

# Mediated Re-enactment: Screens and Queer Time in Milo Rau's *Medea's Children* and Jürgen Kuttner's *The Tutor*

-- Cynthia Shin --

Indiana University Bloomington

This article compares mediated re-enactments in Milo Rau's *Medea's Children* (2023) and Jürgen Kuttner's *The Tutor* (2019), two performances that create multilayered mediation through their use of screens and recorded materials.

"Mediated Re-enactment: Screens and Queer Time in Milo Rau's *Medea's Children* and Jürgen Kuttner's *The Tutor*" explores how these two productions oscillate between the stage and an elsewhere – in *Medea's Children* pre-recorded footage with adult and child actors, and Kuttner's use of archival images from the 1950 adaptation of J.M.R. Lenz's 1774 text. This article uses the concept of queer temporality to reveal how the mediation and intermediality of both productions move beyond normative, linear time, and invite their respective audiences to re-examine the plays' core tragedies using video to show the cyclical nature of history.

Keywords: Milo Rau, Jürgen Kuttner, Brecht, Queer Temporality, Re-enactment

## Introduction

“Wait, don’t after-talks usually come *after* the show?” I asked myself as I shuffled through the program of *Medea’s Children* at the Jugendstiltheater in Vienna. When the lights dimmed, a man introduced himself as Peter Seynaeve and welcomed us to the after-talk of the show. Children walked out to the stage from behind the closed curtain. Some still in costume, some now in comfortable clothes, and some with their hair tied tight with a towel. I really *hoped* this was a part of the performance, feeling the full force of the anxiety that comes from not knowing what’s “real” and what’s part of the performance in the theater sometimes. It wasn’t until the children insisted on re-enacting parts of the performance that I felt confident that I was in the right place at the right time – even though the performance was thrown out of order.

Milo Rau’s *Medea’s Children* alternates between two narratives of child murderesses: Medea and Amandine Moreau. Medea, as told in the eponymous Greek tragedy by Euripides, kills her children as a revenge on her husband Jason. Amandine, a woman who is overwhelmed by childcare and isolated from her family and friends, murders her five children. Although Rau uses a pseudonym,<sup>1</sup> she is based on a real-life case of Geneviève Lhermitte, a Belgian woman who murdered her five children on February 28, 2007.<sup>2</sup> In addition to the two stories, two media also co-exist in *Medea’s Children* to further complicate the time in a method familiar to many Rau’s works. For example, there is a film about Amandine’s parents, who by chance encounter their estranged daughter at a pub. The audience already knows that Amandine is a Belgian woman who killed her five children, as Peter explains in the opening after-talk. While the film is playing, children on stage closely follow the movements of the adults in the film: Vic looks through the newspaper like Amandine’s father while Emma sits across him like Amandine’s mother. Then, the film transitions to a close-up of Emma who monologues as Amandine’s mother. In this moment, a strange multiplicity beholds the audience: we are watching a (fictional) re-enactment of a theater performance that is a live re-enactment of a film, which is itself a recorded re-enactment of a dramatized historical event.

The multiple layers of time in *Medea’s Children* takes me to another theater experience—watching German director Jürgen Kuttner’s *The*

*Tutor* during his Midwestern university tour in 2023, by the Bertolt Brecht Bloomington Karaoke Theater (BBBKT). This performance, initially developed by the duo Jürgen Kuttner and Tom Kühnel in 2019, used archival footage of Bertolt Brecht's 1950 adaptation of J. M. R. Lenz's *The Tutor* (1774) as a background by showing the photos in consecutive interval, almost like an early film. Actors stand in front of the screen and re-enact the scenes that are projected in the background, giving voice to the photograph-cum-film projected on the screen. They are not in costume or on a set; they are not reciting the lines but reading them off the screen (hence the word "karaoke" in BBBKT). In Kuttner's *The Tutor*, three different timelines occupy the audience. The plot, adapted from J. M. R. Lenz's play, depicts the eighteenth century German bourgeois society; the footage by Ruth Berlau documents Brecht's staging of the play at the Berliner Ensemble in the twentieth century; and the actors, who are present on the stage with the audience in the twenty-first century, not only revive the two different pasts, but also evokes new contemporary issues in American higher education as a political problematic raised by the performance. Describing *The Tutor* is as much of a mouthful as *Medea's Children* with both performances stacking time upon time.

