



Reading circus, a crossed analysis

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Presentation of the speakers

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Agathe Dumont

Agathe Dumont is a dancer, independent lecturer and researcher. She has been working as a researcher for CircusNext since 2014. In parallel to a career as a dance performer, she pursued a University education and defended a PhD thesis in Performing arts and a degree in Sport sciences. Her researches focus on the ways circus and dance performers deal with their daily work. She teaches at the National Contemporary dance Center in Angers and at the University, as well as for the Dance teacher national degree in France. She accompanies various projects as a researcher or author (Dance researchers association, European federation of professional circus schools, Centre chorégraphique national de Créteil). She is also an artist-in-residence, with Mariam Faquir, at L'L (Brussels). Her last book, *Käfig, 20 ans de danse*, was published in 2016 (Somogy).

Sebastian Kann

Sebastian Kann is a circus artist and graduated from the Montreal circus school. He is also a young researcher: his Master thesis in Theatre studies at Utrecht University is entitled "Taking back the technical. Contemporary circus dramaturgy beyond the logic of mimesis". Currently, he is continuing his theoretical research, as well as working as a dramaturge in circus and dance contexts.

Introduction

The idea of this session was to show that we can look at the same object, in different ways. When looking at what happens on stage many different things interact and it's quite complicated to sort them all : movement, qualities of movement, technique, dramaturgy, scenography, relationship to space, to others, mediums etc.

As researchers, we don't have the same methods, the same objectives. If some of us work more on aesthetics, others look at creation process, if some of us are obsessed by signs, dramaturgy others are by gestures and movements. But, we all try to do the same thing : understand and analyze the artist's intentions and try to investigate more and more his/her way of writing, developing a Franziska Trapp will therefore take the point of view of semiotics which is more based on the analysis of the show.

I will talk from the point of view of movement analysis which focuses on the body and on practices.

And Sebastian Kann, who works more on the creation processes of artists, will also be here to interrogate our methodologies from his point of view, language, looking at the world and trying to pass something to the audience.

Our question is therefore "how do we look at..." and to perform this exercise we have chosen *Fragments of Mind* by Darragh Mc Loughlin, Squarehead productions, CircusNext laureate 2013-2014, as an example to base our analysis on.

Franziska Trapp will therefore take the point of view of semiotics which is more based on the analysis of the performance. I will talk from the point of view of movement analysis which focuses on the body and on practices. Sebastian Kann, who works more on the creation processes settled by artists, will also be here to interrogate our methodologies from his point of view.

Franziska Trapp, "Come Wander with Me" - Semiotic Reading

Introduction

Darragh McLoughlin, juggler and performance artist of *Squarehead Productions*, explained in an interview conducted during the creation process of his current work *Fragments of a Mind*: "Because I am creating a piece that is quite deep and really about something, I have to search to not make it too superficial. And to allow it to have it's own meaning. And not say what it is about. Because I think there is a danger in saying what a piece is about. Because if I say it's about something and the audience disagree, then I am probably wrong. Because what they see is what it is about."¹

I can imagine, what you are thinking now: "The artist is not going to tell us what his piece is about, but the researcher will. She, the one looking through the lens of the outside eye of the audience, analysing circus performances with an academic background, is going to give us the one and only interpretation of *Fragments of a mind*." And I can reassure that this is absolutely not my aim: Not only, because an objective interpretation of a piece of art never exists but, because the structuralistic approach I'm choosing to analyse circus performances "is less interested in interpreting what [...] works mean. [...] [I am interested] in explaining how they can mean what they mean; that is, in showing what implicit rules and conventions are operating in a given work."² Understanding the structure of circensic acts allows us to explain how a prevailing performance functions. Thus, my intention today is to propose a semiotic reading of *Fragments of a Mind*, explaining HOW the performance creates meaning. Furthermore, the aim of this panel is to show different approaches to circus performances, thus I am going to insert short methodological comments so that you are able to follow my argumentation on a meta-level.

Description

Before going further into details, I would like to give you a short impression of the show, which was created after an intensive process of artistic research with the financial and artistic support of *Circus Next*.

The performance takes place on a frontal stage, demarcated by lights, which forms a square on the floor. A split flap display, a music box and five white juggling balls are the only props. The artist, wearing inconspicuous, dark, somber clothes appears at the protagonist of the piece. Apart from extracts of the song "Come wander with me" by Bonnie Beecher, which repeatedly rings out from the music box, everything happens in silence.

