

In Search Of The Wanderer: An Art Practice As Knowledge

A thesis presented

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Abstract

The following thesis is a piece in process, written in the middle. This experimental approach to the thesis means that this piece of writing is not fixed: parts can be added, things can be removed, it is becoming. By approaching my day to day life and consequently my research in the middle, I refuse to start this thesis with an explanatory introduction and end with a concluding statement. To grasp things always in the middle, I will argue, is imperative for an art practice that searches to free itself from the habitual ways of thinking and doing regulated by the transcendental. Living the middle is a freedom to act according to an understanding of the linkages, the chain of causes that connect every thing to all others. This thesis, which is composed of a tapestry of auto-ethnographic vignettes, exposition and philosophical musings, explores the potentialities that arise in the search for freedom. It is through and with my art practice, which I also call the decolonisation of the body, that this search for freedom is being conducted. The decolonisation of the body as an art practice tries to discard old Cartesian divisions, the first placing the body as a separate entity independent from its relation to the world; the second separating the mental from the physical. Through the philosophy of Spinoza, Deleuze and Guattari I will argue for a becoming one with the world, in the words of Deleuze and Guattari, becoming-imperceptible, if any sense of freedom is ever to be attained.

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AN EVENTFUL COLLISION WITH GLISSANT: A WORLD IN RELATION

It is 1941 in Châtelineau, Belgium. Belgium is being occupied by the Germans. My grandparents from my father's side are both hiding from the Nazis. The reason is that both of them are Jewish. One does not have to explain what a Jewish life during the WWII consisted of. One would presume everyone has heard, read and watched enough stories/films during the years that followed the war. Indispensable to my contemporary understanding in the transformation of the complex European Jewish culture(s) during and after the Holocaust is my reading of Édouard Glissant's *Poetics of Relation* (1990), in which he tries to understand the intricate character of African diasporic culture. In *Poetics of Relation* Glissant proposes a world that is aligned to the concept of the rhizome by Deleuze and Guattari: a world in relation. In most of Glissant's writings he employs his own island of Martinique and its neighbouring island of Guadeloupe as examples for creolised cultures in order to establish and understand cultural emergence as non-reductionist and non-essentialist. In their place, Glissant "proposes ways to understand cultural formation that promote plurality." (Mulira 2015, 115) In the first segment of *Poetics of Relation* he starts by describing poetically how the creole culture in Martinique arose:

"Imagine... falling into the belly of the boat. For, in your poetic vision, a boat has no belly; a boat does not swallow up, does not devour; a boat is steered by open skies. Yet, the belly of of this boat dissolves you, precipitates you into a nonworld from which you cry out. This boat is a womb, a womb abyss. It generates the clamour of your protests; it also produces all the coming unanimity. Although you are alone in this suffering, you share in the unknown with other whom you have yet to know. This boat is your womb, a matrix, and yet it expels you. This boat: pregnant with as many dead as living under sentence of death." (Glissant 1997, 6)

The slave ship as a womb. This womb that Glissant describes is what brought his ancestors to the Caribbean. The deportation event is a catastrophe, a disaster, but which nonetheless led to somewhere and something. In the case of Glissant the experience of the womb resulted in a rhizomatic, creole culture; in my case, the womb that brought my grandparents to Auschwitz had/has as a result a deeply rooted nation state with the name: Israel. Unmistakably these two wombs are very different. The slave ship as womb deported people from different regions, landscapes, parts of the world with different cultures, religions and habits to what Glissant calls the 'unknown' new land. (Glissant 1997, 7) What these people had in common among other things was the fact that their land was being colonised by a homogeneous culture, a culture that was, in the words of Glissant, 'single rooted'. (Glissant 1997, 143) The European culture according to him grows from a single root and has been treated as the heart of a cohesive and European nation. It is a culture of sameness, a culture that no matter where its roots are planted, the growth will always result identically. This homogeneous culture is also what led and caused another womb: The holocaust

trains. Unlike Glissant's womb, my womb came to pass from within: in the perpetrator's backyard. My grandparents, in contrast to Glissant's, shared partly a culture with their perpetrators, they were brought up and born in Europe. For this and many other reasons the two described wombs are disparate, singular entities. So you would probably ask yourself: why would one make the connection?

