



PERFORMANCE
PHILOSOPHY

STREET SMART OR SMART STREET? THEATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL POWER¹

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The appendix of Elfriede Jelinek's *Die Schutzbefohlenen* [*Charges: (The supplicants)*] (Jelinek 2013/2015) contains the following two sentences:

Die Eroberung der Welt als Bild, das war einmal, denn Bild ist ja herstellen. Die Menschen werden aber nicht hergestellt, und sie bleiben nicht, wo sie hingestellt werden.

(The conquest of the world as picture: that was once upon a time, because, after all, picture is producing/manufacturing. However, humans do not get produced/manufactured, and they do not stay where they are put.)²

Apparently Jelinek is doing something here she has done in many of her texts: playing with formulations that come from Martin Heidegger. In this case she obviously refers to the following passage from Heidegger's essay "Die Zeit des Weltbildes" ("The Age of the World Picture", 1977, 115–154):³

Der Grundvorgang der Neuzeit ist die Eroberung der Welt als Bild. Das Wort Bild bedeutet jetzt: das Gebild des vorstellenden Herstellens.

(The fundamental event of the modern age is the conquest of the world as picture. The word 'picture' now means the structured image that is the creature of man's producing which represents and sets before.) (1977, 134)

In this essay I want to reflect on a current crisis of pictorial framing, marking it as the other side of an ongoing change in the history of power relations, and simultaneously interrogate this crisis's

impact on contemporary theater. To do this, I will take Jelinek's poetic play on Heidegger as quoted above as a travel guide: In the first, more theoretical and historical, part I will derive three interconnected key issues or assumptions from her lines which will structure my whole line of argumentation. In the second part I will take both sentences as a headline or motto for the discussion of *Global Belly* by "Flinn Works" (2017), a performance which indeed touches on all three key issues. To show my cards, however, I want to name these issues right away. In shortest form they read as follows:

- 1) Today's crisis of pictorial framing differs vastly from the crisis of "World Picture" as it was addressed by Heidegger, since its background is the development of network technologies and a corresponding rearrangement of the logics of production ("herstellen").
- 2) One of the most significant symptoms of this difference is a current "deterritorialization of the street"—a process which, for historical reasons, brings with it an enormous challenge for contemporary theater.
- 3) Both of these aspects come together in a huge transformation in the history of power relations which can be described as an ongoing "environmentalization," a notion which I will understand in the sense of Michel Foucault here who introduced the term "environnementalité" in an—albeit rather sketchy or schematic—manuscript which belongs to his 1979 lectures on "governmentality." (Foucault 2008, 260–261)



To develop these assumptions more extensively I would like to point out first that, in the context of theatre studies, Heidegger's essay on the "World Picture" has frequently been used for problematizing the long-lasting traditions of the picture frame stage. One might recall, for example, the 2008 congress of the German Society for Theater Studies *Orbis pictus - Theatrum mundi. Welt/Bild/Theater*, where more than a few lectures brought Heidegger's "Age of the World Picture" together with the history of modern stage installations (Röttger 2010 and 2012). Especially the vastly questioned problems of frontal pictoriality were addressed here, i.e., the cut between audience and stage which informed the tradition of the *scène à l'italienne* since the early modern period. According to Heidegger, the emergence of the "World Picture" was grounded in the positioning of man as a viewer against a picture of the world, making him "die Bezugsmittel des Seienden" ("the relational center of that which is", Heidegger 1977, 128) within a newly-defined optical space. In this sense the "conquest of the world as picture" did also change "das Wesen des Menschen" ("the very essence of man", *ibid.*), giving rise to a series of characteristic divisions: subject and object, self and other, *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, etc. Or in Heidegger's own words: "Daß die Welt zum Bild wird, ist ein und derselbe Vorgang mit dem, daß der Mensch innerhalb des Seienden zum Subjectum wird" ("That the world becomes picture is one and the same event with the event of man's becoming *subjectum* in the midst of that which is," 132).⁴ Therefore, when made in the context of theater, the claim that the "conquest of the world as picture" was "once upon a time" (Jelinek) ultimately reads as another way of saying that today, together with the interpretation

of (hu)man as subject, the epistemological value of the picture frame stage is at least highly questionable. However, one may wonder why to bother with this topic once more. After all, the problematic consequences of this specifically modern optical dispositif have been widely discussed ever since its historical implementation, beginning with the tremendous practical problems involved in the attempt to create a fictitious space as a picture, and including the struggle of the actors' bodies that are supposed to appear in this picture-space, as famously described, for example, in Denis Diderot's *Paradox of the Actor* (1773). And is it really necessary to once again repeat the critique of imaginary relations which after all informed countless historical attempts to overcome the picture frame stage and especially preoccupied the early-20th-century avant-gardes?

