

to Aimilia

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## Foreword

This is a collection of letters that I wrote in 2017-2019 as part of my research in and as practice, titled: 'Language Choreography: Re-imagining autobiographical narratives to creating fictions of mental motion'.

The starting point of each letter is an autobiographical event, and through addressing people and institutions, I aim to transform the story, I aim to propose a social-public space for an engagement with imagination.

The collection ends with a response by my closest collaborator (and friend) these last two years, Rodia Vomvolou, who has followed this process from the beginning, and was the one to propose to make this publication in the first place. I invited Rodia to respond with a letter by translating and appropriating this invitation in her own way.

**This collection includes:**

- **p.6** a letter to a cultural Institution
- **p.16** a letter to a participant of a reading group
- **p.24** a letter to BAVO research team and to the artist Renzo Martens  
(which was the result of a writing assignment proposed by Konstantina Georgelou for ArtEZ, MA Theater Practices)
- **p.43** a letter to Frau D., a school teacher
- **p.63** a response letter by Rodia Vomvolou

The format of the letters was partly inspired by Mette Ingvartsen's seven letters to the public, included in her book '*69 Positions*' as part of her dissertation '*Expanded Choreography: Shifting the agency of movement in The Artificial Nature Series and 69 positions*'.

In my writing practice, I was guided by principles of care-focused feminism, associated with values of interdependence, community, connection, sharing, and the body, and by Michel Foucault's concept of the technology of the self.

During these two years several people have read, edited and provided feedback, in order for this collection of letters to be realized today.

I would like to express my gratitude to Konstantina Georgelou, Danae Theodoridou, and Rodia Vomvolou for being there to follow my process, and for their feedback.

To Stavros Papakyritsis for the editing.

To my partner Evangelos Tsempelis and my son Ermis, for their support and understanding.

Thank you to my peers at the MTP program.

Special thanks to: João Cerqueira Da Silva Junior, Pedro Cardoso Rodrigues Manuel, Nienke Terpsma, Ulrike von Meier, and Elena Novacovits. I would also like to thank Pavlos Vasileios Kountouriotis, and the Master of Theatre Practices program of ArtEZ University of the Arts, for their support of my research.





**Dear Cultural Institution,**

I will be starting soon a reading group at your premises, with the title: 'Living in a time of crisis and insecurity. How to imagine the future?'. Therefore, I find it very important to describe what my work for this reading group will be.

In order to describe my work, I have to take into consideration three different time periods.

The time before the start of the reading group, the time during the reading group, and the time after the reading group.

For now, I will deal with the period before the beginning of the reading group, as it is the time we are now running.

The time before the reading group

In October 2017, I find myself in Arnhem, Holland attending an intensive month of classes as part of the practice-based research MA that I pursue in ArtEZ, Institute of the Arts.

I get informed that a reading group will take place in Amsterdam with the title : 'RR Imaginary=the real, Social Imaginations and Fictional Institutions', in which a beloved Greek artist, Danae Theodoridou, whose work I admire and with whom I have worked on a workshop the previous summer, is invited to talk, as her artistic research is based on the notion of 'social imaginaries'.

I go to this meeting although I know that the next day I am leaving for Zurich and I will not be able to attend more sessions of this group in the future.

I pay my train ticket about 40 euros, and a fee of 5 euros for participation, wondering where do I invest my money in?

Is it the intellectual challenge?

Is it the potential of intimacy between people I don't yet know, that nevertheless share an interest in texts that interest me as well?

What is it that I expect from this group that makes me decide to spend my time and money?

Without being able to give a concrete answer to the above questions after the end of this first reading group, and because I sense a potential that I don't want to miss when I return to Zurich, I write an email to the woman responsible for the group in Holland.

I ask her if she thinks there is a way to 'bring' the reading group in Switzerland.

Next day, I write an email to some friends and colleagues in Zurich, to ask them if they are interested in participating in a reading group like this.

I ask a collaborator if he wants to moderate the conversations, and I write to you first (before I approach other institutions) to become the host.

The reason I select you, is because I am a dancer and the potential to take the reading group out of the university and/or out of a more 'appropriate' academic context, and closer to other fellow dancers, the potential of relating to a new group of people through the specific texts, intrigues me.

You, my dear institution, reply positively to my proposition, and we decide to have a meeting with your director and the woman responsible for your front office.

I hear from your representatives that I inspired them, that they want me to be there, to run the reading group, even to moderate the conversation when my collaborator says he has no time to be there all the time. I still wonder what was it that inspired you, what was it that made you trust me a stranger to you, how did this proposal touch you?

That day, I leave your premises happy that you have accepted my offer.

And I leave having agreed the following.

I will write a description of the reading group, I will find a title, I will read, review, and propose the texts that will be read during every session, I will write and send out invitations to friends and colleagues to participate, and I will prepare myself for the conversation (how to moderate it).

What were the responsibilities by your side, that we agreed on, my dear institution?

You will find dates in which the foyer of your institution, with a table and chairs, will be available for the participants.

Water will be offered to participants, and if one wants to make a tea this could also be possible. You will advertise the reading group through your flyers and social media, and through the festival within which the reading group will take place.

Your representatives will read and adjust descriptions and title according to what looks better in relation to content and length.