Interpretation

Coming from the so called 'Cultural Poetics', a school of thought we practice in Münster, my approach is based on the thesis that culture can be analysed in its 'poeticity' with the help of text-analytical means. Therefore all circus performances can be seen as texts in a circensic language³. A text in turn can be defined by the characteristic of readability.

1. Interview conducted as part of a collaboration between Associazione Sarabanda (partner of Circus Next) and Squarehead Productions. Speaker: Darragh McLoughlin. Filmed and Edited: Michele Vindimian. Interviewer: Boris Vecchio. <https://vimeo.com/115705569>.

2. Baldick, Chris: The Oxford Dictionary of Literary terms. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2001. P.320.

3. This is based on a twofold character - the combination and selection of terms that are taken from various semantic systems of signs. Their combination takes place simultaneously and chronologically at the same time. The poetic function, i.e., the projection of "the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination" determines its structure. This means: "Equivalence is promoted to the constitutive device of the sequence." Cf. Jakobson, Roman: Linguistics and Poetics. URL: http://akira.ruc.dk/~new/Ret_og_Rigtigt/Jakobson_Eks_15_F12.pdf

The literary scholar Moritz Baßler defines reading as a process of meaning attribution: While reading a cultural text, we are searching for structural equivalences within the given text, as the main constitutive device of artistic texts is according to Roman Jakobson based on the repetition of signs belonging to a semantic paradigm. The structural equivalences “projected into the sequence as its constitutive principle, inevitably involve[...] semantic equivalence”⁴.

Fragment of a mind is based on three main paradigms: time, space and movement. How are these paradigms established during the act? Which signs of different systems are used?

Paradigm Time

One of the major reference points for a semantical decoding within the piece is the staging of a passage of time that is endlessly slow. The split flap display counts the amount of times the music plays. The performance starts in black, with only the display visible which turns to 126. After having realized the link between the amount of time the music plays and the numbers on the display, the audience finds itself thrown in the middle of the story that has already been started long time ago. But it is not only the obviously visible display that makes us focus on the passing time. The rhythmical repetition of placing one ball after the other in lines on the floor makes allusion to the rhythmical movement of the second hand of a watch – not only as a visible picture but also in sound. The symbol of the clock is repeated several times within the piece: The artist, lying on the ground, moving in circles reminds of a watch hand turning. Furthermore this image is repeated in three-dimensionality by juggling circular cascades. The circle stands out within the performance, as all other movements are mostly focussing on the production of straight lines and squares – both in two and three-dimensionality.

Paradigm Space

At this point we can directly pass on to the analysis of the paradigm ‘space’. The staging of squares and cuboids is repeated on several levels: The use of a proscenium stage, a white rectangular border on the floor, the marking of a square with the help of the lights and the rectangular music box. Furthermore the artist is creating oblong spaces while placing the white juggling balls. Those spaces are sometimes diminishing, sometimes growing. Due to the repetition of spaces and the ability of the artist to move only within the marked frames, the paradigm space appears as a restrictive device. This impression is reinforced by the paratextual framing of the performance. Due to its title “Fragments of a mind” the repetition of fragments of space is semantically coded with the mind of the staged character and thus gains a metaphorical meaning. We are not only seeing the protagonist moving in restricted spaces but at the same time on a metaphorical level observing his fragmented mind. Within this interpretation, the proscenium stage, marks a distance between spectator and the action on stage. On the one hand it is degrading the “viewer to an indiscreet observer who penetrates more or less unjustified the sphere of the actor”⁵. Thus the auditorium is no longer a place of public life of society. It becomes a “projection screen for the inwardness of the individual viewer”⁶. This impression is repeated on the stage level itself by the balls enlarging and minimizing the movement space. Thereby the view of the spectator is mediated. He is looking from the outside to the “inside” of what is happening.

Furthermore the lyrics of the song ‘Come wander with me’ by Bonnie Beecher emphasises a metaphorical reading.

4. Jakobson: Linguistics and Poetics. p. 15.

5. Fischer-Lichte: Semiotik des Theaters. Eine Einführung. Band I. S.141.

6. vgl. Fischer-Lichte, Erika: Semiotik des Theaters. Eine Einführung. Band I. Das System der theatralischen Zeichen. Tübingen 1983. S.141.