On a closer look, the quoted passage by Jelinek does not just re-state these well-known problems. Instead, by connecting the topic of "World Picture" (or rather its fading) with the issue of production ("denn Bild ist ja herstellen") it opens a complex contemporary question which is related to philosophy of technology and also concerns my first key assumption as depicted above. In order to develop this question step by step, I would first like to recall Heidegger's own localization of "World Picture" within the modern logics of "herstellen". Interestingly enough, what looks like a low pun in Jelinek's version actually concerns the core of Heidegger's method of thinking, since in his texts the connection between "Bild" and "herstellen" was in fact frequently conveyed through linguistic derivations: "Gebild" ("the structured image"), "welt-bilden" ("world-building" or "world-forming"), but also "dar-stellen" ("re-present")—words in which the optical aspects of the terms "Bild" and "Darstellung" merge with connotations of productive manufacturing ("bilden"/"herstellen"). This conceptual maneuver leads then to Heidegger's infamous problematization of the so-called modern "Ge-Stell" ("enframing"), as we find it for instance in his 1953 speech "Die Frage der Technik" ("The Question concerning Technology", Heidegger 1977, 3–35). According to this the modern "Gestell"—i.e., the logics of industrial production—"her- und darstellen" ("producing and presenting") converge (21). But what's more, the blending of "herstellen" and "darstellen" points also to Heidegger's general ontological understanding of technology as "poiesis" which according to him has two different interpretations: the modern "Herstellen" which is "herausfordendes Stellen des Natur" ("a challenging setting-upon of nature") and fits the representational frameworks of the "World Picture," but also the ancient (Greek) one which in Heidegger's eyes implied "ein anderes Stellen" ("another *Stellen*", 21): namely, a more careful mode of "Entbergen" ("revealing," 12), "das im Sinne der poiesis das Anwesende in die Unverborgenheit hervorkommen läßt" ("which, in the sense of poiesis, lets what presences come forth into unconcealment," 21).

Now, much has been written about the problematic aspects of Heidegger's contradistinction between the "challenging" modern production and then a pre-modern respective ancient revealing which allegedly meant "hegen und pflegen" ("to take care of and to maintain," 14–15). And for sure this opposition is highly questionable, even if Heidegger emphasized that the two interpretations of "poiesis" must not be treated as a dualism but, rather, "remain related in their essence" (21). However, in this essay I will not deal with the conservative and antimodern implications of Heidegger's understanding of technology once more. Rather, along with Jelinek's "once upon a time..." my main question is whether terms like "Gestell"/"Enframing," "poiesis" and also "World

Picture" as such are still in keeping with the times—particularly against the background of most recent technological developments, i.e., the conditions of network technologies and the "internet of things." Such questioning starts with very simple considerations: for instance with the fact that the German "Ge-Stell" (and its derivations) also points to an "An-gestellten-kultur" ("culture of salaried masses") which was certainly typical for the early-20th century, but since then has been vastly transformed due to the emergence of more recent forms of freelance self-exploitation, and, more generally, with the unfolding of today's "control power" (to recall Gilles Deleuze's much-quoted sketch of the "societies of control" (Deleuze 1995)). But even if such a question might seem naive at first sight,⁵ it nevertheless leads to more refined problems very quickly. To name just one, I would like to mention Donna Haraway's most recent attempts to introduce the term "sym-poiesis": "Sym-poiesis" is primarily intended to correct the concept of "auto-poesis," as it is used in the fields of Systems Theory (Haraway 2016). But at the same time it clearly questions whether Heidegger's "poiesis" is still (or ever was!) a proper term for the "Wesen der Technik" ("essence of technology." Heidegger 1977, 4).⁶ And the same holds true for the term "World Picture": If we connect it with the history of frontal pictoriality *and* with that of industrial production (and this is precisely what Heidegger and Jelinek are doing), we also have to ask if this term is able to describe today's more algorithmic image culture: Can the imagery of *Instagram*, *TikTok* or the so-called selfie culture still be addressed and moreover criticized in the logics of "World Picture"? Do the participants in this image culture still fulfill the criteria of the Heideggerian subjectum (or man), as being positioned against the picture of the world?

To sharpen these questions, I want to come to my second issue now, i.e., the process which I above named the "deterritorialization of the street." However, since this may sound a bit odd or cloudy at first, I will try to explain it in more detail. So what is meant by "the street" here?⁷

I would like to start with a closer look at the very time of formation of the *scène à l'italienne* (and thus the "Age of the World Picture"): i.e., the Italian Renaissance which established not only a close connection between theater and Single-point perspective but indeed grounded this connection in the newly defined field of the street as I am going to address it here. This grounding was enabled by two epistemological developments of the time. The first one concerns the epochal dynamics of the Renaissance which did not want to have its vanishing point in a transcendent vertical order—i.e., the Christian heaven—any longer. In this context, the central perspective appears as a technology which made it possible to define an intramundane horizon, to place this horizon on human eye level and also to project focusing vanishing points there. (This is in fact in a nutshell what Heidegger's *subjectum* as the "relational center of that which is" is about.) And now the first crucial point is that numerous pictures and drawings from this period again and again concretized the abstract construction of vanishing points by the image of a street which runs from the viewer towards the horizon. One can therefore clearly see how the projective energies of the perspective did indeed intermingle with a newly defined street. Moreover, it is fair to say, that in this sense the street itself became a projective and perspectival medium during the early modern period.

The second development concerns then the fact that Renaissance cities like Florence grounded their newly declared independence primarily in their state as mercantile city states. This is why

they defined themselves in relation to a particular external space: not the countryside, but indeed the city street as their self-created, artificial outside.⁸ Not only did the most significant external relation of those cities therefore neither involve heaven, as was the case during the Middle Ages, nor cosmic landscapes, as could be argued for the ancient Greek polis (a point I will come back to with *Global Belly*). The new orientation also brought into play all the energies, agents and milieus associated to the street: monetary transactions, market activities, goods traffic, and all sorts of mobility connected to commercial routes and transportation networks.

