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Edited by Eric Nicholson

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Contents

Kin(g)ship and Power

Edited by Eric Nicholson

Eric Nicholson – *Introduction* 5

Anton Bierl – *The* mise en scène *of Kingship and Power in Aeschylus'* Seven Against Thebes*: Ritual Performativity or Goos, Cledonomancy, and Catharsis* 19

Alessandro Grilli – *The Semiotic Basis of Politics in* Seven Against Thebes 55

Robert S. Miola – *Curses in Aeschylus'* Seven Against Thebes *and in Shakespeare's* Richard *Plays* 87

Elena Pellone and David Schalkwyk – *"Breath of Kings": Political and Theatrical Power in* Richard II 105

Miscellany

Anna Novokhatko – *Epic-Oracular Markedness in Fifth-Century BCE Greek Comic Fragments* 119

April Weintritt – *The Deliverymen of Florentine Comedy: 1543-1555* 137

Konrad Wojnowski – *Performative Uncertainty and Antifragile Theatre* 159

Special Section

Michael Coveney – Dominique Goy-Blanquet, *Shakespeare in the Theatre: Patrice Chéreau*, London: Bloomsbury (The Arden Shakespeare) 183

Gherardo Ugolini – *When Heroism is Female. Heracles at Syracuse* *189*

Angelo Righetti – Measure for Measure: *Shakespeare Festival, Roman Theatre, Verona, 19-21 July 2018* 197

Mark Brown – Waiting for Godot *in the Marketplace: Setting the 2018 Edinburgh Festival in Context* 201

Books Received 211

Konrad Wojnowski*

Performative Uncertainty and Antifragile Theatre[1]

Abstract

In my paper I confront two different ways of understanding and making use of uncertainty in theatre. The first one, which I will call "dramaturgical uncertainty", dominates in the Western tradition of story-focused theatre practice and relates to Aristotelian Poetics and his notion of peripeteia as a sudden "change in fortune". The second one, which I want to call "performative uncertainty", can be applied – generally speaking – to theatrical events that respond to and take advantage of spontaneous and unpredictable factors. In the latter case I will understand uncertainty on the basis of Nassim Nicholas Taleb'stheory of antifragility (2012) which convincingly criticizes the idea of "overplanning" of complex systems and offers an alternative model of organizing performance that can also be applied in the context of theatre (and its organization). My theoretical observations will be grounded in the analysis of Revolution Now! by Gob Squad (2010), a very peculiar example of postdramatic theatre in which participation is at the same time used to introduce indeterminacy into the performance and captured within a narrative structure to reach unexpected conclusions.

Keywords: antifragility; uncertainty; dramaturgy; catastrophe; theatre theory

Coherence is fragile, but persuasive. Just in a matter of seconds a perfectly prepared performance can easily fall to pieces – a minor accident is all it takes: allergy-prone Romeo sneezes under Juliet's balcony, Otello forgets his lines, clumsy Hamlet slips comically and pathos turns into slapstick. Yet still, coherence – as an unspoken rule of artistic professionalism – imposes itself on theatre practitioners and is rarely contested within the confined walls of big institutions, both commercial and state-founded. For centuries it was the text that served as the primary medium for artistic coherence. Not only were texts tools for storing and reproducing performances – quite

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primitive, at least in comparison with cameras and more sophisticated devices for mapping and digitizing physical spaces – but also they allowed to shape and contain the unpredictable multiplicity of theatre agents: actors, viewers, and objects (with their specific affordances). All these entities – possessing different traits and driven by different aspirations – were moulded into a relatively predictable dynamic system constricted by the singular vision of the dramatist and – of course – rigid theatrical space split (by the fourth wall) into stage and audience. With the emergence of bourgeois theatre this division – into active actors and passive viewers – was deepened even further, as the erratic crowds around Europe were disciplined in a very simple way: just like naughty kids unwilling to fall asleep – by simply turning off the lights. Commercialization, which pressured entrepreneurs to produce repeatable performances, and aesthetization of performances, which resulted in the emergence of the theatre artist (and policeman), namely the director, also contributed to the acceleration of theatre's evolution towards aesthetic coherence. With the director at the head of the group the role of drama gradually diminished.

Naturally, this is a very simple story which applies only to big, professional theatres which offered artistic service to the middle and upper classes. Most of the popular forms – from Elizabethan stage and *commedia dell'arte* to improve and Boal's community theatre – do not fit into the picture. The fetish of coherence was also viciously attacked by neo-avant-garde groups, like The Living Theatre in the 1960s, which contested conservative morality and taste of smug bourgeoisie. However, despite the fact that these popular forms and avant-garde aesthetics were later quoted and adapted by directors in institutional theatres – for example, by Klaus Michael Grüber in his famous staging of Euripides' *The Bacchae* (1974) or by Claus Peymann in Peter Handke's *Offending the Audience* (1966) – the primacy of coherence was never seriously contested in the mainstream. On the face of it, "postdramatic theatre" (Lehmann 2006) or "open drama" (Klotz 1960) may seem precisely anti-coherent. Non-realist drama in the 20th century presented reality from multiple perspectives evoking fragmented and even self-contradictory worlds, while postdramatic directors in the 1980s and 1990s carried the avant-garde impulse to destroy coherence and aimed at demolishing the continuum of time in classical drama (Lehmann 2006: 62). But at the same time one can argue that on the level of performance organization nothing really changed that drastically. In most cases described by Lehmann, strictness and unity of drama was simply substituted by artistic visions (and individual aesthetics of the great auteurs). The self-centred theatre of Tadeusz Kantor – who became so influential for many leading artists after 1989 – can serve as the best example of deconstruction leading to the creation of coherent and closed theatre realities.

This is why I find it so compelling to take a closer look and reflect on the theatre practice of a small, international group Gob Squad which predominantly works for major theatre institutions – mostly Volksbühne in Berlin – and at the same time consciously challenges the dictate of coherence. They began in the mid-1990s by making happenings and performances (first one, *House*, in 1994), mostly in public and commercial spaces. With time they began collaborating with festivals and theatres trying to reconcile their guerrilla spirit with the conservative climate of permanent institutions. In Michel Serres' sense of this term (1982) they can be labelled as 'productive parasites' who feast on the remains of disintegrating institutions, use their infrastructures, while maintaining artistic freedom that comes with institutional autonomy. What I find most fascinating in their work is their uncommon ability to interweave rigid dramaturgies – which organize performances and ensure their meaning – with structural openness that allows them to respond to environmental unpredictability. Gob Squad's exceptionality is grounded in their ability to return to equilibrium after provoked crises which unravel in unpredictable directions, or in other words, the ability of turning chaos into order. In this text I will investigate: 1) how they are able to make use of this performative (creative) uncertainty without sacrificing structure and meaning, and 2) in what ways these 'anti-fragile' performances differ from those which are 'fragilely coherent'.[2] However – given my interest in epistemologies of performance – I want to begin by addressing a more general problem concerning the importance of uncertainty in classical dramaturgy.