"Come wander with me away" underlines the limitation of space which is described as a "sad world". At this point I would like to draw your attention on the fact, that the song is analogous to the circus performance based on the repetition of elements – verbs and nouns – that belong to the paradigm space (wander, world, sunset, sea) which are in turn combined with mental states and feelings (sad, sorrow, love, dreams). The main principle of the performance is thus repeated on all levels.

Paradigm Movement

The Split Flap Display that counts the amount of times the song has been played not only functions as the reference point of the piece's timeline, but also alludes to the paradigm movement. Those of you, who came to Paris by train to *Gare du Nord*, have seen this kind of display on their arrival. The image of moving connected to trains is repeated on the movement level. "Soon the man has formed a line with all the balls, and by always moving the last one in front of the first he discovers some sort of locomotive. As he picks up speed, the line starts to travel, and so does he." (Script p.4) This scenery is repeated by the arrangement of balls in a unified pyramid shape, moving like a locomotive. Last, we have to take another look on the piece's song. Here as well, words that belong to the paradigm 'movement' (wander, wanderer etc.) are repeated over and over again.

Lotman: *Fragments of a mind as a narrative text*

This performance not only has a thematic consistency but can also be classified as being narrative. With other words: The performance tells a story. In the following I am going to analyse its narrative structure of by using the means of the structuralist Juri Lotman.

Lotman states, that "the mandatory elements of any plot will include: 1) some semantic field divided into two mutually complementary subsets; 2) the border between these subsets, which under normal circumstances is impenetrable, though in a given instance (a text with a plot always deals with a *given* instance) it proves to be penetrable for the hero-agent; 3) the hero-agent."⁷

These mandatory elements of the plot are fulfilled by the performance.

Plotless substrate

The semantic field is divided into the complementary subsets 'freedom' and 'constraint', established by the paradigms, analysed above. Both, time and space are staged as being restrictive. The space of 'constraint' is characterized by *loneliness* (the character is playing games, made for two person), *uncertainty* and *being lost* ("Soon he stops again, this time in a corner, but quickly decides to turn right again and continues on" Script p. 5). At this point, I would like to draw your attention again on the relevance of the use of language within this performance. The two semantic spaces are also part of the song, which grasps the division by language "sad world" and "never be free".

The opposite of the two subsets is marked on a topographical level, on which the space, marked by light and a white line, stands in opposition to its surroundings. Due to the lightening, we are not able to see what is behind the "invisible wall" which stages the outside space as being a "nowhere". At this point I have to make clear, that the different spaces on a topological level are not only established with the help of stage design and stage technique. It is the movement of the artist himself which divides the two subsets: The impossibility to get rid of the equipment, the balls and the music box, which are coming back from above as soon as they leave the marked square.

7. Lotman: p. 254.

On a topological level, the two subsets are arranged one surrounding the other. Thus, we are confronted with an order of an 'inside space' and an 'outside space'. Semantically this arrangement makes allusion to the inwardness of the represented character. Thus, the performance's title 'Fragments of a mind' is visualized. The inner space, the semantic space of constraint, can be read as the mind of the character. Therefore already the plotless substrate exhibits the dual reading of the performance.

Border

Both subsets are divided by an invisible border, which is clearly staged. Scenes in which the character tests its impenetrability are repeated several times: At first time caused by coincidence, one of the balls passes the boundary of the room reappears from the darkness high above and falls landing in the centre (Script p. 16), this moment turns to a play, started by the character. "The man takes one ball, and after a moment of hesitation he rolls it out of the room exactly the way the last ball went. Another ball comes falling down, this time nearly hitting the man." (Script p. 16) This procedure is repeated by the music box thrown past the boundary. "Suddenly the box appears in the darkness above falling down into the centre of the room and smashing into several pieces." (Script p.16). By the repetition of throwing out and coming back, the performance clearly marks its constitutive order, which doesn't give a possibility to escape.

Border-crossing

Nevertheless, the protagonist crosses the impenetrable border, which leads to the fact that the minimal condition of narrative in terms of a change of state, the existence of an event, the "shifting of a persona across the borders of a semantic field" is realized. By destroying the music machine, the Split flap display stops turning. For the first time, we hear the characters voice, humming the performance's song. The man "moves one foot forward past the boundary between light and darkness and walks out." (Script p.53) The protagonist's ability to cross the border has been prepared by the inclusion of the paradigm 'movement' within the piece.