In *Poetics of Relation* Glissant describes the Caribbean culture as comprising many roots elements from different African ethnic groups, as well as Native American and European ethnic groups. All these different elements (roots) create a multicultural unit. In contrast to the other roots, the African roots are very unique for Glissant. These roots are from the source, the proverbial motherland that was colonised. European and French roots became part of the culture through force and brutality. The Martinican creole culture is for Glissant a product of a rhizome. It does not, unlike the European culture grow by outlining clear hierarchies but "by underground stems in which any part may send additional shoots upward, downward, or laterally." (Adkins 2015, 23) A rhizome culture has no end or beginning, it is always in the process of making new connections by always being in the middle. These rhizomatic cultures grow by what Glissant calls 'relations'. He calls the results of the relations 'poetics'. Relations are, for Glissant moments when cultures collide and the impact of their collision changes their development forever or produces new cultures entirely. Moments of relation occur, for Glissant, mostly unconsciously. (Glissant 1997, 23-35) In the case of the Martinican creole culture, it came into existence while these people were simply trying to survive.

Looking at the womb as the incubator of Caribbean creole culture, how to analyse the result of my grandparent's womb? An outcome which has/had hierarchical and static effects. The problematic connection between the two wombs is a way for me to reclaim the lost key that opens all rooms of sameness and categorisation and undo what my grandparents did: they helped in building an Israeli culture deeply rooted in sameness. The possibility that arose from the catastrophe, from the shared experience of the holocaust trains and the concentration camps, for the potentiality of a life determined by collisions was instantly, with closed hands, denied.¹ The reason(s) why can be discussed at length. What this text would like to discuss further is the reason for making such a connection, a difficult connection, an incomparable connection between the two wombs. It occurred from a collision between me and the texts of Glissant. The relation between Glissant and me is the reason for me making such a connection, to reclaim the key that was thrown into the abyss by my grandparents. The key that would allow me to wander, to make new connections, to enter into new collisions, to relate with the unexpected, to become.

¹ Achille Mbembe argues, that the Nazi extermination material premises are to be located in colonial imperialism, see Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics* (2003)

A multiplicity of collisions such as the collision between me and Glissant are the catalysts in what I call the process of the decolonisation of the body. This process of decolonisation has gone through abundant collisions throughout the years. One of my first impactful collisions was with art. This collision with art resulted in a desire for the new, for an otherwise that seemed previous to the collision with art impossible to attain. By reflecting upon and questioning my art practice as the decolonisation of the body I understood rapidly the connections my practice has with ethics. This ethics is outside moral laws or theories of good. Instead, it is an 'ethics of joy', made more powerful the bigger our comprehension of the world. An understanding that can only be developed in our encounters with the world, its forces and everything that constitute's it. This ethical understanding in the world as singular is the key to a different way of being in the world, of living,

“one that understands and feels things in their specificity, that lives with difference and welcomes the becomings that all things, including life, including its own life, involve.” (Grosz 2017, 135)

The elaboration of ethics is freedom, not a freedom from constraint and cause, but a freedom to act according to an understanding of the linkages, the chain of causes that connect every thing to all others. It is a freedom that can overcome the habitual ways of thinking and doing regulated by morality, social clichés, custom, opinions, politeness, etc. This freedom is not a freedom from determination but a freedom to act according to “the orders of determination, a freedom enhanced by a philosophy or knowledge appropriate to it.” (Grosz 2017, 95) Yet, how can one act freely and obtain such a knowledge of the world? And what are the causes that result from the freedom to act? In my search for freedom through the decolonisation of the body, I have established a multiplicity of alliances throughout the years, such as philosophy. Doing philosophy in relation to my art practice makes absolutely no distinction between theory and practice. The practice of the decolonisation of the body breaks down the Cartesian distinction between the mental and the physical, not by simply collapsing them into one another, or taking one out but rather by forcing one to think how to analyse them together: “mentality is a mode of activity, and it functions not in opposition to the physical but with it and through it, by prolonging and renewing it. (Massumi 2015, 179)

A FIELD NOTE: SOMATIC SYMPTOMS OF BECOMING

Esther kisses me on my cheek. I can smell her morning breath entering my nostrils making it through to my brain where my brain signals to me - it is morning. I ask Esther about the time, to which she responds: "It is ten in the morning!" I open my eyes and see Esther double, not one Esther but two. Who is that person next to her or am I imagining her doppelgänger? It becomes slowly clear to me that everything around me acquired a doppelgänger overnight. Two ceilings, two sinks, two floors, four hands, four feet, two computers.

