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Posttraumatic Theater. A Concept in Progress on the Performativity of Un/Rest.

Katharina Pewny

Aims of the project

The aim of this project is the development of a representational theory of rest. Both theater and performance art are central places/spaces for the negotiation of social challenges in the face of the acceleration and limitation of personal time. As such, theater and performance art offer representations of rest and unrest, and it is through their analysis that I shall develop my theory. It has to be considered that in the European tradition rest and subsequently unrest are interwoven with ideas of the female, and are therefore gendered. The seemingly paradoxical connection of the female with unrest, traumatization, and hysteria, existing in and produced by theater and performance art, is a red thread through the complex net of discourse surrounding rest and unrest. A clear theoretical understanding of theater's and per-

With this article I want to describe the final concept for my Habilitation-project. Therefore it is to be understood as a work-in-progress-presentation.

formance's possibilities of representing rest might be a considerable contribution not only to theater and performance theory but also to cultural studies in general.

The focus on rest offers an affirmative challenge to philosophical diagnoses, which see/find collective suffering in acceleration processes, and remain gender indifferent. The outlined theoretical findings will be produced by connecting contemporary theater and performance theory with gender studies, cultural studies, and trauma theory, as well as with psychoanalytic and philosophic approaches. This theoretical framework will be used to research theater texts by female drama writers and performance art by female performers, from the German-speaking and US-American world since 1996, as well as their staging and media reception. These theater- and performance-specific analyses will inform about the production and negotiation of rest on one hand, and about the function of contemporary theater and performance art in thematizing social problems of acceleration on the other.

In the theater studies of the German language countries, gender-specific theater and performance theory, as well as research about it, is only just beginning. This makes further theoretical developments necessary, in order to connect up with other theoretical discussions¹ and with the large amount of concrete work by female drama writers and performance artists. In order to gain an augmented, changed and more precise understanding of current theater and performance art, gender studies from the German speaking countries have to be connected to the different themes and findings of recent Anglo-American research.

"Hurrying, necessity, acceleration and confinement are ... the great subjects of our time."² Every investigation into possible representations of rest therefore has to consider the connections of rest and unrest (resulting from hurry, necessity, etc.), or rather with unrest as a potential obstacle of rest. Philosophical and social theories show the pull of acceleration in all areas of life negatively affecting the psychic dispositions of man/woman, and implying that women are especially restless on the level of the psyche and the creation of the everyday life.³ The media tells us of a variety of stress-related diseases and nervousness which culminate within urban structures. Investigating the related literature shows that scientific debate about unrest has been increasing for a number of years. Philosophical theories of acceleration,

¹ See Hailde Haider et al., „Feministische Forschung und Theaterwissenschaft“, in Bundesministerium für Wissenschaft, *Innovationen*, 349-357, 354

² See Norbert Bolz, „Das happy end der Geschichte“, in Gerhart Schröder, *Kulturtheorien der Gegenwart*, 203-217.

³ See Paul Virilio, *Rasender Stillstand*, München / Wien 1997.

popular-science instructions for stress management, cultural studies discussions of time structures, and therapeutic trauma theory are all fields surrounding the issue of unrest. But all these researches approach the phenomenon of rest as the negative of unrest.⁴ Like psychoanalysis, trauma theory shows an interweaving of constructions of femininity with theories of nervousness and hysteria since the middle of the 19th century. Like a red thread, femininity can be traced and read through the discourse of nervousness and hysteria, i.e. unrest. Within European traditions, women are represented both as restless (nervous, hysterical) and calmed, iconized sex.⁵ Thus a connection can be drawn between debates around hysteria, artistic expression, and representation, and these have been substantially discussed within the realms of cultural studies and theater studies.⁶ Those debates are forerunners of my intended intertwining of trauma theories with theater and performance art, whose meaning for each other remains at this point completely unthought. With a focus on rest/unrest, a connection between psyche and politics follows, which may put theater studies and cultural studies in a mutually inspiring dialectic.