The special way of border-crossing, used in the present performance, is defined by Juri Lotman as a restitutive event. The man "returns with something he has taken from there"⁸ – a mask, which leads to the fact, that the staged character appears faceless – both in a direct and in a metaphorical way.

At this point, the performance allows two different readings: The fact that the man returns with a mask doesn't have to be valued as an important change. Even before being explicitly faceless, the man was staged with a distance. We have never been able to deeply empathize. Within this interpretation the narrative structure including a restrictive order is used to underline the order of the present text in which it is not possible to escape from the restricted, constraint space.

Another reading would suggest, that the mask has been taken from the surroundings. Within this interpretation, the semantic space of freedom would appear even more indefinite than before. By returning faceless, the narrative structure indicates that the semantic space of freedom nowhere exists.

Analysis of the discours: Narratologic Analysis Gerard Genette

Last, I would like to focus on the manner the story is narrated within this performance, focussing on the main elements of the discours stated by Gerard Genette: time, voice and mood.

8. Lotman: p. 238

Time

In *Fragments of a mind*, we are confronted with a narrative anachrony, which means that the events are disarranged on the level of order: Due to the Split Flap display the performance is packed with flash-backs and flash-forwards. As the events – presented during this leaps in time cannot clearly be distinguished from those, who are presented around – the performance stages the impression of an infinite passage of time.

Furthermore, flash-forwards to the final scene of the performance are repeated several time. We already get to know the performance's end at its beginning. This time-leap is underlined not only by the use of the split flap display but also by light which is getting darker and darker during the performances. At the end – and during the flash-forwards – the light reaches its darkest point. The flash-forwards not only focuses on the progress of the story – as its ending is clear from the beginning, we are interested in the events which lead to the final situation – but its repetition also underlines the importance of the border-crossing, the shifting of the persona across the border of the semantic field.

It is useful to not only take a look on the order and frequency of time but also on its duration. The element of duration illustrates the relation between the discourse time and the narrative time. In total, the narrative time is much longer than the discourse time. The narrative time must include 90009 times 20 seconds (the time the first verse of the song takes). Thus, the narrative time comprises a minimum of 500 hours or 20 days. At some points, the narrative time and the discourse time are equal. At the beginning this mode is used in order to clarify the connection between the Split flat display and the repetition of the song. At the end, it is used to create a climax when it comes to the border crossing. Furthermore, the equality of narrative and discours times underlines the importance of the verse: "never be free".

Voice

Before coming to the end of this presentation, I am going to focus on the 'voice' which is according to Genette concerned with who narrates and from where. The question of the existence of a narrator within cinema, dance and other non-literary texts is controversial. Nevertheless, within this performance its analysis is useful in order to become aware of the complexity of its narrative structure

With regard to the question of narrator, we are again confronted with a dual reading.

By focussing on the song, the woman appears as the intradiegetic homodiegetic narrator of the piece, telling her story in front of the audience even though she never appears on stage. Within this interpretation, the man functions as the protagonist of her story. This becomes clearer, when we take a look at the end: By combining the lyrics "where is the wanderer" with the absence of the character on stage, the man appears as *being* the 'wanderer', who is addressed by the personal pronoun 'he'. This kind of interpretation allows another information: "he came from my sorrow" indicates the possibility to categorize the protagonist as a product of the women's imagination. Within the piece, we are thus observing the fragmented mind of the female narrator.

If we deny the existence of an anthropomorph narrator, the structure of the discourse would be less complex. We than don't focus this intensively on the audible song. Even though we are confronted with a feminine voice, we would equate the pronoun 'me' to the staged character. The lyrics would thus be read as an invitation for the man to leave his compulsive life.

Within this reading the focus would be on his wish to “break out”.

Mood

In both ways, the narration is externally focalized as we don't get to know more about the feelings and thoughts of either the woman or the man. The audience is thus not only due to the use of the proscenium stage but also due to the narrative structure marginalized as an observer.

Conclusion

At the end of my presentation, I would like to go back to the quotation I used at its very beginning. “Because I am creating a piece that is quite deep and really about something, I have to search to not make it too superficial.”

Even though, I am not a critic, I would like to comment on Darragh McLoughlins statement by taking the risk of being somehow pathetic.

