Metode

The Carousel Concept as Assemblage Acting *

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By Mette Tranholm

Since 2004 performer and acting teacher Marion Reuter has developed the carousel concept referring to an improvisation method for training multiple acting techniques and scenic functions. This article is based on my collaboration with Reuter and unfolds how my disincarnation theory of assembling different acting techniques enhances Reuter's carousel practice and vice versa. The collaboration provided an opportunity to try out my theory in practice. The article and the collaboration are part of an artistic research project about the carousel concept at The Danish National School of Performing Arts (DDSKS) led by Marion Reuter. I acted as documentarist and dramaturge. The empirical backdrop for the article is my observations and discussions of Reuter and her students' work on the floor with the carousel concept during the spring of 2018 at DDSKS and a video recording of an earlier carousel ride with students from DDSKS. Our artistic research is characterized by the collaborative exchange between an artistic practice – the carousel concept – and the performance theoretical concept of character which I call disincarnation. The main goals were to document and develop a vocabulary for the carousel concept, thus improving the training, knowledge, and reflection practice of acting students.

There is a knock on an invisible door. A female player opens, and a male player enters. He presents himself as an entrepreneur who wants to buy her summer cottage to build a pig farm on the land.

The visit starts in the biographical reality of the female player who spent every summer in the summer cottage since she was a child - but quickly fictional layers are weaved into the biographical material and an autofictional situation evolves on stage. The players are engaging in the carousel improvisation; the core of an acting practice called the carousel concept.

In the carousel concept, acting students take turns playing the main player, the supporting players, and audience in order to explore basic acting techniques and the connection between self, role, and other. The carousel concept aims to train the contemporary actor. Rather than focusing on one singular method the carousel concept is a tool for training multiple acting techniques.

The carousel concept is an exercise that consists of four parts: 1. Prologue: Interview. 2. Interlude: Preparation and transition. 3. Main part: The carousel round dance. 4. Epilogue: Reflection.

During the prologue the supporting players *interview* the main player about his/her personal life. During the interlude the supporting players meet without the main player to decide on an autofictional goal for a scene they wish to enact with the main player. The interlude serves as *preparation for and transition* to the carousel round dance. The supporting players use the information from the main player's biography as a starting point. During the main part, the players engage in a *carousel round dance*, which is a series of improvisations staged as a theatre rehearsal. The supporting players jump on the carousel and take turn performing their scenes directed by their autofictional goals. The epilogue is a *reflection* staged as a reconstruction; a conscious finding and recollection process of the experience with the carousel round dance.

The focus of this article is on the main part, namely the *carousel round dance*. I aim to examine how the carousel concept activates the biography of the actor in relation to elements from established acting techniques. The main player plays him- or herself as him- or herself and uses his/her real name, while the supporting players take on roles in a more classical sense. The acting students play in the carousel, and during this game they *activate and cross over between elements from the classical, Brechtian, Artaudian, and postdramatic character concept.*[1]

Disincarnation and character concepts in the carousel round dance

The character concepts in the carousel can be analysed using my disincarnation theory. I have developed the term *disincarnation* from an examination of the artistic practice of American filmmaker and performance artist Jack Smith in order to supplement the take on character in postdramatic performance theatre. In my PhD dissertation *Disincarnation: Jack Smith and the Character as Assemblage* (2017) I argue that performers in contemporary performance theatre pick and choose from different character concepts in a disincarnation strategy. Dis/incarnation refers to incarnating a character – understood as *classical* psychological and physical immersion into and representation of a character in a script à la Konstantin Stanislavski – while simultaneously breaking away from it using alienation and deconstruction à la Bertolt Brecht. In addition to this, postdramatic performance theatre activates autobiographical material (postdramatic) and favour the body over linear narratives (Antonin Artaud). In short disincarnation refers to the traffic between elements from the classical, the Brechtian, the Artaudian and the postdramatic character concept.

How does disincarnation play out at a practical level in the carousel? How can disincarnation provide a vocabulary for the work in the carousel? Observing Reuter and her students practicing the carousel concept, I recognise a number of basic elements from the four character concepts. The concept of "performing oneself as oneself" in the position of the main player is closely related to postdramatic theatre while performing characters with a clear goal as the supporting players do, is related to the classical tradition; a Brechtian split between actor and role/character is enacted/laid bare. In the carousel bodily presence à la Artaud is invoked through the unpredictable carousel improvisations.