Within psychoanalysis, trauma theory is currently a prominent topic informing the discourse around unrest (and consequently that of rest). Unrest is understood as a symptom of post-traumatic stress disorders. In this way, trauma theory connects with many theater texts by female drama writers; a third of those investigated for this thematize sexual violence as a menacing phenomenon. In performance art, the theme of the putting-to-rest of women, as well as of the female as a restless and disquieting sex, can be found in relation to sexual violence.⁷ It can be expected that these art forms will offer a rich field for the investigation of the representations of rest and unrest.

The findings about the current loss of rest and the pull of acceleration do not argue for a tendentious cultural pessimism hostile to progress; rather, they postulate that phenomena like rest, unrest, and their representations, which interpret rest and unrest and thus produce them over and over again, have to be reconsidered under shifted social and political conditions. Theater's and performance art's potential to

⁴ An exception is Gerd Achenbach's publication "Kleines Buch der inneren Ruhe". Gerd Achenbach, *Kleines Buch der inneren Ruhe*, Freiburg i. Breisgau 2000.

⁵ See Silke Wenk, *Versteinerte Weiblichkeit*, Köln / Weimar / Wien 1996, p. 131-146.

⁶ See Christina von Braun, *Nicht ICH*, Frankfurt a.M. 1990.

⁷ See Katharina Pewny, *Ihre Welt bedeuten. Feminismus – Theater – Repräsentation*, Königstein / Taunus 2002, p. 106-112.

pick up socially relevant topics and reinforce discussions about them shall be used for this reconsideration.

In this way, through the lens of cultural studies, a not-yet existing bridge between theater, performance theory, psychoanalysis, and gender studies (and in part queer theory) is built, which is indebted to the fact that theater and performance art are connected to the body, and thus may bring forth more speech than classical texts. A focus on theater and performance also demonstrates that within the collective conscious, unconscious and imaginary, which pops up again and again in the arts, there is more interaction with unrest, and thus, *ex negativo*, with rest, than the spoken and written word can currently express. According to this argument, theater and performance art can inform about constructions and conditions of rest and unrest from a female perspective, while both rest and unrest are useful focus points for work about, and analysis of, female drama writers and performers.

Research targets

One: research and critical analysis of texts by contemporary female drama writers, their stagings and their media reception (within German language countries since 1996), as well as productions of female performance artists and their media reception (in New York City since 1996) with a focus on representations of rest and unrest.

Two: the development of a set of tools for the analysis of gender-specific readings of contemporary theater and performance art.

Three: the clarification of connections between rest, unrest, theater, and performance as crossing points of psyche, politics, and methods of representation.

Drawn from this,

Four: a more general assessment of the social function of theater and performance art in times of acceleration.

Five: reinforcement of the inclusion of theater studies in cultural studies.

Six: reinforcement of a cultural studies perspective in theater and performance theory by the inclusion of different spheres of knowledge.

"Rest" is a complex, historically mutable phenomenon that integrates various meanings. In order to respond to this complexity, but also to focus it for the purposes of research, the investigation will be structured by four lines of discussion arising from the connection between theater and performance theory. They are:

gender studies, cultural studies, psychoanalysis, and trauma theory, as well as philosophical approaches.

The connection between theater theory and gender studies

In the 1980s, feminist thinkers began to question the gender specificity of academic disciplines. One level of criticism encouraged the research and visibility of the life and work of women, female artists, and female directors. The following analysis of gender difference and gender deconstruction explored the construction of femininity in theater and in the aesthetics of theater.⁸ These publications show the close connection of the Second Women's Movement and the various political tendencies that succeeded it, from theoretical discussions to cultural transformation instigated by female directors. The deconstruction of "whiteness" and heterosexuality, as well as the conscious visibility of "women of color" and lesbians present in those Anglo-American publications, would not have been possible without their connected political movements. Deconstruction offers a theoretical framework, a basis for the visibility of gender/sex and/in the theater, which allows for a broad, yet to be accomplished, focus on and differentiation of these issues in German-speaking countries. Even if the publications mentioned here and in the bibliography focus on sex/gender and/in the theater, in comparison to literature, film, and new media there is still little research about this topic in German-speaking countries. The historical newness and broad marginality of gender studies in theater theory has meant that development of specific contents has hardly begun. Rather, specifics were developed by a few well-known female authors (like Elfriede Jelinek), or within the context of structural divisions, like works about female authors in the German speaking countries. Within the German-speaking countries it became apparent that socially sensitive issues like the roles of victims and perpetrators in National Socialism or sexual violence are represented in theater texts, but are very diminished and smoothed out both on stage and in media reviews.