I am sure there are many more things needed to be done by your side in order for this reading group to happen, but I am not aware of them in order to describe them.

Excuse me for that.

I do as agreed. You do as agreed.

The only thing you make very clear from the beginning is that there is no money that can be offered for this project.

You tell me that your institution can justify funding only for dance projects.

I try to understand, somehow I sense vulnerability behind this statement. I am left wondering, that being a dancer myself I consider all of my projects' starting point be led by the questions, 'what the body is?' and 'what the body can do?'.

In that sense, I can say with much confidence that I see precariousness and crisis (notions that we will occupy ourselves with during our readings) in relation to the body, and therefore I consider this project to be a dance project.

At some point, I am asked if I think participants should pay. We agree that this will complicate things. This would mean that someone from the institution should be held responsible and it will complicate costs. We agree that a reading group is something that could be done in a kitchen.

I believe participants should not be charged to participate in a reading group. But I also believe that dance institutions should be offered financial support for diverse projects. This way dance can become more 'open' and with a possibility to be seen outside of its box.

Up to today, my dear institution, two weeks before the start of the group, we have exchanged about 50 emails on technical, contextual and conceptual matters in relation to the reading group. I have read, reviewed, and re-read seven books and several texts from other books in order to end up to propose texts from three books, and several other texts. I have thought about the structure of the conversation and I am ready to propose games and tasks that will potentially help with imagining/contemplating together.

By now, I would like to imagine, my dear institution, that I have described in detail what my work for this reading group is. Maybe, I have also managed to convince you that this work should be a paid one.



Or maybe you could claim, not you but the subjectivities that consist you, that I didn't even have to convince you in the first place.

My arguments, that my job should be a paid one, are self-explanatory, and you believed I should be financially compensated in the first place.

But you, somehow just like me, you my dear institution, you are also precarious in the modern world within neoliberal contexts.

You only do not have the means to pay me.

Because you, among other institutions, you are in the difficult place to also feel stress for funding yourself. Because you are a cultural institution among many in a market that demands sustainability, maybe you, you are also not sustainable.

And then what, my dear institution?

Whom could we write a letter to, to ask agonistically for what we both feel we deserve? What is the next subjectivity we can address to for our issue?

The state of Zurich? The banks? The banks are sustainable, aren't they?

I hear Credit Swiss lost 900.000.000 this year.

Maybe it would be safer to address a letter to capitalism?

But then who will be responsible to respond to our letter? Shall we be brave enough to write a letter to capitalism?

Dear capitalism...

How far up can we get to be heard?

Do you believe in God, my dear institution?

Do you think we should write a letter to God?

Dear God...

Dear Bank...

Dear Supermarket...

Dear Google...

Dear Institution...

Dear State of Zurich...

Dear Government...

Dear Capitalism... Dear Neoliberalism...

'Living in a time of crisis and insecurity. How to imagine the future?'



**Dear participant of the reading group,**

This letter is an attempt to find the right words to articulate an invitation to you for the reading group that is going to start next week.

In the first draft of this attempt, I have to admit that I failed to address this invitation. My need to appear well prepared, specific to my intentions and proposition of texts, and ready to explain a vision behind them, made my tone somehow controlling and authoritative, something that contradicted the intention of the letter.

Therefore, I decided that if I had to be controlling, at least it would be fair to be primarily controlling to myself rather than to you, and that's why I decided to address this first letter to me instead of you.

Now, it's time to start again.

Dear potential reading group participant,

The thought that I will meet you in five days finds me in a state of great anticipation!

I want to treat this new relationship with care and affection, I will try to approach it with curiosity and tenderness.

I try to imagine you, my dear participant, I am trying to imagine how you look and what is it that intrigued you to come to this group. Are you blond, dark haired, or maybe red haired? Are you an immigrant, an artist, an architect maybe?

Are you a male, a female, or gender neutral?

Do you live in the city, were you born there or not? What do you consider your mother tongue to be?

What texts and books do you read? How do you spend your free time, how does your body occupy public space?

What is your sexual orientation, and what role do you feel the color of your skin plays in your personality?

My mother tongue is Greek, I am short and brunette, my skin refers to a white European and this has helped me pass unnoticed when the language barrier was really a barrier for my life in Switzerland.

I am a woman, a mother, an artist, and a foreigner, and currently interested in researching notions of precariousness and crisis, and imagine ways to confront and resist them. I also wonder what is it that interests you in this reading group and what potential do we have to create something together.

What potential does a group of people who don't know each other yet have when confronted with a text?

I can imagine that we could read the texts out loud together.

And we could also read them silently together.

I can imagine us being 'moved' by the texts, in ways that could take us away from the table and into the space. I could even imagine some or all of us one evening to dance for hours with the texts.

Another image I have is that we take the texts out of this context, out of this country even, we take them deep inside the forest or under the hot sun by the beach in my home country.

I also try to imagine the people who will never learn about this reading group, or the ones who knew about it and never found a way to join.

I can see Judith Butler joining us to talk about the socio-ontological dimension of precariousness, and 'Precarias ala deriva', a group of feminist activists from Madrid, talking to us about care crisis and care strike.

I can see Danae sitting next to us explaining the notion of social imaginaries from the perspective of Castoriades and others, while accompanying us deeper into her research, I can see Sparti, Castoriades' daughter, narrating her father's trip on the boat to freedom in France during the war.