To create a more nuanced understanding of the connection between theory and practice, Reuter and I staged an encounter between the carousel concept and the disincarnation theory. The purpose was to enable students to analyse and relate their acting process to a theoretical level that would allow them to identify which techniques they use at a given time. The intention was that the students develop a reflective relation to themselves as actors and performers in the different work stages during the carousel round dance. With each reflection after a ride in the carousel; would the students become more aware of themselves as actors while employing and exploring different acting techniques? With the disincarnation theory, would the students be

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1)   There are various other character concepts for acting students to draw upon, e.g. expressionism. I choose to operate with these four character concepts because they are the most widespread in contemporary performance theatre. When I refer to the classical character concept, I refer to the mimetic, dramatic tradition dating back to Aristotle and carried into the 20th century through Stanislavski's naturalism. I am aware that I operate with a certain simplification in my definition of the four character concepts, especially the classical character concept which covers several historical periods and traditions. However, I do not attempt to present a comprehensive description of the character concepts. Instead, I point to specific elements from the four character concepts relevant to unpacking the carousel concept. I believe this strategic reduction supports the overall clarity of the article and the presentation of the method.

better equipped to detect, analyse, and understand character representation in a world where the dramatic tradition with Stanislavski as a representative and the theatrical tradition represented by Brecht coexist and where the body and bodily presence can be conceived alongside a subject in constant change? Would such an understanding create a self-reliant and self-dependent handling of different aesthetics and demands in the practical field of performance art?

The carousel concept as an autofictional concept

Reuter's carousel is first and foremost an autofictional concept; in the carousel the biography of the actor is mixed with fictional elements. The autobiography and personality of the actor is at the centre of the concept and acts as a starting point for developing an autofictional narrative and improvisation. The competence of autobiographical acting or "performing oneself" can be added to the general techniques of actors through an examination of the inseparability on stage of self and role, body and fiction. In order to do so, we must answer questions such as: How can an actor use his/her biography in a performance? What role does the biography of the actor play in a performance?

The carousel concept can be used in the basic training of the actor in manifold modes. Imbedded in the method is a constant insistence on mobilising the playfulness of the student and strengthen his/her ability to act spontaneously within a certain frame.

Another important aspect is focus on communication, interaction, and awareness as to how the students work with their personal biography in relation to scenic presentation. Reuter's carousel highlights the individuality and personality of each acting student to create awareness and training of the student's own instrument (themselves) through biographical and fictional elements. The acting students train different positions simultaneously: The position of the performer, the position of the actor, and a mix of both positions through three main acting strategies: 1. Metamorphosic acting: performing oneself as oneself/presentation. 2. Mimetic acting: performing oneself as a character/representation. 3. Nomadic acting: both positions simultaneously/assemblage acting. Assemblage acting refers to a montage of heterogenic elements, in this case a montage of different acting techniques. The complex structure of life or the practice of life in the carousel can be analysed and interpreted theoretically with my disincarnation theory. Disincarnation is useful to reflect upon the carousel concept because it helps us understand a practice that oscillates between different modes of performance in an assemblage of elements from classical dramatic identificatory character representation and more theatrical or dis-identificatory postdramatic forms of character presentation.

Postdramatic theatre: Actor/self vs. role: *The irruption of the real*

What does it mean to perform oneself on stage? In postdramatic genres such as reality theatre, re-enactments, site-specific, and participatory forms, the classical character based on a character in a dramatic text is rewritten. In these genres, a cultivation of the actor's body and elements from the biography of the performer are valued higher than emotional immersion into a character from a dramatic text. An example of this is when the German performance collective Auftrag: Lorey

> "…seek out 30 people in whichever city the play is being performed in and give
> them one minute each to talk about whatever they want on stage. One man makes
> a declaration of love to a woman in the audience, someone recites a poem or tells a

joke. Each of the speakers holds a lamp in their hand; when their allotted time to speak is up, they plug the lamp in and stand next to it. Auftrag: Lorey brings these people into the light, creating a group image so that a light goes on in our heads…" (Siegmund, Goethe-Institut homepage).

In his seminal work *Postdramatic theatre* (2006, German orig. 1999), Hans-Thies Lehmann links the focus on the biography of the performer to *the irruption of the real*. Lehmann describes how postdramatic theatre is characterised by the irruption of the real, which refers to doubt as to whether events on stage are fictional or real. As an example, we might ask ourselves whether, in performance art, the pain of the performer is real or simulated? (Lehmann 2006:101). In contrast to the irruption of the real*,* Lehmann describes traditional theatre or dramatic theatre as "a closed fictive cosmos" (Lehmann 2006:99). The fictive cosmos marks a separate fictive reality with its own internal cohesion on stage (Lehmann 2006:100). In dramatic theatre, acting is related to representing a character in a script and psychologically immersing oneself into that character. A fictive cosmos is also created on screen and in a painting, however, in theatre everything happens *live* and the fact that the actor on stage is simultaneously actor *and* role becomes more apparent. This is what Lehmann calls das TheatReale: "diverse images of the body arise that all point to the reality that exists only in theatre, namely *the theatrical reality (das TheatReale)*" (Lehmann 2006:163, emphasis orig.).

