

This is the script of the performance 'The Limits of My Language.'  
Performed on July 7<sup>th</sup> 2015 at Showroom Arnhem, NL

## THE LIMITS OF MY LANGUAGE

One doesn't find a different paradigm, we make it.

*Juli and Sarah on stage, next to each other, facing the audience.*

*The reading alternates.*

To order and measure ideas and things.

To categorize.

To categorize knowledge, friendship, memory, history, the living and the non-living.

From building. From constructing. To intervening. To resisting. To naming.

To name and measure ideas and things.

To have learned to understand in a linear way

In a linear way: past, present, future are either ahead or behind, above or beneath.

Something is either living or not. On one side of a border or on the other.

Or in between.

Or not.

To 'where do we put all that does not match?'

To clues. To species. To clusters.

From everyday objects. From personal life.

From gradualism to neo-catastrophism.

To claim to know.

*Small break*

To claim to know order, ideas and things.

To a virus that is not alive. To sedimentary rocks that still have a basaltic composition. To decide to ignore. To claim not to know what's already been claimed known. Remind ourselves. And remind the neighbors to remind themselves.

From clues. To terms. To come to terms. To come to terms with ourselves.

From comfortably numb to active, to comfortably numb to extinct.

From natural selection.

From evolution. From adaptation. From entropy. From suicide. To cells. To data. To digital. To memory. To nostalgia.

From selected to fabricated.

To resisting. From resting.

From resting to bed.

From resisting to bed.

From born, to active, to extinct.

From A to A to B to A.

From selected to fabricated. By who?

I was born like that. How do I die?

*Sarah continues*

The impossibility

The impossibility of reconciliation keeps us wavering on the threshold of the irresolvable. And it is important that contradictions remain unsolved, since their insolvability makes them susceptible for other contradictions. This keeps reconciliation open as a potential, and never as a goal.

*Juli leaves the stage*

A man wrote: 'Gabriel's dark wing is the eternal scale keeping the best of all possible worlds carefully balanced against the counterweight of all impossible worlds.' This dark wing belongs to the archangel Gabriel, and forms a black but fluffy curtain between the possible and the impossible. As this man famously notes, all potentiality is impotentiality. Potentiality is the presence of an absence. An 'artist' is an empty concept that one has to invent by saying: 'I'd rather not'. The fact that the artist decides to say 'I'd rather not' creates an absence. And nowadays, one could say, this absence is lost, for there is only abundance – overproduction of artworks, art spaces, art writing, art museums etc -, which makes the absence hard to find, and without that absence present, there is no potential, and therefore the 'artist' remains an empty concept.

Maybe this analysis happens a bit too quick, but fact is that we can keep on asking ourselves in times where any form of resistance, any critique or refusal attributes to the further development of that what it is negating: Where is our presence of an absence? Or more poetically, where is our desert? Not necessarily that well-known stretch of sand, where one can get lost and die, nor the one with a couple of bushes, where artists go to in order to get off the grid, or withdraw into, to find artistic autonomy. But the desert as a possible claim of that absence we've been looking for.

The wilderness. The wasteland. Peering through the feathers of the archangel's wing at that what we're unable to reach is not enough.

How can we actualize this threshold of contradiction without falling of it either way? Where is that barren wasteland where 'fear lies in a handful of dust' and 'My cousin, he took me out on a sled, And I was frightened. He said, Marie, Marie, hold on tight. And down we went. In the mountains, there you feel free.'

### *Get a chair*

This presentation exists out of three acts:

A Head without a World

A Headless World and

The World in the Head.

So the first act is A Head Without a World, here, a theory of exit as a promising method to find that desert will be discussed. 'A Head without a World' refers to the notion that all the truth lies in knowledge and philosophy, so there is no need for the 'world' or the 'real'.

*Professor Kien adamantly believes that knowledge is more important than the real. All is in books, so his massive private library and obsessive book addiction offer him everything he needs to know. There is no necessity to go outside and into the world.*

The second act is Headless World, here, Julietta will read a text by Lydia Davis. In Davis' story, *Almost no Memory*, she gives an account of a headless world. The female protagonist continually loses her mind about losing her memory; she can't remember most of what she reads, but has written things down in numerous notebooks, stacked on several shelves.