It is also worth noting that recently, as Western societies were getting accustomed to the fact that uncertainty became a permanent trait of the neoliberal landscape (a paradox to be spotted here), the topic of uncertainty has gained prominence among scholars who deal with social and cultural issues (cf. Zinn 2008). This recognition had much in common with recognizing the permanent effects of globalization on economy and culture. At least since the late 1970s and the advent of neoliberal economy, uncertainty is being used as a 'creative factor': a social resource exploited for boost-

[2] This is a term often used by William Kentridge to address the potential of disintegration inherent to every work of art which, in turn, is always an attempt at controlling chaos. So Kentridge: "In so far as there is a central logic behind the whole project, it is the argument of the fragility of coherence, in which the coherence and disintegration of images refers also to other fragilities and breaks. In this regard all the sections of the project are about anti-entropy, a gathering out of chaos to order, rather than a reversion from order to a state of dispersal. With each section the work is to make the disintegration. The completed image is the simplest task. Its apparent explosion is where the concentration is – as if the opera is the easy part, the tuning up, and turning the real work." (2008: 23-5).

ing economies, a source of everyday excitement drawn from 'politainment' (the politico-media complex), and a handy tool to divide and govern societies that live in constant fear (of migration, unemployment, loss of identity, etc.). As Naomi Klein famously showed (2007), it is the defining characteristic of neoliberal capitalism to operate by inciting catastrophes that release energies of "creative destruction" (Schumpeter 1975). This paradigm shift has also been acknowledged and described in depth by such sociologists as Ulrich Beck (1992), Anthony Giddens (1990), and Zygmunt Bauman (2006).

However, the surging interest in 'cultural uncertainty' – exemplified for instance by the last edition of the Foreign Affairs festival in Berlin (2016) – has to be considered something new. During this festival artists, sociologists, and culture experts examined the emerging cultures of uncertainty while assuming that "the question of how to deal with the uncertainty of social and political realities is becoming increasingly urgent".[3] The aesthetic aspects of indeterminacy, openness, and uncertainty are also becoming important among theatre scholars who study participatory strategies in performance (White 2013). The best example of this interest is a recently published book *Risk, Participation, and Performance Practice* in which the authors examine how "openness, uncertainty, and varying degrees of exposure contribute to an aesthetic paradigm where risk is deployed as an intentional tactic, a strategy of engagement, or a critical tool for the shared making of meaning" (O'Grady 2017: xi). By investigating aesthetical, existential, and ethical aspects of risk in participatory performances they reflect on the notion of 'critical vulnerability' and unveil its positive and negative dimensions. Nonetheless, by favouring notions of risk and participation in their methodology they do not pay much attention to epistemological and communicational aspects of uncertainty on which I would like to elaborate. That is why I want to begin by painting a very brief picture of the role uncertainty plays in classical dramaturgy.

Uncertainty for Catharsis. The Case of *Oedipus Rex*

Out of all tragedies Aristotle admired Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* the most. In *Poetics* he presented it as a standard for every writer to follow, because – as Stephen White aptly puts it – it masterfully "dramatizes a movement from *hamartia* to recognition that reveals the depths of the protagonists' concern for the people harmed or threatened by their actions" (White 1992: 237). For Aristotle, transition from mistake to recognition – or from crisis

[3] https://www.berlinerfestspiele.de/en/aktuell/festivals/berlinerfestspiele/archiv_bfs/archiv_programme_bfs/foreign_affairs/archiv_fa16/fa16_programm/fa16_veranstaltungsdetail_171541.php.

to tragic condition – marked a crucial moment in every tragedy and was responsible for its true moral effect: *anagnorisis* was the tipping and turning point of the tragic conduct which in true drama was able to trigger the feelings of fright and pity in the viewer. Therefore, it can be said that the startling effect of *katharsis* was grounded in a linear (and rapid) transition from state A (error) to state B (recognition). Despite the fact that a model tragedy should represent action and not character, Aristotle understood tragic action as a singular and causally related chain of events that culminated in a singular point of focus on the protagonist. The tragic effect inherently relied on linearity of the story and its experience. According to the Greek philosopher, in the best tragedies *anagnorisis* (recognition) and *peripeteia* (reversal of fate) should coincide in one moment. And that was the case in *Oedipus Rex*.

But *Oedipus* does not begin as a story about an individual – the mythic king – but about a city. The tragedy opens up with a social event that transcends the possibility of a linear narrative and understanding: a catastrophe. The first words uttered by the reigning king tell us the story of the people of Thebes who were struck by a lamentable disaster: an outbreak of a mysterious plague. Oedipus bemoans that: "Why is the city thick with incense smoke, / and chants of Paean mixed with cries of pain?" (Soph. *OT* 4-5; trans. Taplin 2015). But as the story progresses, we realize that the town and the suffering of the people is only a background decoration for the more intimate drama that takes place inside the castle chambers. The terrible crisis is soon resolved and – as we all know – two prophets play a pivotal role in this resolution: a prophetess in the Apollo temple and a blind soothsayer, Tiresias. They provide the protagonist Oedipus with necessary cues that allow him to solve the mystery of the epidemic, that is, to blame himself (the tyrant) for the suffering of his people. What begins as a story of the socius ends as a personal drama and leads towards the conclusion: the suffering was never social, the story was always only about one figure.

The story of Oedipus became so transparent over time that it commonly epitomizes Greek tragedy as such, partly thanks to Aristotle's praises and his influence on the culture of the European Renaissance. However – if we want to look deeper into the problem of uncertainty in theatre and drama – we should look with a bit of suspicion into Sophocles' method of framing catastrophe as a singular story. And – more importantly – we should ask: what were the epistemological consequences of presenting the solution to this mystery in terms of individual deeds? Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari noted that nothing concerning the famous Oedipus complex should be treated as self-apparent and thus impervious to critique: "It is often thought that Oedipus is an easy subject to deal with, something perfectly obvious, a 'given' that is there from the very beginning. But that is not so at all"

(1983: 3). I would like to apply the same suspicion to Sophocles' tragedy which functions as a cornerstone for the European tradition of tragic dramaturgy.