In the carousel the students develop a consciousness about inhabiting this theatrical reality and how to apply and exercise it in the position of the main player. In *Between Theater and Anthropology* (1985), Richard Schechner already pointed out this theatrical reality when he coined the phrase "not me … not not me" (Schechner 1985:112). In the words of Lindsay B. Cummings, Schechner's phrase refers to "encountering a self that is clearly other and yet not other" (Cummings 2016:128); role *and* self simultaneously.

Postdramatic theatre disrupts the fictive cosmos by underlining the "reality" of the performance, e.g. by finding the dramatic highlights in the biographies of the performers rather than in a dramatic script. In the article "Authenticity and Fictionality in Postdramatic Theatre" (2009) Luule Epner calls this a "mode of acting" described as self-expression in favour of role-playing (Epner 2009:292) like the Auftrag: Lorey example. This spurs a more in-depth exploration of the relationship between representation and immediate presence (Epner 2009:292). Lehmann argues that postdramatic theatre is the first to make the position of the real an explicit co-player on a practical level, which makes the audience question whether the events on stage are real or fiction. In Lehmann's words this doubt creates an *aesthetics of undecidability* (Lehmann 2006:100). Epner concludes that it is not the goal of René Pollesch and other postdramatic artists to reveal the "true truth", but to combine fiction and the authentic (Epner 2009:301).

In the carousel, the biography of the performer is the dramatic engine and generator of material, as opposed to a dramatic text. An autofictional clash is enacted between self-expression/being oneself or performing the self in a presentation process (main player) *and* role-playing/being someone else/performing a fictional character in a representational process (supporting players). It is not *either-or*, but *both-and*. There is no hierarchy among acting methods in the carousel. As such it mirrors the strategies of disincarnation and the assemblage arises.

Performing oneself

In the *Gob Squad Reader,* the German/British performance collective Gob Squad describes how they find it useful to consider "the self as material for a starting point" (Freiburg 2010:11). An idea for a show always originates from something personal and the performers use their real names on stage. The style of presentation or the performative style of Gob Squad is to "perform oneself" and they have developed different ways of performing themselves (Freiburg 2010:54). The performance of self is built on trust. Trustworthiness must be formed in the group together with courage and openness to the others: "Only in this way can I approach this always fragile 'I', which creates this 'performing oneself' quality that makes up Gob Squad performances (…) they take their own weaknesses and have them become part of the collective performance" (Freiburg 2010:55).

In the carousel, the interview is the starting point where the personal biography of the performer and all his or her strengths and weaknesses are the focal point. Similar to Gob Squad, the performers in the carousel are both the authors and performers of their work (Freiburg 2010:20). Gob Squad underlines that while they do not hide themselves, their real names etc., performing themselves does not mean that everything in their performances is autobiographical. They also adopt different roles (Freiburg 2010:20) creating autofiction: "Method acting does not interest us. We prefer to see the performer playing with roles and performed hopes and dreams whilst also showing their real emotions, desires and failures (…) reality and fiction remain present for all the participants and audience members at all times" (Freiburg 2010:50-51).

In the carousel improvisations of/with the biographical material takes on a life of its own when it is weaved into the fictional ideas of the supporting players. We cannot predict the outcome. Sometimes the supporting player achieves his or her goal very quickly and new goals and fictional layers develop from there. Sometimes they have to drop their goals and new and unexpected stories arise. One intention with the carousel training is to create a consciousness of das TheatReale or in Gob Squads' formulation a consciousness about playing with performed *and* real emotions and desires on stage.

Stanislavski's *magic if* and *living through* techniques

The supporting players will as a starting point perform roles inspired by Stanislavski's techniques. Overall, Stanislavski's techniques are characterised by the *magic if* technique which is at the foundation of classical, representational acting techniques (Stanislavski 1948:159). In *An Actor Prepares* (1948), Stanislavski unfolds how the actors should act *as if* they were in the shoes of the character from a script and *live through* the character. This includes full identification with the character and full emotional immersion into the character (Stanislavski 1948:51) and represents a full transformation into the character from the script. Stanislavski's ideas belong to Lehmann's fictive cosmos of dramatic theatre. For Stanislavski, the fourth wall upholds the closed stage illusion.

Stanislavski's techniques are used during the carousel interlude by the supporting players to come up with a goal for the scene, however although there is no fourth wall in the carousel the supporting players have the opportunity to try out and experiment with a full immersion into the character à la Stanislavski. They do, however, maintain a consciousness about performing a character instead of *living through* it. Similar to Brecht they uphold a distance between themselves and the character. They do so to learn how to shift quickly between different positions as being the audience and performing a character.