*Professor Kien is locked out of his house and finds himself in full reality. He can't ignore the communal and chaos now, and has no choice but to take part in it. He befriends a dwarf named Fischerle, but their friendship is under constant suspicion as the disaster inevitably awaits.*

The third act: The World in the Head is where professor Kien burns his private library to the ground, and himself with it as the most radical form of intellectual self-defense against the chaos of life. The fire leaves it undecided whether he is defeated by or triumphant over the aggressive abundance around him.

This act will attempt to discover more possibilities to find a desert, via the path of the utopias, and the working that busies itself with unworking. But then another, very different method to fight the chaos introduces itself: friendship as the key to that so sought after absence. Probably a bit romantic, but before it can get cheap this man comes in and reminds us that friendship is also the truth of the disaster, and that we're all going to die.

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow  
Out of this stony rubbish

So here we go. A quest for an absence. With the danger that the question 'where is our desert' is the reproduction of an alternative that leads to the burning of a different, but all in all the same library, again.

## ACT 1: A Head Without a World

*So this is the part where Professor Kien's massive library is still intact, and functioning as the only source of knowledge and truth one needs. And where contemporary art is blamed for idealizing the real, and therefore blocking access to the real.*

What about an exit?

A man elaborates on a possible exit from contemporary art, and starts off with two claims: contemporary art suffers from the maxim of anarcho-realism and contemporary art is indeterminate. Anarcho-realism believes that contemporary art is a shortcoming of what art should be. Therefore, they try to create a truer contemporary art through negating anything characteristic of contemporary art. But negating the thing only perpetuates the thing. In this way, the anarcho-realist demand is really a contemporary art demand. The other claim is that contemporary art is indeterminate. The present is heterogeneous and inexplicable and contemporary art aligns itself to that, and in that way it can be anything; it knows no limitations in material, media, subject, form or presentation, nor in production, exhibition-making or formatting. Meaning is always ambiguous and questions are never expected to be answered. So, in order to exit contemporary art, we need to exit both the anarcho-realist maxim and the indeterminacy of contemporary art.

Contemporary art is a fetish of the present; we look at it to know what's the now. But, as a fetish of the present, contemporary art gets in the way of the present and blocks access to the real. According to this man, there are two 'reals': the super-idealization of the real by the anarcho-realists, and the unidealized present as such. So, in order to exit contemporary art (as a meta-genre of art), we must remove ourselves from art that refers to the idealized real, and move towards the present as it is: 'unreal, insincere, unauthentic'; in other words: artificial. This artificiality is the reality of art.

## ACT 2: Headless World

Now this is the moment where Julietta will read 'Almost no Memory' by Lydia Davis, and where professor Kien gets locked out of his house and his library of knowledge, and finds himself in reality, which is communal and chaotic. He befriends a dwarf named Fischerle, but the premises of their friendship are under constant suspicion as the disaster inevitably awaits.

### ACT 3: The World in the Head

*So this is the part where Professor Kien goes mad and burns his library down to the ground, himself with it, as an act against the chaos of life. If it is triumph or defeat is left open. And the notions unworking, utopia and friendship will be addressed.*

A man said in a lecture that 'being governed' can never be detached from the question "how not to be governed?" This doesn't mean: "we do not want to be governed, and we do not want to be governed *at all*"; but rather: "how not to be governed *like that*, by that, in the name of those principles, with such and such an objective in mind and by means of such procedures, not like that, not for that, not by them." And in this we could find the critical attitude.

But how can we disconnect from not being governed like that? Where is that vacant location, perhaps called a desert, where we can develop the self, redirect the senses, built unusual communities, invent new strategies? Where is that alleged desert of possibilities, where criticism, or post-criticism, is constructive and reclaims productivity without being exploited by capitalism immediately? Where is this absence that validates "[t]he art of not being governed like that and at that cost" and therefore could avoid institutional capture?

