

## My Fecund Father

My dad is doing circles around me. He says he likes poems about poetry and plays about plays. He says there are poems that address poetry, and plays that address plays, how we write and compose these worlds. The first time I kiss a boy, I go into the car and tell my dad. My sister, who is already there, looks at me through the mirror and rolls her eyes. My dad tells me about the work of minor Greek poets. I take screenshots of my writing and send them to him. We talk about theatre and poetry and boys. Our relationship is fecund. Sometimes, when we meet in Greece, we make time to go to a cafe, sit outdoors on chairs that usually face the same direction, and talk. Although facing the same direction, we seem to be doing circles around each other.

There are moments when my father sees me clearly. In those moments, our circling seems to achieve a mapping onto itself. Somehow, in those moments, our paths converge or overlap. This is not just a comfortable feeling; it is a feeling of acceptance. A feeling that we exist in this world and we can be seen the way we want to be seen by the people we choose to be seen by. When I come back from university the first year, my dad says he doesn't recognise me when I get off the bus. The year after, he says the same. The year after that he says nothing. I wonder whether he still cannot recognise me or he starts recognising the fact that I have changed.

Fecundity is about growing. Not growing in circles, but still growing. It is also about seeing how one grows. How one holds oneself in doing that growing. I want to grow; be fecund, but not produce offspring. I want to be myself, be my own offspring. Doing circles around each other betrays a desire to meet, to cross paths. We keep circling around past and present, going back to the relationship we once had. And sometimes, we meet in fecundity. This means, we meet in thinking or producing - we find each other in a common space of growing and becoming.

My mum and dad met in 1980 in a rural part of Crete called Old Town, near Chania. He was a teacher in the high school and she was the village doctor. They became friends, spent time together and fell in love. My dad tells me that he often had to exit his classroom, because he wanted to think of my mother and felt embarrassed doing so in front of his class. I have an image of my mum and dad in a beach during that time, they both look so young and happy, among the rocks, unable to contain their happiness.



## Doing Itself

I have been thinking about trembling recently. I have been thinking about people on stage trembling, shaking or stuttering, a kind of stuttering of movement that gives rise to more stuttering. For example, in a collaboration with Tom Richards, entitled *Cuteness Forensics*, Tim Spooner has constructed a world of obscure objects and machinery, strange creatures, fragments of domestic spaces hanging from the ceiling, tubes with liquid in them and precarious spongy tripod surfaces, all of which co-exist on the stage (Yard Theatre, NOW19). In the effort to perform an action, creatures or objects or arms start to tremble. On and off the stage, trembling takes the shape of a process to get somewhere. Trembling is also the result of that process. It is both the conduit and the force transmitted. A small creature is lying on the floor trembling. It has a pink shiny body, white curved feet, grey hair on its face and two ears sticking out. It starts to tremble tentatively and it continues to tremble. The creature trembles in anticipation of nothing; it is lying on the floor, perhaps the temperature is too low, perhaps something exciting is about to happen. We don't know much, but we know this: the trembling is taking over, first the right leg, then the left, then the arm. It is doing itself. It is producing and reproducing itself, giving rise to a circular system of trembling. Trembling in this case is circular: it gives rise to more trembling and imitates itself.

When we produce something, what is it we produce other than ourselves? What kind of patterns are we recreating, other than our own patterns? In meeting each other, coinciding with each other, who are we really longing to see? What is this circularity I am trying to inscribe on me or talk myself into? I am drawing circles around my parents; we seem to converge in certain moments. In others, I experience shifts in the direction my life is going, or a kind of rupture. These are moments when I feel my parents are looking at me as if they are looking at a different person. They think they know me, but actually they see in me someone else. Our circles do not overlap completely. My circularity refuses to map itself neatly onto my family's circles, and yet their mis-recognition helps me to see myself more clearly. We meet and see ourselves through mis-recognition or the unfamiliar. Or, we meet in fecundity, which enables a process towards the self, when turned into a condition of existence.