Now, from both these developments resulted a long-lasting condition which I would like to name the “double inheritance of the street.” On the one hand, being in league with the projective energies of the central perspective the street became a central element of the one-sided European world conquest from the early modern times on. Therefore the “conquest of the world as picture” was literally carried out on the street, and in this sense it was in fact the material base of the “World Picture” and its representational logics.⁹ But on the other hand the street, being the urban outside, always had another, non-representative, “nomadic” vector. This other side brings into play the sphere of vagrants, tramps, adventurers, and therefore all kinds and ways of living on the road. And it is most fascinating that both vectors of the street, the representative and the non-representative one, were indeed defining factors for countless and very different theater forms from the early modern period on. On one side the picture frame stage was profoundly shaped by the representational street vector: Not only did early scenographers like Sebastiano Serlio try to re-arrange street-views in the new interior stages. The optical theater apparatus itself is modeled after the arrangement “viewer – intermundane horizon” and in parts even explicitly informed by street terms, i.e., the “Bühnengassen” (the German word for the wings of the stage). Then again, the nomadic street vector was extremely important for all those (popular) theater forms that tried to avoid the institutional logics of permanent theaters. With special regard to the early modern period, we could think of the touring companies, comedians and artists as they have been described (in the German-speaking context) particularly by theater historiographers following Rudolf Münz: the commedia dell’arte, carnivalesque theater, later the Parisian fairground theater. However, one will hardly find a single case of theater relying just on one of the two vectors, i.e. being purely nomadic or purely representational. Rather, modern theater history is full of hybridisms which worked literally “both sides of the street”, like Molière whose comedies were staged at the royal court, but based on scenarios for his touring company.

If we then go a step further and take a look at the early-20th century, the first thing that comes into view is an eminent crisis of the optical dispositif as it was established from the Renaissance on— i.e. the very crisis of “World Picture” as it was addressed by Heidegger and his contemporaries. This crisis was characterized by the development of modern metropolises, by the rise of the masses, by the emergence of new media (film, radio) and by processes of acceleration (trains, the first automobiles etc.). In other words, one decisive background of this crisis was a huge transformation of a visual culture that had shaped the face of European cities from the Renaissance on, and in contemporary texts we find this transformation frequently described as a general loss of visibility: “Eine Fotografie der Kruppwerke oder der AEG ergibt beinahe nichts über diese Institute. Die eigentliche Realität ist in die Funktionale gerutscht” (“A photograph of the Krupp works or AEG

reveals almost nothing about these institutions. Reality as such has slipped into the domain of the functional," Brecht 2000, 164), as Bertolt Brecht famously wrote in 1930. However, what I want to draw attention to here is that this crisis was still deeply linked to the—albeit modernized—street: Not only was the street now as before the central bearer for most of the new vehicles that brought about the acceleration processes typical of the times. It also became the most important place of the modern masses: This is why early cinema was obsessed with street scenes, inventing a new iconography for the metropolises. Similar, theater reformers and avantgardists also relied in their attempts to overcome the picture stage frame heavily on the street relation once more: rediscovering older nomadic and popular forms (commedia, circus etc.), but also referring to the most modern street milieus of the time—cars, gangsters, boxers, as we find it paradigmatically in Brecht. Furthermore: Also the "double inheritance" of the street reappeared under the changed conditions. Where the street was connected to the projective energies of perspective constructions (its representational vector) it was now able to merge with even vastly exaggerated future projects as they were typical for parts of the historical avantgardes. In this context the street did also get involved with the totalitarian projects of the time: Just think of the importance of the street for National Socialism: the "Reichsautobahn," the SA, songs and lines like "Die Straße frei," etc. Nevertheless, due to its nomadic vector the street was simultaneously suitable for articulating the modern conditions of "transcendental homelessness," and also points to the new mass phenomenon of refugees as described for instance by Hannah Arendt.

In the context of this history, however, something else is to be considered, and this is now where the question comes into play how today's crisis of "World Picture" differs from that back then. What has to be taken into account here is the ever-increasing development of technologies that are able to access environments such as the deep sea, airspaces, the atmosphere and eventually all kinds of macro- and microspheres in novel ways. Thus, from the invention of sonar and radar signals via the implementation of satellites and remote sensors through to the latest achievements of smart or even "smart biosensor" technology and "affective computers" outfitted with "bionic senses,"¹⁰ the last hundred years did not just see ever-expanding possibilities of (bio)electronical government. Since technologies became more and more comprehensive in their ability to steer global movements from earth's orbit, they also led to an increasing transgression of the whole field of the street. And although some symptoms of this process were certainly already apparent in the early 20th century, it came to an explosive head only from its second half and particularly its end on. At least with the establishment of "Google Earth," the good (or rather bad) old Renaissance horizon has been effectively deterritorialized. One could describe this transformation also with terms Peter Sloterdijk has suggested for a "Philosophical theory of globalization" (Sloterdijk 2005): The street and all that is connected to it was the most important medium of the "terrestrial globalization," which transformed the globe into a "World Interior of Capital" from the early modern period on. Accordingly, its deterritorialization belongs to the dynamics of a later "electronic globalization" which not only eclipsed older optical media but started precisely under the condition that the terrestrial globe was being "completed" in the course of the 20th century.

Still, one has to avoid two possible misunderstandings here. I mentioned "Google Earth" and thus a software that still seems to address a viewer. But it is most important that the imagery used by

“Google Earth” is in fact not produced by optical techniques any longer: The remote sensor images this software is based on do not follow the mirroring and projecting logics of the telescope—comparable to the difference between scanning and reading—and what happens when we are using this literally “blind” imagery telescopically is not only that we disregard its process of formation. Moreover, we re-inscribe it into registers of representation which are in fact embedded or included in a much wider “media ecology” today.¹¹ This, in turn, concerns the second possible misunderstanding: I am of course not simply saying that we do not use streets any longer. Rather, what I want to draw attention to is that, under the condition of the satellite control system, the street is being embedded into a much wider environmental field. We could also make a historical comparison here and first recall how the role of the feet changed with the emergence of automobiles or the role of the hands under the conditions of the Fordist assembly belt—they became disintegrated partial objects which ceased to be the main point of interest for technologies of power and government, simultaneously losing their state as dominant elements of epistemological significance, but in turn allowed for all kinds of remediations and reterritorializations. But it seems not exaggerated to say that a similar thing happens to the whole milieu of the street and especially to its vehicle fleet itself today—which for instance explains why early digital times coined the term “data highway”, just as the early era of the automobile invented the unit “horsepower”, but also casts a light on the role automobile nostalgia plays in reactionary political movements like Trumpism.