I can see Nienke, the dramaturg from Amsterdam who was responsible for the reading group there (and was my inspiration for the start of this reading group), talking about her experience at Veem House for performance, a theater that opened only for 100 days this year, resisting precarity in its own way.



I can also see the participants of the reading group in Amsterdam, about 10 people, all of them sitting next to us here today.

Dancers, artists, a guy particularly interested in Castoriades' work.

I see the woman in the blue pullover and the pony tale making brilliant arguments, while smiling and moving her hands in a charming way when talking.

I see Rodia, my friend who studies dramaturgy in Utrecht, a friend almost 20 years younger than me, listening and making one, only one very concrete question that usually doubts the binary form of seeing things.

Maybe someone in the group...

Not maybe, someone in the group has a birthday or a name day, and we celebrate it together.

At some point, I interrupt the feast to thank Mette Ingvarsten for helping me without knowing it with this letter.

And for her great help on the articulation of many other notions that only after reading and seeing her research, I could have done.

I also thank the people I could not imagine, for giving me an opportunity to imagine them in the future.

I promise I will treat this group with care and responsibility and this relationship between us with care.

Let the ride begin!



**Dear BAVO research team,**

**Dear Renzo Martens,**

I have been following your work through articles and videos that my mentor and teacher Konstantina Georgelou has shared with me, for the MA of Theater Practices at the University of ArtEZ.

I am an artist myself, and I have passed through several phases in order to approach my need to confront (through my art) with the existing order in late modernity.

My practice and my artistic work have been informed by my attempt to articulate more accurately within language, body and time/space, how to deal with what is happening in the world today, politically, socially, and ethically.

My search has started with what I called 'in-between' spaces, looked upon as spaces that overcome the binary form. Being completely disappointed when I discovered that a liminal or an in-between space can easily work in favor or in line with the principles of the existing order (namely capitalism, neoliberalism, and many other 'isms') I started looking for what I called (not in the sense that I gave name to it, but mostly in the sense that I claimed right for using the word) alternatives, or alternative spaces.

Spending some time with these terms, I realized that an alternative could also be something equally bad or even worse than the initial attempt I wished to oppose to (and therefore wanting to find an alternative for), and for this reason I continued looking for new articulations.

My Dears BAVO research team, and Renzo Martens,

I don't want to risk to bore you by naming here one by one each of my attempts to deal with, react to, come to terms with, confront, resist, and/or create a dialogue within my artistic research-practice with what I called precarity, vulnerability, endangerment, and anxiety, so I will cut the long story short. No matter how many the attempts, what I would like to let you know, is that I am still within the process of searching.

I address this letter to you today, because I came up with this idea, that I would like to share with you.

I thought to use my work experience in marketing and advertising in order to analyze my artistic research-practice, because maybe then, I thought, maybe this would give me and you more insight in regards to the articulation of the above attempts, and therefore to the artistic research-practice itself.

I also thought that there is no better audience to address this letter than to you my dears, as you have most probably realized up to now, although we do not know each other, we share similar ethical and social questions.

My analysis will be done using the tools that I managed to remember (I haven't work in the field for almost 20 years now), in no specific order, and I hope it will inspire and disgust you, as much as your propositions have inspired and disgusted me.

## Target Market

### *Primary Target Market*

A primary target market is the particular group of consumers at which my product/service is aimed. Below, I include as many demographic and psychographic factors about my primary target market as I can.

Women and men, 25-45 y.o., in Arnhem, Zurich, and Athens, of higher socioeconomic and educational status, artists, academics, intellectuals, teachers of the MPT in ArtEZ.

Women with the aforementioned characteristics interested in creating a dialogue with the existing sociopolitical order within late modernity.

Women with the aforementioned characteristics, interested in the performing arts.



Women and men with the aforementioned characteristics that see art 'as the ability to change the world, not by money or force, but by orientation, by radically transforming the 'sensible', or sensory, reality of the eye, ear, taste, touch and smell, which unavoidably results in a change in ideas, understanding and insight'. 1

Women with the aforementioned characteristics with an interest in the performativity of the ephemeral in the theater.

Women with the aforementioned characteristics interested in the introduction of temporality in the theater.

Women with the aforementioned characteristics who have done some kind of therapy (psychotherapy, psychoanalysis, dramatherapy, dance therapy) for a period of one month and/or more in their lives.

1. Mika Hannoula, *Artistic Research Methodology*, Foreword x (2014 Peter Lang Publishing)

All the first year MTP's ArtEZ students: Mariela Nestora, Constantinos Voudouris, Conrad Useldiger, Maria Joao Falcao, Flora Mc Murtie, Jan Deboom, Silas Neumann.

My ideal customer, and/or my most loyal buyer persona, is a woman who is interested in an artistic work/research that does not follow a certain aesthetics, her interest is rather related to its ethics and is based on creating a dialogue between the inner and the outer self, the personal and the social, the intimate and the general.

The only person I know who has the above characteristics is my partner in life, and because he is a man I am obliged to categorize him in the secondary rather than the primary target market.

### Key Competitors/Direct Competitors

Direct competitors are seen as people who sell the same or very similar to my product.

They compete across the board, or for specific products, for certain customers, or in certain geographic areas.

