Performing in Between Times

An Introduction

FRIEDERIKE OBERKROME AND VERENA STRAUB

In current performance and theatre practices, the term ›preenactment‹ has increasingly attracted attention. Performance collectives such as Hofmann&Lindholm, Friendly Fire, Interrobang or Public Movement use the term in different spellings and different contexts to highlight and reflect on imagined futures in the light of current experiences of (political) crisis. Their preenactments for example deal with the status and expectations of European citizens towards their governments, with urban archives of the future, or update political theatre forms such as Brecht's *Lehrstück* from a future perspective.[1] Thus, they invent hypothetical scenarios, speculate about possible futures and set out to experiment with fictitious time(s) and space(s) in order to gain insight into the present. As a concept, however, *preenactment* has only recently appeared in academic contexts (Czirak et al. 2019; Kaiser 2014; Marchart 2014), so that a theoretical elaboration is still pending. This is all the more surprising, since forms of *reenactment* in the arts have been subject of substantial discussion in theatre, performance and literary studies within the last decade (Heeg et al. 2014; Roselt/Otto 2012; Schneider 2011). The present volume addresses this research gap and aims at introducing an interdisciplinary perspective on the temporal entanglements and affective dimensions of re- and pre-enactment.

In a narrow sense, reenactments can be understood as repetitions of past events. The term derives from the field of historical didactics (Collingwood 1946/1993) and refers to performances that aim at faithfully reproducing historical events and

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1   We refer here to Interrobang's work *Preenacting Europe* (2014), Hofmann&Lindholm's *Archiv der zukünftigen Ereignisse* (2011) and Friendly Fire's *Preenacting the Lehrstück* (2017). Friendly Fire's preenactment piece was also performed during the conference *P/RE/ENACT! Performing in Between Times* at ICI Berlin on October 27, 2017.

promise an authentic re-experience. Recent scholarship on reenactment, however, has highlighted the fact that each repetition always implies deviations from the previous event and is decisively shaped by the present perspective (Fischer-Lichte 2012). It is this emphasis on the iterability that enables expanding the concept of reenactment towards the future – an approach that has already been tried and tested in the arts. Whereas preenactment has up until now been used to indicate a reversal of reenactments' temporal structure, we want to take a step further and emphasize the fundamental interdependence and interconnectedness of pro- and retrospection as well as the instability of each temporal perspective: just as forms of reenactment always contain a prospective dimension, preenactment scenarios require and include a retrospective dimension.[2] We thereby encourage a new perspective on (p)reenactment that transgresses the loops of reoccurrence, repetition or duration and initiates processes of transition and new beginnings, processes that work as a means of redirection and relief.

To emphasize this temporal entanglement at the level of writing, the authors use various notations such as p/re/enactment, pre-enactment or (p)reenactment throughout the volume. These heterogeneous spellings on the one hand indicate the shifting temporal dimensions of the concept and on the other hand point to and accentuate the individual components of a theory of preenactment: actualizations of the past (*re-*), realizations of possible futures (*pre-*) as well as their intersection in actions and practices (*enact*). In its literal sense, »to enact« means to make a bill into a law or to bring something into force. Thus, it not only entails every-day acts of playing social roles that constantly need to be reenacted and actualized and whose effects reach into the future. Enactments also relate to judicial and political practices and contain a powerful dimension that can have both emancipatory as well as stabilizing or even regressive effects. Taking these different semantics of ›enactment‹ into account, we want to think of pre-enactment not only in relation to artistic performances, but also to social developments and political phenomena of our contemporary world.

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2   The theoretical considerations on p/re/enactment presented in this introduction are based on the collaborative theme group-work within the Collaborative Research Centre (CRC) 1171 »Affective Societies«, funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG). Members of this group are Adam Czirak, Sophie Nikoleit, Friederike Oberkrome, Verena Straub, Robert Walter-Jochum and Michael Wetzels. Parts of this introduction can also be found in our conceptual outline published as Czirak et al. 2019.