So, summing up, this functional loss of the street and its (literally) driving forces is precisely why “the conquest of the world as picture” was “once upon a time.” The question, however, is what this means for theater which was so vastly informed by the street’s double inheritance in modern times. I am not just talking about the Renaissance or the early-20th century here. On the contrary: It is most peculiar that the street was still a defining frame of reference for many theater forms after 1945. It was for instance most important for youth and protest movements which culminated around 1968 – for Beatniks and Hippies who wanted to live “on the road”, for groups like the “Living Theater,” for the French Situationist International (“Sous les pavés, la plage”/“Beneath the paving stones, the beach”) and also for the German “antiteater” (Fassbinder). In 1968 Peter Weiss even stated: “The street is our mass medium” (see Kreissl 2000, 138). But moreover, even Frank Castorf’s “Volksbühne” was a theater that during the 1990s once more (perhaps for the last time?) gained its force from the street milieu, as formats like the “Rollende Road Show” and even its logo, the “robbers’ wheel,” already made clear enough. In any case: In the 21st century an opening to classical street milieus seems to work less and less and, if still relied on, produces mainly nostalgic effects. It is therefore an open question to which extent theater will still be able to invent new forms or even just to “stay in the running” by relating to this field: Not only because the projective energies of the street have been outrun, but above all since it becomes more and more clear that its nomadic vector is also being affected by this process.

What is still missing now is a commentary on Jelinek’s claim that “humans do not get produced/manufactured” and “do not stay where they are put”: formulations which apparently touch the issue of subjectivation and also of a possible dynamization or even liquefaction of human contours and standpoints. It is therefore not too difficult to again connect it to the question of the

“subjectum” as addressed by Heidegger: If the logics of the modern World Picture were in line with those of frontal pictoriality, of the “Ge-Stell” and also, as we have seen, of the street, then we have to assume that these logics are likewise being—or have already been—transformed today. However, I want to discuss this issue particularly against the background of a history of power relations here. Therefore I would like to approach the question why “humans do not get produced/manufactured” particularly by drawing on a term by (late) Michel Foucault: This is the term “environmentality” which Foucault introduced in a short, but extremely important manuscript belonging to his 1979 lectures on “governmentality” (Foucault 2008).¹²

To grasp this term properly one should first recall that Foucault used the concept of “governmentality” to describe a certain type of a power which developed during the 17th and 18th centuries: This type of power appears primarily neither as sovereign legal power nor by means of disciplinary techniques (as we find them with Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon). Instead, it seeks to govern and control living beings and things via their mutual embeddedness in all kinds of human and non-human relations. However, by coining the term “environmentality,” Foucault particularly aimed at forms of a then (i.e., 1979) most recent and just developing governmentality, explicitly reflecting on a contemporary “massive withdrawal with regard to the normative-disciplinary system” (260). Environmental governmentality therefore appears to be one of the main *modi operandi* of neoliberalism inspired by the Chicago School: i.e., a power strategy that does not so much rely on the exclusion of non-normalizable forces, but on the contrary aims at a

society in which there is an optimization of systems of difference, in which the field is left open to fluctuating processes, in which minority individuals and practices are tolerated, in which action is brought to bear on the rules of the game rather than on the players, and finally in which there is an environmental type of intervention instead of the internal subjugation of individuals. (259–260)

According to Foucault, among the main aspects of environmental technology are therefore: “the definition of a framework around the individual which is loose enough for him to be able to play,” “the possibility for the individual of regulation of the effects of the definition of his own framework,” and, above all, “not a standardizing, identificatory, hierarchical individualization, but an environmentalism open to unknowns and transversal phenomena” (261).

Back in 1979, when Foucault talked about the environmental shift, he addressed contemporary processes like the development of behavioral engineering and environmental psychology. Then again, if one re-reads his lectures today, one can easily see that all the aspects he named back then should later become well-known parts of the most recent neoliberalism shaped by digital networks. The crucial point is that, although environmental power started to emerge vehemently after 1945 at the latest and has its historic roots even much earlier, it has only recently been able to become hegemonial, having found its proper support in the said technologies. So it is no wonder that Foucault’s term environmentality has been taken up frequently in recent times for the analysis of “algorithmic governmentality,” “smart environments,” “affective computing,” and generally of a controlling power that has effectively shifted from panoptic surveillance to the “capturing” of series and clusters of pre-individual movements, gestures, traces and affects (Gabrys 2009; Hörl 2020;

Massumi 2009; Taylan 2017). What all these different analyses emphasize is the fact that an “environmental citizen is not governed as a distinct figure; rather, environmentality is an extension of the actions and forces—automaticity and responsiveness—embedded and performed within environments” (Gabrys 2009, 34). This means that environmental governmentality does not require subjects whose bodies are locked and enframed “under the surface of images,” as was the case with the panopticon (Foucault 1977, 217) and its theatrical equivalent of the actor attached to the picture frame stage. Instead, the dynamic processes of individuation to which environmental interventions apply fall below and/or exceed the threshold of perception defined by the “panoptic machine” (ibid.).

