And some people that were supposed to come to the show didn't come to the show because they went back to Paris to be with their families."

LRZ: "It was such a mess."

CS: "And then they [the organisers] were just like 'dance karaoke!'"

LRZ: "I still remember, we were building up and then someone from the production was just: 'Hey, hoe gaat het.' And I was like: 'Yeah, kut.' 'Waarom dan?'"

MS: "One person was just one step away with some sort of saying like: 'Yeah, but these things happen.'"

LRZ: "Maar zulke dinged gebeuren toch.'

MS: "She just looked at us, or at me at least and, like, then she didn't do it, but she was almost there like to: 'Ah, joh, wordt een hartstikke leuke avond,' zo."

CS: "Oof."

LRZ: "Ah."

AF: "Very Dutch."

CS: "Yeah."

LRZ: "Yeah, yeah, but that was the attitude around."

MS: "That was a bit what we had to work with."

CS: "And I mean it is understandable, but it's only one side. Like, yes, how do we go on working while acknowledging that there is a larger context outside that we shouldn't forget, that we shouldn't try to, like, cover up with some contemporary dance blanket, especially when you have all these, like, things that are supposed to be mirrors of society, like a mirror of how you communicate between people, a mirror of how to keep your senses open in society. But yet it doesn't recognise at all what is happening in the outside world. Fuck off. That's what I felt even towards my own performance."

LRZ: "We should have canceled the performance."

MS: "Yeah."

LRZ: "It would have been the most respectful thing to do."

CS: "Like, these are the things that you guys don't have to deal with, but I would have gotten… Like, I literally get met with the sentence: 'You can't do that.'"

LRZ: "I know, I know.…"

AF: "If it helps, it was very nice to have the final bit of *The Fool* in a situation that is incomprehensible to begin with and to just go with it. It won't make it better, it won't change the situation, but it is a reminder that there is still something else out there as well. So in that sense I wasn't… I was still happy to see it, you know… I know it's decadent but it can also be good to be reminded of that it's worth it."

CS: "And was there any, ehm, was there any… I think Kristen [de Groot, artistic & general director at Dansateliers] gave the opening talk. So the director of Dansateliers gave the talk…

LRZ: [inaudible]

CS: "I think she did, we weren't there…"

LRZ: "No, I asked."

AF: "You mean the opening talk of the entire Moving Futures?"

CS: "Of that evening."

LRZ: "If they said anything about the fact that there had been shootings or whatever. I think they said like 'Dankjewel door het komen in zo'n moeilijke tijd,' and then they…"

CS: "Yeah."

MS: [changing the subject] "Can you work with this?"

CS: "Yeah, are we talking around all of the questions, or…"

AF: "No, it's wonderful. There's one question left and we're now discussing it, so…"

CS: "What was that?"

AF: "About uhhh, about society, about ethics, about politics. And I have some idea of where that needs to go, but this conversation is also important, this aspect of it."

CS: "What I find, yeah, especially through that, through what we're already talking about, as, like, easy metaphor and maybe it's like too easy to take it on and kind of arrogant, but the allegory of the cave. [sighs] Yeah, Plato's allegory of the cave and how when people in a way don't want to see it or don't recognise that there is more layers or that there is a deeper space, they just won't. Like, you can't, speaking of this arrogant metaphor, you can't take the chains off of their neck and lift them up und turn them around and shove them outside of the cave. That's not how it works. And, yeah, in some ways I felt like I was trying to do that with *The Fool*, especially for some very particular figures in my brain. And that's not how it works. Like, you need to live the philosophy to let them see that it's possible to enter as a person and find these things, so that they can find it themselves. Does that make sense?"

AF: "Yes, though I wonder who in particular you'd like to…"

CS: [inaudible, laughs]

AF: [giggles]

CS: "Yeah, I don't know how to approach politics or political topics or ethics. I mean, I mean ethics we kinda deal with on a concept-basis, but I find that the more you get into ethics and the more you get into, like, human behaviour and psychology, the more simplistic we go. Uhm, like every time, if somebody… How do I say this? If someone approaches us with a political topic, we will, like, go before the political topic and say, like: 'Ok, we can't even address this, we need to address this very basic human need that has been the root of how this ideology takes hold in society. Because it always has to do with people who don't fit in with the ruling ideology in almost all cases."