What about utopia?

But not utopia as some imaginary state of being in a perfect future, but as the future-still-to-come that needs to be formatted according to certain concepts like equality, possibilities and freedom from neoliberal hegemonies. It is utopia as another man defines it: not as something transcendent, but as something immanent. Utopia is not a non-place disconnected from the world we inhabit, his utopia is a non-world fully rooted in the present; it is completely real. And insufficiency is absolutely crucial to utopia. A quote by another man reads: 'We are not saying one has to live according to a well-formed utopia... Our solution lies within an insufficient or negative utopia. The point is not to construct bigger and better castles in the sky, transcendental and sufficient for all. Rather, utopia is always finite, generic, immanent, and real.'

Utopia allows for an insufficient hypothesis without the creation of again another alternative, seeing that the alternative only perpetuates the present system. Herein we could take agency of whatever governs us, and acknowledge that perhaps through leaving, exiting, withdrawing or retreating, we confirm the power of whatever oppresses us. Could working inside and alongside an institution be the absence

we've been looking for? If utopia is immanent and real, the absence, then, lies in the here and now, in the utopia of the present day, and that's where we should look for our silent corners, alleys of insufficiency and deserted pathways. But working in and alongside could also bring about a certain danger of opportunism, idleness or pretend-refusal, and would require knowledge of how to unwork the system, somehow.

One friend writes to another: 'Let me add that friendship is also the truth of the disaster. The thought that you were ill was extremely distressing to me and was like a threat aimed at something that both you and I would hold in common. It seems to me that in these days of distress [...] something has been given [to] us in common, to which we also have to respond commonly. That something which one may call misfortune, but which one also has to leave nameless, can, in a certain way, be common. Which is mysterious, maybe a delusion, maybe unutterably true.'

What about unworking?

Not as a passive form, but unworking as a way to work, to evoke hunger. A man connected unworking on a political level to communities. A community can exist out of two people, like lovers or friends, or exist as a social community. A solitary being cannot question itself without the other, and essentially without the fact that the other's going to die. Death, disaster and absence are at the core of a possibility of community, making it always an impossible and absent community, and therefore it can never be connected to any institution. It's not about production nor completion, but about "interruption, fragmentation and suspension."

Once the community starts 'working', it reduces itself to certain objectives and loses its core of absence. So, at the point when something, even a friendship between two people, becomes recognized as a community, it seizes to be a community. We need to be constantly unworking in order not to undo the work we've put into the construction of a community; in order not to undo the presence created in the absence of it. Friendship should be in a constant state of unworking if it wants to be that required absence.

Dear Juli

Let me add that friendship is also the truth of the disaster. The thought that you were ill was extremely distressing to me and was like a threat aimed at something that both you and I would hold in common. It seems to me that in these days of distress [...] something has been given to us in common, to which we also have to respond commonly. That something which one may call misfortune, but which one also has to leave nameless, can, in a certain way, be common. Which is mysterious, maybe a delusion, maybe unutterably true.

*Sarah continues reading, Juli joins in. Both on stage.*

**To order and measure ideas and things.**

To categorize.

To categorize knowledge, friendship, memory, history, the living and the non-living.

From building. **From constructing.** To intervening. **To resisting.** To naming.

To name and measure ideas and things.

**To have learned to understand in a linear way**

In a linear way: **past, present, future** are either ahead or behind, **above or beneath.**

**Something is either living or not.** On one side of a border or on the other.

**Or in between.**

Or not.

**To 'where do we put all that does not match?'**

**To clues. To species. To clusters.**

From everyday objects. **From personal life.**

From gradualism to neo-catastrophism.

**To claim to know.**

*Small break*

To claim to know order, ideas and things.

*Sarah leaves. Juli tries to push a gigantic movable wall into the space. Juli points at the wall and calls it 'a wall'. She asks Sarah to help her move it. They both push the wall into position #1. Sarah leaves again. Juli plays the Video #1 (market/shops)*

Video #1 (market/shops)

*Juli stands up and reads, on stage*

**Welcome**

Some argue that our way of questioning, measuring, naming, knowing, owning the world and its respective complexities defines our nature. And that certain Western thinking has lost track of being.