I resort to queer theory as a lens to interpret the temporal web of the two performances. Queer temporality, with its interrogation of normative time structure and embracement of a utopian hope for a different future, becomes a tool that illustrates how performance with multiple co-existing temporalities find its political potential towards a theater that not only represents but changes the world. While both Rau and Kuttner do not explicitly deal with queer characters or narratives, reading the two performances queerly reveals their rejection of hegemony and the overlapping of different threads of time that establish new relationships between the past and the present, and, as I will argue, with the future in the two performances.

## Why Queer Time?

Queer time refers to the new modes of temporality that emerges outside of the normative time. Time is often conveniently defined by the normative bodies who can be appropriately bound to that time; Elizabeth Freeman uses the term "chrononormativity" to define this "use of time to organize individual human bodies to-

wards maximum productivity” (2010, 3). Sometimes, this means meeting heteronormative life goals, such as getting married and having children. Other times, it means being bound by the work schedule. In both situations, time is presented as a biological fact rather than as an institutional force enacted upon the individual. Queer time, often reflected in the lives of queer people who do not or cannot meet these hegemonic time markers, shows that there can be different ways that a body can interact with temporality. Hence, the word “queer” in “queer time” refers not only to same-sex desires, but also to non-normative social experiences and logic that stands at odds with hegemonic institutions. Halberstam describes it as “nonnormative logics and organizations of community, sexual identity, embodiment, and activity in space and time” (2005, 6). This nonnormative logic then provides a tool, “the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning” that breaks down the monolithic, singular, hegemonic definition (Sedgwick 1994, 7). By showing that there is more than one way of being, queerness shows that there is no one “right” way of being. Looking at time in theater queerly, similarly, breaks down the institution’s call to “look correctly” and instead shows how to hold multiple times together—something that theater do the best.

Understanding the two performances through the lens of the queer time relieves this competitive anxiety because the seemingly oppositional forces (the past and the present, the beginning and the end, the screen and the stage, the real and the illusion) can coexist. Simone Pflieger’s concept of “untimeliness” becomes informative in explaining this co-existence. Their concept allows the chrononormative notion of “timeliness” to coexist with the queer “untimeliness” because this is the situation in which many neoliberal subjects often find themselves (2023, 23). One can *mostly* conform to the normative time while *sometimes* being untimely. Importantly, they emphasize that there is no hierarchy between the two—sometimes, we want to glorify the queerness of untimeliness, but there is no point in doing so. Hence, “untimeliness” encourages us to think “beyond a binary, clear-cut division between being in-sync and aligned with straight time (timely), and out-of-sync and unhinged (untimely)” (Pflieger 2023, 32). Pflieger’s intervention to queer time is that they show how an individual body can occupy multiple times at the same time, oscillating between the straight time and queer time. This co-existence becomes instructive in understanding performance

that layers multiple times over a single body. Theater seems to be a particularly good space to hold the two seemingly oppositional forces together, to embrace both, to try to hold multiple timelines and competing media at once. It is always possible to look away from the screen to the actors, and vice versa. It is possible to hold the entire stage together. Then perhaps we discover, as Jaspir Puar has, that what looked oppositional was merely frictional, which becomes generative when they brush against each other (2012, 50).