Women and men artists, makers, choreographers, and researchers between 25-50 y.o., that show work in Arnhem/Amsterdam but also in Zurich and Athens.

Coming from the broader field of dance (choreographers, dancers, theorists of dance, researchers) with an interest in exploring movement through-within language.

Exploring the movement of language through contemplation-  
imagination.

With an interest towards an ethics that explores possibilities of dialogue within the sociopolitical existing order in late modernity.

### Key/Major Brands as Direct Competitors

Mette Edvardsen and most of the products she sells.

Ivana Müller and some of the product she sells.

Andrea Božić.

Bojana Cvejić.

Product: 'Contemplations' performance, by Mette Ingvarsten.

More specifically, direct competitors are the following artists and researchers that compete with me across the board in the geographical area of Arnhem.

All the first year MTP's ArtEZ students: Mariela Nestora, Constantinos Voudouris, Conrad Useldiger, Maria Joao Falcao, Flora Mc Murtie, Jan Deboom, Silas Neumann.

### Indirect Competitors

Potentially all researchers, makers and choreographers who sell work in Switzerland, Holland and Greece, and are somehow sensitive about what is happening in the world around them. More specifically, I consider as indirect competitors artists who although do not offer the same product/service as I do, still satisfy the same consumer need in the same geographical region as I do.

All the first year DAS theatre students: Ira Brand, Samara Hersch, Max Gold, Billy Mullaney, Max Gold, Brogan Davison, Ana Vilela da Costa, Ingrid Vranken.

### Marketing Tagline

A tagline is a short phrase that encapsulates my service's-product's image. It is actually a one-liner that portrays my artistic research's/practice's philosophy, and potentially will help me differentiate from my competitors. It should be a tool to explain one's business philosophy or product in a couple of words.

If I remember correctly, it has to be concise, emotional, specific and positive.

'Exaggerate the subtle or subtle the exaggeration'

### Company mission statement

A mission statement is a brief explanation of one's company reason for being.

In general, one should keep the mission statement short to one or two sentences, but as you may see below, I failed to keep it so short, so probably the statement of my artistic research-practice will need to be re-evaluated in a later phase to become stronger.

The mission of my research-practice is to find ways to respond inside the theater to the ethical, political and social questions that concern me as an artist.

Moreover, through writing/language, body/movement, performing, and their relation to time and space, the research looks for ways to create a dialogue with 'being vulnerable and precarious' in the modern world.

## SWOT Analysis

### *Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats*

Swot analysis is a framework that analyzes the factors, internal and external, that have an impact on the viability of a project, product, service, place, or person. Internal factors are seen in regards to the product/service and external in regards to the market the product/service is placed in. Strengths and weaknesses analyze the internal factors whereas opportunities and threats the external ones.

### Strengths

#### *Things the research-practice does well*

Invites people to meet and work outside the theatre. Planning and organizing.

Performative writing, performing, dramaturgical and artistic compositions.

#### *Qualities that separate me from my competitors*

Well-motivated, independent, self reflection, self- awareness, focused, persistent.

#### *Internal resources such as skilled staff*

Trained in working with consistency.

#### *Tangible assets such as intellectual property*

I don't believe in the ownership of art, but I consider my personal artistic process as an asset, in relation to the specificity of the experience earned, and therefore 'owned' in that sense.

## Weaknesses

### *Things the research lacks*

Being fully aware of own strategies.

Being more pragmatic and nuanced in ways that theory is perceived, and in dramaturgical and compositional decisions.

### *Things my competitors do better than me*

Research proposal articulation, critical writing, economy of expression.

### *Resource limitations*

Reluctance towards the formation of a structure to support the artistic work financially.

### *Unclear unique selling proposition*

The way precarity is used is still unclear. Whether the use of the word is needed is also still unclear.

## Opportunities

### *Underserved markets for specific product/service*

I analyzed the niches I am targeting at in my primary target market. I looked into interests of the target group instead of analyzing only demographics, which is what I think opens a door to one's niche underserved market, and therefore to more opportunities.



*Few competitors in my area*

I covered the competitors in the direct and indirect competition part.

*Press/media coverage of my research*

ArtEZ university does this work partially.

Tanzhaus Zurich also 'covers' small parts of my research. In Zurich, Stillpoint spaces, Maxim Theater, and Holzke Kollektiv have done this work in the past and can potentially do it again.

### Threats

*Emerging competitors*

Institutions that teach and individuals interested in learning '*a form of representation that constantly leave(s) open the possibility to discuss any subject*'.

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2 Ibid, Foreword ix

### *Changing Regulatory Environment*

Data protection and privacy may affect the artistic research market in relation to how qualitative and quantitative research results are used.

How the theory of affect and embodied knowledge are perceived and used in the specific market also influence and regulate the environment within the market.

### *Negative press/media coverage*

Two main arguments that hold two opposing positions.

On the one hand, artistic research can be easily seen as not valid, as if it does not exist, in relation to the knowledge it produces (especially when compared to scientific research) and, on the other hand, it may be wrongly interpreted as everything and anything in the art field.

### *Changing customer attitudes towards my research*

Changing customer attitudes is in general very difficult. Customer attitudes is a combination of a consumer beliefs, affects and behaviors towards a brand. Especially for my research I think the problem is that there is not an established attitude towards it because it remains very 'domestic' within the institution of ArtEZ.