LRZ: "Yeah, I mean, after thinking about all of those things, and we talked about so many things, that's why I'm ending up making trees.[229] Because I got to the point where I was like: 'Fuck it, all the information presented to me is just to convince me of something. Somebody decided to give it to me to convince me of something."

CS: "Wait, what?"

LRZ: "And I'm tired of doing that."

MS: "Hahaha."

LRZ: "Like every piece of information presented to me, on the news and the radio, everywhere, down the street, has transformed through this thing somebody decided, to show me that, so that I can maybe be convinced of something. Like, I mean, I know we need to start talking about this. We're living in like the biggest propaganda war, like, in history ever. And like it's not just propaganda between countries. It's propaganda for food. Like: 'Got milk?' Do you remember that?"

MS: "I had this discussion with [my partner] on the documentaries. When we studied, we watched like a lot of documentaries, also to... I don't know, we felt that we could see a little bit of the world there."

LRZ: "Yeah, it was honest."

MS: "See real people in documentaries. And then we moved onto: 'Oh, these documentaries are really well designed. Like, they're more scripted sometimes than we thought they were, or something like that or...' And now we're ending up with hating this sort of the whole documentary. We're like: 'Ok, we have to just interact with the world, not watching a screen anymore, like, at all."

LRZ: "Yeah, it has a little bit of this taste to it. Cause I mean, especially, I read the news a *lot*. Like, I'm a redditor [editor on Reddit]. Like, in Reddit you get all of the news, like all of them, and then what you realise is that you start making a pattern of the world. Like, you start realising, because everything comes in, you start realising that for every time there is a piece of news that says 'red' then there's always, echt meteen erachteraan, from another source, the one that says 'blue.' And the way they present everything, of course it's very interesting to constantly see both sides of the thing, but what you realise is that they never talk of the same

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[229] Luis had shown prints of pictures of trees from a series he was working on before the interview started.

thing. So ultimately there might be way more information out there that is relevant to whatever it is that you're reading about, and that both of them are omitting. And then you're like: 'Fuck it!' Like: 'Hands up.' Because it's not even about the blue and the red anymore. There's like yellow and green and nobody ever talks about them, and that's where it becomes interesting to me to the point that I decided: ok, I'm gonna take my hands off it. Like, which doesn't mean I stopped reading the news and all of that, but when it comes to me reacting to it, I'm like: ok, I think the answer is, like, to not go into that conversation anymore. So my conversation is actively not talking about that."

AF: "Ok."

CS & MS: [laugh]

MS: "And then from a whole other level…"

CS: "Hahaha."

MS: "…I have a sort off intuition…"

CS: "Ok."

MS: "…and that is not at all…"

AF: "Ok."

MS: "…and that has nothing to do with all that has been said before. But that maybe when we get to work with others more, that will be somehow, maybe, some influence, political topic, appearing to us. I feel like that context is always influencing us."

LRZ: "Yeah, yeah."

MS: "If you leave us alone, if we would continue to [create] like we do now, Connor performing, we're talking a lot, it will [stay] within here [between the three of us] also a bit. But I think with moving on and other people coming in the process, [it] will bring up other…"

LRZ: "Yeah, that's also true."

MS: "So I don't know, maybe working with other people will lead us to more political things to work on or with or deal with. Could be."

AF: "I've been reading Jonathan Crary's *24/7*, which is apparently a thing in different [academic] discourses, but it reminded me of *The Fool*, though I don't know yet why, but it is very much what we just discussed. Because living in a society that never shuts off, where light and dark, the difference has vanished because everything is now light, and sleep has become

an inconvenience that we need to eradicate, basically, that also means that the whole question of right and wrong, but also the whole question of how you deal, of how you even deal with this permanent brightness, has become a political one. You can't shut off anymore or something, you cannot… Here, you almost can't go like 'I'm off for 8 hours, you won't see me, I'll be asleep,' because even that has become a political action in not consuming for 8 hours."