Even though they do not identify as gay or lesbian per se, the central figures of both Rau and Kuttner's performances deviate from the normative "family time." The impotence of Läufer (both social and physical) is central to the climax of *The Tutor* in the self-castration scene. Because he impregnated his student Gustchen, Läufer flees the town and hides at Wenzeslaus's. Here, he finds himself seducing Lisa, Wenzeslaus's ward, and is once again asked to leave.<sup>3</sup> In order to guarantee his position as a tutor, Läufer castrates himself. Medea and Amandine kill their children in the act opposite to the heteronormative act of giving birth to them in *Medea's Children*. The gruesome and lengthy murder of the five children is, similar to Läufer's monologue before castration, the most intense moment in the performance. To read these figures through a queer lens, I argue, gives them a new political meaning in the continuing interrogation of the violent and exclusionary processes that heteronormative structure perpetuates. It is precisely because they can no longer access the future through children—what Edelman describes as a fantasy of reproductive futurism (2004, 14)—that the two performances unlock new potentials for differently constellated futurity, which accommodates a layered temporal structure.

Alongside queer time, I pay special attention to the screen. Using a screen during a performance is not unique to German theater, nor is it a method pioneered by Rau and Kuttner. Nevertheless, the screen is important in three ways. First, it plays an important role in both Rau and Kuttner's oeuvre. Second, in both *Medea's Children* and *The Tutor*, the screen becomes a site that shows how the two performances fit within the tradition of Brechtian political theater. Finally, when looked at with a queer lens, the screen becomes a site that dissects another hegemonic hierarchy, namely a tension between authoritative representation and an embodied presence.



I loved that there was  
music with everything.

Mi è piaciuto che ci fosse  
sempre la musica.



Figure 1: "Audience Talkback" at the start of *Medea's Children* (2024)  
with second cast, dir. Milo Rau, Photo credit: Michiel Devijver/NTGent

Through analysis of the screen and its playful manipulation of time, this article focuses on the hopeful dimension to the performance beyond paranoid cynicism. Here, looking queerly becomes again helpful. Jose Esteban Muñoz reminds us that “the past is a field of possibility in which subjects can act in the present in the service of a new futurity” (2009, 16). In this vein, I read the use of re-enactment and the re-emergence of the past in Rau and Kuttner as a search for the potentially different futurity. An immediate reaction to the multiple times in both performances was that the onstage repetition of the self-castration of Läufer in *The Tutor* and filicide in *Medea’s Children* are reminders of the (inevitable) cycle of violence. The address to the audience can be read as accusatory: Why did you let this cruelty happen to us *again*? However, they both seem to be doing and saying more than history repeats itself, because the children and students present on the stage learn something with the audience that hopefully helps us move to a different future than the one repeated on stage.

Reading the performances through the lens of queer temporality transforms this hope into a politically charged one. Queer temporality becomes an appropriate tool for interpreting political theater because of its utopian impulse. Queerness implies a utopian impulse towards a different future that is simply not yet here. As Muñoz puts it, “queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world” (2009, 1). In addition to the rejection of the norm as the inevitable default, it also offers concrete, performable alternatives to different futures. This utopian dream underlies both performances, and their manipulation of time is an attempt to search for a solution. Both performances do not offer a concrete alternative, but their presentation of the onstage problematics is motivated by the hope that the future will be different. Despite the tragic and violent ending, there was a sense of hope in both performances, because the multiple timelines turn the stage upside down. The end is the beginning; the voices of the present provide voices for the bodies of the past. Even if the narrative of the performance shows re-enactments of the historical violence, the performances themselves seem to suggest that there is something *more* to repeating these moments on stage.