What has been underlined by the previous analysis is the complexity with which the performance creates meaning and establishes a narrative structure. Within this performance, the combination of narrative and circus arts succeeds despite of the difficulty to combine “real presence with make believe”⁹. Me, as a researcher, I therefore allow me to say, that is is a great opportunity, to have with *Circus Next* the financial and ideational support while creating a performance based on a long period of artistic research. I hope, that all of you are going to have the chance to see the results while watching *Fragments of a mind* touring.



9. Bauke Lievens: Open letter to the Circus.

Agathe Dumont, "Come Wander with Me" - Movement analysis reading

What is movement analysis or expressive gesture analysis ?

A methodology, a way to look at movement not only from a « mechanical » point of view but more likely by analyzing its intentions, its expressivity and its symbolism. Movement analysis is intimately linked to practices : it's not only what we see but also what we feel. From the point of view of the audience « what we feel » can be described as kinesthetic empathy : the way my body reacts to an other body. The best examples to illustrate this is our bodily reaction when we see someone falling. From the point of view of the performer: we will look at the qualities of the movement and try to understand the way he/she embodies a dramaturgical purpose.

Where does it comes from ?

Movement analysis is at the crossroads of different fields : biomechanics (*looking the structure of movement*), anthropology (*why do we move*), aesthetics (*in what frame does this movement takes place*) and embodied practices.

Its origin can be find in the early explorations of modern physical education practitioners and modern dancers in the USA and Europe at the end of the 19th century/beginning of the 20th century. Among them, Rudolf Laban, an Austrian pedagogue and choreographer, who built a complex theory on movement and expressivity¹⁰. For Laban, the body is in the middle of spatial dynamics that "moves" it as well as the body moves them. Therefore, he analyzes movement trough space, looking for example at our "kinesphere" (the space our body can reach without any weight transfers). The relationships of the body to space will enable the choreographer and pedagogue to list a panel of "qualities of movement", from "pushing against" (the maximum *Effort* and resistance) to "indulging to" (the minimum *Effort* and resistance). To go into details, he will use four main principles of movement: space, time, flow (or energy) and weight.

In France Laban Movement Analysis, has been investigated by the famous dance critic Laurence Louppe but also by Hubert Godard who developed a method: "Analyse systémique du geste expressif". For Godard, the most important thing is weight. Weight embodies how we relate to gravity and therefore how we relate to the world... !

Hubert Godard, has theorised and analysed half-pro and half-conflicting relationships between the body and the gravitational pull of the earth in order to determine the parameters - both functional and expressive - that are behind our posture and gestures. From a symbolic point of view, he talks about a gesture construction on the Earth-sky axis determining our body awareness. To him, the "dialogue with gravity" constitutes our gravitational identity; our posture carries our history, our emotions. "Behind each posture, each gesture, we can see a watermark of the psychophysical organization that established our relationship with verticality and gravity"¹¹.

Therefore, when using this type of analysis, we can focus on posture, tensions, actions. We can try and understand intentions to offer a dramaturgical analysis starting from the body.

10. Laban Movement Analysis, see *Choreology* and *Eukinetics*.

11. Godard Hubert, « Le déséquilibre fondateur : Le corps du danseur, épreuve du réel », Entretien avec Laurence Louppe, in *Art Press*, hors-série n° 13, « 20 ans, l'histoire continue », 1992.

Analysis of *Fragment of a mind*

To analyze the video from my point of view I will look at different things: the weight, the space, the hand, the support, the touch.

Space - In terms of space, Darragh evolves practically without weight transfers and in his kinesphere, giving the sensation of a space "pressing" but also intimate.

I would like to focus on the hand as a synecdoche (the part for the whole) of the whole body. The expressivity of the hand is bearing the expressivity of the body. What is the grip, what is the support?

The hands here have very specific intentions. Their relationship to space seems clear: the hand either "compress" the space, creating a tension in the fingers and the forearms (*pushing against*) or "expand" in space giving the impression that body could suddenly fall into a the sensation of floating, leading to a sensation of "vertigo" for the audience.

Weight - The quality of the contact of the hand with the object is very specific: there is no "weight" in this contact. The hand never gives all its weight to the object so that, by this "weightless" contact, the hand, and by extension the whole body, stay in a state of tension, a ephemeral balance that could collapse at any time.

The quicker the rhythm of the contact with the objects is, the more we feel the fragility of the body on stage, the possibility that the hand could, at one point, miss the ball. The virtuosity of the juggler is read in the details of each small moves, in the sensations of each action.

