

# The Third Site: Blending Polyphonic Methodology and Epistemology

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## Abstract

Mimesis Heidi Dahlsveen:

11.27 p.m. my son died in a bed at the hospital

Venke Aure:

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This article discusses how art and academia can intervene in what the authors call *the third site*. The authors' common ground lies in an interest in artistic encounters between people where art and academia bring new discoveries on both the personal and the professional level. The core of this article is the lecture performance in which the authors explore boundaries of the personal, academia and art. By using artistic, art-based, and scientific approaches, they explore how established positions in art and academia can blend polyphonic methodology and epistemology. In their performative writing they use this artistic competence as their starting point, using performativity as an active event that produces representations of lived lives, the production of existential empiricism. Their endeavour is to illuminate value-related and new questions through art making and establish an epistemological and methodological basis for working with art and academia. The authors

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believe that the blurring of borders between art and academia contributes to epistemological and methodological pluralism.

Through artistic experiences, academia becomes vital and varied, creating a diversity of ways in which knowledge and the meaning of life can be represented.

**Keywords:** storytelling, art, academia, methodology, epistemology

### **The performative framing**

The project *The Third Site* was an ongoing process that started with a *storytelling performance* which mixed an autobiographical story with Norse mythology, the topic of which was a son dying. In the process from the performance to the writing of this article, we, the authors, have used our memories, experiences and knowledge originating in two different positions: that of the performer, the artistic researcher of the performance, and that of the art- This article discusses how art and academia can intervene in what the authors call *the third site*. The authors' common ground lies in an interest in artistic encounters between people where art and academia bring new discoveries on both the personal and the professional level. The core of this article is the lecture performance in which the authors explore boundaries of the personal, academia and art. By using artistic, art-based, and scientific approaches, they explore how established positions in art and academia can blend polyphonic methodology and epistemology. In their performative writing they use this artistic competence as their starting point, using performativity as an active event that produces representations of lived lives, the production of existential empiricism. Their endeavour is to illuminate value-related and new questions through art making and establish an epistemological and methodological basis for working with art and academia. The authors believe that the blurring of borders between art and academia contributes to epistemological and methodological pluralism.

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based researcher of the performance. Our starting points differ, yet we create a place where art and academia intervene. Starting with the storytelling performance, our collaborative work continued with a *lecture performance* performed at national and international conferences. In our work, we associated with the term *The Third Site* to create a space for dialogue and discovery.

By using the term *The Third Site*, we relate to theorists in a wide range of fields who have used the term to clarify different hybrid phenomena, such as Lev Vygotsky (1930) in social psychology, Celia Whitchurch (2008) in education, Randal Packer in art media theory (2010) and Edward W Soja in critical urban theory (1996). In contemporary theory, the term is closely associated with how Homi K Bhabha in his postcolonial studies used *the third space* to reflect how identities and communities are linked to unequal power and cultural representation (1994). For us, *The Third Site* became a creative space in which we felt we could be ourselves privately, personally, and professionally, where we could try out ideas and theories that spoke to or contradicted us. It is an interdisciplinary space that is constantly in motion, where we do not always know the outcome, even as we write this article.

Our common ground for using *The Third Site* is our interest in artistic encounters between people where art and academia bring out new discoveries on the personal and the professional level. Our driving force is to explore and view from multiple perspectives, this creates an empirical-near attitude, based on existential narratives.

The core of the lecture performance was our own experiences of personal grief and how these could be articulated through aesthetics, memories, narratives, and academic perspectives. In the lecture performance, we used different styles of dissemination. We choreographed the placement of our bodies to communicate different spoken utterances or texts in the space in which we performed.

We placed two chairs on the stage to serve as the anchor in the staging of the lecture performance. The chairs were used in different ways, one performer sitting, the other standing, with their backs turned towards each other, alternating by walking away from the chairs, etc. We rendered the manuscript visible by throwing sheets of paper on the floor as the lecture performance progressed (see Figure 1). Photos of the dead son lay on the floor. Sometimes we would step on the manuscript and the photos, and sometimes we would move them around on the floor.