So, what I want to draw attention to by these remarks is the fact that it is not sufficient to address the issue of environmentality by still focusing primarily on the ideological effects of imaginary relations—respectively, in a theater context, the picture frame stage. After all, this kind of critique finds its main points of attack in the normalizing effects of panoptic traditions which environmentality itself started to treat as a relic of an age gone by. To put it more frankly: Instead of the “conquest of the World as a picture,” we are dealing today primarily with the “conquest of the World as environment” in the particular Foucauldian sense of the word. Again, this does not imply that today’s environmental world is without imagery. On the contrary: We are perhaps more than ever surrounded by images. But this imagery is not in itself optical any longer—just as the imagery of a *Zoom* meeting is not that of Bentham’s panopticon, but is, rather, the blind (and blinding) imagery of controlling power.



Against this conceptual background I will come to *Global Belly* by “Flinn Works” now. “Flinn Works” was founded by Lisa and Sophia Stepf, Konradin Kunze and Helena Tsiflidis in Kassel in 2008 and since then has constantly been working on topics of the globalized world with feminist and postcolonial approaches. The performances of “Flinn Works” could be counted among a form of theater that has recently been described as “Recherchetheater” (“research theater,” Feindel and Rausch 2016). Accordingly, *Global Belly* is based on a whole year of research in five countries. What makes this performance particularly interesting here is that it indeed presents us with a shining example for humans neither getting “manufactured” nor “produced” in the classical meaning of the word(s). *Global Belly* is about the logistical, legal, media and gender-political conditions under which the booming industry of transnational surrogacy operates today. Furthermore, it makes clear that these conditions have emerged together with environmental technologies which are capable of detaching the smallest components from individual bodies, allowing them to circulate globally and getting reassembled later.

A maximum of just 30 guests can take part in the performance which takes place in a room that is structured by two large video screens (in the center) and four huge advertising banners defining a circuit course with four separate stations. The guests are divided into four smaller groups and follow this course after being assigned different roles and positions four times. Each of the four stations describes another aspect of the highly complex logistics of today’s surrogacy industry, in

which sperm, eggs and newborns constantly circulate around the globe, and at each station we get to talk to another performer (Anne Hoffmann / Cornelia Dörr, Matthias Renger, Sonata, Lea Whitcher) who takes the part of a person involved in these logistics. One of them introduces himself as a homosexual friend of ours, joyfully pouring us Martinis and proudly telling us that he and his partner finally decided to order a baby. For this purpose both men's semen was mixed together and then got implanted into the donor egg of a US citizen whom our friend found by means of an online surrogacy platform. After that the fertilized egg was flown to India and implanted in a surrogate mother there.

At the next stop, we take the position of a group of Indian surrogate mothers who are presented with the results of their latest pregnancy tests. Here we meet a doctor (i.e., another performer) who tells us that one of us seems to be sterile, but another one is pregnant with triplets now. The doctor also explains that, since only one baby has been ordered by the clients, two of the embryos will be aborted (which is in fact a common practice in today's surrogacy industry). Then again, at the following stop we get to know an Anglican surrogate mother and anti-abortionist who presents her personal set of rules. She particularly emphasizes that the child will have to be carried out, even if prenatal diagnostics should reveal that it has trisomy 21. Finally, we meet a Ukrainian lawyer who informs us about the legal loopholes allowing the newborns to travel to Germany.

Now, taking up my three key issues again, I'd like to focus on three aspects of *Global Belly*. First, the performance indicates that there is also a striking gender aspect related to the Heideggerian concepts of "Weltbild" and "herstellen" regarding their mutual fading. Put frankly: Environmental technology exceeds also the techniques of classical sexual (re)production by establishing an eminently post-sexual dispositif. It is not an exaggeration to say that this touches Heidegger's idea of technology as "poiesis" in general. On one side, his German translation "das Anwesende in die Unverborgenheit hervorkommen lassen," is at least faintly reminiscent of a paraphrase for "giving birth" and therefore of the very process which is distorted beyond recognition by the procedures that the surrogacy industry depends on. Then again, it would be much more appropriate to describe this new kind of parturition literally as a variant of "sym-poesis," since there are in fact all kinds of human and non-human actors and ultimately the whole globe (or earth) involved—*Global Belly*. It seems fair to say also that also physical production is changing its character in this process. At least, the Indian surrogate mothers are by no means "producing" babies; instead, they could be better described as parts of a global machinic assemblage which does not so much subjugate but rather "enslaves" them (to quote an illuminating distinction here that Deleuze and Guattari introduced in *A Thousand Plateaus*, 1987, 456–460).

This remark leads also to my second point. Above I mentioned the blind and at the same time non-(pan)optical imagery of control power which nevertheless is frequently used as if it would still follow the logics of projection. Accordingly, by exposing the media ecology which enables the managing of a global surrogacy business, *Global Belly* also shows to what extent such re-inscriptions and reterritorializations are crucial for the functioning of today's non-disciplinary capitalist economies. This is why we, as participants, do not just get in touch with the four "Flinn Works" performers here. Instead, we are constantly surrounded by various screens and displays

which affect us from different sides, making face-to-face-communication a more or less secondary effect. We are, for example, presented with a number of advertising trailers that praise the alleged progress of surrogacy platform capitalism, which also enables queer couples to become parents. We are allowed to Skype with the feminist-minded owner of a surrogate mother company in Israel, who then is called away from her screen by the lucky news of successful pregnancies in Thailand. Later the Anglican surrogate mother proudly presents photos of her already delivered children, which she regularly requests from her former clients. Then again, while drinking Martinis, the visitors can admire the egg donor's profile via smartphone: a neat blonde who has just the one flaw that she is a card-carrying Trumpist, which the ordering party unfortunately recognized too late. So all in all, we become components of a hyperconnective media environment which underlies our interactions with the performers and at the same time opens the local (theater) space to more global dimensions. But we also experience the extent to which all these interfaces and internet platforms are being used to fill the gap between the anonymous global circulation of non- or pre-human particles and the ordering couples' desire for children. Imagery, therefore, plays a significant role in the performance. However, it is even more interesting that this supposedly progressive imagery of parenting, beyond the frames of a classical nuclear family, is in fact completely in line with the logics of a not-normalizing environmental power as depicted by Foucault. It fulfills therefore exactly the criteria quoted above: It is "open to fluctuating processes, in which minority individuals and practices are tolerated;" it does not advocate "a standardizing, identificatory, hierarchical individualization, but an environmentalism open to unknowns and transversal phenomena;" and, above all, it defines "a framework around the individual which is loose enough for him to be able to play," opening up "the possibility for the individual of regulation of the effects of the definition of his own framework." In short, this imagery is by no means enframing, neither in the sense of the panoptic machine, nor in that of the Heideggerian "World Picture" and "Ge-Stell."