Flow – When doing movement analysis, it is also very important to look at the musicality of gestures. We could define musicality as both the flow or energy of the movement and it's inner music.

Here the flow is almost linear, with small accents from time to time. The regularity of the flow gives even more importance to these "accidents" so that whenever they happen, our eye is immediately attracted. Even before they happen, something can be perceived. This what we would call the "pre-movement". The pre-movement is the the tiny and almost invisible postural adjustments that take place before the impulse of the movement, known in neurophysiology as anticipatory postural adjustments.. Part of the poetry and the intention of movement lie in this pre-movement, just before the body begins to act, before the first weight transfer : "We will call 'pre-movement' that attitude towards weight, gravity, which already exists before we move, merely by standing, and which produces the expressive initiation in the movement we are going to perform."¹² In a more poetic way we could say that pre-movement is the way the body tells us something before even telling it... It keeps both the performer and the audience in a state of alert.

Body parts – This leads to focus on the notion of extremity. In Darragh's dance, what makes the dance are the extremities: hands and feet.

The hands are extremely present. They initiate movement, they lead the body towards the ground, they carry its weight. They are the receptacle of the tiny oscillations of the body The hands are the sensitive indicator of the weight of the body and carry all its expressivity.

The mobility of hands call on our haptic sense – the way we perceive both through touch and kinesthesia – that is to say the perception of the body in its environment. In *Fragments of a mind*, the relationship to the space and to the object conveys together the dexterity of the pianist's hands and a sense of touch.

12. *Ibid.*

In his work, Darragh offers us to experience “touching” by kinesthetic empathy, placing this sense almost beyond vision and listening (which are generally the two main senses stimulated in a theater). He moves the stakes of the scene and questions the body of the audience, highlighting what the philosopher Michel Bernard calls inter-corporality¹³. This attention to small details is what, for Myriam Peignist, historian and anthropologist and acrobatics specialist, is the foundation of the acrobatic body: “Critical points, key points of balance, pivotal points of coordination and sensitivity are more subtle. They are micro-points, discrete points.”¹⁴ Looking at the history of acrobatic dances, from ancient times, she reminds us that the acrobat is “the one that walks on tiptoes”. Acrobatics would therefore be this very intense consciousness of extremities, the development of very rare sensations that, on stage, could resonate with our deep emotions.

On stage, Darragh, is looking for those “discrete points” and “rare sensations”, trying to give us access to the intimacy of the acrobatic gesture and the subtlety of a virtuoso gesture that is not spectacular but rather sensational.



13. Bernard Michel, “De la corporéité fictionnaire”, *Revue internationale de philosophie*, n° 222, 2002/4.11. Peignist, Myriam, “Acrobaticus et corps des extrémités”, *M@gm@*, 7.3, 2009.

14. Peignist, Myriam, “Acrobaticus et corps des extrémités”, *M@gm@*, 7.3, 2009.

Discussion : Agathe Dumont, Sebastian Kann, Franziska Trapp

S. Kann: I was invited to ask these two researchers questions through the filter of my own theoretical practice, but I was actually watching these presentations more interested to ask from the perspective of a circus artist. Because I know that, also for having given presentations like this myself, sometimes there can be a certain confusion about where the analysis is meant to land, and also a sort of a tendency to ignore the fact that you are also passionate producers of creative works in a certain way. So I was wondering if you could talk both a little bit about where your desire to do this kind of analysis comes from, and also, giving this talk in this setting, what you hope to perform by sharing this sort of frameworks with us.

F. Trapp: My interest in doing this kind of analysis is to understand how circus performers function or, when I go a step back, my interest is to get to know how culture functions. By focusing on circus and circus performances I am interested in how circus performers can produce meaning, and the meaning is always in relation to culture. So it is not just inside circus, not just inside the context where it is shown but it is also produced by the audiences who are watching it. What I presented is not the interpretation of the audience because, as we already said, *the audience* does not exist, but is ò just a way how you *could* read it as an audience.

S. Kann: What attracts me from what you present, and from an artist perspective, what I think would be interesting to take away from your approach is this way of breaking things down, questioning what is going on with the time, with the space, and approaching the dramaturgy as something that is made up of lots of different parts that all run at the same time. What was interesting for me to underline and what Franziska is doing (she is like breaking it down in a way we really cannot see also for ourselves as creators how to begin intentionally constructing this sort of thing) is that I am sure that Darragh was not thinking about time/space/move.