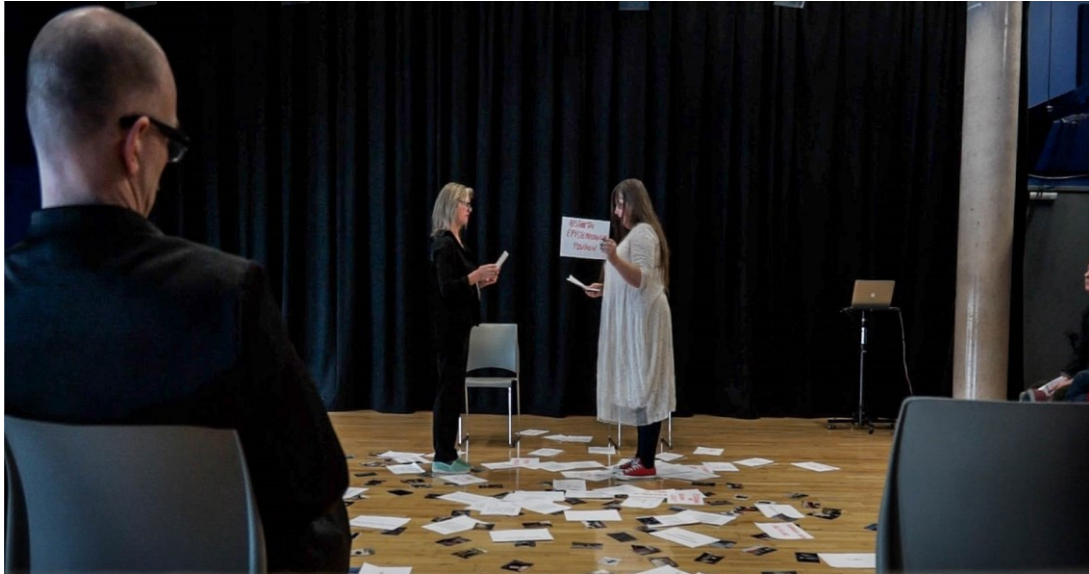


Figure 1. A still photo from video taken by Dahlsveen. SAR conference, Plymouth, England. 2017.

In our work, we strive to cross the borders between artistic and academic institutions to integrate artistic strategies in knowledge production in both fields. The term *lecture performance* emerged from the art world in the 1960s when art was reconstructed as an academic discipline. Mashinka Firunts writes about this process as follows: “Throughout the decade, artists mobilized the format to imagine how knowledge may be produced and disseminated outside the academy: within alternative institutional frameworks, beyond authorized communicative forms and through embodied modes of performativity” (Firunts, 2016, p. 19).

When preparing the lecture performance, we used a wide range of co-creating methods such as dialogue, writing, directing, and performing. In addition, the theoretical research and discussion was an important part of the process. Practice and theory should form a poetic rhythm in the process and in the lecture performance. Poetic in the sense that there were both abruptions and flows in the transitions between different kinds of textual expressions. This cooperation also forms the foundation for the content and form of this text.

The focus of this article is the lecture performance in which we explored boundaries of the personal, academia and art. Our collective expertise and knowledge took us beyond our respective conventions as storytellers, lecturers, and researchers.

## **Performative writing**

Over the years, we had an ongoing dialogue in which we exchanged different types of texts, making comments, additions, and reflections. This has created a fluid and open space charged with energy and creativity.

In this article, we have chosen to use quotes from the lecture performance that create spaces of their own and that will not necessarily be discussed. These are open spaces that invite the reader to participate in meaning making to characterize what we call a performative article. By choosing this approach, we relate to the linguist J L Austin, who already in 1955 analysed how to bridge the gap between words and events and proposed that the distinction between descriptive and performative utterances could be a starting point. Austin created his third site where the performative utterance actually does something in the world, such as promising or forgiving, and make creative spaces, a performative position he concretized as follows: "The name is derived, of course, from 'perform', the usual verb with the noun 'action': it indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action" (Austin, 1962, p. 6). The performative utterances might challenge what one regards as conventional and constative texts based on traditional understandings of time and reality in Western narrative models of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### ***Dahlsveen:***

In my life, the doctor told my son that there was nothing more they could do to cure him of cancer.

In the Norse myth, the mother, Frigg, walks the earth to make everyone swear that they will not kill the young god.

In my life, I looked around to find a cure that could save my son.