CS: "Or not participating or not creating things for other people to consume."

AF: "Yes."

LRZ: "But this is why I find *Schwalbe Speelt Een Tijd*, like, the fact that they, in a very quiet way, because they don't talk about it all, ever, they give you space to think, they give you time to sit, they give you silence…"

CS: "They give you time to *sleep*, you sleep when you wanna sleep."

LRZ: "They give silence, they give you a dekentje to sleep."

CS: "Yeah, you're given sleep…"

LRZ: "You're given six hours to be with yourself in a way. And I find that a very political statement in itself. But it's like silence is the new loud. Hahaha."

MS: "It's sounds very meditative. Like, it's sounds like [my partner] going to one of his retreat things. To settle in…"

CS: "But it's more like this definition of what a real vacation is. Like doing whatever you feel you need to do to relax. Whether or not that's taking care of work while you're on vacation or painting while you're on vacation, or riding an elephant or being on the beach. Like, eh, you can have coffee, go outside and smoke cigarettes for six hours if you want. You can sit and watch these decors go by and access every political issue that you want to access."

LRZ: "Or you can make yourself five tostis in the tosti automaat that they have there."

CS: "Or you can sleep. Or you can just let it all wash over you as if it was, eh, the sound of the waves…"

MS: "Yeah."

CS: "…as you go to sleep."

MS: "It's probably interesting to see what the audience, how they react."

LRZ: "I mean, I find it interesting that I'm so attracted to these types of works that create silence. And that I'm trying to create silence. But then I go to the Witte de Wit, like, there's an

exhibition right now, in the gallery, in the Witte de Wit. There's the giant wall and it's full of equally big, like, panels, like [mimes] this big, of different bright colours and they all say catchphrases. They all say, like: 'It's so important!' Or whatever, I don't know. But, you know, it's also reacting to this idea of everything being propaganda, and everything is bewust or onbewust, everybody is really aware of how we're being attacked. But the artwork in itself wants to shout at you. And, like, I saw a picture of it, I've seen many pictures of it go by on my feed and I feel so, like, absolutely not attracted to this right now. Cause I'm like: 'Oof, like, I don't need to go there so that you can scream at me a little bit more but then in the name of art.' You know? Like, it's the same action. You're still screaming."

AF: "There's nice ones know at the station in Utrecht, Because of SPRING [Festival]. I think it's Tim Etchells. But they're simple posters with slogans, but the slogans don't mean anything particularly. And there's one about Geert Wilders' peroxide. And when you walk by, first you wonder 'Why is there a white poster in the middle of all these images that try to sell me stuff, and then you go: 'Peroxide?' But it's strange in that it does try to sell you something but not really either. You have to make something of it yourself. I quite liked it. It sort of, then it becomes a silence in the middle of noise…"

LRZ & MS: "Hm."

AF: "…rather than just…"

LRZ: "I mean, there was a McDonalds advert series…"

CS: "Oh, yeah!"

LRZ: "…that was fantastic."

CS: "It was so silent it was scary."

AF: "Yeah?"

LRZ: "It was so silent. It was just vector images, like silhouetten, really minimalistic. It was like a blue, a beautiful blue background and you would just get the form of the frietjeszak, like red, and then just with rectangles coming out of it in yellow, and that was it. No logo, no nothing."

AF: "You just thought… Your mind goes 'McDonalds.'"

LRZ: "But it was perfect, because it also makes you think, you know."

MS: "Talk about making meaning!"

LRZ: "Also because you, like, also, like, become aware of how much they are in your system. They don't even need to put the logo. And I thought it was so elegant that they did that."

CS: "This…"

MS: "You don't need much and you think: 'McDonalds.'"

LRZ: "And also that you're like: I want have this [poster] at home. It's so silent."