From the point of view of cognitive theory, the next necessary step is to examine single topics or phenomena in the works of female theater writers and performers. This will be part of my argument about un/rest. The urgency of this argument is also created by a theoretical and political understanding that constitutes the exclu-

⁸ See Jill Dolan, *The Feminist Spectator as Critic*, Michigan 1988, Sue-Ellen Case, *Performing Feminisms*, London 1990, Elaine Aston, *An Introduction to Feminism and Theatre*, New York / London 1995, Elin Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis*, New York 1997.

sion of women from the scientific and cultural canon, but which does not constitute a specific approach to the world and to theater. My earlier research focused on female drama writers in the German speaking world between 1986 and 1996. My current research will concern theater since 1996.

From the point of view of theater studies, research about female authors and female directors takes the following structure. Up until the middle of the 20th century, women did not occupy the positions of writers and drama writers, meaning they were not able to express their view of the world and the female sex. On the contrary, women were the objects of description. At the same time, numerous female protagonists occupied theater stages. Specifically, in theater, the exclusion of women as historic subjects is accompanied by an inclusion of women as objects of representation. Theater is therefore constituted by this phenomenon of the passive inclusion of women as represented without allowing them access to active authorship. As with other literary forms, this extinction of the female subject constitutes the male author. This asymmetry is intertwined with the forms of theater, and it is also apparent on the level of dramaturgy. Feminist theater theoreticians in the Anglo-American world discuss the relevance of various forms of theater and dramaturgy for attempts at social transformation. These arguments refer to the Western history of culture and theater, which gives subject status exclusively to men. Within this system, the linear development of the plot, accompanied by a linear understanding of time, assigns women the position of supporters of male constructions of subjectivity. Such questions of dramaturgy can be raised anew with the focus on un/rest. Which structures and what dramaturgy appear in the descriptions of calming and disturbing events by women drama writers and women performers? How are they staged and received?

Performance as an art form and performativity as a phenomenon were first developed in the Anglo-American world, and have now partially reached German language-based theater studies. Two lines of research are important for my argument.

The ritual aspects of performance art, which are obvious, as many women performers work with nudity, body fluids, pain, and minimal scenery. Whether the increasing interest in the ritual aspects of performance may be symptomatic of spiritual needs, or rather, whether ritual allows transcendence in the sense of an imaginary construction of a reference point outside permanent transformations, is the main question at stake in the discussion of rest. The second line of research follows and interacts with the studies outlined above concerning gender and/in the theater. It will be centered around the differentiation between biological and social sex in

order to interrogate the heterosexual order, and consequently, to show that the exposure of bodies and sex have always been caught in the mechanisms of representation. Those performances labeled "Lesbian Performances" (even if the category of lesbianism is controversial), reveal the seemingly natural heterosexual order constituted by performance, and how it can be reversed in the old tradition of the Shakespearean theater.⁹ The postulate, formulated by the anthropology of theater, that performance may function as an "in-between" of established art forms and forms of being, becomes true for the "in-between" spaces of gender dichotomies. The deconstruction of gender dichotomies through performativity will be an important element of my research, as those gender dichotomies are intertwined with the notion un/rest (see below).

The surveyed literature clearly shows a tendency inherent in the sciences to personalize radical art forms and to turn them into icons. The complex development of performances by women in the '80s and '90s in the USA, mainly in New York, contrasts with the fact that the relevant literature only mentions a few of them, and always the same women artists and their works (the Split Bridges, the WOW Cafe, Karen Finley, Cindy Sherman, Laurie Anderson, Hannah Wilke, Yvonne Rainer, as well as Valie Export in the German-speaking countries). A few of those icons, who meanwhile stand for feminist/queer performance art, have made their way into prestigious European institutions (such as the exhibition "Tableaus vivantes" in the "Kunsthalle," Vienna, summer 2002). I therefore intend to research and analyze feminist performance art that has not been accessible to the German-speaking world. The focus will be on performance art from New York City from 1996 to the present day, because, unlike the work from the '80s and the first half of the '90s, this period is only marginally described in American secondary literature.