To answer those questions, we should take into account that Sophocles told us this story about a fictional epidemic in Thebes by referring undoubtedly to the actual, historical epidemic that had struck Athens only a few years before the Theban plays were written (Dixon 1996; Kousoulis et al. 2012; McNeill 1976). This historical background is rarely taken into consideration in canonical interpretations of Greek tragedy. Harold Bloom (2007) only mentions it in passing, whilst Humphrey D.F. Kitto (2011) does not even do so. Yet only from such a historical point of view can we understand that *Oedipus Rex* had an important social, political, and epistemological meaning for the citizens of Athens in that it harnessed uncertainty in the real world and re-channelled it for narrative purposes. The fright and the pity were in fact quite real as the memories of the plague were still fresh among the Athenians. From this perspective we can safely surmise that the Theban plays offered a narrative 'framing' of the real-world experience – they 'solved' the traumatic and puzzling event, and thus reduced cognitive uncertainty induced by the epidemic. It is not to suggest that any citizen of Athens took the play literally and blamed Oedipus for their own suffering, but I want to argue that Sophocles provided general tools for understanding catastrophic events (and, for instance, blaming a fellow citizen). In other words, *Oedipus Rex* did not give specific answers, but suggested a way of coherently asking the question. It is pointless to speculate what the reasons for this were: whether Sophocles had political interests, or was it an involuntary, purely aesthetic decision? From my perspective it is important to indicate the relation between catastrophe – understood primarily as a cognitive challenge – and his method of writing, which later influenced Aristotle to standardize poetics of writing tragedies, for which he took Oedipus as the core example.

As I said, we can imagine that the real plague posed a challenge for the minds of the Athenians in 430 BCE: it was something uncanny and out of order. There were no definitive tools to understand it, no scientists to take samples, check them in a laboratory, and produce a scientific verdict. The disaster – as any other in these times – had to remain ambiguous and unintelligible, so naturally it gave rise to uncertainty among the citizens who could speculate on the potential futures, causes, meanings behind their suffering. It was in such a political and social climate that Sophocles wrote his tragedy and decided to relate it to the events of the recent past. He staged the Theban myth, which allowed him to situate the catastrophe in a moral framework. The epidemic in Thebes was presented as a result of 'disturbed' moral equilibrium (*dike*) in the world after Oedipus had committed an evil

deed, unknowingly killing his father. The unresolved evil haunted the community of Oedipus and demanded redress. This is how a natural disaster – a complex matter in Sophocles' story – became a moral issue.

It is debatable whether the moral order in Thebes was restored by the acts of divine justice working through the prophecies or whether Oedipus was bound by nature itself which simply returned to the state of order after crisis. Some critics even argued that the protagonist was free in his choices and it is possible to support such claims. Even so, it is beyond any debate that the story of Oedipus develops linearily and that Sophocles compressed a (potentially) complex and multidimensional phenomenon into a causal chain of micro-events. In other words, he translated social uncertainty into dramaturgical uncertainty which in turn might have become a model for aesthetic engagement and a framework for understanding the real world.

To sum up these remarks, the social and cultural importance of *Oedipus Rex* lies precisely in Sophocles' telling a story of a disaster. Unlike Thucydides in *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, Sophocles did not tackle uncertainty and complexity together. He neither introduced many perspectives nor aimed to find peace with uncertainty. On the contrary, he tried to resolve cognitive uncertainty and to replace it with a frightening conclusion. In the play *katastrophe* becomes *peripeteia* followed by *katharsis*. The audience can understand what happened to Oedipus and this understanding is granted them if they follow a simple chain of causally ordered cues. Deed A leads to deed B – this is the basic formula of classical dramaturgy, which is a way not only to arrange events in a tragedy, but also to support a deterministic and linear view of the world. The coincidence of the real plague in Athens and its simulation in *Oedipus Rex* proves this – the tragedy appears as 'media coverage' to universalize and frame the experience which as such has no 'meaning'. The multifaceted, complex, social uncertainty sparked by the plague and encompassing many doubts and many potential stories is expressed in the form of simple questions: why did it happen and who is to blame? And the answer is given by Sophocles in personal and singular terms. The tale of the people of Thebes presents only one character who becomes a (self-sacrificing) scapegoat.

Hence, in tragedy uncertainty is associated with lack of (human) knowledge about hidden determinations. The audience and the protagonist share the same fate while remaining in the state of ignorance resolved at the end of the play. The (tragic) truth is elegantly simple, only initially unknown to the viewers (and the characters). I want to underline that this decision – to present the world as causal and simple – should be seen in the light of its epistemological consequence, namely the linearization of uncertainty on the cognitive level. And this was precisely the main downside of preserving the unity of the story which "ought to be of one action and it ought

to be a whole" (Arist. *Po.* 1450b24-5; trans. Sachs 2006). Greek authors and many of their later imitators followed the path of Sophocles and conserved the worldview according to which uncertainty was synonymous with ignorance, and accidental elements should be excluded from the story in the name of plausibility and intellectual coherence.

However, it is important to stress again that the tragic dramaturgy does not exclude uncertainty altogether, but rather channels it as a source of suspense. Ignorance of the viewers is exactly what draws them into fictional worlds, action, and into a character's fate, which remains interesting precisely because of the veil of uncertainty. Classical dramaturgy thus relies on a paradox: uncertainty is at the same time welcome as the source of emotional engagement and treated as a mystery to be unveiled. This is a very pessimistic view of uncertainty as it is thought to lie in the (imperfect) eye of the beholder and not in the complexity of the world. In such a model no real adventure is possible, everything is already predetermined: by the character's fate and by the playwright's script. Nothing new and exciting can happen on stage and every event can be foreseen (if one has the necessary information). Both soothsayers and dramatists look for fate in randomness.

Brecht's Critique of Linear Dramaturgy

This is probably why Bertolt Brecht despised 'Aristotelian' theatre so much. It is fruitful to turn here to Brecht's writings on theatre, as he was deeply interested in how different theatre forms determined different perceptions of reality. His disregard for the Aristotelian dramaturgy was so strong that he gave its name to everything he found pitiful in European theatre tradition; that is, to all idealist, psychologizing, and deterministic tendencies that dominated in European theatre since its birth in ancient Greece. For Brecht, all these problems stemmed from the "centralization of plot and an organic interdependence of the separate parts" (2000: 22) in tragedy. We can speculate that Brecht's critical view of tragedy's oneness and cohesion was also partially caused by his negative experiences with bourgeois theatre which celebrated the tradition of deterministic linearity. In melodramas the oversimplified and 'demoralized' catharsis became an aesthetic effect sought after by dramatists and viewers – a mere pleasant sensation used to incite some excitement into the dull life of an average townsman. Brecht was right that the focus on the individual and her transformation was already present in Greek texts, but in tragedy it was at least given a transcendent meaning. Sophocles transcendentalized the suffering of Oedipus who – in turn – transcendentalized the suffering of the Theban com-

munity, lifting it to the mythical plane of relations between humans and gods. This plane of transcendence disappeared from 19th-century European theatre which focused on the human being, stripped to her/his bare (but universal to all mankind) emotions. Brecht ridiculed this tradition by enlisting typical reactions of the bourgeois theatre crowd: "Yes, I have felt that too.—That's how I am.—That is only natural.—That will always be so.—This person's suffering shocks me because he has no way out.—This is great art: everything in it is self-evident.—I weep with the weeping, I laugh with the laughing" (2000: 23). Brecht exposed this emotional blackmail, but his hostility towards Aristotelian dramaturgy had a serious epistemological justification – the naturalization of fate and determinism distorted the image of social reality and stood in the way of proletarian revolution.