Probably, if I create a structure to support my artistic work, and therefore make my name more established

in the artistic market (artistic institutions, theatres, educational institutions), then it would be easier to change customer attitudes towards my artistic work.

One of the strategies I employed to change customer attitudes, is the approach of classical conditioning, which tries to 'pair' the product with a liked stimulus. For example, we 'pair' a car with a beautiful woman.

In my case this year I will try to 'pair' my artistic research and work with the artist 'Mette Edvartsen' as I will ask her to become my external mentor.

This may or may not have an effect on the attitude of my customers in the following years. I already have employed this strategy last year, by 'pairing' my artistic research and work with the artist 'Danae Theodoridou'. The results of this pairing were very good in comparison to my customers' positive attitudes towards my research.

My Dears BAVO research team, and Renzo Martens, this was a short analysis of my artistic work (research-practice) in which I used only very few of the tools, strategies and tactics that I 'borrowed' from the field of marketing and advertising.

In case you find within it some interesting strategies that relate to your work, and would like to discuss with me further, please don't hesitate to contact me personally via email at [mylonaeleni@hotmail.com](mailto:mylonaeleni@hotmail.com) or call me at: +41 767 872 400.

I will be very happy to discuss with you possibilities on how to cooperate in the best possible ways (whatever that may mean), in relation to the common concerns we have.

At the moment, I am looking into templates of business plans and advertising strategies in order to refresh my memory and be more ready for our discussion when and if this happens.

I hope we will find a way to continue this dialogue further.

Best Regards,

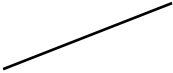
Eleni Mylona

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**Dear Frau D.,**

It is almost one and a half month now that our son E., left your class at the public school in our neighborhood. I have been wanting to write a letter earlier but I thought that maybe my anger will influence my writings in non beneficial ways, and therefore I decided to leave some time to pass until I start this letter. I

*1st interruption*



*Today, I feel more ready to write something that addresses you.*

*At the moment, I am sitting on an armchair at the bureau of my partner in central Zurich, it is eight o'clock in the morning, I drink bergamot tea at a blue porcelain cup. My laptop is on my lap, outside is cold and grey and I just left 10 minutes ago E. in his new school, which is not far away from this bureau. Now, I need to wait for him for four hours until he finishes, and then I pick him up, we eat something together, and I take him back for his half an hour guitar lesson, that started last week at the new school.*

Dear Frau D., I need to admit that my anger is still there, maybe even more active than a month ago, and therefore I will start this letter by apologizing because due to this anger I don't aim to create a dialogue with you.

This letter wishes to remain a monologue, and it wishes to become the vessel to talk about my experience about what happened during a year and half that my son 'E.' had you 'Frau D.' as his teacher, a teacher who guided him in the first steps of his social life. I realize that this aim, to keep it as a monologue, might be a bit unfair to you, and this is the second reason I would like to apologize for.

Unfortunately, this is the way it is. I promise though, that within this monologue, I will try my best to shed light to all subjectivities included in the story (including yours), in the most objective way I can.

I also wish to let precarity and vulnerability appear in any case it appears, without judging or trying to intervene, whether an event is related to you, to my son or to me.

Furthermore, even if at the moment this seems impossible, I will try within this letter to look for the poetic, the affective and the related in each incident I describe.




This way, I hope I will manage by the end of this monologue to find a different way to see this story, a different way to look at the reality of this story, a way that at the moment I cannot project.

The first incident I remember and would like to describe here, is the first day I met you, Frau D.

It is the open day, an October day, the sky is blue, and we the parents are allowed to come for the whole school day to observe any class we would like to. I hear that a new teacher is brought to school without anyone ever inform us parents about it.

I enter the class and I am greeted by you, you seem confident and quite enthusiastic about what you do, my son E. speaks so highly of the fact that since your arrival, children can sit at any place they like, and change places even everyday if they feel like it.

These few hours I spend in the classroom I feel charmed, almost seduced by what you say or do, you are good in everything, you talk about what you do, how skilled you are, how your child tells you that he would have been honored to have you as a teacher, what your husband has built in the classroom (a bookshelf, if I am correct), how flexible your body is. You show yoga exercises and you teach them to children who are not so flexible. You bend and in an instant you touch your feet, the toes of your feet 2, you are talented in that, I hear you say.



2nd interruption

*The body, this body that writes this letter is very stiff at the moment. The shoulders are stiff, the neck hurts when turned left. So, when I re-read about that day, in which your body is so flexible, about your fingers touching your toes, my body feels a relief! I take a big breath and I imagine my body bending, every muscle releases, every bone rolls starting from the head, the neck, the arms fall in front of the body freely. Now I suspend this moment for a while and then I let the pelvis follow this movement, let the pelvis go to the back while taking with it the rest of the body. The head falls freely and heavy in the front, the upper body is rolled over the pelvis now.*

*Gravity moves to the back of the feet and the back of the thighs stretch now. The body feels its gravity and it follows the natural breath only a bit deeper.*

*A deep breath in, a deep breath out, and again. With every breath out another release, and the upper body folds over the pelvis, the whole body goes a bit lower each time, until after a couple of breaths the fingers touch the ground.*

