

Live – between – Stream

Livers, masters, Veils



ALTERNATIVE IMAGE DESCRIPTION: A PLANT IN A BOTTLE, NOT REACHING THE WATER (© SUSANNA YLIKOSKI)

For a word

“Joe, Joe, your best and only access to this world is TV.” (Wallace, p.164i)

We live in a junction point of time-with(out)-livestream and time-with(in)-livestream. Throughout the past year as a spectator of the performance arts, I have come accustomed to the live-stream format and am slowly nearing a tipping point where the experience of Live is in transition in becoming a memory. Throughout, I will convey Live as an event where the audience and the performance physically share an environment, and Stream as an event where the performance takes place through a digital platform. Shortly, I will reflect on my own discomfort of the phantasm-virtualism, Stream, the place where everything seems to persist in the illusionary realm of a-un-reality; the place where we experience a dilution of senses; the place beyond embodiment. One of the major motors imbedded in Live, is its ability to create an inner web of urgency where the abstract nature of life becomes concrete. I find that Stream, in contrast, populates into in-concreteness and often, through the harshness of the blue light, into forgetfulness. Translating this phenomenon and my longing for Live, I will angle aid from David Foster Wallace's essay 'E Unibus Pluram: Television and U.S Fiction', though written almost thirty years ago, it still holds a striking parallel to digital platforms, in its discussion to television's affect and relation to culture and our self-perception. When Wallace made the decision to write ironically about the irony of his time, I have decided to use the mannerisms and spirit of the fragment

Stream, with the knowledge of the superimposition of publishing in a platform called *Stream*.

The two different Veils

“For television’s whole raison is reflecting what people want to see. It’s a mirror.” (p. 152)

It is different to watch or to see. Television (p.181) in its most literal term means to look far, accordingly leading us farther away from ourselves. Though this function allows us to be naturally reflective (for us to identify with what we see), in its ‘far-aw(a/r)yeness’ it does not aid us to meet with ourselves. Live introduces us the difference of another, without which we would end up going in cycles: spiralling around ourselves like dogs chasing their own tails; one thing feeding itself in an endless inescapable loop; pool in-able, send less now, lie, sail, no hint fed, so felt: the railing. The mold(y) trap of words circling in and around themselves, and we start to listen without hearing.

There are several variants of the Stream: (1) the ‘documentation’ (I, as a spectator, am (but not) there), (2) the ‘play-pretend’ (I am (and not) there), (3) the ‘cinematographic’ event (solely and purposefully in the past), and (4) the (suddenly so familiar) ‘zoom’ format.ⁱⁱ Though all approach the streaming in Stream differently, they all are joined together to be met through a lens. It is

paradoxically terri(puri)fying and beautiful how the cameras guide our gaze to tell us what we ought to look at, providing us an incomplete framing where we lose a part of our (spectatorial) power and freedom. Live on the other hand confronts usⁱⁱⁱ by the uneasiness of our own choice: what to pay attention to. We might be pointed towards a direction where the performance convention(ally) potentially ought to happen, but as proven (Zeitgeist) art in its often mischievous^{iv} nature flips this presumption away from its feet inviting us to fall with it. When no one knows if there precisely is something to look at, the Liveliness results in it becoming personal that exists in the perceptive differences being imprinted to resonances: affected by lived actions we carry on with(in) the experience: it transforms us. The agency here lies in tracing and *mapping*^v.

“Television’s biggest minute-by-minute appeal is that it engages without demanding. One can rest while undergoing stimulation. Receive without giving.” (p. 163)

We are never met with silence when entering Live as we enter a space of allowed vulnerability, where we expose our inner reality in our responses at least to the people residing next to us by our smells, mannerisms, fashion, and commentaries of ‘Gasp’s’, ‘Oh’s’, ‘Bravo’s!’ and ‘Buu’s!’ . Our in-out-erity becomes unveiled as its own spectacle, just like the events on the stage, the

sad thing is that we lose a part of our *author-ity* when we gaze our screens alone at our homes. Is it a coincidence that an acronym of Stream is Master?

Though to look at, the decision of it, is comparably radical, arguably its negation is more radical in Live. Is there a pressure to leave Stream – who notices but you alone unless it is all of us. We are met with the difference of tension in mass and individual. Live still holds the (influential) power of a single spectator, placed within a mass of (com/modity/rad(e)ial) spectatorship: with the *ability to move it*. It is that un-nameable power of becoming, a process of assisting a creation (where without(side), one or the other, there is neither). We assist it even upon falling asleep, whereas the palpable wall of Stream renders us into ghosts, unable to be felt in our presence. We remain in Live, in Stream we rewind.