F. Trapp: Not at all. I have been in contact with Darragh and know him, but we did not talk at all about his show. I am not interested in what the artist wanted to have inside of the show. I am just interested in what comes out at least for someone. Even though I talk to artists and even though I am in contact and maybe talk about their pieces with them, I really try to stay a step way back in order to see the show as a project or a product, so this is important.

A. Dumont: Today I really did the exercise to work on the video of the show. Generally, I am doing the exact opposite of what Franziska is doing, because I am looking at shows from the performers' point of view. If I analyze a show, I will first observe some rehearsals, observing the way the artists are working in a studio and I am doing interviews. I will always relate what is the discourse of the artists with what I see on stage. This is a totally different point of view. I am not working from the point of view of aesthetics or semiotics. This is a different posture and I always felt that to analyze a show, you need to know what the artist wanted to do on stage and what is his/her relationship to the body. But I know of course it is only one point of view.

S.Kann: Could you imagine also this idea of kinesthetic empathy or movement analysis being useful in a creative process? Have you seen that happen?

A. Dumont: Yes, I have seen this happen and I think it could be interesting because it is a way of telling that movement has a meaning and movement is never useless. Putting a movement in space is telling something strong. I think it could be interesting to have this approach of the creation process, questioning the production of the movement, and asking what this movement tells about the space, about the artist's relationship to time, to gravity... Of course, these are very important things in circus, but our relationship to gravity designs a lot of things that we will pass to

the audience.

S. Kann: Another thing I could not help noticing was that the juggling disappears a little bit in the analysis. Do you think you could comment about the juggling a little more, about its disappearance and the difficulty of including circus techniques in the sort of analysis you are doing, but also wondering, really looking at the "tricks", how it works, phenomenologically and semiotically? I think that you said it was circular.

F. Trapp: Well, Darragh is not really juggling, or only when he is doing this circular cascade. Most of the time he is like placing balls (I think this was inside my analysis). I think it is really interesting because he is using juggling, or the way he is juggling, in order to narrate or to produce meaning. Often, you can see that the circus techniques are just used in order to illustrate feelings or whatever of the stage character. I think that the technique he is using is producing for example paradigm movement by this locomotive, which is only created by placing the balls or by the time, which is not only created by the flip-flap display, but also by the repetition of moving the balls.

S. Kann : But this is interesting to me, what you say already, that it is not really juggling. So it suggests that the show positions itself with relation to a "technical discourse". Would you like to say something about that?

A. Dumont: This is why you need to ask the artist! What is his/her vision of technique? Actually, this is what I would do. I would not like to explain or read the technique here by *my* vision of what the "juggling" technique is, saying there is "one technique", which I don't think. This is why I would have a discussion with the artist also to understand what is his/her relationship first to what technique is. This is an important question. Then, what is juggling and how the both interact in his/her practice? We talked about it with Darragh when I did some interviews with him, and I know he did not talk a lot about the juggling

technique but more about how he reinvented the relationship to this "contact" thing. Of course, you are pointing something right about naming things and how we do talk. Also, as I am an outside eye (I am not a juggler myself), I can read the movement but I have never embodied the juggling practice.

S. Kann: I think you are touching something interesting here, because you were mentioning the kinesthetic empathy. As Agathe said, it is related to neurological research, which has found out that our neurons mirror the actions done by someone we are watching, and that we are also doing it in our brain. It is like the same parts of our brain are going as a few are actually doing what we are seeing. But this works way better if we have already done the thing, which explains why, for example, dancers like watching dance more than non-dancers. But I wonder how this works in circus, precisely because it seems that, in the definition of circus ,you have not already done the thing, so I wonder then whether it does work with this kinesthesia, whether this all get drop out of kinesthesia?

A. Dumont: Kinesthetic empathy is also structured by our cultural body habits. I mean that this is a constructed thing, there is not a basic human universal way of interacting with a body. Some people do not feel pain, for instance. So it is a construction. Of course if I experienced juggling, I do not have the same way to relate to the body, but if I have never, still I have a way to relate to this body. Of course, the performer on stage cannot decide this. I know there have been some research done on jugglers and on the neurophysiological things happening in jugglers' head, and there are a lot of things happening in a juggler's head. So it is a lot of complex neurological paths and of course, most of the normal people do not have this complexity of the relationship to space, time, specifically, and touching. This affects the way you read the show. When having discussion with people from the field looking at a circus show, of course I feel we have different reactions, talking about the body, from people having an experience of it and people who do not.