HARUN FAROCKI'S *SERIOUS GAMES* AS (P)REENACTMENT

Fig. 1: Harun Farocki: Serious Games I: »Watson is Down«

Copyright: Harun Farocki GbR, Berlin

Harun Farocki's four-channel video installation *Serious Games I-IV (2009-2010)* can serve as a vivid illustration of several key aspects of (p)reenactment this volume pursues.[3] Artist and director Harun Farocki is well known for his documentary films in which he combines found footage with his own film material and critically analyzes the relevance and the impact of media and image practices on society. *Serious Games* consists of four parts that each investigate a different aspect of the relationship between contemporary warfare and virtual reality. For part one of the series, entitled »Watson is Down«, Harun Farocki filmed a drill at a Marine Corps Base in California in which four Marines are seen during a training unit seated in front of their laptops (Fig. 1). Their instructor who is placed in the back of the room uses a computer program that simulates a future operation in Afghanistan. The digital images appearing on their screens are thus based on geographical data of the actual landscape. »Three Dead«, part II of the series, documents another military training unit in California. This time, however, the soldiers do not act in virtual reality, but within a full-scale model of an Afghan city, in which 300 extras represent the village population. As the fictive town is primarily built out of containers, visually it appears as if reality had been modeled on a computer animation (Fig. 2).[4] In

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3   The work was initially produced for the exhibition *Serious Games* that took place in 2011 at Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt and that was curated by Harun Farocki and Antje Ehmann (for further information see Beil/Ehman 2011). *Serious Games* was again exhibited at Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin in 2014.

4   See also Francesca Cavallo's contribution in this volume that examines *Serious Games III* from a risk management perspective.

part III, entitled »Immersion«, Farocki shows yet another dimension of how contemporary warfare is affected by computer simulation techniques. In contrast to the first two parts in which virtual scenarios are used for recruitment and training, herein, they serve as a means of therapy for war veterans. The film shows a workshop presentation introducing a new software to psychologists working with warveterans who suffer from Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (Fig. 3). In the fourth and final part of the series, »A Sun Without Shadow«, Farocki compares these two computer programs used for either training or reworking war experiences on an aesthetic level and adds a layer of reflection to the whole series.

Fig. 2: Harun Farocki: Serious Games II: »Three Dead«

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Fig. 3: Harun Farocki: Serious Games III: »Immersion«

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Especially part I and III of the series offer valuable insights that can serve as starting points to think about p/re/enactment strategies in a broader sense. At first sight, one could conceive of the therapy sessions shown in part III »Immersion« as a form of reenactment in which the veterans revisit and re-live their emotionally disturbing experiences during war. Part I, »Watson is down«, on the other hand, appears as a form of preenactment whereby soldiers prepare for their future involvement in combat scenarios and train to cope with the affective tensions such operations cause. Interestingly, however, the soldiers' preenactments as well as the veterans' reenactments are connected by the use of similar computer simulation techniques. In this sense, virtual reality seems to work as a prism that enables both the projection into the future and a reflection of the past. By superimposing different temporal dimensions, *Serious Games* emphasizes the fundamental interconnectedness of re- and preenactments, which becomes even more obvious as the videos are experienced simultaneously in the exhibition space (Fig. 4).

Fig. 4: Harun Farocki: Serious Games I-IV,
Exhibition View at Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin
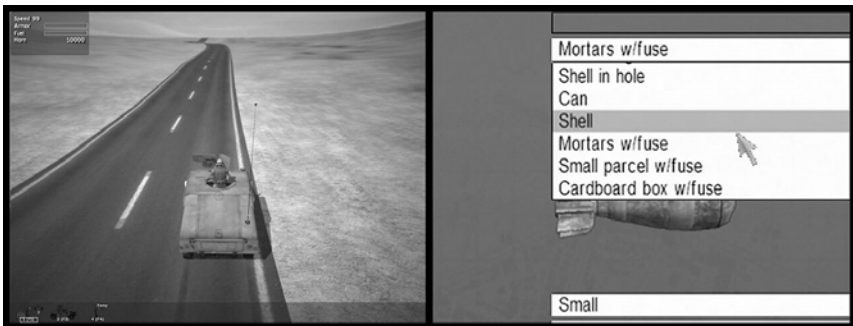

Copyright: Harun Farocki GbR, Berlin

Taking a closer look at the individual video-clips, one can observe shifting temporal constellations even in the sequences themselves. During the therapy workshop, for example, the veteran switches from a narration in the past tense to the present tense, from recalling the events out of his memory to re-experiencing them physically.