I stand up from bed and become aware of my vertigo. The environment to which I am a part is turning. Are we all turning but at different speeds? Or am I experiencing an attack of dizziness? I walk, in a very disorientated manner, towards the toilet, falling at almost every step I make. It feels like walking anew, learning how to walk again but this time differently, this time the walking does not happen on two feet but on four. Knowing that the additional two are not physically part of my body they still seem and feel to me like they are. I can see them; they are present moving along my two existing legs. Original and copy have no relevance as they are all doing the same thing, at the same speed, in the same environment with the exact same physical presence; two pairs of identical twins, doing the same action simultaneously in the exact same way, or at least what seems to me to be the case. Walking on four legs is a tough exercise but I eventually manage to reach the toilet. I decide to make the act of urinating easier for myself by taking a seat on the toilet and peeing sitting down. Peeing while sitting is not new to me. At one point in my life I was certain that if every man in the world would pee sitting, the world would a better place. Looking at the two identical streams that come out of my urethra I wonder again what the cause of my spinning head is.

The previous day Esther and I were wandering in the rehearsal space. We started the wandering with some synchronisation exercises which consist of copying each other simultaneously while always being in movement. Who copies who? Who initiates what? Who moves and what moves? It is more sophisticated of an exercise than mirroring one another. The exercise demands simultaneous action and reaction: observing, moving, creating, copying, appropriating and re-appropriating. The exercise was Esther's idea. She thinks these sorts of exercises are helping us in raising a stronger awareness of the complexity of things occurring simultaneously. She suggested doing these sorts of exercises as a warm up practice to the wandering 'as an assemblage'.

Yesterday's wandering was very intense and draining. It was our first full run in the presence of Schne and his sound contributions. I felt so empty during the run, impersonal, being in a total trance of the instant. Almost every detail was inspected and recognised by Esther and me. Chain,

as usual, took the leading role but with merit. The aluminium tubular structure was behaving unpredictably, which made it considerably hard on our bodies. The sound contributions were at times colliding beautifully with the rest of the elements. This made it really special, the assemblage was opening up, it was searching for new assemblages, assemblages being produced in the moment, out of new relations, between the different elements.

My search to abandon my fixed and static identity by the decolonisation of my body through this practice was taking shape. I was feeling the symptoms of it which I presume were coming from the process of decolonisation. What could be the cause of these vertigo attacks that are shaping my daily life? They can arise from different sources, I thought initially. In the beginning, I assumed that their origins lay in the noise of the chains rolling over the tubes. The sound/noise is very intense. It is a high pitch sound that can dislocate your head from your body. Time passed, I was wearing earplugs, but the vertigo attacks were still appearing. This led me to think of it being a symptom of the change that my body is going through, a change directly linked to my art practice's becoming. With every detoxification process one starts feeling multiple bodily reactions that can be extreme painful and disturbing. The addicted body in detox must go through an extreme metamorphosis in order to adapt to an existence without addiction. The process of detoxification is terrifying in which a body goes through a rollercoaster of delusional and hallucinatory episodes which usually lead to an utmost sense of emptiness and depression. I arrived to the conclusion that my vertigo attacks were directly linked to the process of decolonisation as a process of detoxification. Walking on four is one of the challenges my body must undergo for me to get rid of the blockades of my past.

AN EVENTFUL COLLISION WITH SPINOZA: MONISM

The decolonisation of the body as a search for freedom rethinks the relation between human and the world by trying to re-live our immersion in this world, experience our belonging to this world and to each other. An affirmation of life so intensely, that one could never be in doubt about the reality of it. This affirmation of life does not need a god, or a state, or even morals to tell us that this world has value. It is to embody the world, to live it out, to go with it because our participation in this world makes it real: it is the only reality we have. This affirmative participation in the world is ethical and creative and is part of a becoming that is all-encompassing. In the words of Deleuze:

“The link between man and the world is broken. Henceforth, this link must become an object of belief... Whether we are christians or atheists, in our universal schizophrenia, we need reasons to believe in this world. It is a whole transformation of belief... to replace the model of knowledge with belief. But belief replaces knowledge only when it becomes belief in this world, as it is. (Deleuze 2000, 172)