*Breathing in. Breathing out. Now, in thirty counts the body starts to unfold, bone by bone, one, two, three, four, starting from the tail bone, knees bend, nine, ten, now slowly, slowly, breathing in, thirteen, fourteen, breathing out, the head hangs freely, the eyes are closed, the head stays there, it is the last part that will come up, bone by bone, the lower back, the upper back, twenty two, twenty three, the knees stretch, the feet feel strong on the floor, one can feel the whole foot touching the floor, front and back, breathing in, the eyes are closed, the bones of the neck, the balance of the body, twenty nine, and... thirty.*

*The head comes in an upright position, the eyes remain closed, the upper body is unglued from the lower, solar plexus is open, the body stays there in this state of consciousness with the eyes closed. Breath now resumes to its normal rhythm, and slowly the eyes open, I look in front of me.*

You also guide children to play board games as long as they don't speak, this for some reason seems very important to you. You pay attention to how you can master silence in children and obedience, it seems that you have managed to perfect micro-management.

You have the ability to make children silent in seconds, no one moves or talks, I am not sure if they even breath when you clap your hands with charm and wait patiently until each and every child has stopped talking and moving, and has his/her hands crossed in front of her chest.

You can even do that as a joke to parents that speak to each other and then you wait for us, your audience, until we look with admiration, you suspend this moment, this moment of approval so to say, and then suddenly in a second you say a word (in our mind this sounds like a magic word, I think you use the word 'confetti' ) and then again children can move, and breath and spea... no they are still not allowed to speak.

In order to do so, children of the second grade need to raise their hand that holds a cube with different colors, from its green side, and wait until you go to them and then again with charm and confidence you ask them silently what is it that they want.

You have managed to teach discipline in seconds and it seems so easy from the outside...

This demonstration of skills, this effortless way to control a bunch of eight years old children, the way you can change attitude from smiling to being very strict, to keeping the right distance between you and the parents, you do that so well, it is so convincing.

The class hour finishes and I feel pure admiration for the way you have managed to keep this class so well organized, according to your own rules. Without thinking, not even for a moment, and out of pure admiration before this virtuosic performance, still dizzy and almost hypnotized I reach to you, and you hear me whispering: 'Congratulations!'

I smile and I am excited, I think, wow, she is so talented, I approach you and I almost want to hug you...

You, on the other hand, with your body language, your sudden distant-almost service attitude, and a strict gaze suggestive of the appropriate distance we should keep in this occasion and in accordance to the hierarchical structure our roles impose, namely me being a mother and you being a teacher, ground me back to the classroom. 3

3rd interruption

*Being a teacher especially nowadays is very hard. I recently read an article about how teachers face more aggressive emails and even harassment by parents:*

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/apr/29/schools-parents-pupils-education-teachers>.

*One needs to develop methods to protect herself in the classroom both by children who search naturally for their emancipation mechanisms, and by educated, potent, demanding parents like me.*

*The simplistic idea of a teacher that holds all the knowledge, and of parents that trust and obey, does not exist anymore.*

*Of course, I don't argue that things should have remained or should remain simplified, because this is problematic in-itself, it holds conservatism, a disturbing role power source, and a view that promotes an 'either/or' dichotomy that can lead to populist, even dangerous practices.*

*But, I do realize that things are more complex these days, and because I do care about this complexity, I am interested in finding tools and methods to protect 'her'.*

*I think we all, parents and teachers, and educational institutions, and governmental institutions, should spend time and money to find ways/tools/methods/principles that promote a conversation in regards to those issues.*

*Tools that will eventually make teachers feel less precarious in the classroom. Because if we help teachers feel confident, protected and connected in the classroom, they will not have the need to remain distant or fear intimacy and relatedness, on the contrary they will be free to practice it.*

*Which means that our children will also then feel protected and loved, and recognized.*

*Which for me is the key to their freedom and happiness.*

I look around me, it is a big and pleasant space beautifully decorated and with very large windows from both sides that overlook a huge grass field on the one side, a playground, the school swimming pool, and a panoramic Zurich view on the other. From where I come, this affluence on infrastructure, this excess of space and money spent, somehow bring the dizziness back, and at the same time impose a need to be grateful that all these can be part of the everyday life of my son at a public school in Switzerland.

Now that I write this text, I wonder if maybe this imposed gratefulness that a southern European like me feels before the so well organized school system in Switzerland, me that comes from a country where nothing works, or so it is said, is the reason that gives you the right to impose yourself in this dominating tone.



Your attitude, body language and tone is didactic, it is as if you admonish me for something.

Although I find this attitude offensive, I am impressed by your nerve to perform this attitude towards me, I wonder who the hell gave you the right to actually talk to me like that. But, I don't express any of these thoughts to you, as your attitude is really effective. It keeps me silent and for the moment obedient.

Now, you continue by giving a very serious, yet short speech in private, about what E. should improve, you show a black and white list of goals that should have been achieved by my son E. on this semester, you put much emphasis on the improvements that should be made, you look disappointed and the words you choose prove that a progress should be made ASAP, otherwise something very bad will happen.

You nevertheless don't reveal what is it exactly that is going to happen if (for God's sake no) the behavior is not changed.

You leave the threat hanging over me, another effective method, I would say.