Without a doubt Brecht's reluctance towards dramaturgical focalization on the individual was influenced by his experience of living in the turbulent times of the beginning of the 20th century. For Brecht World War I and industrial capitalism shattered the illusion of 'I', a sensible individual who makes rational choices. By showing how easily we can mechanize human existence and how irrelevant human 'inner life' is in the face of external factors, war and mass factories destroyed the credibility of culture based on individual psychology. Taking this into account, the dramatist should make room on stage for "oil, inflation, war, social struggles, the family, religion, wheat, the meat-packing industry" (2000: 23). Brecht argued that we needed new drama and new theatre that could express world as a scene of conflicts and tensions between social groups, ideas, energies, and material interests. His ideas diverged drastically from classical dramaturgy: in Brechtian theatre the world should present itself as a complex habitat of different forces and not as a linear tale.

However, maybe even more importantly, Brecht's disdain for Aristotelian theatre stemmed from the fact that in the 19th century deterministic dramaturgy was framed into bourgeois aesthetics of illusionism which excluded theatre audiences from the field of visibility and focalized all attention on the *dramatis personae*. In one of Brecht's earliest texts, *Emphasis on Sport*, published just before the staging of *Baal*, his first play, in 1926, we can find a remark which reveals his outright contempt for the theatre of illusionistic exclusion: "A theatre which makes no contact with the public is a nonsense" (Willett 1974: 7). Brecht strongly castigated Berlin theatre-goers for passivity and lack of enthusiasm. Then he envisioned a different audience – lively, involved, chanting, and – interestingly – smoking cigars (that is, unhampered). However, he referred to sport arenas precisely because such theatre crowd was no longer conceivable. In 1926 audiences in bourgeois theatres all around Europe were already effectively silenced. This process of disciplining theatre-goers, so that they would not interfere with

events taking place on stage, was an effect of a very long cultural transformation of theatre and coincided with the emergence of the middle class in Western Europe (Fischer-Lichte 2002: 146-54). However, this 'creeping revolution' accelerated rapidly at the end of the 19th century when the very concept of theatrical performance changed dramatically. One of the key factors in this change was strictly technological: it was the invention and popularization of electrical lighting that finally allowed for an efficient division of the theatrical space in half. Joseph Donohue argues that:

> From Elizabethan until late Victorian times, the mutual visibility of audience members as the performance progressed made the experience of theatre-going fundamentally different, socially, from what it would become by the twentieth century, when the auditorium was darkened and the only light emanated from the stage. The sense of anonymity – and passivity – conferred on later play-goers when the lights went down would have been incomprehensible to earlier audiences, always aware of their identity as a community-in-little and likely to register immediate approval or disapproval, not just at the final curtain (2004: 294).

This seemingly minor invention not only boosted the process of disciplining audiences, but also resulted in consolidating the idea that performance is a work of art. Not incidentally, electrical revolution in theatres in the 1880s was soon followed by an aesthetic revolution which Patrice Pavis calls "the origin of mise-en-scène" (2013: 2-10). The profession of director, which shaped the history of 20th-century theatre in Europe, could emerge and flourish only after installing lightbulbs above stage. And it should not come as a surprise, if we agree that the main duty of theatrical directors is to secure performance repeatability (objectified in the form of products of individual artistic vision). Careful organization and control of performance as a predetermined and predictable 'system of meaning' became possible only after establishing order in the auditorium. As Jonathan Crary accurately remarks: "Spectacle is not primarily concerned with a looking at images, but rather with the construction of conditions that individuate, immobilize, and separate subjects, even within a world in which mobility and circulation are ubiquitous" (1999: 74). From this point of view we can assume that most of the technological and artistic innovations at the end of the 19th century expressed a general tendency to exclude uncertainty and indeterminacy from the theatre space. Edward Gordon Craig's and Maurice Maeterlinck's unfulfilled dreams to replace actors with marionettes were probably the most radical emanations of this cultural logic.

Being still in many ways indebted to literary tradition, Brecht could not fully address the problem of materialist uncertainty. And although he strived to exclude classical dramaturgy from his texts, he was aware of the

futility of such endeavours. *Lehrstücke* were expressions of this struggle to include 'the performative' and 'the social' into the text which still aims at delineating the story or characters and holding on to literary values. As I will argue, refashioning uncertainty and 'making use of it' in performative ways not only requires the text to be decentralized or reformulated as a set of instructions for participation, but also calls for finding new ways of productively exploiting unforeseeable factors. And this challenge must be taken up at the same time at the level of devising text, organizing media for performance, and constructing an 'antifragile' communicational structure. To illustrate this point I will turn now to the performance of a post-Brechtian theatre group Gob Squad entitled *Revolution Now!*.

Performative Uncertainty. After Brecht

The first part of the show unfolds according to the standard procedures of postdramatic German theatre: cameras are brought on stage, there is no story whatsoever, actors exchange roles, they mix up different texts and improvise etc. All these bits and pieces are loosely connected by the topic of revolution and the grand question of the show: if a revolution is even possible in a society atomized by capitalism and alienated by technologies of mass communication. As is typical of contemporary German theatre, these general questions are underpinned by a strong sense of reflexivity. For that reason the discussion about the possibility of a new revolution on the streets of Berlin shifts to a more fundamental debate about the sheer conditions of talking about revolution in a safe, enclosed, and isolated theatrical space. After the members of Gob Squad have reached a deadlock in their quarrels, they realize there may be something fundamentally wrong with the whole concept of debating revolution on stage. In doing so they also refer critically to Brecht's idea of revolutionary theatre and – in part at least – the legacy of their host institution: Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg Platz. For Gob Squad's members, every revolution must necessarily involve opening to the unknown, that is, to the unpredictability of the streets and the 'Brownian movements' of masses circulating through them. Almost every modern theatre which closes the doors and dims the lights is thus highly unsuitable for talking about the dynamic world outside. Or to put it more mildly, traditional theatre – which is a product of the bourgeoisie – can reflect on, but not take part in any social change.