## The Politics of Experiencing Time Otherwise

Both performances indicate that history is presented as a cycle, and yet there seems to be a desire to break free from it. The past repeats itself in the present, and this repetition constitutes tragedy. But what is the point of performing tragedy if it's merely a re-enactment? From *The Tutor*, it is the prologue and the epilogue. Brecht's adaptation begins with a prologue that establishes a connection between the social conditions of the eighteenth century together with that of the twentieth century. The actor playing Läufer addresses the audience directly: "Ladies and gentlemen, the play you're about to see / Was written in the eighteenth century [...] But what I really do, you'll see / Is spell out the sorry state of Germany" (Brecht 2014, 27-28). The performance by BBBKT adds an additional dimension by bringing in the concerns of the twenty-first century. Raymond Wolf, one of the student actors, wrote his own version of the Brechtian epilogue that further connects the text together with the circumstances today. It reads, "the story differs from your world only in time [...] an end to these cycles would be grand." The epilogue not only indicates a re-emergence of the past but also indicates that these multiple iterations of the past have been a re-enactment, a repetitive cycle. Similarly, in *Medea's Children*, Emma recounts that "even if you start right from the beginning, it all seems to be plotted out in advance. That's the real tragedy: that we know how it's going to end. And we do it anyway. And we still don't lose hope." The hope for a different future is present in both monologues: "an end to these cycles would be grand" and "we still don't lose hope."

The non-linear queer time that Kuttner's *The Tutor* creates invites this utopian feeling that the future can be different. One of the central issues of *The Tutor* is what constitutes a fair wage for an educator. Even though Läufer was initially agreed to be paid 150 thalers, the Major negotiates with him saying that the best he can do is 140. His work as a tutor is also disregarded as something unworthy. The privy councilor disapprovingly comments that a tutor "lolls about and gets paid for it" (Brecht 2014, 50). In this context, Läufer's act of self-castration can be interpreted as working against his own nature to fit into the social norm. The self-emasculatation of intellectuals was also what interested Brecht about Lenz's play. Läufer's castration was metaphorical because "an intellectual made himself impotent and thus ended any possible resistance to the existing class system"

(Barnett 2015, 68). Brecht considered Läufer's self-emasculation as both a historical symptom of a German society, and of himself, because he had to abandon his more revolutionary, radical performances, including the learning plays (Müller-Schöll 2018, 78).

At Indiana University, the audience saw the parallel between Läufer and educators in a higher education system that is increasingly corporatized. Läufer's maiming was interpreted as an attempt to cut off any personal affect that is irrelevant to fulfilling the ever-increasing workload of the university. During the roundtable following the performance, students mentioned that they want a personal connection with their professors and instructors. They seek a human relationship, especially in humanities classrooms where we move away from the transactional model of "I pay, you teach." However, the burden and risk that comes with this connection is sometimes too much for the educator to bear. Any close emotional attachment to the people that you are working with needs to be cut off because it would intervene with productivity. We observed that those who severed their natural connection with students and therefore can work despite the emotional burden—somewhat like Läufer after self-castration—often end up with a more promising career than those who do not. Presenting different times simultaneously becomes an important reason why political issues can be brought forth in *The Tutor*. Here every participant explores and practices what it means to occupy non-hierarchical, non-linear time to explore their timely and historical untimely political issues together. This practice is not only a lesson in watching theater, but also an education in imagining the world otherwise.

This lesson, for *Medea's Children* and *The Tutor*, are facilitated through the screen. Screen plays an important role in both Rau and Kuttner's oeuvre. Many other Rau performances use a screen and live video camera on stage. For example, in *Five Easy Pieces* (2016), the screen is used to open a space that pushes the audience uncomfortably as they watch the difficult fictional repetition of someone's real trauma. Similar to *Medea's Children*, it incorporates pre-recorded filmic materials featuring adult actors that children re-enact live on stage. A camera is present on the stage, providing a close-up of the live-action performance. *Orestes in Mosul* (2019) and *Antigone in the Amazon* (2023) also use a giant screen on stage, not only for re-enactments but also to invite the Iraqi and indigenous Brazilian activists onto