You speak to me in the tone and the authority of a CEO that runs a big company, and admonishes an employ that didn't reach her goals for the month. I find myself in a difficult position when you talk about my son's behavior making a caricature of what I know of him, making gestures and grimaces that are supposed to describe his disrespectful behavior towards you, but while you do them, one can diagnose between the words -'we, his teachers treat him respectfully, while *he* replies with disrespect'- a deep feeling of contempt you have for him. This contempt shows also on your body language and tone when you talk to him, and although *what* you say is polite, *how* you say it makes quite evident that you don't respect him for what he is, that you don't recognize him for whom he is, that you maybe don't even care about who he really is.

I wonder if this comes from an unconscious racist view that you have. 4, 5

4th interruption

*Does this question imply the answer, in other words has it already decided what the answer would be and is used just to convince the readers about this answer?*

*How would this question be put differently in order to remain more open?*

*Are you sure you don't know the answer to this question? Why do you keep asking questions that already imply answers? Does this maybe show a difficulty in creating a dialogue by only using questions, or is it a way to be manipulative and pass on an idea to the readers of this letter?*

5th interruption

*Is there a racist part that you don't realize ? Does any part in you believe in the inferiority of a certain race in comparison to another one?*

*What characteristics you believe a child should have that could make it inferior to others? What are the characteristics that pupils have that make you like them more than others? How do you resist expressing preference to a child if it exists? How do you resist expressing dislike to a child if it exists? Are preferences and dislikes in children related to their behavior towards another person or to a characteristic that relates to themselves? Do we tend to like people who behave well or people who inspire us with their qualities?*

Now, you describe an incident which you name as 'challenging your authority'.

E. refuses to do what you tell him and asks to do it later, you reply that he should do it now because you say so, and he asks what will you do to him if he doesn't do it at the moment and in the way you tell him to.

You reply to him that you will call me, and he asks you to do so.

You find this, as you tell me, the ultimate act of disrespect.

I look at you and this dizziness comes back.

It's only three minutes ago that I admired your virtuosity, and I now don't know how to bridge the previous feeling, with this one of being put on the spot, which is the result of your short, but nevertheless sharp, speech.

You spend some more time praising your behavior towards him, by letting me know that no matter how disrespectful and angry E. is towards his teachers, you still speak to him in a polite manner.

Suddenly, I realize that this whole hour I have completely forgotten about E's other teacher, the one I new from before, the one who was there the first whole year that E. was at school.

She is there, she might even have talked but for some reason I have not noticed her presence.

It is as if she is also silenced, has she been substituted by you? And if yes why? I also suddenly realize that your performance has been so powerful that for the whole hour I have not paid attention to anyone else but you. Everyone else, children, other parents, what is taught, how and why, all has been put aside, and have only been mentioned in relation to you. *You* are not happy with E's attitude, *you* have done this to overcome this obstacle, *you* are polite, *you* are flexible, *you* don't like this, *you* want to see improvements in that, *your* goals are these, *you* achieved obedience etc.,etc. I wonder if you care about who the persons you teach at this fragile state of their lives are. Who they are as personalities, what their dreams are, how they are building their characters? Do you wonder about how they will be helped to become citizens, free people, happy people? Or do you care about them acquiring skills, and achieving goals? 6

6th interruption

*If I take a critical position towards these questions, and attempt to look at them from an institutional point of view, they definitely seem absurd, if not naive.*

*A public school in Seebach, in a not so good neighborhood in Zurich, cannot afford to deal with these questions because they don't reflect the problems this neighborhood is confronted with. These values revolve mostly around notions of integration, and employment security, which have nothing to do with the values of individual freedom and freedom of thought that my questions ask, because the latter ones imply that the former ones have already somehow been achieved. In that sense, my questions are irrelevant and utopic within this community.*

*They are a lot more sophisticated, cosmopolitan, cultured and refined, and therefore could be seen as elitist in a community that focuses in teaching its children to read and write in a (most of the times) foreign language, and to acquire skills and abilities. This, I suppose, is the only way they have found to create the prospect of having a regular job in the future, in the public or private sector, as this is the best alternative, or even the only alternative one can see towards a steady, and therefore happy, life. Consequently, hopes and dreams revolve around the acquisition of a better house, a new car, or a bigger television set. In this context, no one can afford to worry about how to teach children to imagine a different world, to be happy, to create a free spirit and/or to be creative, or even to cultivate their aesthetics, their values, their relationships.*

*We all want the best for our children.*

*The definition of what lies within this 'best' though varies dramatically.*

Ok, I wrote almost all that I wanted to write and my anger towards you, Frau D, is expressed in a more creative, let's say, way. 7

7th interruption

*If this sentence is seen out of its context, and within the therapeutic, psychoanalytical discourse, it can easily be misunderstood as a method I have developed to heal myself, to find ways to help me recover from trauma, so to say. Being so reactive when terms like healing and therapy are used in relation to my work, I am glad this letter remains within its discourse and in context, namely within performative writing. I feel very frustrated when I need to explain to people that I work with autobiographical stories and autoethnography, not in order to heal myself from trauma or in order to apply any kind of therapy to myself. I rather use it as a form of qualitative research within which I use self-reflection and writing, to explore a personal experience and connect it to wider cultural, political and social meanings and understandings.*

From now on, I will try to employ some methods that will help me transform the dominant narrative of the above letter in order to search for the poetic, the related, and the affective, by looking for and shedding light to the precarity each subjectivity experiences within the above narrative.