Moreover, the audience of the most leftist theatre in leftist Berlin – which, according to the laws of probability, should also be mostly leftist and anti-consumerist – cannot offer a true and open dialogue about the idea of revolution. The reason for that is simple: such audience cannot pro-

vide enough material and energy for experiments in the social laboratory of a truly revolutionary theatre which must incite conflicts and externalize social tensions. Information bubbles can be sometimes rich and complex, but they are never unpredictable. That is why at some point in the middle of the performance Gob Squad members decide to break not only the fourth wall separating them from the audience, but also the external walls of the theatre building which separate them from the less predictable world outside. The group leaves the stage and takes a camera with them. In the meantime its audience is left alone facing a huge screen on which the live movie is projected. There is an irony to this gesture: to reach deeper layers of reality, we need a camera. So begins the search for a protagonist who will lead the future revolution. Actors scatter around Rosa-Luxemburg Platz and enthusiastically interview random passers-by. After finding a person who agrees to take part in the performance, they start asking her/him personal and political questions concerning the topic at hand. At the very end, they introduce the guest on stage as the leader of the future revolution who waives the flag of Volksbühne.

I have seen *Revolution Now!* twice and the events that followed the decision to leave the building unfolded into completely different directions. The first time Gob Squad stumbled upon a young Italian tourist from Naples whose name was Eduardo. He was enjoying a weekend off in Berlin and praised cheap flights and beer in his hostel. He was also really enthusiastic about the whole idea of taking part in a show (a great holiday adventure) and revolutionizing the world in general. Hence, the show was a great success. It ended with a joyful, affirmative ending that gave hope for a better tomorrow. Eduardo's behaviour gave validation and meaning to Gob Squad's decision to leave the building and transcend the sterile space of theatre-laboratory. He – as a random voice of the society – gave credibility to the concept of revolution.

The second show I witnessed did not go as smoothly as the first one. This time the participant turned out to be a young architect who came to Berlin from West Germany to study and work in a prestigious company. His name was Andreas. Although reluctant, he decided to take part in the show. During the lengthy interview part he kept on expressing doubts and concerns about the need for a revolution and stated on numerous occasions that people should focus on individual hard work and 'tending one's own garden'. But it still came as a surprise when just before the crucial moment of introducing him on stage Andreas changed his mind, turned his back, and went straight home leaving the members of the group empty-handed. The performance fell into crisis, so the group started to look for another protagonist, and eventually found somewhat anticlimactic replacements: two Erasmus exchange students who did not speak either German or Eng-

lish. Once they realized the tragic situation, the actors rushed towards the final scene to wrap up this embarrassing show. The overall outcome of the performance was strikingly different from that of the previous one. Andreas's reluctance and Erasmus students' communication problems complicated Gob Squad's stance: revolution became a dubious concept and the group's enthusiasm seemed untimely and immature. When class and communication obstacles had been revealed, the performance about revolutionary spirit turned out – this time – to ridicule the idea of revolution.[4] Both unwanted and unexpected encounters added new layers of sense to Gob Squad's work: opening to the unpredictable environment allowed them to introduce topics of social unintelligibility, communication barriers, and class-related hostility. But these outcomes did not 'impair' the performance. On the contrary, they added complexity to the initial naivety of the group members who share similar social and intellectual backgrounds. Indeed, the folk have spoken (with many voices).

Participate! But Why?

After this lengthy description I want to return to the central issue of this text, the topic of uncertainty in theatre practice. At this point one may argue that contrasting Sophocles' drama with a contemporary postdramatic show seems like comparing apples to oranges. In a way it is true, but my aims here are not comparative, but rather abstract. I am not comparing an ancient play and a postmodern performance. I want to talk about two kinds of theatrical (and dramaturgical) uncertainty. By taking *Revolution Now!* as an example, I argue that the decision to leave the enclosed theatre space can be interpreted as a different kind of *peripeteia*, or "dramatic collision":[5] a structural overturn which opens many possible futures, introduces uncertainty into the structure of the performance, and uses it for creative and meaningful purposes. Such uncertainty is distributed among performers, viewers, and random participants who are taken by surprise in the middle of their mundane tasks. This – in turn – secures the democratic charac-

[4] In his review Brandon Woolf describes a different ending. In a performance he saw, Gob Squad stumbled upon a young designer, Itamar, who was about to open a new boutique in Berlin. When asked if he is willing to design for the upcoming revolution, he replied that he would like people to "buy his clothes and wear them to the revolution". It would be truly difficult to imagine a more ironic conclusion to the show (Woolf 2011: 148).

[5] According to Hegel, "dramatic collision" of ethical attitudes which leads to crisis lies at the very heart of every tragedy and every theory of tragedy (cf. Lehmann 2006: 35). My intention here is to hijack the term and point towards the 'accidental' and indeterminate aspect of dramatic 'collision'.

ter of the performance and establishes a different kind of epistemology of performance: 1) lack of knowledge about the final outcome is shared by all participants, who – in this regard – are not divided into entertainers (those who know) and 'entertainees' (those who will be informed later); 2) the very meaning of the show depends on the identity of the random participant and thus is established 'by accident'. I would even like to argue that the sole purpose of this 'participatory technique' is to provoke such accident. The way Gob Squad frames its search for the leader of the revolution leaves no doubts about their intents. They do not look for the real voice on the streets in Berlin, or for an authentic experience which will 'transmute' art into life. On the contrary, the whole encounter is displayed on the screen (so one can doubt if it is, in fact, taking place live) and framed with humour, distance, and irony, so that the 'real' is immediately 'aestheticized' and staged. Yet still, the impact of the encounter on the overall structure of the performance is 'real', that is, unpredictable and – as the case of Andreas explicitly evidences – potentially catastrophic. The way Gob Squad (ab)uses participation – not for authentic contact or engaging the crowd, but for 'harnessing' uncertainty – is quite exceptional and worth further discussion. Naturally, one could maintain that it only demonstrates their postmodern cynicism. However, in my opinion, this 'ironic' strategy not only allows the collective to accommodate randomness within theatrical representation, but also to bypass the shortcomings of 'authentic' participation which Claire Bishop convincingly exposed in her wide-ranging historical study *Artificial Hells* (2012).