Theories about the works of female performance artists in the USA, as well as the distribution of these theories, became less frequent in the '90s, while at this time performance as a category was first discussed in theater studies in the German-speaking world. This shows that female performance artists initiate and mirror discourses, which shortly after become paradigms - i.e. as the "performative turn in the 20th century." It is exactly this potential which will be discussed in relation to rest.

⁹ See Alisa Solomon, *Re-Dressing the Canon*, New York / London 1997.

The connection of theater theory with cultural studies

Within “Kulturwissenschaften” (“cultural studies”), currently on the way to becoming fully institutionalized, theater is extremely under-represented, despite the proliferation of theatrical notions and phenomena like masquerade, mirroring, mimesis, performance, and representation. To give an example: performativity initiated a theoretical turn within gender studies and then became an important term for linguistics, but the thematizing of its theater-specific connection is only at its beginnings.

If so, it is the presence of so-called real bodies in real time that give theater any position within postmodern discussions of aesthetics. Those arguments often focus on the transformation of reality versus fiction and mediality, or on the possible fusion of reality and fiction by the media.

In modernity, the separation between “reality” and “art”, a common figure for representation, became a fragile concept, and has become differentiated further in so called postmodernity. This separation has also been greatly dissolved within non-traditional art forms. Accordingly, spaces of art and “reality” are no longer strictly separated, but increasingly intertwined. Since its beginnings, performance art radically questioned the separation of art and life. In the 20th century, theater also often “left” the traditional stage-as-viewing-box, and conquered the public and private spaces of everyday life – auditoriums, streets, squares, public transport, and public stages. In the shape of performance art, theater also conquered private “inner-spaces” (for example apartments) and economic spaces (shopping malls, shops), as well as virtual spaces. Performance art’s occupation of a variety of spaces emerged as a consequence of this radical doubt about the separation of life and art. Currently, the “emigration” of theater from traditional stages can increasingly be seen within the political arena. Theatrical and performative forms of representation are now being used by “grassroot movements” in Europe and beyond – as performances at demonstrations, as theater at “No border - border camps,” and as a more active use of the body-as-signifier (the anti-globalization movement “Tutte Bianche”). Parallel to the vanishing of theater from traditional stages, political processes are described by metaphors from theater and performance – as mirroring, staging, masquerade, and performance.

This shows how thought about theater carries the potential to significantly shape ideas of reality (Freedman in Case, 1990). This potential shall be used as a fundamental assumption for my approaches to rest. The augmentation of traditional places for theater and performance art signifies a focus on place. Where does acting

and performing take place? Are they places which point to rest or unrest? Are they places for contemplation, or places for consumption?

A further question within this context is the physical movement and/or rest of the viewers during a play or performance. Theater confronts these issues within a static time-frame and space: the audience can enter the auditorium only at a given point in time at the beginning of the play, the play cannot be stopped, and it cannot be reproduced technically (in contrast to film and video). To leave the auditorium during the play or to speak are socially sanctioned. The fragmentation of attention does not allow a single focus of the world, and current theater concepts, symptoms of so called Post-Modernity, realize a multiplicity of "scenes" on a single stage. Thus the "post-dramatic theater"¹⁰ is a place to demonstrate the fragmentation of ideologies, perceptions of the world, linear structures of time, and life. Aside from the organization of the events on stage within theater and performance spaces, the evoked physicality of the viewers can also be read as a phenomenon of contemporary fragmentation and acceleration processes. On the contrary, theater that eventually transforms into performance, as well as performance art per se, often works with the physical movement of the spectators. As performance art, the theater of the "static vehicle" becomes the "moved and moving vehicle". My argument will have to explain what the difference between physical *Ruhe*/calmness and mobility might mean for spectators during the theater play or the performance, and what it might mean for a culture in the state of a "racing standstill". This will be explained by selected plays and performances.