This belief in the world is a practice. It is to embody the relations of the world, the interconnectedness. Akin to this belief in the world is Spinoza's 'ethics of joy.' Joy, for Spinoza, is not essentially happiness. It can lead to happiness occasionally but it is not the cause of all happiness. Joy and happiness are on different but related axes. Spinoza's joy is more an affirmation of life by continuously, immanently, searching for the potentialities of the body and intensifying these potentialities. Joy is a practice of trying to get underneath or outside the categorisation of language, the state, religion, etc. (the transcendental) and the affective restrictions that arise from those categories by means of continuously experimenting with new combinations and connections. These processes of transformation that are caused by the ethics of joy, can at times manifest themselves in pain and/or take a form of somatic resistance, like vertigo, anxiety, fear, etc. Rosi Braidotti argues, that these signals, in her words, "boundary-markers" (Braidotti 2006, 137) express a clear signal, or a message. The message is being transmitted, physically, to the body, instants before the threshold. These thresholds are limits and they, function as warnings to the bodies in the process of transformation by reminding the bodies to stop at, or before the threshold: the moment that will allow you to survive, to endure and thus to go on. In the practice of the decolonisation of the body, these boundary-markers are called symptoms. They manifest in my case in vertigo attacks during the processes of becoming, which are never always harmonious and straightforward since becomings are processes that involve inter-connection with other heterogeneous forces and can result at times in conflict and clashes. Nevertheless these processes of becomings increase one's power and virtue that can lead, according to Spinoza, to freedom.

Freedom, Spinoza argues, is unattainable, although some freedom can be obtained. Humans

(modes), for Spinoza, are not wholly self-determining. We, constantly affect and are being affected by other finite modes and since all finite modes are necessarily interconnected with the things around us, it is impossible for us not to be affected by them. In this regard, total freedom is impossible. Spinoza argues, that only a substance (God) can be totally free, since God is nature and nature is. Accordingly, God is immanent since all the effects that are caused by God's causality remain in nature, thus part of God. Nothing can be outside of God, unlike the God of Descartes and religion; it does not compose a harmonious universe, as a home for individuals; it does not intervene in events and judge our behaviours. God, for Spinoza, is being itself, completely autonomous, with no purpose or outcome set before it: "For if God acts for the sake of an end, he necessarily wants something which he lacks." (Spinoza 2001, 35) Everything, all entities, including ourselves, are parts of one big single being. This view of the world is called monism. Spinoza believed, that all the modes (humans, things, animals, etc.) are part of two continua - the infinite continuum of thinking and the infinite continuum of physicality. These two continua are one infinite individual that is expressed through the attribute of thinking and the attribute of extension. God is comprised of endless attributes but since we (modes) are only capable of understanding through the mind and through extension (motion and rest), we are only able to conceive through two attributes. Finite modes, are in the words of Spinoza, 'surface features' of these infinite continua. Physical things (finite modes of extension) are the changeable, momentary expressions of the continuum of extension. Minds and ideas (finite modes of thinking) are the changeable, momentary expressions of the continuum of thinking. Finite modes are thus, always determined by the infinite attributes of God.

In order, not to make an argument for a separation between mind and body, which one could conclude from the above, Spinoza argues that every idea is also a physical thing and every physical thing is also an idea. Extension and thinking are two attributes in which one mode exists.

"The thinking substance and the extended substance are one and the same substance, which is now comprehended under this attribute, now under that. So also a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing, but expressed in two ways." (Spinoza 2001, 50)

In contrast to Descartes's separation of the body and mind, Spinoza believes, that body and mind perfectly coincide with any another, since the mind is the idea of the body, and everything that occurs in the body occurs also in the mind. The mind understands everything that take place in the body, but does never bring into being any effects in the body. And the experiences of the body never cause ideas in the mind - experiences are truly and directly known by the mind. Body and mind are one thing expressed in different attributes. In this regard, we cannot talk about a body/mind interaction or a mind/body interaction. Every event is, therefore, comprehended simultaneously in both the mind and the body. But if Spinoza is correct, why are we not able to conceive of everything that happens in our bodies? Spinoza has a very interesting and unconventional