According to Bishop, different trends of participatory art share common quality of involving many people to "constitute the central artistic medium and material, in the manner of theatre and performance" (2012: 1-2). Ideas or reasons for participation can be numerous – from simple entertainment to social engagement – but they all stem from the assumption that art should overcome the divide between passive consumers (viewers, readers, etc.) and active artists. Very often avant-garde artists in the 20th century designed participatory performances to confront the bourgeois audiences and awaken them from their elitist stupor. From the perspective of the avant-garde, which waged war against the commodification of culture, audience activity itself was perceived as valuable. However, this strategy directed against the middle class became dubious at least since 1990s when avant-garde participation found itself in the context of wide-spread technologies of interactivity, or in other words has been hijacked by mechanized (programmed) forms of participation brought upon Western culture by so-called new media (and software). This techno-cultural turn shed a different light on the issue and showed limitations of participation made only for the sake of participation. New forms of mechanized inter-action re-

vealed the ambiguity of participatory art, because what exactly do we mean by 'taking part' in theatre performance? Does standing up and walking around freely counts as participation? Do we have to say or sing something? Enter the stage and break the wall that divides performers and viewers? Or are these customary acts not participatory enough? In other words, can we reduce participation to any form of activity and is it possible to abstract the minimal amount of spectator activity which counts as participatory?

I have posed these questions to suggest that participation and spectator activity are impossible to define rigorously, so additional notions must be introduced into the equation. And for the same reason – from a more practical perspective – participation often becomes an empty gesture, a mere ornament on the (closed) dramaturgical structure of a theatrical performance. This is why it did not emerge as an important counter-tendency to theatre commodification, a trend diagnosed by Richard Schechner in early 1970s. In an important text entitled *Audience Participation* that bridged his theoretical and practical interests, Schechner conceived of participation as a repressed force in Western theatre where performers are expected only to produce commodities: "'finished' and 'packed' like other products of American culture" (1971a: 73). Schechner argued that participation was not a novelty forced onto Western culture by the avant-garde, on the contrary: it was killed off in the course of Modernity. Bourgeoisie in the Western world embraced theatre as one of its preferred art forms, but this inclusion came at a price, namely on condition that after a long day at work the viewer would not have to engage productively anymore. However, participation re-introduced into Western theatre by experimental and neo-avant-garde was often instrumentalized, becoming an aim in itself.

Therefore, to resuscitate the concept of theatrical participation it may be useful to approach it from the perspective of performative uncertainty. I would like to argue that if we want to employ participatory practices for creative purposes in theatre, we should use them as tools directed against the very idea of deterministic programming, that is, as mediums for sparking uncertainty. And this is exactly how participation in Gob Squad's *Revolution Now!* works. It begins with engaging a third party in the performance (a physical and communicational gesture), but its impact is not reducible to simply 'taking part'. It lies elsewhere: in devising an 'antifragile' structure of the performance that is materially and communicationally open in the sense of its ability to exchange information with the environment and react to actions and information that cannot be predicted. Uncertainty caused by the inclusion of 'alien bodies' into the 'performance system' activates a chain of unpredictable events which are captured by the performers within the framework of the show and given aesthetic signif-

icance. There is a clear performative dimension to this process. The ending of *Revolution Now!*, its final 'solution' – whether it tells a happy story of revolution, denigrates the idea, or points towards a different answer – emerges as a product of carefully prepared instructions, trained behaviours, unpredictable (unscripted) movements, transitory relations, and micro-catastrophes. Its interactivity does not rely on preprogrammed and secure 'end states' typical for forking-path narratives. The final outcome is unknown to anybody – maybe even despite the efforts of Gob Squad, who all in all probably expect to end the performance on a positive note. But what is interesting in *Revolution Now!* happens outside the realm of intentional and artistic programming, as aberrances or deviations from the scripted line of events. The aesthetic adventures emerge out of an artistic catastrophe which – for better or worse – may be experienced as unpleasant both by actors, participants, and viewers. Awkwardness and clumsiness are the price to pay for taking the risk and opening for dialogue. The narrative framework that allows the performance to signify the final catastrophe, so that it does not dissolve into gibberish, functions only as a necessary context and not as an executive program which determines how we should interpret the performance. It is important here to stress that without this framework the catastrophe would be meaningless. Uncertainty can be productive when it is properly contextualized and framed (marked as aesthetic). As Gob Squad members point out themselves: "our main dramaturgical work is to balance reality and form, developing strategies to be able to react to random events within a dramaturgy" (Gob Squad 2010: 30).

Gob Squad's 'antifragile' interweaving of scripted behaviour with inputs from random participators into a fixed representational frame distinguishes their artistic practice from experimental and participatory theatre which rejects representation in favour of direct, authentic contact with the audience. From radically provocative performances of the Futurists in Italy, through Artaud's ritualistic 'theatre of cruelty', to neo-avant-garde counterculture of the 1960s, provocation directed against the passive audience was one of the most noticeable artistic strategies connecting various kinds of experimental theatre (Jannarone 2009). And since the beginning of their career Gob Squad members have been consciously relating to and reconfiguring the traditions of counterculture and experimental theatre. For example, the main theme of *Close Enough to Kiss* (1997) was the desire for authentic contact with the crowd which was complicated and frustrated by layers of technological mediation; in *The Great Outdoors* (2001) Gob Squad attempted to connect the black box inside the theatre to the reality of the street; *Gob Squad's Kitchen* (2007) was a humorous tribute to the legacy of Andy Warhol and 1960s American culture. Even *Revolution Now!* could be interpreted as a postmodern commentary and joyful critique of counter-

cultural dreams of changing the world through art. It is worth recalling, in this context, that the topic of revolution (against conservatism, predictability, and boredom of bourgeois life, etc.) appeared in most of the iconic performances of Living Theatre, Open Theatre, and Schechner's Performance Group. In the 1960s Schechner postulated that given the inertia of Western culture devoured by passive consumerism and obsessive attachment to tradition the role of contemporary theatre – as a medium of participation – should be rebellion and transformation of modern life (1967: 27). According to Schechner, the first step in this theatrical revolution was to defile the sanctity of text; the second, to affirm volatility, randomness, and unpredictability of live performance. And Schechner's view of theatre as a medium for cultural revolution accurately described confrontational, provocative, and sometimes violent character of theatrical experiments in this turbulent period. For example, in *Paradise Now* (1968) by The Living Theatre, or *Dionysus in 69* (1969) and *Commune* (1971) by The Performance Group actors confronted and provoked the audience, which often led to unpredictable outcomes and crises in mutual communication. *The Connection* (1959), one of the earliest performances directed by Judith Malina and Julian Beck, relied on jazz-like improvisation by actors who, not infrequently, were under the influence of psychoactive substances used to inhibit their ability to control themselves and stick to the script (cf. Sell 2005: 59–131).[6] Undoubtedly, subversive and provocative practices of American experimental theatre of the 1960s were grounded in appropriation of communicational uncertainty as a potentially creative and transformative factor.