In the Norse myth, when Balder dies, his mother Frigg believes that he can still be saved by visiting the queen of death.

My way into producing knowledge through art is performative and embodies practice in oral storytelling. As a storyteller, I was in a position of a direct experience – a memory – that needed a language. In the storytelling performance, I used the Norse

myth about the death of Balder, the young god who realizes that he is going to die, and how his mother, Frigg, with the help of the “whole world”, tries to prevent this. In combination with the myth, I told the story about my son dying of cancer.

In his work *The Visible and the Invisible*, the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961) examines the relationship between an experience and the verbalization of an experience (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 28). The experience is mute and unaware of its own meaning; the experience makes a call for the language (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 29). The myth offers a *langue* that invites sensuous meaning making, which we, the authors, reinforce because we have both gone through a similar experience. We understand the image of the mother because we are the mothers. We understand why the myth has to be told; it brings forth memories of our own experiences.

Memories are a constant renegotiation of meaning. To remember is to give meaning to something (Edgren, 2013). Memories are not seen as a linear activity that leads us from the past into the future in a cognitive and chronological order of events. Memories are today understood as a rich text that is important to many disciplines (Freeman, 2010, p. 263).

We live in a dialectical relationship between to remember and to forget. In life, it is essential to forget. The author P L Travers wrote: “Perhaps he came to realize that if a thing is to be remembered, it has first to be forgotten” (Travers, 1991, p. 84). In our project, memory can be regarded as an investigation of embodied knowledge. Our view is that embedded in a memory lies a need to communicate. A memory is then a collaborative space where people talk to each other and remember through dialogue. What we live out and what we hold on to is a dramaturgy of life, art and academia.



Figure 2. Screenshot of a tweet from the conference Women in the Folk, Lewes, England, 2017.

### **Aure:**

I am positioned as a theoretical researcher, an educator in methodology and epistemology, and a contributor to transdisciplinary and art-related projects. To do research *with* art has become more and more important for me, a perspective that is a part of the ongoing development in qualitative research where, among other aspects, artistic and art-based research have an impact.

We, the authors, see *artistic research* as research performed by an artist who has art as her professional competence, as Dahlsveen has. In our performative writing we use this artistic competence as our starting point. We use art as the core and the active event that produces representations of lived lives, we use art as what we call existential empiricism to develop an art-related methodology. The theoretical researcher can also do research *through* art, but in our case, Aure does not have the lived access to the production of art, and we therefore refer to her activity as *art-based*, which is the case in Aure's role. Seeing the researcher as an active art-related participant is also described in the following statement by the Swedish Research Council in a report about artistic and art-based research: "The rooting in an artistic practice is strong, and art-based research often draws on the artists' experience, professional expertise and creative ability" (Swedish Research Council,

2016, p. 5). A more traditional understanding of these differences between artistic and art-based research is to see the latter as an investigation from the outside, as research *on* art. However, our undertaking is to present an epistemology and methodology based on artistic and academic equivalence in the research process.

In an interview published in a report entitled *Research Ethics and Artistic Freedom in Artistic Research* in the Swedish Research Council's Artistic Yearbook, Torbjörn Lind focused on the lack of documentation related to artistic research: "Poor documentation is something that recurs in several reports and is therefore an issue that the Committee for Artistic Research and others will continue to have on their agenda" (Bornholm, 2017, p. 51). Lind continued to problematize the criteria used and asked: "Are they enough?" concerning documentation regarding artistic research? In the present, conferences in the field of both art and academia open for new performative documentation through so-called "performative papers", which we, in our case, call lecture performances. We see this mixing of knowledge merged into a single presentation as one way to clearly express the underlying criteria for the performative work. This is a part of developing and emphasizing *The Third Site* as a hybrid methodology. From this position it is absolutely necessary to be explicit about the theoretical and methodical awareness in written publications to substantiate transparency in artistic research.

### **Art and academia as part of a performative turn**

Our concern about the epistemological basis for art can also be chosen as an efficient factor in meaning making and production of texts in academia. We operate within the performative paradigm in the way we develop this article, influenced by the space of opportunities this position offers to create *The Third Site*.

