

Master's Thesis **HUNGER** – The Process of a Work in Progress – Kierstan DeVoe  
Advisor's Opinion – Pavel Zajíček

Let me start with a question: “What have we read and how?”. This is an obvious professional deformation on my part, but since the thesis deals with text originating from the Authorial Reading class, I think I'm entitled to this formulation.

When I say that they originate in the class I'm not being as precise as I could be. Kierstan is inviting us into the story of a story which has been accompanying her and living with her from the very beginning:

“One day when I was three years old, I suddenly stopped playing and turned to my mother. ‘I used to be a wolf, Mommy,’ I told her nonchalantly” (5.)

“...this master's thesis aims to tell the story of the inspiration behind, realization of, and the personal journey required to create this final performance, a story I've been waiting to tell my whole life.” (4.)

In other words, Kierstan is contextualizing her wolf story, she is doing so on different levels, she is exploring the net of influences, inspirations, motives and roots from which the story grows. What makes this research so appealing is the fact (or is it just an impression?) that Kierstan isn't presenting her discoveries as an all-knowing distant expert. She is on the way, all the way, with us.

And the “how” question? One of the ways of looking at Kierstan's thesis is as a suite or even a play of dialogues and dialectics. She enters a dialogue with her fellow students, family members and teachers, most significantly with Kateřina Daňková. As she describes her feelings after a comment in an acting class, she admits:

“In all honesty, I was furious. I needed more distance?” (18.)

And later:

“I admit to you now that it would take me several more years to truly understand what Daňková and my other professors meant when they said ‘more distance’ and ‘less therapy.’” (18.)

“I hadn't realized in those early days of KATaP what I was doing wrong in those AA classes.” (25.)

In this manner are we invited to witness the whole process of realization and development, the process of learning.

Some of the dialogues are rather mysterious, e.g. the repetitive returns of Kierstan's mother:

“All my life she (mother) has told me, ‘My purpose is you.’” (2.)

“I've always said, ‘Everything I am is because of you, Mama.’” (2.)

These quotes – when put together and linked with some of the more difficult topics, mental health etc. – in some ways say more than was probably intended.

Another level of dialogue is the one with the various disciplines taught at KATaP, namely movement classes, Authorial Acting, Authorial Reading and especially DJ. The depth of understanding Kierstan shows for the whole system of classes is remarkable. She provides us with her personal experience which she puts in the context of intellectual reflection:

nothing remains unsupported.

The most important dialogue, and the one most difficult to grasp, is the one Kierstan is conducting with herself. She moves, perhaps even dances between various time levels and reflects on different points on the timeline. We can say that she is literally in dialogue with both the past and the future, not to mention the future past and past future and more plateaux in between.

Another important topic is the dialogue between Kierstan's experience of DJ and her encounter with psychotherapy, the distinction of the therapeutic component in her theatre studies:

“I don't go into a piece or a project with the intention to ‘therapize’ myself, but more often than not, I find myself changed by the process, compelled to adapt and learn accordingly.” (17.)

The best writing of the thesis is, in my opinion, Kierstan's description of procrastination as a part of her creative process (pages 29-31) where most of the levels we have mentioned meet and interconnect:

“Someone somewhere cries. Another stares off into the middle distance, stone-faced, seemingly unfazed. The wolf growls, then whimpers. Chaos ensues...”

If I were to mention some areas with a space for improvement, I would point out some formulations where Kierstan got carried away trying to make her point clear or emphasize an impression. Most of the cases are placed in the first third of the text, we may therefore argue that Kierstan found balance along the way.

(“Uninhibited by ego or selfdoubt (those came later), Baby Kierstan could give you a story any time of day, and these stories could go on for hours and hours and days and weeks and years and eternities.”) (3.)

And of course, the minor blunder that the theorist (1724-1804) was Immanuel Kant, not Kent.

In conclusion, the submitted thesis *Hunger* is the well-written, honest testimony of a journey on which Kierstan dared to embark. It mirrors the creative and reflective principles taught at our department in an original and personal way.

I gladly recommend that the thesis pass, pending successful oral defence.

Prague, March 30, 2021