The connection of theater theory with psychoanalysis and trauma theory

Current psychoanalytic and trauma theory explicitly comment on un/rest and the loss of rest. This fact, as well as psychoanalysis' and trauma theory's common highlighting of traumata in theater plays, as well as the traditional connection of psychoanalysis and theater theory, clarify this focus of my research. Trauma theory, a discourse emerging from psychoanalysis, will be connected in new ways in my research with theater and performance theory. The following are four lines of discourse especially relevant to this connection. They focus on theatrical aspects of hysteria, on trauma theory related to the Holocaust, on trauma induced by sexual violence, and on the position of the viewers and witnesses.

¹⁰ See Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Das postdramatische Theater*, Frankfurt a.M. 1999.

One: any question about rest, especially in the context of theater theory, will inevitably lead to psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis is the theory of the unconscious, and depends per se on mechanisms of representation. Since Sigmund Freud, psychoanalysis has been entangled with play, stage and drama. Significantly, a tight connection has been drawn between hysteria and theatricality. Hysteria, a result of shock and trauma, develops by a "fastening" of affects, which cannot be acted out (they may be partly or completely repressed), and, in the hysterical scene, the affects, now fantastically augmented, are represented by the body. These concentrations and super-impositions take place continuously, because the psychic "stagnation," or trauma, stands for the impossibility of development, and for a need to insist on a certain condition.¹¹ Therefore, hysteria is connected with theater via translation processes operating between psyche and body on the one hand, and via mimesis as a representational action on the other. The phenomenon of hysteria "supplies" a significant nexus between trauma, female psyche, and representation, and this is true not only for gender studies within theater studies. Hysteria is the red thread for research within cultural studies concerned with art / representation / female aesthetics in a broader sense.¹² This research project picks up this thread to connect it with traumatization and to consequently develop this connection further. An important aspect of this development will be the often-neglected connection between sexual violence and psychic instability, already named by Sigmund Freud as "rape" and "neurosis."

It will have to be shown in what way disquieting, traumatizing events are present on stage. Are there implicit hints to traumata or are they named directly? Are there similar structures present in theater plays and performance art as those we know from trauma theory? What does theatrical and performative work with pain mean in this context, and can it possibly extinguish the signifying function of physical expression?¹³ Which kinds of representation for traumatizing events are found in theatrical stagings? What theatrical elements (light, stage design and concept, music, rhythm, movement) are used in their representation?

If Christa von Braun's analysis about hysteria's capacity to transform words into bodies is transferred to theater, then the focus is directed to the stage and performance aspects of theatrical events as possible places of information about traumatiz-

¹¹ See Babette Rothschild, *Der Körper erinnert sich*, Essen 2002.

¹² See Regina Schaps, *Hysterie und Weiblichkeit*, Frankfurt a.M. 1992, Elaine Showalter, *Hystorien*, New York 1997.

¹³ See Elaine Scarry, *Der Körper im Schmerz*, Frankfurt a.M. 1992, p. 3-11.

ing events. Another investigation will be the nature of the verbal and staged articulations of trauma in theater – is trauma's lack of verbal representation also true for theater (which supercedes representation's "common" inability, inherent in verbal representation, in the poststructuralist sense)? Or do theater and performance art as specific cultural institutions have the possibility to speak the "unspeakable", and/or show it?

Two: within German cultural studies, trauma as a category has become increasingly present since the '90s. The holocaust and its effects for the survivors and their successive generations, as well as the successive generations of the perpetrators, motivate this line of research. Methodological debates consider the difficulty of neither universalizing trauma (to understand history solely from the point of view of the holocaust), nor to level available evidence, i.e., to make the unspeakable of trauma absolute. These ideas are relevant for my research, because they also concern trauma induced by sexual violence, insofar as memory and the possibility for representation can be entangled in similar structures. The analysis of cultural and theatrical events can enable a change of paradigms from the dilemma of universalization and leveling to a search for creation (texts, staging, performance art), which, as narratives, can be investigated and taken seriously. Narratives help to make structures visible, and silence and feelings of helplessness are no longer the only possible starting points. As texts and plays, those narratives can be subjects of representation that can be interpreted. A leading question of this research will be whether "trauma-typical" mechanisms of representation can be found in theater plays, stagings, and performance art, and whether specific changes emerge as a result of the media.