In the art field, many questions have been raised about the ideas associated with the complex terms relational, social, and performative turns. As a part of the social turn in contemporary art, the art theoretician Claire Bishop, in her text "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics", critiqued the perspective in Bourriaud's essay *Esthétique relationnelle* from 1998 as being too consensus-driven and conflict-averse (Aure, 2020, p. 136). The relational turn has since been expanded with perspectives concerning interdisciplinarity and more experimental art practices in situated events, as exemplified by the storytelling performance. Already in 1962, Umberto Eco in the text *The Open Work* "characterized works in movement" to promote works of art as a process (Eco, 1962, p. 22). These points became a part of the performative turn



which Erika Fischer-Lichte describes as an encounter with art that could contain a transformative power for reflection and meaning making (Fischer-Lichte, 2008).

In the way we relate and openly communicate from both an artistic and an academic position in a performative space, the language is affected in our lecture performance. Therefore, the researcher Aure created a poetic stance for her language by saying:

I hear the mother`s breath,  
I hear the son`s breath,  
I hear my brother`s breath; I hear my heart breathing.

This happens because the researcher has also chosen to use what Dwight Conquergood calls “performance-sensitive ways of knowing” (Conquergood, 1998, p. 26) as a source for her art-based reflections, where the core of the art-based research is to take part in the artistic experience of meeting life itself.

The grieving mother with the sounds, her breath, her son`s breath.

The layers in the narratives meet the interpretive heart, body and mind of the researcher. As Alex Arteaga wrote in an unpublished manuscript based on his lecture “Ästhetische Praxis als Sense-Making” in 2010, “[i]t is a myth that reflection is only possible from the outside.” (Klein, 2017). The researcher`s voice also comes from within. This voice from within is mixed with theoretical and analytical embodied reflections.

This position can be related to the way in which the Swedish Research Council, in its report *Artistic Research – A Subject Overview* from 2014 emphasizes art as a starting point for a more fluid and exploratory cooperation based on methodological exchange in art and science where the process usually proceeds “in combinations of systematic, exploratory, creative, experimental, action-oriented and speculative working methods through artistic creation and analysis, staging, simulation and modelling, critical innovation and reflection, and theory formation” (Swedish Research Council, 2016, p. 5). In the report, the boundary between research based on art and research based on science is described as “fluid”, a term and a statement we relate to our use of “blurring” to emphasize the “fertile grey zone” to depict the boundary between these fields in our cooperation. Furthermore, the report connects artistic research to a broad artistic field that includes such areas as the visual arts, dance, architecture, applied art and film, and claims that artistic research often “takes as its

starting point the scope for the art to shed light on value-related and communicative questions concerning the creation of meaning and quality” (Swedish Research Council, 2016, p. 5). This statement has a clear relationship to our endeavour to create meaning, and through art illuminate value-related and new questions regarding own discourses. We believe that such blurring of borders between art and academia contributes to epistemological and methodological pluralism that challenges separate knowing regimes in the fields of art and academia.



*Figure 3.* Photo from the storytelling performance 23.27. Photo: GBBørsum and Fortellerfestivalen, Oslo, Norway. 2017.

## **Performative methodology**

11.53 a.m.

I had been sitting by my dying son since 11.53.

On my left side, there was a window.

I looked out of the window.

The window was open. It did not help. Both inside and outside the air was like ...

Sometimes I got up and left the small room. So that others could sit down

to say goodbye.

Then I sat down again.

Soon he was just a memory.

Death kissed him.

His skin turned grey.

A blue line on his lips.

11.27

the nurse said as gently as she could: "Now he has passed away."

Making the storytelling performance based on being by a dying son's side was a directly embodied experience that Dahlsveen needed to explore and express in a performative way. Oral storytelling is a living, contextualized and situated event influenced by those present (Lwin, 2010). Kristin Aadland claims that in a storytelling situation there is a performative relationship between the storyteller and the listener, where the listener helps to create meaning in the story that is being told. There are thus elements present in this relationship that are not to be found in, for example, a written text, such as the use of the voice and the body. The story becomes a place of negotiation about meaning where the paralinguistic and the non-verbal come into play (Aadland, 2016, p. 64). In the lecture performance, these elements were important to hold on to as part of the performative identity. In Norman K. Denzin's words, we place these art-related approaches to the "performance paradigm" characterized as an "experiential, participatory epistemology" that "allows the self to be vulnerable to its own experiences as well as to the experiences of the other" (Denzin, 2003, p. 16).