However, in most of these cases randomness and uncertainty were welcomed and celebrated as intrusions of 'the real' into the artificial situation of the theatrical performance (Schechner 1971a: 74). Gob Squad's way of work follows a different logic. Inviting random passers-by into the theatre building (*Revolution Now!*), re-staging Andy Warhol's screen-tests with live audience (*Gob Squad's Kitchen*), or encouraging viewers to join their small reality-show on stage (*What Are You Looking At?*, 1998) should not be read as gestures aimed to break the 'fourth wall', turn theatre into a social ritual, or celebrate (real) life over art. As I already noted, participation in Gob Squad's theatre practice is always employed within an aesthetic framework of fiction, narrative, or – usually – fictionalized reality. The ending of *Revolution Now!* does not function as 'an outbreak of the real', or as a true encounter with the true folk (opposed to inauthentic theatre-go-

[6] Schechner even strived to redefine theatre as an art of environment in which matters of representation and meaning are replaced by spatial categories of "environmental design", that is, "creating and using of whole space" (1971b: 379). He proposed a theory of theatre focused solely on space, movement, bodily relations, etc.

ers). All actions of the participant chosen at random at the end of the show were ultimately framed as a part of the theatrical reality which suspended the binary opposition of the real and the fictitious. Nina Tecklenburg, a theatre scholar who collaborated with the group for years, also recognizes Gob Squad's indebtedness to the tradition of American experimental theatre, but at the same time she highlights the differences between them. She claims that in the case of the group

> interaction [is] not a breakthrough of the real into a fictive situation, but a breakthrough of the real into a framed real. . . . The collective thus quotes and simultaneously undermines a dichotomy that is relevant for many avantgarde and postdramatic theatre practices: face-to-face encounter vs. the one-way communication of traditional theatre as well as early entertainment media culture. . . . To go beyond this means two things: to distance oneself not only from the classical but also from the postclassical theatre of "authentic encounter," although both theatrical forms — classical and postclassical — remain visible (2012: 19).

However, as one might infer from this description, Gob Squad's art is neither a celebration nor a mourning after the loss of the real. The real – in the form of spontaneous excitement, unwanted awkwardness, unintentional failure, and other minor 'happenings' – appears in their work in and through fiction.[7] As I already stated, their method of work consists of careful scripting and inclusion of randomness which create a peculiar 'antifragile' form that depends on unexpected deviations from the script without necessarily 'taming' them (as predicted outcomes to choose from) or blurring the line between art and life. All in all, Gob Squad members take responsibility for being artists who want to 'put on a show'; not to abolish theatre and create an illusion of authenticity. This is why Gob Squad performances are usually well-structured and filled with technological 'barriers' separating actors from viewers (screens, cameras, or masks), although all these devices are not used as "obstructions but as the basis of encounter" (Tecklenburg 2012: 19). What I find exceptional about their work and worth theoretical recognition is precisely this paradoxical antifragile form: although the group works in a big theatre institution, uses various technologies of mediation, reaches for post-Brechtian poetics of distance, and retains some sort of dramaturgical framework, it is still able to harness and play with uncertainty.

[7] It is probably this suspicious approach towards unmediated authenticity that irritated Schechner who qualified the group as one of the examples of "conservative avant-garde" which only recycles old ideas without a truly "destructive attitude" of the real experimental theatre (2010: 908).

Antifragility: From Economy to Art

The notion of antifragility is an invention of Nassim Nicholas Taleb, the 'enfant terrible' of contemporary economy. He is aggressively anti-neoliberal, anti-socialist, not really anarchist, definitely not Marxist, etc. However, despite many controversies surrounding his economic theory of antifragility, his ideas can be fruitfully applied to theatre and performance studies. But first, let's clarify what antifragility is. Taleb assumes that Western culture conceptualized different forms of organization as being either fragile (easy to damage) or robust (solid, resilient). To steer away from this unhealthy dualism, Taleb tries to find a third way in thinking about systems: titular 'antifragility' describes forms of organization that are neither fragile nor robust, but rather able to benefit from shocks and other stressors. The spirit animal of Taleb's theory is Hydra – the mythical creature which is able to grow even more heads after being beheaded (Taleb 2012: 33). To put it bluntly, antifragility is the ability to 'gain from harm', but – of course – not from any harm. By positive stressors Taleb means micro-disturbances which can affect those systems that are not too big to register them and evolve. Therefore he advocates keeping things simple and the downscaling of economic systems. He also takes a strong stance against Modernity, which he understands as a "systematic extraction of humans from their randomness-laden ecology—physical and social, even epistemological" (108). Taleb reminds us that the idea of upscaling and securing the system of power connects most modernist political and economic projects. Think – on the one hand – of centralized governments which try to exercise control over all aspects of social life or of huge monopolies and – on the other – of banks that are 'too big to fail'. What on first look seems contradictory – free market neoliberalism and socialist central planning – turns out to share the same enemy, that is, randomness and unpredictability which are countered with surveillance or various forms of planning that aim at securing the present and predicting the future. But such large-scale projects become susceptible to random shocks and unpredictable events which endanger their integrity. From here it is easy to draw an analogy between Taleb's argument and the matters discussed earlier.

As I concluded above, classical dramaturgy at the same time regulates performances and supports the deterministic worldview in which true randomness cannot exist, because the theatrical script serves to imitate the causality of nature. This is why the classical structure of a play is best fitted to present ordered worlds from which chance events are excluded. The succession of events follows the rules of causal necessity and finally forms a deterministic chain connecting protasis, epitasis, and catastrophe. Although pristine, elegant, and orderly, such structures are also very fragile

– any random event that interrupts the chain is a disturbance that cannot be harnessed productively. Let's imagine a spectator intruding on a classical play and 'making a scene'. Nothing positive can come out of such disturbance, as actors cannot adjust the dramaturgy to the unexpected event. Similar argument could also be made against modernist mise-en-scène paradigm which freed itself from linearity and causality, but at the same time reinstated a singular vision of the artist, the grand director. It is thus possible to point out that from this perspective we can see that the distinction between classical dramaturgy and modernist, more experimental forms that dominated in the 20th century (including postdramatic tradition) is not as substantial as it is commonly perceived.