al understanding of physical things. He suggests, that every physical thing (body): a human, a chair, water, a tree, the air, are all one continuous physical things since all physical things are 'in' (part of) God. Bodies differentiate from one another by speed (motion and rest). The air is different than a human because it has a specific rate of motion, that is distinct to the air. Thinking of bodies in this regard, is to embrace the fact that bodies are never fixed; all bodies move at different times, at different speeds and affect and are being affected by different bodies, in unique, distinguishable ways. All individual differ in their capacities for distinctive rates of motion and rest and in the ways they affect and are being affected. Bodies can affect other bodies and be affected by them; bodies can move things and be moved by them; and depend on many other bodies in order to carry on being what they are. To answer the question posed above, the human body is correspondingly as complex as the mind, and as the body gains more capabilities, its mind will be able to comprehend more. It is in this regard that Spinoza famously asks: What can a body do?

“We do not even know what a body is capable of... We do not even know of what affections we are capable, nor the extent of our power.” (Deleuze 1990, 226)

The notion of power derives from Spinoza's epistemology which involves two perspectives: 'adequate' and 'inadequate knowledge'. The adequate idea according to Spinoza, is a true idea of the essence of a finite mode. True knowledge of a mode includes a full understanding of the causes that determine a mode. Adequate ideas are not fabricated by us; they only exist in the infinite continuum of thinking and extension. This, does not mean that we (modes) are unable to attain true knowledge since the human mind is part of the infinite continuum of knowledge, therefore an adequate idea is in itself, a true, full conception of the human body. But insofar as we humans and other finite modes interact with other finite modes, we do not have access to a full adequate understanding of our own finite bodies. Instead, finite bodies have a partial or an inadequate idea/knowledge of themselves and their essence. In this regard, how can we access the truth, that of our own bodies, that vanished through encounters with other finite things that mess with our minds and our adequate ideas of our bodies? Spinoza believes, that through active encounters with modes that have something in common with us, we can recuperate what was lost to us: the truth of ourselves. Encounters are different and have different effects regarding the knowledge our own bodies. Some encounters make us more distant from our essence by raising false ideas, false knowledge of the capacities of our own bodies. Other encounters, have a positive and joyful effect by enhancing our adequate knowledge that comes from agreement. This Spinoza calls: 'common notions'. Think about the notion of extension as something that is shared by all modes. In order to understand the essence of one's notion of extension one must actively enter into encounters with other modes, immanently, in order to recover adequate ideas of the body. For example, when you are in a box-fight with someone else who is trying to punch you in your face, you know that by moving aside you will succeed to avoid contact. It is by entering fruitful encounters with other modes that one can gain adequate knowledge of its own body. Power, according

to Spinoza is the same thing as virtue. It is the desire to act according to its essence (true adequate knowledge).

“By virtue and power I understand the same thing, that is, virtue, insofar as it is related to man, is the very essence, or nature, of man, insofar as he has the power of bringing about certain things, which can be understood through the laws of his nature alone.” (Spinoza 2001, 165)

Spinoza's ethics of joy is an affirmation of life according to its essence. This can be done for finite modes by obtaining adequate knowledge that is immanent to their essence through building common notions. Building common notions can only be done through encounters with other modes. It is therefore that Spinoza advocates for a life full of experimental, adventurous encounters with things as long as they are not harmful to one's nature. Only by searching for the common notions can one understand one owns body better. Only a body that is determined to live by its essence can achieve some sorts of freedom. The body in the decolonisation process continuously asks what a body can do, never being satisfied with a singular answer. Spinoza's monist world is the stage where the process of the decolonisation of the body takes place. A world where never-ending collisions are taking place. Only by embodying these collisions porously does one live the interconnectedness, the monist life. The encounter with Spinoza gave rise to a multiplicity of changes in the process of the decolonisation of the body. The search for common notions (adequate knowledge) became the drive of a process that seeks for freedom. It became the main tool for analysing encounters of all sorts. Spinoza's ethics has become the earth, the ground, the soil where the body in the process of decolonisation operates. Being one with the world therefore, has tremendous repercussions and effects in the becoming of the world, in its interconnectedness.