Figure 4. Photo taken by Dahlsveen from the ECQI Congress, Edinburgh, Scotland, 2018.

The performative practice means that the meaning making is taking place in a performance where the listener is present in time and space, and where the development of methods prepares for this meeting. Because meaning making is important, the experience of non-meaning is also important. This might be found in the poetic dimension, the paralinguistic, like rhythms, abruptions, creating patterns, etc., where the listener, instead of understanding the direct meaning, must associate, wonder, being fascinated or disturbed (Dahlsveen, 2018). Examples of this were the abrupt ways of using the body and the text, and repeating parts of texts with slightly new phrasing. Both the meaning making and the non-meaning making are elements that form performative methodological strategies. The production of knowledge happens on many levels in an art-related practice, from a technical understanding of how to do things to an understanding of the social happening in a performative event (Lüneburg, 2020, p. 186).

Within the performative methodology, we will now look closer at some performative strategies we used in *The Third Site*.

## **Performative art strategies**

Using the Norse myth of Balder to reflect upon real-life experiences challenges us as participants in our conventional way of understanding knowledge from an analytic distance in academia. The performative puts meaning making into motion. By not only sitting by a desk creating a text, but also by working on the floor and reflecting on this work and using the theory to move us on the floor, the practical work itself helps us create a language and develop strategies.

How can we relate to death, to what we do not understand, to the unpredictable?

We rely on the unpredictable, the poetic between the lines as a tool to navigate towards an existential understanding of knowledge production. Which paradigmatic values to use is always an ongoing battle regarding the construction of paradigms in art and academia. Regarding this, the following quote is interesting because it shows that already in 1953, the National Science Foundation in the United States used terms that emphasize basic research as driven by curiosity towards the unpredictable, quite similar to our epistemological position today (we have, however, taken the liberty of replacing the linguistic use of male with female):

A worker in basic scientific research is motivated by a driving curiosity about the unknown. When his her explorations yield new knowledge, he she experiences the satisfaction of those who first attain the summit of a mountain or the upper reaches of a river flowing through unmapped territory. Discovery of truth and understanding of nature are his her objectives. His Her professional standing among his her fellows depends upon the originality and soundness of his her work. Creativeness in science is of a cloth with that of the poet or painter. (National Science Foundation, 1953, p. 38)

And we will add: creativity in art can weave cloth with that of the researcher or philosopher. Through these artistic strategies, academia becomes inclusive of more diverse manners of representing knowledge and meaning of life. There is a cyclical movement going on in *The Third Site*, the myth about Balder helps us to articulate our own grief, our own memories become a starting point for the theory, the theory becomes embodied as we relate our artistic experience to perspectives outside our experience. The new experience throws new light on the myth and our own memories.

***Performative strategy #1 Language and dialogue***

I remember I saw my son die; his body lost what I recognized in him. I saw, heard, and felt that there was a different being lying there, not my son. He was an object. My living body reacted to the dead body; it was the sensation of Kristeva's 'abject' (Kristeva, 1982); the paradox, the beginning, and the end. To understand the meaning of this, I had to use my body to enter the memories; I had to use my body to turn the experience into a language of aesthetics.

In our case, because of the richness in *The Third Site*, the language became multivocal, in line with the core of phenomenological methodologies that *are* plural.

In the process, we, the authors, have had a long and ongoing dialogue and exchanged different sorts of verbal and written texts, using our own voices, borrowing the voices of others. We have shared narratives and memories, not all of which have been included in the project, but which have formed a common web of references. This long and ongoing dialogue started in the spring of 2017, when Aure began following the rehearsals of the storytelling performance. The dialogue started with experiences and experiments and has continued in this article as a document with comments that were exchanged between us. Sometimes, one of us has called, sent a text message or an email. This material creates a rich textual and multivocal reflection, a relational writing. The whole foundation of *The Third Site* rests in a polyphonic space. This space is not created by a de-personified monologue writer since voice is always personal. According to the Russian language philosopher and literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975), every utterance is dialogic since it is part of a context (Mørch, 2003, p. 13).