I am not at all convinced that this will work, but I will give it a try, my dear Frau D.

In order to do so, I will assume that the dominant narrative of the above story is to accuse a second grade teacher of the public school in Switzerland, you Frau D., of being narcissistic, narrow-minded, and petit bourgeois. Of doing micro-management to achieve goals, of being interested in judging achieved goals and acquired skills in children as a group, rather than looking at children as individual diverse characters who need to be treated differently in order to achieve their potentials as humans.

It is also assumed that the latter holds an inferior quality in relation to the former and by lacking it you are accused of being low cultured, a big disadvantage for a teacher whose main quality, according to the author of this letter, is to transfuse culture, and through that the potential of freedom and transcendence to children.



I will now review the above letter and I will intervene in its dominant narrative by employing different methods in the form of an interruption.

I will employ the following methods:

1. *Time/temporality/ephemerality*: being busy with what is happening now in the moment.
2. *Embodiment*: what the body can do or what the body does while I write.
3. *Power*: I shed light to different subjectivities and switch the relation of power among them, in order to see a different perspective of the story.
4. *Repetition*: what remains after several repetitions.

Repetition imposes a rhythm.

5. *Other tools*: taking things out of context, re-articulating questions, conversing in questions, re-articulating movement.

With Best Regards,

Eleni Mylona

5

**A response**  
**By Rodia Vomvolou**

Being asked to write a response to the letters of this collection, as a contribution to this publication, makes me confront with the question:  
To whom should I respond? I could choose to start like this:

Dear Eleni,

Or

Dear reader,

Or

Dear publication,

Or

Dear Assessors of the MTP (Master of Theatre Practices)

Or

Dear Frau D.,

Or

Dear Bavo team and Renzo Martens,

Or

Dear Cultural institution,

Or

Dear participant of the reading group,

Each one of these salutations could take me into a different kind of response, and all of them could be potentially interesting. For now, I will choose the one that seems the most urgent to me. It goes like this...

Dear Eleni,

It's a morning of a week day around 10.00 a.m., I'm in my room in Utrecht, you are in your house in Zurich and we are having a Skype call. Or, it's late in the afternoon, around 7.00 p.m., we are in Brussels in an Airbnb rented house and we are having a face-to-face conversation while drinking tea.

Or it's around 12.00 a.m., we are in Kortestraat in Arnhem and we are working on your next presentation while eating chocolate.

Unfortunately, the exact moment that the idea -of developing these letters into a publication- emerged, slips from my mind. It could be one of the above, all, or none of them.

I cannot either clearly remember if it was you or me that first said it.

What makes it so difficult to situate it in my memory's timeline, is probably the fact that it came so naturally, like it was always there and we just had to say it out loud to each other.

I hope you are going to allow me here to take the right and claim a 'we' space when talking about this publication. It is a 'we' that includes you as the artist and me as the dramaturg, you as the writer of the letters and me as one of the first readers, you as the one discussant and me as the other, you as my friend and me as your friend, you as Eleni and me as Rodia.

Thus, I see this publication also as the result

(and yes I know you are not a fan of this word my dear) of our emotional, mental, artistic and personal exchange, not in terms of its content, but rather in terms of its conception and actualization.

On the other hand, I may have taken it too literally when you say that one of the main elements/concerns of your artistic research and practice is 'to invite people to different modes of co-existence'.

By claiming a 'we' in this publication, I may have taken this invitation a bit further than I should.

Of course, we could discuss a lot about authorship and ownership here, but for the sake of this letter let's not go there now.

Well yes, the truth is that, although I just claimed the 'we' space, this publication is all your achievement – and it was not an easy one.

Thus, by the distance I have claimed back now, leaving the 'we' space, I want to offer my very subjective and informed reading of this publication as a gift to you. Your letters constantly move between the personal and the public-social, the autobiographical and the fictional, the literal and the performative, the real and the symbolic, the critical and the humorous.

You enact a choreography of oscillation, of going back and forth, of constantly re-examining the distance I as a reader have from what I read, and you as a writer have from what you write.

You open up space in my imagination without leaving me all by myself, you use the everyday, the mundane, the description of details as a counterbalance.

You do all of that with care, care for yourself, care for your reader, care for the people you include or address your letters to, care for the language, care for the imagination, care for the world we are currently living in.

Have you understood yet what I tried to do in this response, my dear Eleni? I tried to appropriate the main elements/characteristics of the way the letters of this publication are written by you (namely starting from an autobiographical story that is emotionally loaded and performatively alternate it) and transform it into my own performative writing.

I follow it almost like a choreographic score.

My aim with this letter was :

1. To intervene in the bigger narrative of the other letters, opening up other spaces in imagination.
2. To treat both the reader and you with care.
3. To keep its intimate and personal tone without excluding the reader.

Doing that, I actually follow one of the core aims of your artistic research and practice, which is 'the spectator/reader to achieve emancipation and agency, in order to make her own story out of the appropriated elements, in order to intervene in the narrative in her own way.'

Honestly, I have no clue if I succeeded, but does it really matter?

My warmest wishes,

Your beloved dramaturg,

Rodia Vomvolou



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