

# THE KITCHEN

CENTER FOR  
VIDEO, MUSIC  
AND DANCE

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## Two-Track Mind

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"You are asked to participate in an unbalanced situation. I speak and you read. Is it more or less unbalanced than if I speak and you listen?"

These are the first words of half of the "unbalanced situation." Amy Taubin speaks to us over a microphone while slowly pacing across the room, as we silently read the other half, a written text we were given at the door. Even before she opens the discussion/story, we have noticed something unusual about the situation: the audience is brightly lit while the performers — Taubin and one pair of women in a far corner and another pair sitting in the center — are in near darkness. The "woman with the video camera" ignores the performers and tapes the audience. This reversal reinforces Taubin's double text, which addresses the problem of performing itself.

For some reason, perhaps because it satisfies an existential appetite for self-awareness, it is always a thrill when a performer challenges the bizarre conventions of performance that we all take for granted. Taubin's question of whether her set-up is more or less unbalanced is to the point. She is asking us to weigh the usual imbalance of the active/passive split of performer/audience against the role changes she initiates. She implies that it is a particular point that can make a situation look unbalanced. Taubin suggests that if you give up a fixed point of view, situations become easily confused, exchanged, reversed.

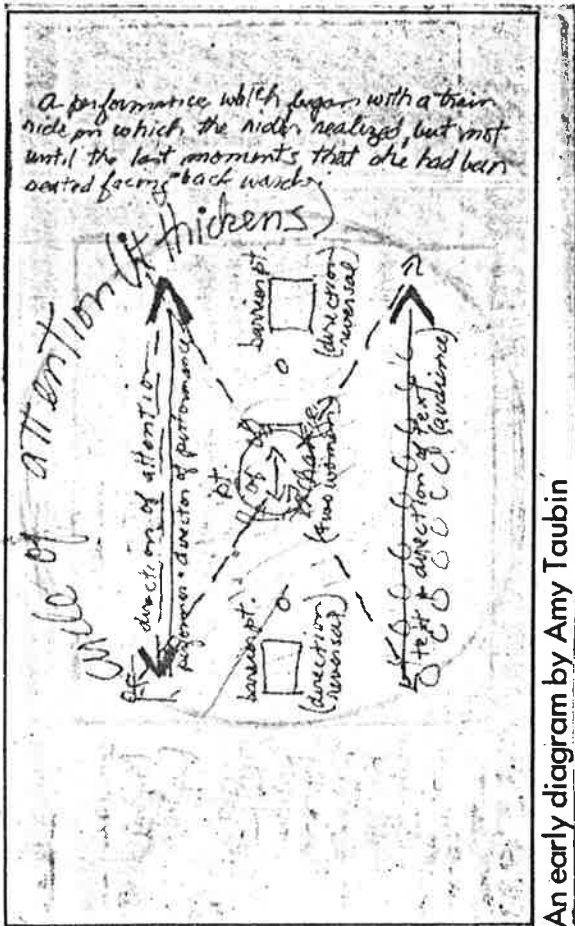
The two halves of the text, both beautifully written (by Taubin) reflect and refract each other. The story centers around a woman taking a train ride and not realizing till the end that she has been sitting backwards the whole time. She says, "I notice that this ride is different in some way which is not yet clear to me." She is disoriented without realizing it, confusing the action of approaching with the action of leaving, and their accompanying optical perceptions. She seems to be in a suspended state emotionally as well. The spoken and written tracks are separate trains of thought, neither of them taking priority. Station stops are the clearest points of correlation between the two; they are announced as departures but list-

ed in the reading material as arrivals. At the end of the train ride, the realization of her "mistake" gives her a point of view. She sees exactly how she has been confused; she has confused anticipation and memory.

Many reversals and exchanges happen during the ride/performance. There is a continual verbal exchange between the two "women who whisper," who exchange places every now and then. The text constantly switches between first and third person; the Amy Taubin who speaks and the character whose thoughts we follow; the character whose voice we hear and the character we read about. There is a correspondence, too, between body parts as names of stations and stations as European cities (body parts starting at boots and traveling up to face, cities starting at Amsterdam and traveling down to Paris). In the beginning, Taubin announces the intended correspondence between the performance and the train ride: "Each position of the video camera corresponds to what passes between the stations. Each position of the video camera corresponds to one car of the train. Each section of the audience addressed corresponds to what passes between the stations. Each section of the audience addressed corresponds to one car of the train." We, the audience, are simultaneously the landscape and the observer of the landscape.

She further addressed the phenomenon of performing by introducing the exchange of words for body: "I don't do that [act on stage] any more. I write. I substitute words for body. Does that change anything?" Yes . . . perhaps the differences between performing with body and performing with words are overshadowed by the insidious samenesses — both fulfill a need to show, to tell (to control?), with a secret hope for real communication. But Taubin has succeeded in rendering body subservient to works — by wearing dark clothes and moving inconspicuously, by letting her voice be the most defined element of the physical self. In fact, her presence is so elusive that she has nearly created a performerless performance.

Throughout Taubin gently reminds us about perspective, the ambiguity of the word and concept of direction, and perceptions from a fixed point and from a moving point. In the end, after she has walked slowly from our left to our right (completed the journey, the text, the performance), she asks, "Did you remember that each position of the video camera corresponds to what passes between the stations . . ." The reminder made me want to see it all over again . . . confusing memory with anticipation . . . arriving as we depart . . .



An early diagram by Amy Taubin