What do these moments of turning back to the time my dad does not recognise me make possible? They enable me to return to myself and observe myself more fully. What others cannot see, I demand to see more clearly. I am able to see myself more clearly in those moments. And those moments seem to require some sort of circular movement; a sort of going back to myself: both the moments when I am recognised and the moments that I am not, the moments of estrangement and recognition. I can see myself more clearly, because my dad's lack of recognition confirms that I have grown, that I have become a stranger to him. When my dad has to exit his classroom to think of my mother, it is because he has become a stranger to himself and therefore cannot be seen. Change becomes palpable in estrangement or mis-recognition. And this is when I coincide with myself.

Those moments of convergence I also experience in the theatre. Mostly when I watch something that is strange or something that trembles in repetition. At some point, Spooner, facing away from the audience, grabs the creature with the long pink legs and white feet and grey hair from the floor. Spooner pulls what looks like the creature's bottom half of their body, to reveal a shinier bottom half with no feet but only shorter legs in their place. Spooner shakes the fabric with one hand, while holding the creature with the other. Subsequently, he moves upstage in front of what looks like a fake oval mirror placed on a frame of pale blue fabric. Spooner positions the creature on top of the mirror and starts shaking its legs. We realise his legs are tubes and the creature's insides are starting to

discharge dark dust that stains the mirror, the fabric of which is marked by dark circles that grow bigger and bigger. The shaking of the creature, the discharging of the dust and the staining of the fabric all seem to be doing something. They seem to be pointing towards the things that the self is capable of. The self as material is used in the form of shaking to speak or stutter. There is a fecundity to things like this, they make other things happen, they give rise to other things. They create, they make, they produce. But they also produce themselves. They become themselves by acting the way they do.

What I find in these moments by Tim Spooner is the effect of animism, the attribution of life to inanimate objects; this particular experience, which can be at times on the verge of the uncanny, or the unfamiliar, is strange; it is overbearing; it has a quality of movement, this doubtful animation; it is weighing in a particular way and invites me to do my own work on identification and animation. In these moments I find a comparable moment of estrangement and recognition, an exaggerated version of myself, a version whose edges are further away than I can reach. In those moments, I experience a sense of overlapping with myself. As if I have been doing circles around myself; as if myself has been doing circles around me. And we finally meet. So, I coincide with myself. We occur at the same time. Circling around oneself is about wanting something, looking for a moment of relief one may find in coincidence. Within strangeness we might find such relief. Simply perhaps, because we are looking for it. I see myself clearly when I coincide with myself. I also see myself through mis-recognition. When I cannot see myself clearly or others cannot see me, I observe myself more fully. I lean in and take myself in, in the moment of unfamiliarity. Selfing, in this case, is material; it is substance to work with, to create forms and shape into something. This material has layers and it consists of stuff. One can take off the bottom half, expose the shiny legs, open the gutter and let the dust out. This dust creates circles on fabric, it stains the fabric and returns to itself.

Moments of shaking or repetition seem to also have that function; within them I can experience myself occurring at the same time, happening at the same time as myself. This kind of coincidence can happen in those circles, in the attempt to follow myself or find myself in this path. It can also happen when I identify with something I do not recognise or something outside of myself. Unfamiliarity demands something to be resolved. The same happens with repetition. They open up a space and I can see myself through them.

Circling around each other and meeting in fecundity reveals a desire to explore, to recognise, to overlap and converge. It also reveals a pattern of making and knowing, of becoming oneself. The material one is working with is the material of the self, the substance of being. We tremble and shake and repeat ourselves in fecundity, we become who we are by returning to past and present, the relationship we once had with ourselves and others. We circle around ourselves, around the things that seem to matter; the dark dust that stains the fabric, the trembling leg, the odd creatures that remind us perhaps of who we are or once were. In trembling, as in fecundity, we find ourselves and this type of circularity opens up the space within which we can finally coincide with each other, but most importantly coincide with ourselves.