“We’re not the voyeurs here at all. We’re just viewers.” (p. 153)

The physicality of a Live situation informs and thrusts us, in an unhiding manner, to be wholly distracted, comforted, and disturbed by someone else’s presence: these chance encounters of the physical others/ness in their foreignism-a-familiarity. And what is *physical is met with resistance* and that propels us into action.

This prospect of potentially engaging us in our daily lives makes us the dreamers, in opposition, to Stream that momentarily unwinds (p. 164, removes and erases our daily lives from us), offers us dreams. As Stream settles in fantasy (p. 189), Live actualizes that fantasy, making it tangible, and

revealing the immanent nature of inter-dependency. In its actuality Live enables im-agi(n/t)ation^{vi} and with that other illusions to emerge – a subject (spectator) meets a subject (performer/artwork). We are visitors due to the relativity of our bodies to themselves.

In this absence of (physical) confrontation, we are easily satisfied with copying, making opinions, and on our very own dementia: to remember becomes a decision. One of the questions Stream is facing, is when the experience is forced to be diluted by the sensorial lack: how to be in an active (physical) exchange with the different contributors: the audience and the work, and if this is even important anymore? And though Stream has propelled a positi(tion)ve movement away from exclusiveness: the opening of performance archIves and sHowS has made the performance arts reach/able to interact with/ larger and unfamiliar audiences; as well as the taste of the current worldwide pandemic has created a response of appreciation and need for Lived culture, it also enhances approaches of detachment, absence and even separation. When we face ourselves in that mirror^{vii}, we are invited stalkers and peeping toms stripped away from our author/s/itative power, armed with bin-trash-oculars. But maybe, this is just one step in, towards a new direction and beyond our understanding of(f) ground, alike to the brut/e/al moment of detachment from our mOther^{viii}, as inevitably we must gain (in)dependency and to become our own masters.

“We’re not here to capture an image. We’re here to maintain one. Can you feel it, Jack? An accumulation of nameless energies.” (Don DeLillo, 1985, ‘White Noise’, p.13, (Wallace, p. 170))

ⁱ Wallace, David Foster. E Unibus Pluraum: Television and U.S Fiction. Review of Contemporary Fiction, 13:2, Summer 1993. Print.

ⁱⁱ Examples for (1) the ‘documentation’, Marlene Monteiro Freitas, *D’ivoire et chair – les statues souffrent aussi*, performed at Festival de Trajectoires (FR), January 16th 2021; (2) the ‘play-pretend’, Director Michael Rauter *Abschied*, performed at Radial System V. (DE) December 13th 2020; (3) the ‘cinematographic’, Wim Vandekeybus with his company Ultima Vez in collaboration with Olivier De Sagazan, *Hands do not touch your precious me*, performed at KVS’s platform (BE), January 17th, 2021; (4) the ‘zoom’, Omer Keinan, *The New Fire Ceremony*, performed at Viral Festival (IL), April 13th 2020. *The terminology has been imposed by the author, and by no means does correspond to the mentioned artists perception of art and their work.*

ⁱⁱⁱ “There is only one interesting difference between the cinema and the theatre. The cinema flashes on to a screen images from the past. As this is what the mind does to itself all through life, the cinema seems intimately real. Of course, it is nothing of the sort – it is satisfying and enjoyable extension of the unreality of everyday perception. The theatre, on the other hand, always asserts itself in the present. This is what can make it more real than the normal stream of consciousness. This also is what can make it so disturbing.” Brook, Peter. *The Empty Space*. New York: TOUCHSTONE: Simon & Schuster, 1996. Print. P.121-122

^{iv} “It is necessary to be another creature from time to time in order to function. In primitive cultures there are many rituals that flirt with the supernatural or abnormal, as a temporary state of being different. In our society and culture these are almost absent – we are lacking upside down activities.” Vera Mantero on poetry, Interview in Paris, January 5th, 2004. (Peeters, Jeroen. *Through the Back: Situating Vision between Moving Bodies*. Helsinki: Kinesis 5, 2014. Print. P. 217)

^v “Make a map not a tracing”, Deleuze, Gilles & Guattari, Felix. *A thousand Plateaus*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987. Print.

^{vi} Imagination here is defined as the ability of the body in comparison to fantasy defined as the ability of the mind.

^{vii} “Good lord and the dots are coming out of our own furniture, all we’re spying on is our own furniture.” Wallace, p.153.

^{viii} “The Father is the Void The Wife Waves Their Child is Matter. Matter makes it with his mother And their child is Life, a daughter. The daughter is the Great Mother Who, with her father/brother Matter as her lover, Gives birth to the Mind.” Gary Snider, ‘No Matter, Never Mind’, (McLagan David. *Creation Myths*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1977. Print. P. 23)