the stage. Rau's opera debut, *La Clemenza di Tito* (2021/2023), also uses both pre-recorded materials of the Viennese citizens as well as a live camera on stage to provide close-ups to the artworks the actors re-enact onstage. *Medea's Children* is an extension of an ongoing question of representation that Rau explores in his works. Kuttner also experiments with screens, since manipulation of media plays an important role in his oeuvre. He has worked with multiple media as he is not only a theater director, but also a radio moderator and journalist. His perhaps most renowned performance is *Videoschnipselabende*, part of regular programming at Berlin's *Volksbühne* since 1994 (Volksbühne, n.d.). In this performance, Kuttner takes old television snippets from news broadcasts, advertisements, and films, and gives lectures about them in a humorous and intelligent way. Each performance is unique, with a new theme and video clips that vary from love, sex, war, kids, Mick Jagger, and the aggressive potential of a German foreign minister's ringtone (Volksbühne, n.d.). In his previous visit to the Midwest in 2018, he performed a video snippet lecture with the title "I Wanna Be Americano" that is fondly remembered as "innovative and hilarious" (Sheedy 2023). Just like Rau, screen plays a key role in Kuttner's theater.

The screen is an important in the context of political theater that Rau and Kuttner aspire to create. Rau and Kuttner both aspire for a theater that fosters new political discourse. In this context, education plays an important role in both performances as they are specifically didactic on purpose, like what a Brechtian learning play would look like (Brecht 1964, 80). In *Medea's Children*, there are repeated pauses where theater and acting stops. During these breaks from re-enactments, education in/through theater becomes possible. For example, children ask Peter what terms like "apotheosis" means. When he explains it, it seems like it is for the children, but this can also be a learning moment for the audience. This repetitive procedure of children re-enacting and discussing the scene with empathy demonstrates a kind of "intelligence of stage" as the "intelligence of imitation" for Rau (Englhart 2021, 69). In the case of *The Tutor*, education is thematized in both the content and context of the play. The play features the theme of education and what it means to serve as an educator. Brecht was particularly interested in using Lenz's play to participate in the debate about school reforms in the GDR (Weber 2006, 179). Kuttner's adaptation in a higher education setting, as previously mentioned, was relatively easy because the





Figure 2: Use of projection during reenactment from *Medea* in *Medea's Children* (2024) with first cast, dir. Milo Rau, © Michiel Devijver/NTGent

production's setup even allows amateurs to step into the role of actors and be a part of this performance—all that is required is to read the lines. The “intelligence of stage” through imitation works here, too. In that sense, *The Tutor* was an experiment that was as much for the audience as it was for the actors participating in it in a Brechtian fashion, giving the students a chance to develop their political consciousness through participation.

Both Rau and Kuttner employ Brechtian methods of doing theater politically through their use of screens on stage. Brecht suggested that the mechanism of theater should disallow emotional attachments to what is being represented on the stage, in order to encourage critical engagement with the political dimension of the performance (1964, 186). Rau's *Medea's Children* uses a similar procedure to *Five Easy Pieces*, using the camera on the stage to break the illusion that the actor is the character. Let us return to the scene at the pub: Emma is captured on the screen via an onstage live video camera as Amandine's mother, grieving over her estranged daughter. The lights are dimmed, and her close-up is projected on the giant screen, sucking our attention to her. Once Peter shouts “cut,” the lights turn back on, and Emma breaks out of her role. She smiles and reveals that her tear was not an emotional reaction, but an illusion created from a tear stick that still stings a little bit. Her smile and the revelation of the theater mechanism breaks the audience away from identifying emotionally with the character that she was playing earlier on. In Kuttner's *The Tutor*, identification with the actors is difficult by design since they are mostly providing voices for the existing photographic images on the screen. The connection between actor and character is severed, as the body of the actor on stage is only meant to provide a voice for the “body” of the actor on screen. Similar to *Medea's Children*, the screen provides a looming presence that draws our attention away from over-identifying with the actors. The presence of the actors and the theatricality reflected in the archival footage co-exist to dissolve a unified character and break any emotional attachment to it.