Three: in therapeutic trauma theory, un/rest appears as overstimulation, and is one of the many explicit symptoms of post-traumatic disorder.¹⁴ Psychic disturbance is expressed by symptoms like over-agitation, fear, nervousness, increased irritability, inner stagnation within the past situation that caused the trauma, etc. Psychic disturbance appears in psychic processes as well as physical functions. Parallel to the proclamation of the disappearance of real physicality as the final meaningful causality within "Kulturwissenschaften" ("cultural studies"), there is a theoretical line in which constellations of violence, sex, and physicality function together. In addition, constellations of violence are very present in the plays of women dramatists in German-speaking countries. A third of the plays discussed in my doctoral

¹⁴ See Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, New York 1992, Babette Rothschild, *Der Körper erinnert sich*, Essen 2002.

thesis have sexual violence against women and girls as their theme (77 plays by German speaking women authors between 1986 and 1996). The percentage of female survivors of violence is also close to a third (a third or a fourth of all women/girls). It has not yet been openly discussed how theater and feminist performance art represents trauma deriving from sexual violence from a female perspective, and how uncanny the inherent potential of such trauma may be. Research about the trauma of sexual violence will certainly be valuable to my research. Theater and performance art are ideal fields for investigation, insofar as they work with language, space, sound, time, movement, and real physicality. In contrast to dance, which sometimes is presented as a place of metaphor and hysteria, theater and performance mainly work with bodies (in motion) and language. In this way, theater and performance serve to demonstrate translation processes in both directions (Phelan in Foster, 1996). So what does traumatization by sexual violence mean for form and content (dramaturgy, stage design, light, movement, etc.) in the production of rest and unrest within theatrical events and performance art?

Four: theater and performance theory can also be confronted with trauma theory when it comes to the witnesses of trauma. Communities that are witnesses of increasing trauma and individuals who are witnesses of traumatic events and recollections are caught in a similar dialectic as the survivors of trauma – in a multiplied vortex of repression and designation (Herman, 1992). If violence or trauma is represented in theater and performance art, the viewers almost gain the position of witnesses. In my research I intend to investigate and to theoretically differentiate those effects induced by theater and performance that mirror the dialectic of trauma and possible reactions to violence (violent reactions, over-identification with witnesses, mockery, the audience leaving the theater, or refusing to visit the theater (Garner, 1994; Pewny, 2002; Dolan, 1988; Cixous in Drain, 1995). At this point it is possible to make connections with the canon of theater theory. The notion of catharsis (the "break" from overwhelming feelings by living them) is re-visited at this point as is a critique of society that works by "showing" the situation.

Intertwining theater theory and philosophical approaches

In the 20th century, rest is always discussed *ex negativo*, via the discussion of unrest. Since the turn of the 19th century, what rest is not has been comprehensively explained, as well as how un/rest, nervousness and acceleration take place. I will consider rest *ex negativo* on the one hand, and on the other hand attempt a new defini-

tion of rest through its representation by theater and performance. The task is to think the category "rest" anew and to propose a definition that does not have a fixed reference point outside the world, but that finds its reference within the tension between an affirmation of and a detachment from the world. Beyond these discussions, pre-Socratic sources and their a-logical thought may offer inspirations to shape new concepts about rest.

The absence of rest in Western contemporary cultural studies must not be understood as a sign of its irrelevance; rather, it mirrors the repression of the search for, and the possibility of gaining, physical rest. Three lines of modern Western thought will be relevant for my research. The first one outlines the connection between un/rest, psyche, and gender difference, while the second and third lines clarify the social conditions relevant to the analysis of the function of theater and performance art. These three lines of thought are all part of the theoretical framework of my research, which serve to capture the notion of un/rest.