The first elements that came to mind from Stanislavski's techniques when observing the carousel were *the creative objective* and *the given circumstances*. In the carousel, the supporting players concentrate on actions and trying to fulfil their desires. Since there is no script, the supporting players themselves have to create a clear situation, desire, and goal for the scene to play out with the main player. If we transfer our life goals to acting, there is an equivalent to them in Stanislavski's acting techniques. He refers to these goals as *creative objectives*. This belongs to the realm of mimetic acting, which refers to a conscious and driven movement informed by, for example, Stanislavski's WH-questions.

Stanislavski: The creative objective

In *An Actor Prepares* (1948), Stanislavski describes how a play can be divided into scenes or units and that: "At the heart of every unit lies a *creative objective*" (Stanislavski 1948:127). He describes the inner, active objective as a light that shows the way and gives the actor a purpose for being on stage (Stanislavski 1948:127-128). What is the goal of the character in the unit? Why is he or she on stage? What is the action that he or she wishes to perform? These are central questions for Stanislavski, and they are also the WH-questions that the supporting players have to answer to come up with a goal for the scene in the carousel. Stanislavski expands on this subject with *the given circumstances*.

Stanislavski: The given circumstances

In *An Actor's Work: A Student's Diary* (2008), Stanislavski explains that the given circumstances refer to "the plot, the facts, the incidents, the period, the time and place of the action, the way of life …" (Stanislavski 2008:52-53). The given circumstances are created by the answers to the *reasons why* the character is on stage (Stanislavski 2008:39). The answers to why the character acts and reacts the way he/she does can be found by answering the seven essential WH-questions extracted from Stanislavski: *Who am I? Where am I? When? What do I want? Why do I want this? How will I achieve my goal? What must I overcome?* (Hirst 2017:1). *The creative objective* and *the given circumstances* are closely related to the realm of ontology since they address existential questions such as the purpose of being alive, why we live the way we live, want the things we want, and do the things we do. They contribute to the ontology of the stage because the supporting players always deal with these questions to act out their scene. As an example, one of the supporting players decides to perform herself. *Who:* as herself *and* as a homeless cat with the goal of *What?* Getting the main player to let her sleep on his belly. *Why?* She wants him to love her, care for her, and live with her. Each supporting player develops his/her own individual goal, desire, and character that can challenge, play with, and develop the main player.

Other examples could be picking a fight with the main player, transforming him/her into a bear, getting a kiss etc. The creative objective is informed by the information about the main player that has been generated during the interview. Goals are useful not only because they set a direction, but also because we can evaluate a goal/creative objective: What did you do to get a kiss? In the carousel round dance the audience can follow the play situation clearly because they know the goal. This gives the acting students an opportunity to watch, from a different perspective as members of the audience, how different performance modes develop and are brought to life.

Burning at the stake: Life in the primitive present

Going beyond the *magic if* mode, the carousel abandons the dramatic text – and sometimes words altogether. The main player does not perform a role or character in the classical sense but appears on stage performing her/himself "as her-/himself." Unlike all the other participants, the main player does *not* know what will happen and whom he/she will face in the carousel.

All of these elements are references to the acting theories of Artaud. Artaud's actors do not perform a role or character in the classical sense, and the dramatic text is not at the centre of the events on stage. Artaud focuses on the metaphysics of presence as bodily presence, replacing mimetic character representation. For Artaud, an actor should burn at the stake and signal through the flames because this is where we are most alive and present, in close proximity to death. Elinor Fuchs notes that with this strong image of the artist burning, Artaud condensed "the entire aspiration to presence in the theatre" Fuchs 1996:69). However, Artaud did not cast away the mind. For Artaud, pure bodily presence includes the mind, and he strived to dissolve the mind/body dualism and unite the flesh and spirit of the audience to "force his audience to truly think (rather than having their existing worldview confirmed)" (Cull 2009:117). Attacking the senses of the audience would among other things bring this about (Artaud 1958:84).

The carousel concept is special in terms of Artaud's theories in the sense that the supporting players and the audience are the very same people, which fulfil Artaud's desire to erase the split between stage and auditorium and unite the two.

For Artaud, burning at the stake invokes an acute awareness of one's bodily presence via the pain inflicted on the body. Following Artaud, I argue that it invokes *primitive presence*. Life in the *primitive presence* is a terminology taken from the philosophy of Hermann Schmitz. In the article "Emotions outside the box – the new phenomenology of feeling and corporeality" (2011), Schmitz unpacks that when we are shocked or hit by strong emotion, chock, pain or ecstasy, we experience life in the primitive presence. Life in the primitive presence creates an awareness that fuses here, now, being and I in a way that leaves a mine-ness or pure presence, undoubtedly being the one who hurts. Here-now-being-this-I makes a primitive presence (Schmitz/Müllan/Slaby 2011:246). The main player sometimes experiences life in the primitive presence in the carousel round dance because he or she has no idea about what is going to happen next and therefore reacts spontaneously in the situation. This invokes a heightened alertness and presence of the main-player's Here-now-being-this-I. The actor's self-experience of the primitive presence in the carousel is framed by Reuter and part of a conscious investigation of the inherent unpredictability in the open improvisation structure. The unpredictability is not only unsettling but also stimulating in the sense that it causes a bubbly play movement for the main player, who is always trying to create context and stability in an unstable improvisation situation and therefore training presence on stage.