Finally, the screen becomes a site that rejects competition but embraces co-existence over hierarchies. The screen on the stage plays a key role in creating a sense of repetition, as well as competing for the attention of the audience. Hans-Thies Lehmann identifies how the screen on stage further highlights this tension. He contrasts

the actor on the stage with digital images on the screen. The actor becomes a kind of interference (*Bildstörung*) because it disrupts the “phantasm of ‘immediate contact’” that the electronic images promise (2006, 173). The screen further accentuates the paradoxical relationship theater inherently has with the real. Sometimes present images *as if* they are the representation of the real, and sometimes present reproductions of images in the making on the stage, *as if* they are only fictional. Sometimes it does both, letting the audience find themselves in an uneasy in-between space. The two performances recreate an uneasy dynamic between the screen and the stage. Photographs from Brecht’s archive are always portrayed on the stage simultaneously with the actors in *The Tutor*. Similarly, in *Medea’s Children*, pre-recorded videos are shown simultaneously as children’s enactment of the same scene on the stage. The eye inevitably drifts to the screen because it is so easy to look at. This desire to look intensifies with the close-ups of the actors in *Medea’s Children* because the images on screen provide a way to have immediate access to the details that are easy to miss from farther away. The screen then serves both as a guide towards images that are worth looking at amongst the meaning that is being created live on stage, and as a promise that unknowability of images on stage can be overcome through the aid of the filmic images. In both cases, there exists competition between the screen and the stage, both trying to grab the audience’s attention. Should one be looking at the authoritative, historical material of Brecht on the screen or the actors performing live albeit only providing voice to the footage? Should one be looking at the child actors on the stage or the film on the screen?

### **Beyond Competition towards Concurrence: Queering Re-enactments**

The competition between the screen and the stage feels particularly stark in *The Tutor* because it also parallels another dichotomy, the past and the future. Here, re-enactment is also dictated by the images on the screen, similar to the re-enactments in *Medea’s Children*. The live actors of the present give voice to the actors from the past who are already themselves giving a voice to the characters of their past. This historical past depicted on the screen feels particularly removed due to the clunky pause between photographs, a reminder that even though it looks like a film, it is not a film as we know it.

The screen projection thus creates a further distance between the audience, where even a familiar medium like film comes across as strange and distant. The disconnect feels particularly present in one scene, where Mrs. von Berg asks Läufer if he could demonstrate how well he can dance. Läufer in the footage starts dancing with a slow delay between each still while the student actors do not; instead, they pause somewhat awkwardly while the footage continues. But this is a rare occasion. Other times, there is an uncertainty that pulls the eye in different directions. If we focus on the actors on the stage, the photographs serve as an ornamental background. They become a set that highlights the presence of the actors. But we can easily focus on the images on the screen, paying attention to the documentary material. Then, the voice of the actors serves as a supplement to enhance the film.

Focusing on this competition makes the climax of *Medea's Children* feel like a challenge, a provocation asking the ethics of witnessing violence on stage. The performance culminates into the longest and slowest scene, Amandine's murder of the children. Vic had mentioned in passing during the performance that in the Greek version of *Medea*, the children are killed off-stage. The murder of the children on stage almost seems to be in direct defiance to that tradition. The murder scene begins with a pre-recorded film of Amandine walking to the grocery store to purchase the knife that she will kill her children with. In front of the screen stands Anna, a little girl, who explains the gruesome details of the murder and what is to come. Amandine, played by Jade, now appears on the stage. She beckons children one by one into the house on the set. Peter follows the children into the house with a camera in his hand. Close-up of a murder takes place on the screen. He even helps move the lifeless body out of the house once the murder is completed on the screen. The camera stops moving while he helps Amandine and points to the ground where he has left it. What is interesting about this scene is that the murder of children is actually pre-recorded. Unlike the "real" work that the camera has been doing throughout the performance, where it provides the audience with a reproduction of images, here the camera is only pretending "as if" it is filming live. Yet, by this time, the audience has practiced enough discretion to understand that they can be skeptical in their witnessing of the cruelty. This moment seems to culminate in Milo Rau's own words, where he says that "realism in theater doesn't mean that a reality is reproduced but that the reproduction itself becomes

real in the moment of performance” (2016, 122). It implicates the audience because they let such violence happen “for real” on stage. The theatricality of the scene is thrown into question once again after the re-enactment is complete. Sanne, one of the child performers, hyperventilates even after the lights are turned on and all the dead children come back to life. Peter rushes to calm her down. Was she just being a child, naively taking the murder scene to be real? Or is this part of the ruse and the illusion?