The third aspect, however, is the most complex one, and it also brings us back to the issue of the street. What interested me most when I attended *Global Belly* was that this performance does not so much refer to the secular perspectival street as we know it from the Renaissance on, but rather to its Christian predecessor. The circuit course of the performance is not just reminiscent of the medieval cycle play and the practices of a religious parade, but moreover—as the number of four stops clearly indicates—of an Advent wreath. As another element of the performance underlines, this is indeed no overinterpretation: The Anglican surrogate mother bears the name Mary, whereas her husband is said to be working as a carpenter, just as Saint Joseph did. This is, of course, an allusion to the legend of "immaculate conception" and thus to Holy Mary's "career" as the archetypical Christian surrogate mother. But above all, it connects the most current, nonreproductive and "sym-poietic" technologies of fertilization with the virgin birth of Jesus. And indeed, the biblical story tells its own version of a kind of childbearing that was pervaded by non-sexual and non-human forces, even if not in the form of globe or earth, but in that of a monotheistic and transcendent god.

Now, on the one hand this is perhaps the most ingenious move of *Global Belly*: By referring to the Christian street, the performance suggests that the desires and also the imagery which today's

surrogacy industry exploits are ultimately informed by the logics of Christian Advent and its salvation history. To wait for the coming of a baby that, since it is not “produced” within a modern sexual dispositif, is able to bring redemption to *all* couples and life forms, no matter their sexual orientation: This is the non-disciplinary ideology from which the surrogacy industry draws. Strangely enough, its counterpart is therefore a street which works not only post-perspectivally, but also recalls its pre-perspectival Christian ancestor. If we try to find an explanation for this surprising correspondence, we might perhaps find it in the fact that modern governmentality even in its most recent forms is still a descendant of Christian “pastoral power” (Foucault 2009, 115–190).

However, on the other hand, the performance, as being informed by the topology of the Advent wreath, is in a way on the same level as the clients, users and consumers. In other words: It still takes a street as a kind of starting point or base of operation, although mainly exposing and exploring its condition in the ages of “electronic globalization.” One can see this, by the way, in the fact that this is the only place where the performance seems to remain in line with the limited Heideggerian terminology. After all, a further translation of “poiesis” we find in Heidegger is “auf den Weg bringen” (“to start upon the way”) or simply “schicken” (“to send”) (Heidegger 1977, 24), terms which reveal the explicitly postal and, at the same time, the more hidden Christian character of his entire concept of technology. So it seems fair to say that *Global Belly*, at least at this point, does not really exceed the frame of the Christian “schicken” but rather exposes the fact that the surrogacy industry treats the globally circulating components of human babies ultimately as “Christmas mail.”

In my postscript I will return to this issue of sending and mailing. Here, I would like to pursue another question, which in my eyes arises from this context. It is important to remember that the Christian legend of Holy Mary, being a story of an intimate entanglement between God and a human girl, is for its own part only a derivative narrative. Especially in ancient Greek mythology, such tales can be found in abundance. The crucial difference, however, is that Greek mythology knows neither a monotheistic God nor a transcendent heaven. Instead, it is based in a rhizomatic cosmos which enfolds the world of humans or mortals (anthropoi). In more technical terms: What we find in Greek mythology is ultimately a topological inclusion of the secondary human world in a more general cosmic field pervaded by all kinds of non-human forces and energies. Interestingly enough, in this topology streets do not play a significant role—their spiritual career is indeed due only to the Christian implementation of the one and only transcendent father and his salvation-bearing son.¹³ This becomes even clearer if we think of ancient Greek theater. Unlike modern theater, tragedy (and also Aristophanic comedy) did by no means relate to an urban outside defined by the street and all that is connected to it. Instead, the “outside” here was cosmos, and this holds true even if the Greek polis’ awareness for its embeddedness in cosmic forces faded during the 5th century BC. Furthermore, it is fair to say that the most important bearer of cosmic awareness in Greek theater was the chorus, and after all that has been said and done here it should not come as a surprise that it was particularly the chorus that was excluded, or at least extremely reshaped, in later “street theater,” particularly from the early modern period on.

Now, against this background it is all the more noticeable that in *Global Belly* the question of the chorus is also more or less absent. Instead, the street parcoure of the performance makes us encounter a series of single persons who, although by no means individualized in the old standardizing, identificatory, hierarchical manner, are nevertheless far from being choric figures. Rather, they ultimately resemble the “dividuals” Deleuze portrayed in his “Postscript”: “control man undulates, moving among a continuous range of different orbits” (Deleuze 1995, 180). These are network people, not “chorus people.” It is therefore perhaps not by chance that the interactive roleplaying with the four performers might also be—at least for my taste—a less felicitous component of *Global Belly*.