In real life we do not know where we land during a conversation as we do when we have read a script. This uncertainty is allowed in the carousel and the main player does not know where he or she will land. This inspires courage and presence. As the main player, the actor learns to navigate through Lehmann's *aesthetics of undecidability* where the line between the real and the fictional is blurred. We cannot predict where the story is going, and this lack of control for especially the main player sharpens the performers' presence and ability to react spontaneously. The resonance between the main player and the supporting cast also becomes central. The students' ability to tune into the resonance frequency is heightened during the carousel. This requires that the actor is accessible,

reacts to what is going on here-and-now, and accepts "what is" in relation to self, role, and other.

Alienation effects

As opposed to Stanislavski, Brecht wanted his actors to enact a split between actor and role on stage through alienation techniques. In "On Chinese Theatre, *Verfremdung* and *Gestus*" (2015, German org. 1957), Brecht describes how the split makes it possible for the actors to critically question the actions of the character. Alienation effects (Verfremdungseffekte) break the stage illusion, e.g. by dissolving the fourth wall between audience and spectator by speaking directly to the audience, bursting into song or stepping in and out of character (Brecht 2015:149-51).

In the carousel, there are no attempts to hide the stage reality. The illusion is laid bare, and the actors play with *the fictive cosmos* and disrupt the fiction with elements of the real or vice versa. A split between actor and role is enacted in the sense that the main player is on stage "at his/her home" as an actor-self with his or her private name while the supporting players portray "characters" visiting her/him. While the supporting players use some of Stanislavski's techniques, they also act out an assemblage of characters and jump between different characters breaking the illusion and the full Stanislavski immersion. They also perform Brechtian shifts in the sense that it is laid bare that they are both actors and audience.

The figure of the assemblage

The carousel concept and disincarnation blur traditional distinctions and dualisms between scenic functions and character concepts such as actor/audience, classic/postdramatic, which are tied to broader developments in the performing arts: Postdramatic theatre genres have emerged during the last few decades. A new generation of performing artists is also marked by ensemble-devised performance (McGinley 2010:12). In these performances, the boundaries between acting techniques and traditional scenic functions such as actors and dramaturges, actors and audience, actors and directors are blurred. Christel Stalpaert notes how the separation of dramaturge and actor installs the mind-body dualism in the sense that the dramaturge is usually and historically considered "the brain" of the scenic functions and the performer "the body." The blurring of the scenic functions dissolves traditional dualisms (Stalpaert 2009:x). As an example, Stalpaert describes how the performance collective *Need Company* refers to itself as an "artistic family", where the artistic process of creation is collective. Jan Lauwers is not the traditional patriarchal leader. On the contrary, all the members of the group carry a "shared intellectual responsibility" (Stalpaert 2009:121-122). Although Reuter initially sets the carousel spinning as facilitator, the carousel concept is a non-hierarchical method in the sense that everybody tries out every part/scenic function: Interviewer, concept/objective developer, main player, supporting player, audience, set designer, light designer, and reflection partner. This contributes to the feeling of shared responsibility. As Stalpaert points out, conventional dualisms and hierarchies are rapidly dissolving or crossing over into each other, forming new assemblages. How does the contemporary acting student navigate these waters? To answer this question, I turn to theories that think beyond conventional dualisms. Disincarnation is a tool for mapping the practice of the carousel in order to name, differentiate, and pinpoint the techniques the students apply. As a conceptual tool disincarnation makes it possible to develop a language for understanding the events in the carousel and thus strengthen the autonomy of the acting students.

As I set out to examine, interpret, and map the carousel through the concept of disincarnation and the relationship between different acting techniques, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's conceptualisation of the *assemblage* will serve as an analytical and practical key concept. Here the assemblage is understood as a material montage of heterogenic elements (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:4). The concept of the assemblage is related to another key concept in the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari: *becoming*.

Becoming refers to an in-between identity that is never fixed, but in a constant process of becoming. One of the cornerstones of Deleuze and Guattari's thinking is a positive account of a multiple or schizophrenic subject with an identity in constant variation or becoming. In "What Is Becoming?" Deleuze uses Alice from *Alice in Wonderland* as an example of a character with an infinite identity or an identity in constant variation or becoming: Alice is becoming larger and smaller, that is more and less, simultaneously. Alice does not have a fixed identity: she is multiple things at once, a multiple or schizophrenic subject. (Deleuze 1993:40).[2]

Disincarnation is characterised by different acting techniques crossing over into each other in a character assemblage. It is my thesis that performers in performance theatre create character assemblages by picking freely from the four different character concepts never settling in one of them (Tranholm 2017:85). With disincarnation, we are better equipped to detect, analyse, and understand character representation in a world of collapsing or intersecting dualisms. Here the body and bodily presence can be intertwined with a subject in constant change.