Through the ongoing dialogue we were able to sort out what was important in the process. But the language can be subjected to a monologue (Mørch, 2003, p. 15) by focusing on unilateral and normative discourses. By having the dialogue as something fundamental in the methodology, our experience is that we achieve viability for nuances and greater opportunities for discovery and change as a project progresses.

In the ongoing dialogue, we have experienced that we have lost the authorship – who said what is now unknown to us – and have created a common vocabulary where there also is space for disagreements and obstacles. The dialogue is an image of the imperfect life where the truth cannot be categorized as final (Mørch, 2003, p. 15). For

Bakhtin, the novel is the clearest example of how language is dialogical, while also claiming that the dialogue is the “property of any discourse” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 279).

We have already mentioned that the poetic was part of the performative expression, where, according to Bakhtin, the dialogue disappears:

In poetic genres, artistic consciousness – understood as a unity of all the author’s semantic and expressive intentions – fully realizes itself within its own language; in them alone is such consciousness fully immanent, expressing itself in it directly and without mediation, without conditions and without distance. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 285)

For us, it was natural to follow up the dialogue with poetic violations, as this creates an extended opportunity space, and we can step into what we convey. Bakhtin argues that the poetic does not create room for reflection because the language has been narrowed and monologized and loses its specific context (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 297). Our experience is that it is precisely the poetic expression that helps to create a duration; that is what makes us remember. We experience the poetic as a place through rhythm, clarification, association, abruptions and flow that give a different meaning. The poetic dimension enlarges our own reflection and language.

### ***Performative strategy #2 The body***

The mixed, the blurring, is both the danger and the creative force, according to Norse mythology. It is clearly seen in the character called Loke. Loke is a trickster, and he is “half” or mixed, and through this Loke represents the danger, but also the driving force, in the Norse myths:

Loke, one day he left the home of gods and went far away to the land of the giants. There he entered a forest. In between the trees, he saw something coming towards him. She had long, long legs like the trunks of the trees. She had long and heavy breasts, and her long hair was blowing, blowing in the wind created by her steps. She grabbed him in her strong arms and said: ‘I have been waiting for you’. Then she kissed him. She was a jotun, a giant. Her name was Angerboda, which means ‘You will regret this’. Then they started, blending their bodies, and exchanging fluid, up along the trunks of the trees, down on the ground, here and there, up and down, in and out. After a while, a good while, Loke wanted to leave. Angerboda said: ‘Excuse me, what about the children?’ ‘The

children?’ This endless activity had resulted in three children. ‘I do not have time to take care of them’, said Angerboda, ‘I am a busy woman, and I am running my own business. You, being a father, you have to take the children with you’. Therefore, Loke left with three children.<sup>3</sup>

One of the important metaphors used in this project is the grotesque, as described by Bakhtin (Bakhtin, 2007)<sup>4</sup>. The grotesque is an element in the story told above, and it contrasts with the other narratives that are embedded in our work, the grief of losing someone. The topical jump between grieving and laughing creates a wholeness.

The grotesque realism as an aesthetic is the materially bodily principle of life. The body is unfinished since it still creates and is being created. The body reveals its being as an expanding and self-crossing element through acts like fighting with death, intercourse, pregnancy, birth, eating and drinking (Bakhtin, 2007, p. 36).

Degradation is a prominent feature in grotesque realism. Through grotesque realism, one can look at the synthesis between the private and the public. All that is elevated, spiritual, ideal, and abstract is brought down to a material bodily level, and in this degradation, the life-giving laughter arises and displaces the entrenched ideas. The grotesque realism serves as a concretization of abstract ideas that manifest themselves bodily. The grotesque realism used in *The Third Site* offers a narrative modality where the psychological aspects disappear and, instead, the cosmic is emphasized, and the history of the individual is written in the circles of the body and nature. Our own grief is decentralized, since it does not stand alone, but is part of a whole narrative. This means that the grieving mother's individual biography is inscribed in cyclical streams connected to bodily desire, life and death, and this refers to what Bakhtin describes as our *collective body* (Mazour-Matusevich, 2009, p. 8). The grieving mother's story as an artful production of meaning holds our body and mind in the grip between grotesque irony and fragility.