This sequence highlights that past traumatic experiences are never fully concluded but are preserved in the present and sometimes even dominate actual experiences and actions. The documented scene becomes even more complex considering that this is not a real therapy session, but a workshop demonstration of the newly developed simulation software and its technical features. As the viewer comes to realize, the supposed veteran is in fact an actor who imagines and anticipates the potential reactions of a future patient. Thus, what Harun Farocki presents us here is a *preenactment* of a potential, future war *reenactment*. For the spectator of the video installation, this insight sheds a different light on the images seen beforehand and blurs the boundaries between both temporal modes – an observation that resonates with the broader concept of p/re/enactment we want to further develop in this volume.

MEDIATIZED AND AFFECTIVE P/RE/ENACTMENTS

Besides these temporal interrelations and interruptions, *Serious Games* elucidates further aspects that are central to our conceptualization of p/re/enactment, which are the spheres of mediatization and gaming as well as their affective dynamics. As the virtual reality scenarios presented in *Serious Games* already demonstrate, an understanding of (p)reenactment needs to move beyond the definition of an »embodied« live performance and also include mediated situations and encounters. In »Watson is down«, for example, both the aesthetic and the operational mode of the training software remind us of ego-shooters: the soldiers in front of their laptops navigate their virtual tanks through the Afghan war landscape and act on behalf of their avatars as if taking part in a real operation guided by their instructor (Fig. 5).

Fig. 5: Harun Farocki: Serious Games I: »Watson is Down«

Copyright: Harun Farocki GbR, Berlin

Considering such highly mediatized forms of p/re/enactment, it becomes all the more necessary to question the paradigm of ›liveness‹ which continues to inflect recent developments in theatre and performance studies (Phelan 1993; Auslander 1999). However, in mediatized p/re/enactment practices it becomes crucial and obvious that their occurrence in the here and now entails a multiplicity of possible enactment situations: (p)reenactments are thus not generally bound to the temporal or spatial co-presence of the actors involved, which is why they can no longer be regarded as singular events but as events that can continually be actualized at different times and in various contexts. Mediatized (p)reenactments perform (between) times and spaces.

As much as the soldiers in Farocki's video are undergoing strategic military training for future manoeuvres, this form of training also establishes a specific affective orientation towards the experience of war situations.[5] One can assume that many of these young soldiers are too familiar with ego-shooter games and may associate feelings of excitement and pleasure with their aesthetics. Can this be interpreted as an attempt to reduce possible traumatization by anticipating and lowering levels of fear and intimidation? Following this line of thought, one could speak of the soldiers' preenactments as an »affective prophylactic«, to use Richard Grusin's term (Grusin 2010: 46). Grusin coined the term ›premediation‹ to highlight the fact that all possible scenarios of the future have already been mediated, meaning they have been anticipated through the media before they even occurred. His thoughts on the relation between re- and premediation resonate with our notion of pre-enactment. Rather than »getting the future right«, the main aim of premediations, according to Grusin, is to »prevent the experience of a traumatic future by generating and maintaining a low level of anxiety as a kind of affective prophylactic« (ibid.). Can we think of p/re/enactments in a similar way? How does the affective arrangement of computer games alter or influence the soldiers' actions and experiences in the field? What is at stake when games all of a sudden turn serious?

In light of these considerations, affect can be seen as another crucial vector that relates future, present and past, even though it seems problematic to reduce the affective potential of premediation to ›negative‹ affects such as traumatizing experiences. Similar to premediation, the p/re/enactment of future events not only shapes present affectivities, but also has the potential to transform, lower or heighten their intensities in the future – be it as a ›prophylactic‹ or, more positively, as a form of training, preparation, rehearsal or pleasant anticipation. An understanding of p/re/enactments as events whose affective potentiality derives from the past *and* the

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5   For a detailed analysis of *Serious Games* see Engberg-Petersen (2017) who especially focuses on the connection between military technologies, perception and aesthetic experience in *Serious Games* and traces their relationship in a historical perspective.

future – and is furthermore not limited to immediate bodily experiences – shifts the focus to relational dimensions between times and spaces which have not been widely considered yet. This interdisciplinary volume thus examines (p)reeanctment's affective dynamics as well as their mediation of times and spaces in various social, medial, political and activist contexts.