The main player: an assemblage of character concepts

In the following, I present examples of the traffic between character concepts in the carousel round dance and how to apply the possibilities of disincarnation in practice; to examine disincarnation in the carousel. During each encounter different performance modes and character concepts are activated and the main player jumps between performing her/himself as her/himself and performing different characters/roles/acting-selves in an autofictional assemblage. The assemblage of character concepts is clearly present in these three excerpts from three carousel round dance visits.

Visit 1) A male supporting player performing himself as an entrepreneur knocks on an invisible door and enters. He confronts the main player with his goal/desire to buy her summer cottage, because he needs the piece of land to build a pig farm.

This visit starts in the concrete biographical reality of the main player since we know from the interview that she has spent every summer in the summer cottage since she was a child. She acts and reacts, now conscious about the autofictional situation in the carousel, as she probably would have in real life if she were confronted with this offer. The offer stirs up emotions of nostalgia and family memories. The scene ends with her final refusal of his offer to buy and she stands her ground. As such, the drama is found in the main player's reality as opposed to a fictional script and is taken a step further in the carousel improvisation in a kind of re-enactment of the main player's reality. The scene becomes strong dramatically because it is rooted in the reality of the main player. Her private background influences and feeds into her reactions in the fictional play situation with the supporting player. The classical and the postdramatic character concept twist into each other as the dramatic highlight and emotional release for the main player is tied to the

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2)   This section is informed by my dissertation *Disincarnation: Jack Smith and the character as assemblage,* 2017:85.

biography of the performer rather than a script-based character. The position of the real is made an explicit co-player like in postdramatic theatre since the biographical self is the starting point – she performs herself.

Visit 2) A male supporting player performing himself as a lover knocks on the main player's door and enters. His goal/desire is to propose to her because he loves her. This visit starts in the fictional desire of the supporting player who has prepared a ritual for the proposal ceremony.

He instructs the main player by placing her in a chair and tells her to cover her eyes with her hands. During the visit she sits in the chair without seeing what he is doing. In a circuitous mode he prepares the ceremony with many candles on the floor, lights them and spreads a stack of papers with love poems on the floor. He makes her uncover her eyes. She finds herself in the overwhelming environment that he has created and is strongly moved. Tears are streaming down her face. He puts a ring on her finger and kisses her. She does not respond clearly to his proposal. He says, "I love you" and leaves. The scene has an open ending.

A feature that is interesting from a technical point of view is that in the short scene the main player behaves as if she is employing a Stanislavski technique: *The Method of Physical Actions*. In the interview "The Method of Physical Actions" (1965), Sonia Moore describes how Stanislavski discovered that all inner experiences are expressed through physical actions. As such, the physical and psychological are inseparable (Moore 1965:91). Moore explains: "The physical action is 'bait' for an emotion" (Moore 1965:92). We see a clear example of this in the scene: The supporting player tells the main player to cover her eyes with her hands. She follows his instruction, which affects her in the way that she becomes sad and cries. Her specific reaction is influenced by a set of circumstances that happened before and culminate in the physical action of covering her eyes with her hands as we often do when we are sad. In *The Method of Physical Action*, you do not turn your attention inwards toward your emotions. Instead, you turn it outwards toward your actions and objectives. In other words, your emotions are activated by a physical activity – in this case covering her eyes with her hands (Moore 1965). This scene takes a step away from the personal life of the main player because the supporting player enters the room with a fictional story, and she reacts to the fictional circumstances and desires he brings into the room. Elements from the postdramatic twist into the classical character concept when her performance of herself crosses over into Stanislavski's *Method of Physical Actions*.

Visit 3) A supporting player performing himself as a homeless person knocks on the main player's door and enters. He confronts the main player with his goal to move into her home because he needs a place to live. He acts weak and sick and is exhausted. His appearance is dingy, and he seems a bit drunk and strange which influences her behaviour. She tries to refuse his need to get comforted in different ways but is simultaneously affected by the atmosphere that he brings into the room. She cannot stay defensive toward this very weak person.