How to cross the limits of a world in which being and knowing are two separate words?

In a world of binaries, there is only: The inanimate and the animate. The open and the closed. The powerful and the powerless. The dead and the alive. The thing and it's name. A world for nature. And another world for its observer.

Observer as evil exploiter, or observer as caring protector.

Still from within the self, still from elsewhere.

**Welcome out.**

*Juli points at the wall and calls it 'a wall'. She asks Sarah to help her move it. They both push the wall into position #2. Sarah leaves. Juli plays the Video #2 (cemetery)*

Video #2 (cemetery)

*Juli stands up and reads, on stage*

**Welcome to the Andes**

Does a migration into another way of understanding the world mean a migration into another world or a mutation into another being? And this has nothing to do with one site or another. Nothing to do with geography or topology or cartography. But a lot to do with language. Vocabulary. Conceptual-vocabularies. All to do with recognition. All do with *re-cognition*.

I'm going talk about a visit and this visit can be seen as physical but also not.

When one can go and visit a particular place of longing - the Wild, the Desert, the Andes, or any of this sort of terrestrial paradises, any of this idealized versions of places that we look for, that we have heard of, that we have read about - it might not mean or be, more than that: a visit.

In this sense any traveler, any wanderer or walker, any meanderer, runs the risk of being nothing but a visitor. Going for a philosophical vacation. Going for a break from one's cognitive habits into someone else's ways of recognizing the world. Visiting your neighbor's subjectivity in order to know, because you have heard that there is

another world, because you are looking for it. Without an invitation, but with the possibility. The curious visitor is welcome. For a little while.

Is to migrate to mutate? Or are you always a colonizer?

Welcome to the Andes. Welcome out.

*Sarah reads from audience*

Would it be too easy if anyone that wanted could just stay? That would be way too easy. That would be cheating. Like when an artist goes with a very good camera to a very amazing place and then prints a very big print in a very expensive shop. And then has a very sharp friend write a very smart text about the very expensive work.

*Juli points at the wall and calls it 'a wall'. She asks Sarah to help her move it. They both push the wall into position #3. Sarah leaves. Juli plays the Video #3 (geysers) Video #3 (geysers)*

*Juli stands up and reads, on stage*

Welcome Home. Where?

A tourist once fell into a geyser. I know so not because I was told the story, but because when I was there I could peep in and see him. And so I could recognize that down there, there is not this kind of localization or characterization of the human as a subject. I did not need to decide if the geysers were true because they are unutterably true.

We have to look elsewhere, because if the geysers cannot kill us – as geysers don't kill - then who are we going to blame for our death? Who has *response-ability* to make the friendship endure? Yes. Friendship needs to be in a constant state of unworking. If one wants to move, or change, friendship should be in a constant state of unworking.

**Welcome back. What?**

One doesn't find a different paradigm, We make it. If one wants to go elsewhere we have to make that world. If one wants to stay on that barren land we have to figure out a way to make it habitable without destroying its barrenness - since that is what attracted us there in the first place. In order for the new to be possible, do we have to demolish the edifices that we have built or is it enough to abandon them? Is it enough to taunt them?

It's hard to just go into that 'another world' and expect to be able to stay when you have not helped to build it. Is a community in which you have no *response-ability* a community that you are not part of? Because to acquire that ability: the ability to respond to a specific set of relations is not easy. How to begin if first of all you have to know such set of relations and yet in order to get to know these from within one may have to be - or be part of - that set of relations?

Is to know the other also to destroy the other?

**Welcome to the 'A-certain-primate's-world'.****Welcome out.**

(count to 5. 1,2,3,4,5...)

Dear Sarah,

It exists! I've been there but I could not stay. I realized I was only a visitor. Maybe because I gave up way too fast. Maybe I accepted that it was not what I expected. It is mysterious, It is a delusion, It is unutterably true.

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