A FIELD NOTE: THE PROCESS OF AN ASSEMBLAGE

Today is a special day. I received an email from the AFK (Amsterdam Fonds voor de Kunst) saying that they have arrived to the conclusion that they will subsidise us with an amount of €10.000. We applied for it around two and a half months ago to fund with the performance All Things Want To Run. It was necessary because some venues invited us to perform the developed version of our new performance in progress. We will start with two performances in February at De Brakke Grond, one performance at the end of March at Lely Urban Resort, and another one in May at Dansmakers Amsterdam. So you can imagine how pleased I was with the news from the AFK. This money will partly be spent on fees for the sound designer, the light designer and the dramaturge. With this news, I call Igor, our dramaturge, and set a meeting for tonight. He suggests that we meet at a café at 't Spui in Amsterdam. His success as a dramaturge has enabled him to travel all over the world. At this moment in time, by chance Igor has decided to come to Amsterdam to solve some housing issues. This coincided extremely well with our desire to work with him. We have not had the chance to collaborate with Igor yet, neither do we know him well, nonetheless there is this unexplainable desire from both Esther and me for this encounter between our assemblage of different elements and Igor.

I arrive early at the café directly from my class in Utrecht. I take a seat at a collective, shared table, order myself a beer and take out my book by Ben Spatz titled What A Body Can Do (2015). I find reading in the public sphere an almost impossible task since I almost always get distracted by the surroundings. I open the book and make an attempt at reading the introduction. That is when a new person enters the café and sits right opposite to me. Usually, such an act would cause quite a stir in the Netherlands but since the café was at its full capacity, her deed went unnoticed by the guests. She orders a glass of wine and asks the waiter for the menu. This request sounds like gold to me. I start going wild with the idea of her having dinner all alone at the collective table on a Thursday evening. I ask myself over and over again why that is? Dozens of speculations cross my mind. This exercise of speculating is not to arrive to an answer but it challenges me to imagine the unimaginable, it is a test in imagination that I play with myself constantly. I become fascinated by the idea of her eating alone there with a glass of wine and a book, which I have not yet had the chance to identify. She looks relaxed and behaves confidently while sipping from her glass with little oscillations. The idea of her there all alone attracts me and my imagination. I start obsessively observing every little vibration, movement that occurs in front of me. Spatz's book can still be found in my hands but for very different reasons. The book is being used as a tool for spying. I pretend to read the content but what I am actually doing is examining her closely and fantasising excessively about her life and desires.

*Esther arrives and pulls me out of my dreamlike state. She asks me directly if Igor has arrived. To which I reply confusingly: "Hmmm I don't know I haven't had the chance yet to have a look around." She goes to have a look while I try attentively to follow her wandering in space and forget about the woman opposite me. From Esther's signs I understand Igor has arrived. I stand up and grab what remains of my beer and look one more time into the direction of the woman. She pulls her head up, smiles at me and goes back into her mood of reading. I walk away and head towards Esther. She grabs my face, kisses me and tells me to look up there. I see Igor with his back to us, sitting, facing the streets of Amsterdam, all by himself. Together we walk towards Igor excitedly. For some unknown reason, Igor senses our arrival and turns, smiling. Did he predict our coming? Did he sense our energy? Shocked, I greet him with a hug. We all sit down simultaneously. Small talk as usual takes the stage but not for long. Igor is not a small talk expert either. So he impatiently and curiously asks us about our project. I tell Esther to start. Which she does by telling him the whole narrative passionately: how an encounter between Esther and me gave rise to a collaboration which started with another performance and project titled: *The Seafoth Knows Neither Pain Nor Time*. How we collided with chains, with a tubular structure, with Schne (the sound designer), etc. How all these collisions and encounters produced our current permeable shape of things, which we also name the shape of our assemblage. Igor's shiny eyes open up and he smiles, at which point I ask him: "What's the matter?" Without us knowing Igor has been fascinated with the concept of the assemblage for years, since he read: *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) in the 90's. What fascinates him most about it is the desire that produces assemblages, which can result in an unpredictable collection of heterogeneous elements like in our case. "How on earth did you guys end up in an assemblage with chains and a tubular aluminium structure?" Excited, Igor keeps on questioning us and our assemblage: "I understand you guys are interested in dissolving the dichotomy between subject and object but is that possible? How can a subject become object and subject object?" All these interesting questions and explorations we are dealing with in our practice have been recognised by Igor who has the same fascinations. It is Glissant's notion and concept of relation that is being embodied here, at this moment in a café in Amsterdam. It is another extraordinary collision that is occurring and which will change our state forever. Igor and his assemblage entered ours and we entered his, we created new assemblages. This meeting is another reminder of the porosity and fluidity our practice can take. We conclude the evening with a conversation around Massumi's idea of the woodworker. The woodworker for Massumi is well aware of her material. She does not pick up any piece of wood to make a table. She chooses the right piece of wood that will enable her to make the perfect table. She is able to choose carefully since she has the capacity to interpret and to read the signs the wood communicates as qualities. These qualities envelop a potential that is the capacity to affect and to be affected. Her interpretation, therefore, is a creation that came into existence out of care and knowledge. (Massumi 1992,*