I propose that it’s time to deviate from these questions by holding the seemingly opposing, contradictory forces together, as merely brushing against one another. While there is no single body that haunts *The Tutor*, different elements of *the production* that are scattered across different times constantly align and misalign with the normative hierarchies of what is worth paying attention to in the cultural institution of theater. Prioritizing one element in *The Tutor* over the other – whether it is the presence of actors, the historical significance of Brecht, or the play text – all hints at a cultural hegemony that claims it deserves our attention. Thus, a cynical encounter with *The Tutor* would be to say that each layer lacks something; the historical footage lacks sounds and presence, the student actors lack costumes and props, the teleprompter lacks theatricality. But they are lacking only when they cannot interact with the rest of the performance, when they are condemned to a singular plane of existence. When they are allowed to infiltrate different times that it doesn’t belong to, the screen and the stage complement one another. The actors in Kuttner’s *The Tutor* serve as an interference to the images. Their job is to complicate the implied hierarchies of the theater. Should we be looking at the images or the actors? This is theater, so perhaps it makes sense to be looking at the actors who embody their presence. But the actors (especially in the Midwestern university versions) are mostly only providing a voiceover to the images. They are not really acting. So perhaps it makes sense to be paying attention to the professional original actors of the film. But the film by its nature is not an original but a reproduction. The normative logic about art suggests that in theater, we want to look for an original experience and presence. But it is a reproduction of an original Brecht performance – perhaps that should count for something. As such, the setup of Kuttner’s performance constantly throws the audience to question the seemingly contradictory dynamic between sign and mimetic reproduction.

But, looking queerly, there is something freeing about the warranty to look at whatever the moment calls for and to excavate relevant elements to put together a scene for yourself.

With this queer way of looking, we can return to *Medea's Children*. In Rau's *Medea's Children*, Jade is the body that oscillates between different times simultaneously, being both timely and untimely. Jade, who plays Amandine, appears within the time of both pre-filmed material and on stage. In the murder scene, we see the representation of her body in the supermarket. We also see her body on stage, luring children into the house. Once she disappears into the set, her representation reappears on the screen, killing the children. One role that she plays is complicating the question of reproduction and re-enactment. On the screen, the image of Jade is already a reproduction of herself, even as she is playing Amandine. However, when her body appears on the stage, it becomes a sign for Amandine. But because of the screen that is looming in the background, she is expected to act as a mere reproduction of the image that is already on the screen, rather than act and express as a living sign on the stage. This idea is further complicated as Amandine is supposed to be another iteration of Medea, a modern re-enactment of the ancient tragedy.

But perhaps what is important is to consider what it means to see the same body in multiple iterations of time. Jade's body is constantly in-sync with the given time only to be thrown out of it by the juxtaposition of the screen and the stage. Within the single time frame, Jade's body serves the given role perfectly well. Within the film, she makes the perfect representation of Amandine. On the stage, she plays the role of Amandine well. But when the two are put together, the past and the present co-exist in her body. She is both the past that is represented via the screen as well as the present that is re-enacted on the stage. Hence, she exists unstably within the normative time and simultaneously out of that time, depending on whether you are looking at the screen or the stage. By seeing the same acts repeated multiple times, the audience gets a sense that they are not merely looking at the filmed material or the actors but are meant to see something in between the two modes of representation. Jade's body becomes a ghost that haunts both sides of the equation but also holds the two together. It provides a sense that the two times—that of representation and of presence—are bound together through a reappearance of the same body across differently mediated times.