As we worked towards the various lecture performances, we had to embody our material. We experienced this as a vulnerable situation, as our bodies need time to find a narrative in space. Our starting point also refers to a vulnerability, a dying body.

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<sup>3</sup> The source used for the story is P A Munch: *Norrøne gude- og heltesagn*, but the storyteller has adapted and rearticulated the story in the performance.

<sup>4</sup> We write Bakhtin with K, whereas one of the sources uses C.



In *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics*, Arthur W Frank (2013) writes about the sick body's narratives. The body's stories divide into two categories, the personal and the social. The body itself is not without stories, but it cannot articulate them. The body is alienated, since one tells stories about it and not with it (Frank, 2013, p. 2). The social is present because a story requires a listener, a recipient, and often, as in our case, someone else tells stories about another person's situation (Frank, 2013, p. 3). When a story is told, there are some rhetorical and cultural expectations present about how a story should be (Frank, 2013, pp. 5, 9). In our process, the motifs were not action bound by one narrative, but the process opened up for using a mixture of autobiographical episodes, Norse myths and a blending in methodology and epistemology.

We assume that our bodily vulnerability arises because we generally work within structures preventing us from creating different forms of relationships (Heinemeyer, 2020, p. 143). These structures may appear as protective (Heinemeyer, 2020, p. 156), but they can also prevent us from exploring and create new knowledge.

The three children of Loke and Angerboda are the following: First you have Midgardsormen, a serpent, growing fast, the gods threw him into the ocean. There he continued to grow, until he reached his own tail. He is keeping the world together, if he let go of his tail, the world will collapse, land will sink, water will rise, and you must find a new place to live. The second child was Fenrisulven, a wolf so big and greedy that he could swallow the moon. They had to tie him with a leach made of the sound of cat's paws, made of women's beard, made of birds' spat, made of fish breath, made of the roots of the mountains.

Then the third child, called Hel, meaning 'whole', funny name for one who is half. Half-dead, half-alive, she is ruling in the land of no visits, no one wants to go there. Queen of death, queen of those who die of sickness.

A communicative body is dyadic, it carries with it a recognition (Heinemeyer, 2020, p. 161) of others and as such is in dialogue. The second feature in the grotesque realism is the transcending; it has no clear or normative boundaries between the cosmos, the social and the body (Bachtin, 2007, p. 31). Through her three children, Angerboda becomes the cosmos, the social and the body. And we, the authors, are neither Angerboda nor Frigg (mother of Balder), two fictional characters, but our understanding of them is reflected in the characters and how we tell about them.

For our part, the body is about daring to explore the boundaries of our own unknown territories.

### ***Performative strategy #3 Crafting text through art***

In our relational writing using artistic and art-based perspectives, we also found that our oral and textual work became performative productions where the artistic, art-based and academic aspects intervened. This experience is related to how Henk Borgdorff, in his article “The Conflict of the Faculties. Perspectives on Artistic Research and Academia”, describes a desirable balance between art and science: “It is important to draw a clear distinction between artistic research and other forms of art-science collaboration, where artists are outsiders, visitors, or participants in scientific practice” (Borgdorff, 2012, p. 3). As we have described, in our cooperation, art is the starting point and the core of the work and as such, artistic approaches have an impact on the text. This position emphasizes working *through* art. Mark D Vagle writes that research grounded in “through-ness” moves “from a focus on being to a focus on becoming, production and provocation” (Vagle, 2018, p. 45). Our different performative paper lectures as well as this text are characterized by being created in a process. We practice becoming. Maybe the provocative aspect is not that strong, but it is present in the way our work blurs the lines that separate art, academia, and life, as a criticism of a tradition based on discrete disciplinary disciplines and institutional structures, as we have shown in the examples above. Again, we use Borgdorff’s words as an appropriate description for identifying a part of our work: “artistic practices contribute as research to what we know and understand” and requires that “academia opens its mind to forms of knowledge and understanding that are entwined with artistic practices” (Borgdorff, 2012, p. 3).