INVESTIGATING RE- AND PRE-ENACTMENT

This is the starting point for the following reflections on re- and pre-enactments in the arts and academia; reflections that have been presented and fruitfully discussed during the international conference *P/RE/ENACT! Performing in Between Times* that took place in October 2017 in collaboration with the ICI Berlin. It was organized by the interdisciplinary working group on (p)reenactment that is part of the Collaborative Research Centre 1171 »Affective Societies« at Freie Universität Berlin. The members of this working group respectively the editors of this book share different disciplinary backgrounds, ranging from art history, literature and theatre studies to sociology, a variety that is also reflected and exceeded in the volume's compilation. As the term ›preenactment‹ has found its way into academic discourse through theatre practice, the volume opens with a conversation between the theatre practitioners Nina Tecklenburg (Interrobang) and Sven Lindhom (Hofmann&Lindholm), led by theatre scholar Doris Kolesch. The text is a transcript of a panel discussion that took place during the conference; as such, it gives a vivid insight into the pre-enacting performance work of the two theatre collectives. While dealing with the temporalities and affectivities of p/re/enactment is central to all contributions, the book's overall structure puts special emphasis on certain dimensions of (p)reenactment relating to our discussion of Harun Farocki's *Serious Games* above. The first section starts with texts that address forms of pre-enactment on a basic theoretical and/or historical level. The following segments on *Corporealities*, *Politics*, *Media/Fiction* and *Gaming* then each accentuate a certain aspect of the spectrum of p/re/enactment performances, ranging from embodied theatre practices to highly mediatized game scenarios, from political activism to fictionalized utopias.

Theories/Histories

The first section of the book sets the stage for the volume by reflecting on fundamental theoretical and historical premises of p/re/enactment. It starts with **Adam Czirak's** essay »Theatre of Radical Fictionality. Episodes from the History of (P)Reenactments« in which he radically deconstructs the schematic juxtaposition of

re- and preenactment. The contribution is based on an episodic passage through European theatre history: in ancient tragedy, in Shakespeare's theatre but also in Bertolt Brecht's tradition of epic theatre, Czirak discerns different scenarios in which forms of re- and preenactment collide. According to Czirak, these episodes share their part in the history of a »theatre of radical fictionality« that suspends a dichotomous hierarchy of theatrical representation and make it impossible to identify distinct temporal, local or semantic references. Rather, the discussed examples constantly provoke questions and demand an »unfinishable research for the relay between the performative and its *one specific* meaning« (p. 60) – a challenge that this volume will devote itself to.

Maria Muhle takes a skeptical perspective on the time-logical separation of re- and Preenactment, too. She questions the assumption that the former is usually associated with reality, whereas the latter is often considered as a practice of possibilities. Muhle unfolds her critical perspective alongside an intensive discussion of Hans Blumenberg's concepts of *Präfiguration* (prefiguration) and *Vorahmung* (pre-imitation), which each describes different constellations between nature and technology, reality and possibility. While prefiguration sensitizes the reader to the repetitive contexts of history, but ultimately works on the realization of possibilities (and thus has a potentially determinant effect), Muhle presents pre-imitation as a mortgage of imitation: it indicates »the interdependence of ›man‹ and ›nature‹ – and thus breaks with the hierarchical ›model‹ of modelling itself« (p. 74). Subsequently, she pleads for an anachronistic intertwining of reenactment and preenactment, which no longer corresponds to any unambiguous logic of time. Thus, p/re/enactment's concrete historical and/or reality effects need to be questioned all the more. Muhle follows this approach by highlighting the anachronisms in Colson Whitehead's *Underground Railroad*, a novel that revisits and reinvents the history of the informal escape route for slaves from the southern to the northern States of America.

Friedrich Balke's contribution »Flashes and Arrows, Jumps and Slips. Louis-Ferdinand Célines (P)Reenactments« is designed as a close-reading of works by the French writer Louis-Ferdinand Céline. He focuses on two scenes from the novel *Voyage au bout de la nuit* (Journey to the End of the Night) and the mythical ballet *Foudres et flèches* (Flashes and Arrows) and concentrates his analysis on the dynamic figures of jumps and slips already mentioned in the title. In the first part of the essay, which serves as a poetological and political classification, he reads these forms of movement as permeated by political affects. In the second part of the contribution, he traces these constellations of lapses and leaps within the texts. According to Balke, the scene from the *Voyage* presents the »reenactment of a key situation as a repetition of affective recruiting that determines all war history« (p. 88); the ballet scene, on the other hand, creates a »utopian future scenario« (ibid.) that is equally bound to physical forms of movement.