In the end of *Medea's Children*, the screen and the stage lose competition and instead ask to be considered concurrently, both within its time and outside of its time. Jade begins a monologue as Amadine, reminiscing about her life, lamenting about the loneliness that she finds herself in. While she is on stage, spotlighted, the screen plays a pre-recorded film. It shows time moving backwards. They depict scenes the audience has already seen before: Medea slaying the dragon, Amandine's parents at the pub. But they are with a slight modification, as the adult figures have been replaced with children. This small alteration completes the co-existence of two different times; Medea, Amandine, and Jade collapse into one. In the monologue, she hopes to live her life again. "I wish I could play my part on this earth again, with a different name, a different beginning, and a different ending." The performance seems to have been an exercise in that. The part of Medea was played again with a different name and a different beginning by Amandine. The part of Amandine, then was played again by Jade. It seems like a reiteration of the rules of tragedy that there will be suffering and humans have to move away from this inevitable fate. Turning back the time will only mean that Amandine finds herself in the position of Medea, repeating the same mistake. Yet, Jade's monologue echoes once again hope that somehow there will be a different future. She says, "and yet I'm looking out into the audience: Maybe there's someone who's willing to save me. Someone who wants to go through life with me." The curtain closes while the screen projects Jade as Medea walking backwards on the beach. The re-enactment was a search for how to "fix" the past, to find the moment where someone could have saved her from the loneliness and prevent the tragedy. But all the re-enactments showed that that is not possible. Yet, when we think out of time, all the parts are now calling from different directions. It is not just about a reiteration of Medea but also about Amadine and Jade, the two being more than a tragic repetition of the same old story when different layers are not in competition with one another, but when they build on top of each other. I return to the initial moment of anxiety while watching the opening of *Medea's Children*. I felt I was at the wrong place and the wrong time because it was possible to be so; it was possible to miss and misunderstand the call of the theater institution. But what if I had genuinely and seriously taken the performance's premise that we are gathered *after* the performance to see the re-enactments? What if by performance, we meant the pre-learned way of engaging with theater, with *Medea*, with normative preconceptions of lov-

ing mother and innocent children? Then the potential for *Medea's Children* to open a crack to these "correct" ways of being through re-enactment feels much potent; and it makes sense that it had to be done outside of the usual, normative time.

Moving away from the competitive model to the unsanctioned, imperfect coexistence of times explains another experience of live theater – namely, the audience's attempt to engage with the theater machine beyond what we are asked to look at. During the performance of *The Tutor*, multiple audience members noticed another screen: the monitor that was feeding the lines to the actors during the performance. Soon, they were following the lines by looking at the monitor serving as a teleprompter, as if they were holding a play text to follow along. Now, there is another screen that is competing for attention, pulling the audience in different directions. It would be easy to dismiss this screen as an improper engagement with the performance, a fluke by the youth who are too used to subtitles, or an accidental discovery of the theater machine that is meant to be hidden. But looking at the set-up of *The Tutor* queerly, gathering the imperfect moments that complement one another across different times, has made me return to this moment in the theater of watching people turn their head away from the screen and the stage, to look at the monitor. Like a layered diorama, the performance works when the individual layers come together to create the whole experience; that includes the sneaky glance at the monitor away from the stage.

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## Endnotes

- 1 This is an interesting change as Rau used the name of Marc Dutroux in *Five Easy Pieces* (2016), a similar piece that used child actors to stage a story about a child murderer and rapist. Screens and re-enactments were used in this piece as well. See: Andreas Englhart. 2021. "Play with Consequences?" *Theater* 51 (2): 63–74.
- 2 In the performance, Amandine kills her children on February 29, 2008.
- 3 Läufer marries Lisa in Brecht's adaptation, but this scene was omitted from the BBBKT adaptation.