10-11) With this analogy, we decide to call it a night, hug, kiss and exit the cafe. Esther and I decide to go for some food, undecidedly we start walking, wandering the streets without exchanging a word, speechless regarding what just happened between Igor and us.

AN EVENTFUL COLLISION WITH DELEUZE: RELATIONS AS ALLIANCES

The practice of the decolonisation of the body as an art practice was extremely active two and a half years ago with the collision between Esther Arribas and me. Not knowing back then the desire to decolonise my body: to part with the fixed dichotomies and categorisation put in place by the big power structures, by entering active encounters to procure better and adequate knowledge of my own body, created assemblages. The desire to assemble, to work together, to collaborate in a fluid way outside fixed hierarchical settings, is to serve the immanent moment, it is a desire for the unknown, for the potentialities that can arise from new connections. What the philosopher José Gil wrote on the dancer's body could be applied to my practice as a process for decolonisation:

“Desire creates assemblages. But the movement to assemble always opens itself up towards new assemblages. This is because desire does not exhaust itself in pleasure, but augments itself by assembling. To create new connections between heterogeneous materials, new bonds, other passageways for energy; to connect, to put in contact, to symbiose, to make something happen, to create machines, mechanisms, articulations-this is what assembling is about. To ceaselessly demand new assemblages.” (Gil 2006, 21-35)

The desire that creates assemblages is not predicated on a lack. It is a desire for new connections and combinations. Spinoza calls this desire 'conatus'. According to Spinoza, desire arises from a fundamental drive to life that abides to every living being. It is what drives all modes in nature. Conatus is the desire for one's essence, for the true understanding of one's own body. (Spinoza 2001, 105) It is therefore that according to the philosophy of Spinoza, desire can only result in an enhancement of adequate ideas through active and productive encounters. This desire for freedom in the process of the decolonisation of the body mainly occurs momentarily in the studio space, a place where the decolonisation of the body continuously takes new forms. The studio is where most of the experimentation occurs, it is a place where I can wander. The studio space as a restricted open place that is detached from the constant limitations of daily life. But how porous can this place be? Can this place open up towards the world outside? Can this space have a direct influence on my daily life? and the life's of others? To answer these questions is to allow that no answer will ever be fixed. Answers shift, open and close, penetrate at times and at others times close down. This continuous change is to accept that the impact of the decolonisation of the body remains at times unseen in the world outside. Nevertheless, the change is always present no matter where I go: linear or wandering, the studio place is carried with me, everywhere and at all times. The studio space is knowledge. It is a different knowledge from what the schools and the universities teach us. It is a knowledge that is continuous, ever changing, in process, that derives from endless experiments. It is a knowledge in search of freedom, embedded in Spinoza's ethics of joy. An embodied knowledge that produces boundless assemblages.

The concept of assemblage (*agencement* in French) is a concept developed initially by Gilles Deleuze. Interestingly, Deleuze and later Guattari, gave the concept multiple, different definitions throughout their careers. Each of their definitions, connects the concept to a singular aspect of their writing, making it impossible to come to a coherent definition. The concept, from the perspective of the philosophers has no identity but a becoming. Nevertheless, let me start exploring the concept with a quote by Deleuze:

“What is an assemblage? It is a multiplicity which is made up of many heterogeneous terms and which establishes liaisons, relations between them, across ages, sexes and reigns - different natures. thus, the assemblage’s only unity is that of a co-functioning: it is a symbiosis, a ‘sympathy’. It is never filiation which are important, but alliances, alloys; these are not successions, lines of descent, but contagious, epidemics, the wind.” (Deleuze and Parnet 1977, 69)