CS: "Like, still you have the, you can get into like personal associations. Like, 'Oh I used to go to McDonalds with my family. I hate McDonalds, it scares me that this thing makes me think of McDonalds…'"

LRZ: "I hate that I love it, this specific image."

CS:"'…oh, I never even, it was such a treat because we didn't have very much money, it was such a treat to go to McDonalds. It was the only thing that I could afford. You know, like, you still get into this personal history of the sign, of the symbol of the thing. But, it's not open to interpretation, it's open to opinion."

AF: "Why is that important, that it's not… Well, I know why it's important to McDonalds, but why is it important to you?"

CS: "Well it was important to me for *The Fool* because I wanted to take responsibility as the artist to say: 'I know what this is about.' This isn't…"

MS: "…not just 'Whatever you come up with as an audience. It's all ok.' I don't really have a good idea of what I…"

CS: "Because I mean I think that there is, not a fully justified, but there is a reason why they keep taking money away from us. And it's because you can hide as an artist, saying that you're being a mirror of society when actually you are something that has a slightly reflective property. And then you let other people… Like this [points to reflective but cloudy surface], that it would actually be like 'nonono, I *can* see myself in this.'"

MS: "Hahaha."

CS: "But you have to work so hard to see your reflection in it, instead of through the craft and the decision of the people who make a mirror as clean and as clear as possible. [long pause] Where's our couch?"

MS: "Yeah!"

LRZ: "I don't know."

MS: "Yeah, where's the couch?"

LRZ: [from another room] "I'm waiting for it."

CS: "Is it nine?"

MS: "It's nine?"

AF: "It's nine!"

LRZ: "It should get here earlier than ten."

MS: "Ok, you still have an hour."

AF: "Yeah, there's an hour before [it] *has* to be here."

CS: "But I mean, of course we're just gonna assemble it until like five in the morning, because it's IKEA so we'll see how long that takes."

AF: "Are you not good at IKEA couches?"

CS: "I don't know, I never had one before."

AF: "I'm very good at couches, especially IKEA. I do all the beds in our house."

CS: "Hahahaha."

AF: "I think I'm sort off done with you."

CS: [laughs]

AF: "That sounds much worse than it is. No, it's very good. And the mirror thing is also something for me to remember when I write. Like, wilful vagueness…"

CS: "Oh yeah."

AF: "It's not a quality…"

CS: "Yeah, but that's student work. It's not like they give you the space and time to reflect on the process that you're going through as a human being."

AF: "No, that's true. That's true."

CS: "So how are you expected to come out with any kind of clarity? That's not an excuse to suck at your work, but, eh…"

AF: "But I've made it worse than it has to be. People have gone: 'You're a [good] critical thinker, but could you please just stop this.'"

CS: "Actually, that's what I got in the committee for my funding."

AF: [laughing] "Sorry."

CS: "I mean, I have Kristen and Johan [Cuperus, managing director of Dansateliers] sitting on the side of me going: 'Land the plane.' Yeah, that's the thing. Hahahaha. Luis even gave me, like, a little object form the house to remember to, like: 'Land it.' I had, like, all these little focussing objects in front of these ten people of this committee and I just didn't…"

AF: "But you did land…"

CS: "It was good."

AF: "Congratulations, it was very good to hear."

MS: "And I just found out today that one of the persons in the committee I know. Like the boyfriend of a friend…"

LRZ: "So that's why…"

MS: "Hahaha. It was really funny that she texted me. It was a really weird conversation…"

CS. "I wonder who it was on the committee. Because there was like a few people who were like: 'I get it, it's fine!' And then there were like other people who were like: 'Why is this guy talking…'"

LRZ: "I'm just waiting by the window…"

CS: "When is my couch coming, when is my couch coming?"

LRZ: "Couch couch couch couch couch couch couch couch…"

[Muffled talking continues on topic of IKEA, plans for the coming summer and the train schedule back to Utrecht. Everyone scatters, walking out of recording distance from the microphone.]

CS: "Thank you for a nice discussion again."

AF: "Thank you!"

CS: "The articles you mentioned…"

AF: "Yes, I will send you stuff."

[Microphone is turned off.]