In relation to this, the Schmitz talks about feelings as spatial atmospheres. In his book *Der Leib* (2011) translated into Danish: *Kroppen* (2017), Schmitz argues that since Plato, Western philosophy has overlooked dynamic connections in the human experience by separating body and soul with the soul as an enclosed inner world. Western logocentrism has undermined the first-person corporeal experience of life, e.g. how it feels to be A experiencing B, as well as reflections about finding ourselves in our surroundings (Schmitz 2017:12+81-83). To Schmitz, the mind/body dualism is reductionist, which is also true for Deleuze and Guattari. What separates Schmitz from other poststructuralists, is his argument that no inner world or soul exists (Schmitz

2017:12). Instead, emotions, usually attributed to the inner world, are *spatial atmospheres* that may be occupied by subjects as well as objects. Although Schmitz is an anti-dualist, he still refers to subjectivity as affective, however, the subjectivity he refers to is spatial and not trapped in the inner world of the soul. Schmitz tries to expand emotions beyond the psycho-physical dualism, which is why emotions cannot be reduced to inner psychological states (Schmitz 2011:244-246). But then, where are they located? Schmitz writes: "In my opinion, emotions are atmospheres poured out spatially that move the felt, (not the material) body" (Schmitz 2011:247). According to Matthias Wirth's lecture at Humboldt University: *Feelings as things: Hermann Schmitz's phenomenology and the 'realness' of medical humanities* (2017), Schmitz understands emotions as spatial atmospheres that spread indefinitely onto a room and lie in the room like for example silence. Atmospheres enter a room, or an *atmosphere is awaiting the person entering* the room like a presence within the room, such as the cheerful atmosphere of a party or the thick air in the room after a couple had a conflict (Wirth 2017). If you feel sad and arrive at a party, something happens: We are met by a feeling or spirit from outside ourselves. As an actor you must react to your surroundings. This is what the main player does in this scene. Her supporting player enters the room and fills it with a spatial atmosphere: a thick air of melancholy, joy, weakness, anarchy and sadness surrounds her and she reacts to this. Though the given circumstances are fictional or autofictional, if an actor takes the circumstances for real, he or she reacts to them as a reality cf. Lehmann: das TheatReale. The given circumstances from the classical character concept twist into Artaudian attempts to dissolve the psycho-physical dualism. In all the scenes, elements from the Brechtian character concept are at play in the sense that there is no attempt to hide the fiction nor the fact that the main player is an actor performing herself and the supporting players take on roles in a more classical sense. As such the form of the carousel plays with the split between actor and role. These excerpts from carousel round dances exemplify disincarnation on a practical level by displaying the traffic between elements from the postdramatic, the classical, the Artaudian, and the Brechtian character concept.

The nomadic subject

The examples above point out how the acting students in the carousel train multiple acting techniques. In the following section, I argue that the multiple acting techniques mirror the multiple subject of contemporary Western society. Alongside the activation of different acting techniques, the carousel activates an experience of different segments of the actor's personality or subjectivity as material for autofictional performances. Often these personality traits twist into each other, e.g. vulnerability twists into strength in the first scene.

In regard to developments in subject formation, René Descartes' notion of the subject, known as the Cartesian subject, refers to a unified organic subject, a rational subject with a stable, essential core. The unified subject favouring the mind over the body was already advanced by Aristotle's ideas about character representation in Greek drama. In *The Death of Character* (1996) Fuchs' account of the history of character refers to a movement from the domination of an organic character built on consistency to inconsistency in character representation through a multiple or nomadic subject on stage. As a reflection of the Cartesian subject, the classical character is characterised by consistency and reason in inner/emotional construction and development (as seen in the drama theories of Aristotle) and unity (as seen in the philosophy of Georg W. F. Hegel), culminating in naturalism/psychological realism (Henrik Ibsen) whereas the inconsistency in

character representations mainly starts with symbolism (as seen in the theatre of August Strindberg and partly Ibsen) (Fuchs 1996:21-35).

In relation to the multiple subject, Rosi Braidotti in her book *Nomadic Subjects – Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (1994) argues in line with a number of other poststructuralist philosophers that humans are not one thing but contain a variety of characteristics that point in different directions. Braidotti and the poststructuralist movement argue that the different postmodern subject positions break away from the universal subject and represent a rebellion against essentialism. Braidotti explains that if one wants to understand the postmodern subject, "one needs to emphasise a vision of the thinking, knowing subject as not one, but rather as being split over and over again in a rainbow of yet uncoded and ever so beautiful possibilities" (Braidotti 1994:158). The nomadic subject is always in becoming, moving around between different stages, positions, and identities. These movements have the potential to bring about change and contribute to the creation of new images (Braidotti 1994:29).[3]

As such, in our modern everyday lives, we all act more or less consciously as nomadic subjects. Our social and private conditions such as job, partner etc. demand different attitudes, and we alter our personal behaviour to meet these demands many times during a day. The nomadic subject displays that we are not passive, but active and fluid bodies and personalities. Reuter recognises this nomadic or multiple subject in the main player from the carousel. The main player does not attempt to perform many different characters, e.g. a new character in each scene. Instead, he/she displays a nomadic multiple subject exhibiting different sides of his/her subjectivity/personality. The main player is performing him/herself as him/herself while being affected by and responding to the supporting players, just as in life we respond differently to different people in different situations. This means that each scene challenges different nuances of the main player's personality, which creates a transformation process in the ongoing play situation. Every time a new person enters the room, we see a new side of our main player because each meeting creates new demands. Similar to a dream or like Alice in Wonderland, the acting-self is in a constant process of becoming in the carousel. In each unit, each supporting player has a desire or longing that they wish to fulfil with the main player. This desire creates an (autofictional) goal that addresses a specific segment of the main player's personality and biography. They all want something different and in the process of addressing these different demands, the main player utilises a number of different acting techniques.