There is no right nor wrong, but taking it into account, we do not look in the same way because we do not come from the same place.

Questions from the audience

V. Štefanová – CIRQUEON: I like both of the methods you were talking about. The one Agathe presented is more concentrated on the artist, and the one presented by Franziska, based on semiotics, is more based on the one who is reading and receiving the message made by the artist. I am more on the semiotics level because the context I am coming from, Czech Republic, is like that, a country of structuralism and semiotics.

There was one thing, you were questioning the movements, the space, the time, the artist, but you were not questioning the objects. And this is something very important for me. There were objects like balls, and we can also read it as a sign and as a meaning. So does questioning the object play a role in your research, because then we do not have to talk about juggling only but objects theater or objects manipulation?

F. Trapp: I know the more it comes to balls and technique, I would have another idea maybe to read *Fragments of a Mind*. When we are looking at it, it is maybe a sort of technique discourse. The interesting thing could be that when we are reading *Fragments of a Mind*, and looking at the title as well, we can maybe see there also not only the fragments of the mind of the character but also fragmented juggling, or a fragmented mind or the fragments of minds of jugglers... If we do this kind of interpretation, we will also have to focus on the balls, which are as well not spread or in lines but like really balls, which are white balls, in opposite to the borders marked on the floor. I think I would definitely have to focus on this and also your remark on the technique in order to complete the analysis.

A. Dumont: I would see the object only as a part of the space right now, and the relationship to space. The contact with the object is a kind of relationship to space for me, and the object is part of the space.

Then we could look at the specificity of this object and how it is in the space, but the object does not have any intentions, the performer gives the intentions to the objects.

S. Kann: For me, the object plays a huge role in the way that I look at what is going on in circus. For me, what I really see strongly in the show is a sort of tension between the way technique always takes you outside of yourself. The character is always in conversation with this non-human other, also with the space, the time, and the discourse of juggling. When he produces a trick, it is because he is coming to a certain relation with something else, that allows for that trick to happen. I see a real tension between that and yesterday, we had a really interesting presentation about precarity and precarization in arts practice but particularly in circus. I think there is an interesting conflict between the way circus is always radically relational, and precarization forces us to be individual, entrepreneurs of the self and brains. So I think that with the solo form that is going on here, there is definitely an interesting conflict between the expression of the self as a deep ego self, and the always moving outside of the self into the technique and into the objects.

A participant in the audience: There are two things that struck me in your interventions: it is on the one hand the part between the description of the different fields and the different perimeters which one feels very strong in Franziska's intervention with the definition of different narrative structures, paradigms, etc., and this poetic form of approach and vision which seems to me particularly suited to contemporary circus, given that the artistic identity of the circus itself is problematic and pose a problem to define. There is one thing that I find interesting: it's the metaphor. For example, I worked with François Chat, who is a very special juggler, who has a connection to the object and to his very singular presence. When he talks about it, he speaks of a thread that connects him to the spectators and is extremely elastic, so he can move closer or further away depending on his state of presence, his condition emotional at the

moment of performance. At the end of the performance, he cuts the thread: it's over. I think an image like that speaks of something that would be close to performance analysis. On the other hand, I missed one thing: the study of rhythm. Agathe spoke of musicality, and I think we can also talk about rhythm, because the rhythm also includes the rhythm of the body, the respiration, the breath, etc., which work directly on the movement and influence it. Finally, I think that it would also be interesting to subjectivize the vision as much as possible, that is to say that the juggling is for me linked to something very obsessive and therefore to a way of considering the object and the space in this form of obsession. I think what I saw in Darragh's work is also a way to express the lack. I think that all this sort of confinement and restriction of space is also a way of expressing the lack of just being a juggler and being locked up in the perimeter of the juggler.

A. Dumont: Thank you very much for this complementary analysis, I think that on the analysis of the representation, we could take many different paths, it is inexhaustible. The purpose of this session was to show that it is inexhaustible and that it is worthwhile to look more fully at these different inputs, without becoming specialists in any form of analysis, but at least to master the tools of "how we look at something".



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