Corporealities

The following section connects the above-mentioned temporal discrepancies of pre-enactment to different experiences of corporeality. **Veronika Darian's** contribution focusses on the complex and sometimes even contradictory temporalisations in a »Theatre of Age/ing« between reenactment and preenactment. According to Darian, these forms of theatre present personal life stories not in linear progression, but through a playful cross-over of foresight, retrospection, and actualization. Thus, »Theatre of Age/ing« works against a temporal logic of development which has been effective since the beginning of modernity. Rather, it highlights the cracks, ruptures and discrepancies in the lives of its protagonists. Ensuing from these theoretical considerations, Darian undertakes an analysis of various examples and deals with Jens Sparschuh's novel *Das Leben kostet viel Zeit* (Life Costs a Lot), Max Frisch's play *Biografie. Ein Spiel* (Biography. A Play), Samuel Beckett's absurd drama *Krapp's Last Tape* and Gob Squad's Performance *Before Your Very Eyes* (2011). In doing so, she illustrates the different temporal paths that p/re/enactments may take – »linear, circular, parallel, jumping, repetitive« (p. 118).

In her reflections on how »Opening Space in Time« could be possible through »Gestures of Pre- and Re-Enactment«, **Rebecca Schneider** continues the discussion of different forms of temporalization, but with a stronger focus on a concrete embodied practice and its political potential, namely the »Hands Up«-gesture in *Black Lives Matter*-protests. Both referring to, but also distinguishing her own approach from Althusser's scenario of interpellation, Schneider is particularly interested in the space opened up by the imperfection of each repeated call. According to Schneider, it is neither re- nor preenactment alone, but the simultaneity of both call and response, a »response of surrender reenacted as a call to refuse to surrender« (p. 124f.), that allows the »Hands Up«-gesture to move »laterally, slantish, transversally, […], but surely collectively« (p. 126). This way, the gesture might offer a means of expressing solidarity, a means of giving the past a different future and vice versa.

Politics

Building on the above, this section concretizes the political dimensions of preenactment in that it sheds light on how such performances may challenge established orders of political action by p/re/enacting practices and rhetorics of change. In his essay »Time Loops. Political-theoretical Reflections on Preenactments and Real Utopias«, **Oliver Marchart** examines the significance of preenactments for political activism and bases his considerations on an antagonistic ontology of the political. Accordingly, true political action is only possible when an antagonism erupts.

If such a moment does not occur, political activism can test itself in the form of preenactments, that is, the »artistic anticipation of a future political event« (p. 130). Although preenactments can transpose neither antagonism nor political events as such from the future into the present, according to Marchart, they do provide a form of training: preenactments allow to practice a political mode of action in order to be prepared for the moment of actual conflict. The essay explores this chiastic relationship referring to the concept of prefiguration, too; this time theorized from the perspective of political practice and interpreted in the sense of the necessary construction of time-loops.

Susanne Foellmer's text »(Pre-)Enacting Resistance? Protest and the Means of Staging« starts with her personal experience of a political demonstration against Donald Trump's politics that took place in February 2017 in Berlin. Starting from her initial impression that the protest »didn't feel ›real‹, but rather like a mis-en-scène«, her contribution investigates the relations between protest and staging as well as »the links between action, enactment and agency« (p. 141). As Foellmer's close observations demonstrate, it becomes undecidable whether the overly mediatized protest march »qualifies as a pre-enactment of an enacted protest action« or as »the re-enactment of a multitude of marches seen before« (p. 151). Her article thus highlights the intricate temporal and medial entanglements of political events such as protest marches.

Using the example of the re-staged tribunals of the Swiss theatre-maker Milo Rau, **Robert Walter-Jochum** deals with the temporalities of a certain concept of affect – that of outrage or indignation. Rau's reenactments take up political conflicts that have not received a legitimate trial and therefore anticipate a situation of coming justice. Walter-Jochum's contribution »(P)re-enacting Justice: Milo Rau's Tribunals as a Theatre of Outrage« proceeds from the thesis that Rau's tribunals can be understood as ›affect machines‹ that are supposed to spark outrage in the audience. Drawing on political manifestos of outrage such as Stéphane Hessel's polemic *Indignez-vous!* (Time for Outrage!) or Milo Rau's pamphlet *Was tun?* (What Is to Be Done?), it examines the communicative strategies of two exemplary (p)reenactments, the *Kongo Tribunal* (Congo Tribunal; 2015) and the *Moskauer Prozesse* (Moscow Trials; 2013). Walter-Jochum's analysis shows, on the one hand, how strongly Rau's utopian actions focus on the affective generation of outrage by reactivating historical documents of highly charged political events. On the other hand, it makes clear that outrage can be consciously activated and used, thus sensitizing the viewer to its political ambivalence.