Our cooperative work between established art and science positions requires flexibility, and that is exactly what “through-ness”, both as methodology and method, invites, because the conception does not offer linear approaches, but rather “there are internationalities of different shapes, sizes, and contours running all over place, being made and unmade” (Vagle, 2018, p. 45). Our text has different shapes, different genres and contours, a lack of certainty and finitude which Vagle describes as “the beauty of crafting phenomenological research” (Vagle, 2018, p. 56). In addition to the linguistically visible, we will emphasize the underlying reflexive epistemological living-in-the-world bases, related to how Heideggerian-oriented phenomenology underlines that phenomena “come into being in language as humans relate with things and one another, again, ‘in’ the world” (Vagle, 2018, p. 43).

Through the performative aspect of oral storytelling, we find ourselves being related to others' experiences, we find ourselves in the phenomenon of sorrow. We craft phenomenology through art because we understand this epistemological approach as treating "a phenomenon and a lived experience as synonymous" (Vagle, 2018, p. 12).

## **Phenomenological sensibilities**

What are the sources of art-based reflection?

The artistic experience is outside and inside. Artistic experience brings forth layers of grief, hidden memories. The loss is being processed and present. It brings the loss into existence. What is real, what can we know, what does meaning mean? These questions are common for art and academia and blur the lines between discipline-based positions. This blurring offers a third site that is ambiguous, unclear, it is anti-structural rather than structural. In Jacques Derrida's words, this site "does not settle for methodological procedures, it opens up passages, it marches ahead and marks a trail" (Derrida, 1989, p. 42). This site invites the use of new entrances to create new performatives. This site will never see itself in relation to a simple opposition between art and academia.

This site is our *Third Site*.

The artistic experience in *The Third Site* contributes to an epistemological pluralism that challenges a conventional way of understanding knowledge from an analytic distance in academia.

Through artistic experiences, academia becomes inclusive of more diverse ways of representing knowledge and meanings of life. The mother performs in such complex ways that we experience ourselves in this site where memory, emotion, imagination, desire and understanding interact with one another.

The words, the colours, the sounds, the movements; this embodied knowledge in *The Third Site*.

In our wondering inquiry, we relate to Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten who, already in 18th century, derived the concept of sensuous knowledge to describe aesthetic (Kjørup, 2006, p. 8), meaning that aesthetics is a specific type of knowledge.

We see sensuous knowledge together with the emphasis on the notion of embodied knowledge as crucial for existing in the gap between words and what we consider to be reality. This understanding of aesthetics opens our story towards phenomenological sensibilities presented in poetic, factual, grotesque, and expressive forms that include all senses in our efforts to make meaning in the world in which we live together.

The grieving woman`s voice and movements lead us into the stories ...

The Norse giant Angerboda and the trickster Loke invite our bodies to participate in their blending of bodies, embedded in nature`s circulation – bodies and the cosmic – overreaching in relation to individual biography.

This aesthetic experience becomes a part of our experiences, just as John Dewey put it in his effort to create distance to looking upon experience as something that happens exclusively within us, understanding experience as an essentially psychological concept. Dewey argued that “[t]he objects and events are as much a part of experience as we are ourselves” (Jackson, 1998, p. 3).

The performative destabilizes conventional presentation of subjectivity through narrative elements that destruct, or at least challenge, conventional forms of representation. As the cultural theorist Morten Kyndrup`s description highlights the performative character of meaningful action as a performative doing or a performative being that not only points to the here and now and the future, but that also looks back into the archives (Kyndrup, 2006), using myths is a way of looking as a part of a performative presence.

### **Art and epistemological elasticity**

Via grotesque realism, we are removed from the actual death happening  
11.05.2016.

Our own sorrow, and the death of our beloved, become situated in our  
body and soul.

As such, the aesthetic experience is based upon both an epistemological and an ontological elasticity because the experience demands elasticity. This can be connected to what Bakhtin calls a polyphonic approach to perceiving knowledge and meaning in the fields of academia and art. As Della Pollock, who works with

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performance theory and cultural studies, argues: "Performance writing is evocative, reflexive, multivocal, citational, and always incomplete" (Pollock, 1998, pp. 80–95).

In contrast, we, the two performative voices, search for the multivocal and simultaneous entrances for creating art, science, and methodology in the third site. This multi-layered encounter between art and academia develops what we call an aesthetic epistemological position, common to all the fields.

When our dear ones died, we, as individual researchers, took transcending positions in a common space. We created a *Third Site*.

### About the authors

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