The increasing amount of discussion about nervousness at the turn of the 19th century brought about a notion of rest via its negative aspect, unrest. Un/rest is here presented as a gender-specific representation. The *femme fragile* is the corresponding image of a nervous woman in literature in whom the apparent oppositions of nervousness and rest are combined. A weak nervous system and dependent financial relations characterize and create the image of the *femme fragile*: she is passive and at rest, and thus embodies the image of the naturally calmed and nervous woman. At the same time, the figure of the female librarian appears in the US. She is a young woman who tends to nervousness because of her intellectual activity. The "nervous woman" appears in literature when previous physical explanations of un/rest or nervousness were referred to the then newly-discovered psychic world. In women, the mutual dependency and connection of soma and psyche is discussed as cultural pathology, as a sign, as a cause and carrier of "cultural unease". In my research, I intend to discuss gender-specific links to un/rest in terms of figures from drama.

Contemporary cultural studies understand time as a structuring device. Generalizing time measurements are understood as a homogenization opposed to difference and individualization. Western societies have become "work-leisure societies", meaning leisure time is not unplanned but thoroughly organized. Self-time, meaning time that is not dedicated to social amusements and duties, including reproduction duties, which are mainly carried out by women in their so-called spare time, is steadily vanishing. This thoroughly organized (spare) time disengages women from questions about the meaning of life, of happiness, and of contempt. If relaxation

and reflection on and in the present can motivate self-determination, then work conquers that formerly private sphere.¹⁵ Time for non-activity and the posing of metaphysical questions has given way to instructed work on the self, to plans of career and leisure time. The presence of "work on the self" can also be seen as a consequence of the loss of religious meaning and interpretative ideologies. Therefore, within this development, the question of the function of theater and performance art becomes apparent. Should theater and performance art as goods of cultural consumption be understood as fillings for spare time, or are they places of relaxation that trigger imagination? Do they represent places of calmness and creation of rest, the release from the duties of the everyday, the liberation of an individual or collective imaginary?

At the turn of the millenium, philosophers discuss and publish analyses of the social dynamics of acceleration. These social dynamics of acceleration are localized as changes in the organization of society and work (effects of industrialization), in the psyche (desire to negate death), in the symbolic, and in the imaginary (effects of secularization). In some of these arguments, the dynamics of acceleration are understood as the consequence of the repression of fear and death, as truths that threaten fantasy, or as psychic states, if self-consciousness had existed. Acceleration is not only thought of as increasing speed, as a "flight from oneself", but also as the dialectic of the standstill: one mode of description of acceleration is the simultaneity of calmness and movement. In Paul Virilio's work, an increasing simultaneity of stasis and movement can be found, as the first of many such figures of "static vehicles" (which are often copied by information technologies). Accordingly, theater is understood as a physically motionless state as well as a spiritual journey. At this point, a further fusion of theater and un/rest becomes apparent, which may inform the nature of un/rest as well as the function of theater. The image of theater as a "static vehicle" shows the concurrence of calmness and un/rest, of stasis and movement, of standstill and imagination. This image may be another starting point for the investigation of the social function of theater in the production of rest. Performance art as a "moved vehicle" induces physical movement in the viewers, and expresses the correlation of physical motion and rest.

¹⁵ See Peter Heintel, *Innehalten*, Freiburg i. Breisgau 1999, p. 65.

Methodical and theoretical approaches

This project is to be understood as a “kulturwissenschaftliches” (“cultural studies”) theater-theoretical one. Indebted to poststructuralist thought, it draws on traditions of the humanities and theater studies in the German-speaking and the US-American world. This research employs a spectrum of methods according to the interdisciplinary necessities of the problems it discusses. I want to outline the theoretical frame as a deconstructivist, feminist analysis of discourse. Analysis of discourse here means the analysis of the production of rest and unrest in the theoretical fields of theater- and performance-theory, trauma theory, and philosophy, as well as in theater and performance and their media reception. This analysis is indebted to its feminist-deconstructive origin from which it draws its interest in female authors and performers as well as an interest in the intertwining of femininity, rest, and unrest. Furthermore, deconstructivist, feminist analysis of discourse means understanding fixed images of femininity in their entanglement with the significant phenomena of rest and unrest as discursive effects, but without any, however argued, naturalness of “sex”/“gender”.¹⁶

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¹⁶ See Judith Butler, *Das Unbehagen der Geschlechter*, Frankfurt a.M. 1991.

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