Media/Fiction

Our proposition to expand conceptualizations of p/re/enactment by including media-tized situations is the starting point for the third section that focuses on the interrela-tions between reality and fiction – a relationship that is strongly based on practices of mediatization. Throughout her text »Rehearsing Disaster. Pre-Enactment Between Reality and Fiction«, **Francesca Laura Cavallo** investigates forms of preenactment that develop, rehearse or reflect on strategies of risk and catastrophe management both in the arts and in the everyday. As our present is fundamentally shaped by economic uncertainties, social instabilities and globally reaching phenomena of crisis, Cavallo argues for an increasing relevance of such mechanisms that rehearse, predict and an-ticipate possible future scenarios, for example in fire drills or war simulations. How-ever, she remains sceptical about the beneficiaries of »rehearsing disaster«-techniques in the everyday because they might »promote a sense of both anxiety and security, which can support or undermine policy and ideology« (p. 182). In an extensive dis-cussion of Rosa Barba's artistic research project, *The Empirical Effect* (2010), Cavallo thus advocates for a decidedly critical potential of reflecting risk management in artis-tic (p)reenactments.

In her article entitled »P/re/cording the Future«, **Tina Turnheim** offers a close reading of a ›pre-enactment‹ initiated by the performers and cultural theorists Mar-garita Tsoumou and Tim Stüttgen. As Turnheim argues, *Wir sind ein Bild aus der Zukunft* (We Are an Image From the Future; 2012) investigates the temporal intri-cacies of documentary and puts into practice different ways to premediate the fu-ture. The performance, for example, confronts the language and simulations of weather forecasts with that of the financial market which are both imagined as me-dial preemptions of future events that influence our behavior in the present. Draw-ing from Walter Benjamin's reflections on historiography, Turnheim shows that the artistic performance »searches for the interruption of linear time, for splinters of the present, in which past and future collide and ›recognition‹ becomes possible« (p. 214).

Heiko and Friedrich Kirschner's article »Situated drama – a framework for preenacted storytelling« introduces an explorative approach to how preenactment as a concept can serve as an intermediary between sociology, digital media and pup-petry. Guided by social theory, the authors argue that preenactment can be under-stood as an ongoing process of interpretation and communication in specific strate-gies of staging in everyday life. Combining these theoretical backgrounds in the form of a polymythic drama, the authors describe how the situated framework of the game-based performance *Battle Royale* (2015) they put into practice serves as a ›bridge‹ of tension between everyday life and art. Heiko and Friedrich Kirschner also show how typical social patterns of participants take over a performance, mak-

ing visible the deep connection of everyday life and ›playing‹ games as a process of p/re/enactment.

Gaming

As a specific form of mediatized (p)reenactments, the contributions in the final section focus on digital and analog gaming strategies. In his article »Be Kind Rewind«, **Benjamin Beil** draws our attention to computer games and their specific potential in creating alternative and paradox temporalities. His analysis of contemporary computer games shows a variety of different strategies how conventionalized game structures (such as the death of the character, rewind functions or restart logics) are made plausible within the larger narration of the game – resulting in a self-reflexive »playing about the game« (p. 245). By conceiving of computer games as a »pop cultural repertoire of (new) medial temporalities« (p. 241), Beil's article opens up a new object for research on preenactment that informs current discourses in performance or theater studies. The article concludes with the critical remark that – despite their distinctive temporal structures – many contemporary computer games do not fully realize their potential in transcending everyday experiences of time and instead remain committed to a supposed paradigm of reality.

Drawing from her experience as a game designer, **Daniela Kuka's** contribution is both a vivid exploration of actual games to envision possible futures and a theoretical reflection of their potentials and limits. Her experimental approach to game design is reflected in the various gaming scenarios that she put into practice for her project *preenaction.de*. In her article, Kuka argues for a reading of (p)reenactment that is not so much concerned with different temporalities but based on previous experiences and the resulting different expectations of players. She finally takes a critical stance towards the current trend of gamification as a tool to enhance productivity in business contexts.

This juxtaposition of digital and analogue pre-enactment techniques again stresses the relevance of an expanded notion of preenactment in increasingly mediatized and networked worlds. Conceived as a means to elucidate not only the interconnectedness of temporalities, but also the relations between art, politics and the social, an expanded concept of p/re/enactment promises new possibilities for analysing social and political change and their complex affective dynamics.

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