But even if one may come to a different assessment here, these considerations allow us to question once again the status of the street as the “starting point” of the performance. If we put it very pointedly (and certainly in a risky way), we could say that the emergence of hyperconnective media and environmental technologies has also brought up and renewed questions of human embeddedness in “cosmic” forces—although we certainly do not impersonate these forces as Zeus, Apollo, Athene or Poseidon today. Then again, in the field of theater, this development is accompanied by a renewed interest for the chorus, being the very figure of theater that preceded its long connection with the street. However, it is an open question if theater today—even in its most experimental choric forms—is or will be able to really relinquish its street connection: if only because modern ideas of public space were deeply grounded in the history of the street.¹⁴

POSTSCRIPT

I started working on the issues depicted in this essay after attending the 2018 symposium “Wie Logistik und Masterpläne das Leben in der Stadt verändern” (“How Logistics and Master Plans Change Urban Life”), which the Forum Freies Theater Düsseldorf (FFT), one of the major independent production houses for theater and dance performances in Germany, hosted as part of its larger research series *Stadt als Fabrik (City as Factory)*. This research series has a very special aim: The city of Düsseldorf has recently sold the building close to the city center which hosted the venues of the FFT to an international hotel chain. Therefore, the FFT is about to move into another building which is located not far from the Düsseldorf main station. Since this building is quite huge, the FFT is not its only inhabitant-to-be: Being projected as a new “cultural hotspot,” it will also house the Düsseldorf theater museum and the urban library. Thus, the relocation of the FFT is part of a general “creative city” master plan the city of Düsseldorf wants to realize.

However, to understand the stakes of this “master plan” one has to know two things. First, the area around the Düsseldorf main station has a reputation for attracting homeless people, drug addicts and also refugees. Furthermore, the new cultural hotspot is close to the “Worringer Platz” which is a square in Düsseldorf considered a dirty corner and eyesore. In other words: The new “cultural hotspot” is ultimately part of an urban strategy to “upgrade” the area, to “redesign” the district and in the end to drive those people away who “disturb the cityscape”—which suddenly puts the FFT in the role of a potential gentrifying agent. (This is, by the way, a further example of how environmental governmentality works, this time in the context of urban policy: it’s not

“interpellating” subjects, but much more manipulating the environments in which they are embedded.) Therefore, by interrogating the role of city master plans the FFT ultimately aims to clarify its own future role. The second aspect, however, is even more significant in the context of this essay: It concerns the building itself which will house the new FFT. Formerly it was Düsseldorf’s main post office, an expansive building that was erected only in the 1990s as a hub for the distribution of letters. This building has been abandoned in the course of recent reconfigurations of logistical infrastructures, which have led to the construction of huge distribution centers in the urban periphery by *Amazon* and the Post’s own *DHL*. Thus, the new site of the FFT is a building that can itself stand in for the deterritorialization of the street, which in this case means a shift from the post office to *Amazon*.

Now, against the background of what I have developed here it is not difficult to put this shift in parallel to the other developments I talked about: Just as Haraway’s “sympoiesis” suits today’s technological conditions better than Heidegger’s “poiesis,” just as the street has been opened to rhizomatic “cosmic” dimensions, just as the panoptic logics have been substituted by a blind control imagery, also the older logics of postal mailing have been effectively overlain by those implied by *Amazon*. More pointedly: If the Heideggerian “Age of the World picture” was also the “Age of sending” and thus an “Age of the mail” and of the “post office,” its current crisis could literally be read together with the rise of the “Age of *Amazon*.”

However, at first sight this claim might again seem a bit strange. One could object that *Amazon* (and all the other delivery services) are of course still dependent on streets and moreover, even use them more extensively than ever, a factor that has in fact led to huge traffic problems in today’s cities. Then again, one could easily answer this by taking this development as an inevitable reterritorialization effect, comparable to that happening with the still projective usage of control imagery. Still, as a final remark I would like to mention two aspects of this reterritorialization process which could be the most crucial ones. First, one has to take into account that the traffic problems caused by *Amazon* and co is also the best argument for the development of current “smart city” projects: i.e., projects that aim at even radicalizing the tendencies of steering and controlling each and every movement from earth’s orbit. It is an open question what (also theater’s) street smartness will look like in times of smart streets. The second aspect is one I would like to illustrate with the help of an idea by Claire Lyster, an architect from Chicago who was one of the guest speakers at *Stadt als Fabrik* and who has written extensively about the question of how logistic “networks change our cities” (Lyster 2016). One of her suggestions to solve today’s traffic problem by *Learning from Logistics* goes like this: If *Amazon* is currently establishing more and more logistic centers in the urban periphery which not only stock myriads of different goods but also have the tendency to expand horizontally (since they are always flat-roof-buildings)—then why not build vertical residential towers right on the roofs of these so-called fulfillment centers? And if companies like *Amazon*, but also *DHL* and others, have started to deploy delivery drones in the last years, then why not use this technology even more effectively? If the drones picked up goods in the fulfillment center and then flew up to the residential apartments and delivered them through the windows, the traffic problem would be solved at one stroke. And the best part is: Due to cutting

edge algorithmic technology the drones would be able to react to the residents' desires even before they realize them for themselves.

I want to close this essay with this suggestion by Lyster, even if it may sound like science fiction: Not only does it offer the image of drones picking up objects of desire in a basement run by *Amazon*, itself a concise comment about what an unconsciousness structured like a learning algorithm could look (or rather function) like. It also points precisely to the conditions a future theater "beyond the street" would have to work with, for good or bad.

Notes

¹ This essay was written during a research stay as a Humboldt research fellow at the Leibniz-Zentrum für Literatur und Kulturforschung" (ZfL), Berlin, 2021.