However, Gob Squad "antifragile" aesthetics, which Tecklenburg situated outside the dichotomy of "classical . . . and postclassical theatre of 'authentic encounter'" (2012: 19), shows an interesting way out of the safe spaces of bourgeois theatre tradition, deterministic dramaturgy, and – interestingly – 'artificial hells' of participation. The collective reaches out to the audience or the outside world not for the sake of authenticity, but to provoke micro-disturbances which will force the actors on stage to react and adapt. This ensures that every performance is, in fact, very different, and its uniqueness does not depend only on the performers, but on unpredictable events arising from interactions between actors, viewers, and the outside world. The scope of possible outcomes is not defined only by the group (and their capabilities), but extends almost endlessly into the field of social life.

Of course, this ability to react to stressors and adapt lies not only in the formal qualities of their performances, but it is also intrinsically tied to their work method and unusual education which – again – does not fit into the binary contradistinction between amateurism and professional training in theatre academy. It is not by chance that none of the group members went to a classical theatre school: part of the group graduated from 'Creative Arts' on Nottingham Trent University, others finished the multidisciplinary (and multimedia) Institute for Applied Theatre Studies in Gießen. This implies that none of the members trained to be a professional actor, scenographer, or a director. But thanks to this fact the group was able to overcome the constraints of specialization and work as a true collective, exchanging positions, perspectives, and hierarchies (Gob Squad 2010: 10). And for this reason, upon embarking on a new project everyone in the group is uncertain about their responsibilities and roles. Moreover, most of the members were trained to work with cameras and not with their physical bodies on stage. This is why most of their work involves live recording and performing behind screens and other escapist surfaces. And this is the case in *Revolution Now!* – the piece begins with a long scene shot in

the lobby of Volksbühne and ends with a long escapade outside the theatre building. However, Gob Squad never uses these portable media to secure their 'artistic product', that is to say to make their performance more polished and reproducible in the same form. Quite the opposite, they struggle with the camera and look for ways to disrupt the false sense of security provided by technology. I would even argue that Gob Squad's openness to unpredictable stressors – structural antifragility of the performance system – can be read as a form of compensation for the use and abuse of these technologies. Arguably, there is a correlation between the excess of security in the age of electronic media and the need to disrupt their form and content. Simon Will, one of the longest-serving group members, explains that one of recurring themes in their work is the critique of cultural 'convenience', the state of overabundant security and daunting predictability achieved by Western societies thanks to technological development and the privatization of life which allows citizens to enclose themselves in safe bubbles (of matter and information) (Gob Squad 2013). This overestimation of convenience has a very practical and severe downside: Western, highly developed societies become unable to deal with social uncertainty and randomness, because these abilities can only be learned by exposure to unpredictable factors (so-called otherness).

Just like Taleb's notion of antifragile economy was directed against the fetishization of safety and predictability, Gob Squad's antifragile dependence on uncertainty is a response to the lack of randomness in 'the culture of convenience' (and not to the 'loss of the real' bemoaned by counterculture in the 1960s). In *Liquid Times* Bauman wrote that economic and technological acceleration, which causes an erosion of traditions, customs, and institutions and provokes existential uncertainty in people who lose their waypoints and coordinates, is being countered on an infrastructural level by new technologies and new forms of social organization. He defended his argument by giving such examples as the rise of gated communities, enhanced surveillance, security checks at airports, etc. But nothing illustrates this process better than the history of bourgeois theatre which since its early days repressed social uncertainty by policing the audience and which established the hegemony of scenic action, classical dramaturgy, and – later on – artistic vision of the director. Relying so heavily on illusion and classical dramaturgy, theatre lost its social function as a place of confronting social otherness. From this perspective, I hope it becomes clear where the significance of Gob Squad's work lies. Their 'antifragile theatre' running on the fuel of 'performative uncertainty' may be regarded as an interesting alternative to – on the one hand – deterministic and content-centred modes of artistic production, and – on the other hand – to experimental theatre which wants to dissolve in the social sphere. Furthermore, antifragile thea-

tre can be understood as an experimental space for social encounter where true otherness and uncertainty can be expressed and channelled for expressive purposes. And this is exactly why it is important to discuss the notion put forward by Taleb in the context of culture and artistic practice.

To sum up my considerations, I would like to make one final remark about the risks of fetishizing the notion of antifragility and the whole concept of opening to unexpected stressors, which can easily become an aim in itself. Again, we can learn a lot in this regard from Gob Squad. Firstly, I must stress again that the whole concept of antifragility does not consist in getting rid of any fixed forms of organizing performance, but rather in carefully 'devising' semi-fixed structures which benefit from the unknown and the unpredictable. To achieve this, artists must think of their scripts in terms of open systems consisting of non-definitive commands, rather than linear sets of text to present despite all obstacles. Secondly, this method is highly dependent on the organization of the group. It is impossible for a director (or any other individual and centralized instance) to devise antifragile performances. For example, unexpected inputs may require minor *ad hoc* (emergent) redirecting of the performance by group members. Fragility of the classical theatre – in most cases – stems from relying on one responsible decision maker who cannot react to new stimuli quickly enough. And lastly, there is of course a limit to productive uncertainty. Too much noise and unpredictability may cause the system to collapse: the inclusion of too many voices into the performance can turn it into gibberish, and the disturbance caused by the environment may be so strong that the system will not regain stability. And there is also another limit to uncertainty, one which contradicts Taleb's economic fetishization of unexpected stressors: collective and experimental work that does not follow any specific goal and remains open to artistic unpredictability requires basic economic security. And for that very reason I remain highly sceptical about the notion of economic antifragility, but also strongly believe in and argue for creating antifragile platforms for artistic practice which will help express uncertainty and randomness as creative forces indispensable for social life.

Finally, if we agree with Schechner's long-term prediction that 'fragile' theatrical forms – belonging to the aesthetical order of the *mise-en-scène* – will be slowly superseded by more 'spectacular' technologies of representation (1997: 5), then Gob Squad's aesthetics of antifragility seem to offer a unique type of experience which despite its representational format cannot be emulated in cinema or in front of the computer (at least now). Although the collective constantly makes use of new media technology, it also strives for errors and imperfection: their performances are always unfinished, spontaneous, reactive, and fragmentary. Additionally, while maintaining critical distance towards mainstream capitalist entertainment, Gob Squad's

theatre is still simply engaging and fun. The suspense founded in the case of classical dramaturgy on lack of knowledge here takes the form of excitement, because the future of the performance is not known to anybody. As Tecklenburg accurately concludes: "in Gob Squad's affirmative guerrilla theatre, critical distance and reflection need not exclude entertainment and pop, and alienation and melancholy can also stand beside spectacle, empathy, and enthusiastic engagement" (2012: 30).

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