The nomadic actor

Through our collaboration, Reuter and I developed the concept *the nomadic actor* drawing on Reuter's carousel, Reuter's experience as an actor and the concepts of the nomadic subject and disincarnation. The nomadic actor is an example of how disincarnation can be applied to the practice of the carousel and how the resonance between the carousel method and the concept of disincarnation makes new terminologies and images possible. The carousel and the practice of disincarnation cast the contemporary actor as a nomadic actor moving between different acting methods, techniques, positions, and identities. The staging of the nomadic actor in the carousel training is mirrored in the traffic between acting techniques that defines disincarnation. The nomadic actor is in a permanent state of playful mobility and travels around between positions

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3)   This section is informed by my dissertation *Disincarnation: Jack Smith and the character as assemblage,* 2017:62-63

and oppositions such as presentation and representation, self and role. The carousel concept trains and plays with these multiple possible selves and identities.

Reuter is interested in the personality of the actor as a whole *as a starting point* for being on stage. As Laura Luise Schultz points out in her essay "Teatralitet i skrift og rum – sceniske tekster og læsestrategier" (2016, eng. "Theatricality in writing and space – scenic texts and reading strategies"), Reuter's starting point is always the potential of the actor. When working on the personal potential of the actor, a figure emerges that nobody could have conceived in advance, but which represents features that the audience can take example from. The figure arises in a moment of transformation. The figure does not come from a text, but from the actor himself or herself. Through the circumstances he or she "becomes someone else in the situation" (my translation, Schultz 2016:159).

Inside the carousel we train the transformations of Alice like a mobilisation and mobility of the inner republic. We train the hegemony of voices as a kind of "self-conquering" process during improvisation, repetition, and recollection. Through the repetition structure in the carousel the problems of how to deal with different play positions becomes more obvious. New play strategies and different forms of behaviour appear, get tested and expand the understanding of performing oneself as oneself and as someone else. The players in the carousel not only become better acquainted with who they are when they act. They also become better equipped to deal with and handle this inner plurality and multiplicity as material for acting.

How does the biographical come into play? How do the main players administer their biographical material in a public performance without feeling exposed? Reuter's basis for acting training and her reason for developing the carousel concept is that we cannot separate the personality of the actor from the performance. In the carousel the students learn to examine and to understand that the performance of the actor cannot be separated from the individual personality of the actor. The autobiographical is not the purpose of the carousel concept. Reuter and the students always use different principles and elements in the carousel improvisation to clarify that all autobiographical work is related to the creation, understanding, and detection of the students' self as their own acting-instrument. It is a process of creating meaning. Being on stage in the carousel is artificial. It is a construction of different elements. Reuter uses the fictional aspect by either enlarging a segment of the actor's self completely (by becoming oneself as a homeless or a lover) or by substituting or exchanging it with something else. The supporting players fictionalise the biographical material with their desires. This creates an autofictional, dreamlike world where anything can happen. Both players start shifting acting positions in the ongoing improvisation process where the autobiographical and the fictional, presentation and representation twist into each other. The autofictional allows each student to experience their different forms of being and behaving on stage including their strengths and weak points as potential sources for artistic material.

The nomadic actor in the carousel

The study of the interplay between the carousel practice and the disincarnation theory enhances our understanding of contemporary acting. The carousel concept contributes to the training of performing oneself alongside other techniques. It assists the contemporary, trained actor and develops a shared language for theorists and practitioners. In the first carousel ride, the performers are encouraged to play in a state of consciousness that takes responsibility for the interaction

with the co-player, the space, and the ongoing play situation. In the pre-theoretical realm of the carousel, the actors play intuitively. In the reflection/reconstruction round of the carousel, the students consciously start to handle and transform their intuitive play experience into play material. With the disincarnation theory they can connect their play experience with theory by identifying elements from different acting techniques. Recognizing different acting techniques provides the students with a language and technical terminology, which enables them to discuss their practice concerning the scenic concept, performance mode etc. with peers and representatives from other scenic functions and theoreticians inside and outside the rehearsal room. The character as an assemblage figure and the concept of disincarnation informs the notion of the contemporary actor as a *nomadic actor* travelling between different acting techniques and segments of his/her biography. The carousel concept offers a space where alternatives to conventional character representation and different notions about performing oneself on stage can be rehearsed and practiced alongside classical acting techniques.

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