² I decided to translate "Herstellen" as producing and manufacturing here since we find both versions in the English translations of Heidegger. Sometimes Heidegger uses the expression "herstellende Verfertigung," which is translated as "productive manufacturing" (Heidegger 1977, 12). Furthermore, Jelinek's polysemous use of "Herstellen" also indicates the manual gesture of taking someone and putting him in a certain place ("manufacturing" is derived from "manus," the hand). And, finally, I would like to emphasize that Heidegger's use of "Herstellen" relied heavily on the role of the hand in producing (see also Jacques Derrida's classic text on "Heidegger's hand," Derrida 1987).

³ There are several versions of Heidegger's essay, the first one being a lecture held in 1938. In later versions Heidegger tried to mask some of his alignments to National Socialism (see Kellerer 2011). However, the sentences I will quote here can be found in all versions.

⁴ If one takes Heidegger seriously here the term "Mensch" is—other than the term subject—by no means limited to the logic of "World Picture," which may also explain why Jelinek is able to talk about "Menschen" in her second sentence. Besides, it seems most important that Jelinek uses the plural form, opposing Heidegger's fatal anthropocentrism which for example works in his notorious definitions of "man" (in the singular) as "world-building" ("Der Mensch ist weltbildend"), or still in his "Letter on 'Humanism'" which famously states: "Der Mensch ist der Hirt des Seins" ("The human being is the shepherd of being"). On the other hand, I read Jelinek's use of the term "Menschen" as a symptom of her resistance to a somehow too hasty and fashionable "post-human" discourse.

⁵ Frankly, such questioning may seem naive because within the Heideggerian logic the "Age of the World Picture" is not simply a historical period which can be "overcome," but ultimately denotes the conditions of metaphysics and representation in which the modern "Da-Sein" is necessarily always already entangled. So, in the end, it all comes down to the question of whether the structures of representation, subject and "Gestell" are founded in a basic metaphysical position one can never escape but only, if at all, differ from in a minimal manner (this is what the Heideggerian term "verwinden" aims at), or if there is an exterior to these structures which has its own logics and legacy. In this essay—and against the general background of a more Foucauldian and Deleuzian approach—I will argue strongly for the second option: mainly because in my eyes it is the only way to differentiate properly between the realms of representational powers (sovereignty/disciplinary) and that of non-representational governmentality and controlling power. In other words, and in extremely concise form: It is exactly the history of governmentality which Heidegger was not able to think, a problem that does not only touch the question of his entanglement with National Socialism but also affected his very last attempts to grasp the properties of a cybernetically renewed "Gestell." (For a more detailed discussion see my book *Chor-Denken. Sorge, Wahrheit, Technik*, particularly chapter IV on Heidegger and Foucault.)

⁶ This becomes clearest in the following passage from *Staying with the trouble*: "Finished once and for all with Kantian globalizing cosmopolitics and grumpy human-exceptionalist Heideggerian worlding, Terrapolis is a mongrel word composted with a mycorrhiza of Greek and Latin rootlets and their symbionts. Never poor in world,

Terrapolis exists in the sf web of always-too-much connection, where response-ability must be cobbled together, not in the existentialist and bond-less, lonely, Man-making gap theorized by Heidegger and his followers” (Haraway 2016, 11).

⁷ My thoughts on the relation between theater and street belong to a bigger research project I am planning together with Ulrike Haß. For more see Haß’ 2019 lecture “Am Ende der Straße. Zum Gefüge des Stadttheaters” as well as my 2020 essay “Why Streets are no longer paved with Theater Gold.”

⁸ I am paraphrasing a passage by Haß here who states that the Renaissance cities “als ihr Außen nicht das Land definieren, sondern die Straße, also das von ihnen geschaffene, artifizielle Außen” (Haß 2021, 221).

⁹ I also count the waterways and shipping canals within the field of the street here, since they follow the same projective logics (as is for instance reflected in Shakespeare’s Merchant of Venice).

¹⁰ In fact, biosensor technology exceeds older ideas of the cyborg. The latter was still primarily based in the binary (or symbolic) codification of analog organisms, but the first aims at optimizing digital computing by embedding it into biological processes for themselves. For more see Parisi in Herzogenrath 2009.

¹¹ Therefore, it would be too hasty to understand this special relation between imagery and apparatus only in good old Lacanian Fashion, i.e., in terms of the Imaginary and the Symbolic, being intertwined in the form of a moebius strip, with the Real in-between and at the same time as the impossible outside. It seems more appropriate to say that we are dealing with all kinds of feedback loops and structural couplings between signifying and non-signifying machines today. Accordingly, in my eyes it is more productive to include the Lacanian moebius strip as such topologically in a general ecology of non-signifying semiotics. For more see Berressem in Herzogenrath 2009.

¹² It is most important not to mix up Foucault’s “environmentality” with Heidegger’s “Umweltlichkeit,” if only because these terms have two completely different terminological roots (for more see Hörl 2020, Sprenger 2019). Furthermore, conflating those terms leads necessarily to a one-sided perspective on Foucault’s references to Heidegger (not seldom in line with the radically shortened and highly problematic version of Foucault we find in Agamben).

¹³ The second important ancient street is then that of the Roman Empire, which was later also the main starting point for the “rediscovery” of antiquity during the Renaissance. We can conclude from this that the “Age of the World Picture” was in fact mainly informed by Roman-Christian traditions, and not so much by Greek ones. Then again, today’s environmental shift could in a way also be addressed as a shift from Rome to Athens—which is, by the way, in my eyes also the background of Foucault’s late interest in the ancient issues of taking care (epimeleia) and speaking truth (parrhesia).

¹⁴ The so-called web-theater, as it has developed due to the Corona pandemic, might serve as an example for theater trying to fully strip off its street connections. However, I honestly doubt if this is a sustainable model for the theater to come.

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Biography

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