Deleuze emphasises in his definition the kind of relations that links these parts together into an assemblage. Only by alliance according to him, can the parts hold together into an assemblage. The distinction, between alliance and filiation has played a major role in Deleuze and Guattari’s arguments in their text, titled *Anti-Oedipus* (1972). Filiation is explained as genealogical and arborescent, being governed by “the unity of an ancestor” (D&G 1987, 241). For example, the relation between a father and a daughter, can only be a relation through filiation because one can only be a daughter if one is related genealogically to a father. The identity of the daughter or the father can only exist from their mutual relationship. Differently, when two parts enter into an alliance, as in the relation between plants and the insects that pollinate them, this relation does not characterise and/or define their identity. They happen in the air between the parts, through influences, that result in new connections and liaisons. (D&G 1983, 147-155) Another important aspect emphasised in Deleuze’s definition, is the nature of the parts that constitute the assemblage. The parts of an assemblage that are connected through alliances must differ in nature and/or origin, this Deleuze calls heterogeneous. Heterogeneous parts are independent and autonomous from the whole that constitute them, meaning heterogeneous parts can be detached from one assemblage and enter into another assemblage, penetrating into new relations. These relations are called ‘relations of exteriority’. By contrast, parts which cannot exist independently from the relations that constitute them (father/daughter relationship) are characterised by ‘relations of interiority’. Assemblages are defined by the ‘emergent properties’: the properties of the whole that are caused by the interrelations between the different, independent heterogeneous components for two reasons, and must be included in the definition of the concept of assemblage. Firstly, the emergent properties are crucial, otherwise, the parts that compose an assemblage, could merely form a collection of components that coexist without generating a new individual. Therefore, irreducibility is crucial in the concept of assemblage. Secondly, making the emergent properties of a whole depend on the interrelations between its components guarantees, that the established properties are not taken to be transcendent. The identity of assemblages is not determined as a

result by “essences [that] belong to a different plane of being from the entities whose identity they define, a transcendent plane,” (Delanda 2016, 12) but are contingent on the emergent properties that emanate through the interrelations of the assemblage’s parts. In this regard, all assemblages are singularities: individually and historically unique entities that belong to a materialist ontology of immanence. It is immanent since all assemblages “populate the same ontological plane,” (Delanda 2016, 13) a plane that has not developed from a necessary, transcendent plane. The human species exists on the same ontological plane as a human organism and all other singularities by making no hierarchical and “ontological distinctions between levels of existence, such as genus, species, and organism.” (Delanda 2016, 13)

An interesting contribution to the concept of assemblage is Manuel Delanda’s argument that reality exists of endless assemblages. Everything consist of assemblages, all the way down. As Delanda argues, all that is, is an assemblage of “assemblages of assemblages”. (Delanda 2016, 3) Each part of an assemblage is also an assemblage and the environment it exists in is, by definition, also an assemblage. Delanda’s reality, consists entirely and only of assemblages that perform at differing levels of scale, each historically unique in their being. This material, mind-independent and non-human agency approach has been developed rigorously by the new materialist philosopher, Jane Bennett. For Bennett, everything in the world, organic and non-organic, is alive because of the entanglements, interrelationships and tendencies for unlimited change. Usually, we think of objects as stable and static things, while we humans are the active entities of the world, the ones who create change. Bennett argues that objects and things are alive because they have the capacity to produce change in the world by shaping the web and modifying the interrelationships they are part of. The human body is one of those interrelation constellations consisting of a web of materials and active bodies:

“My own body is material, and yet this vital materiality is not fully or exclusively human. My flesh is populated and constituted by different swans of foreigners... the bacteria in the human microbiome collectively possess at least 100 times as many genes as the mere 20,000 or so in the human genome... we are, rather, an array of bodies, many different kinds of them in a nested set of microbiomes.” (Bennett 2009, 112-113)

In this regard, there is no such thing as subjects and objects. Everything is in process, going through constant change and modification, all affecting each other, forming alliances, competing, creating new processes and leaving others. These webs of interrelations Bennett calls assemblages. To think of assemblages according to Bennett and Delanda, is to accept that humans are part of complex and massive process orientated, interconnected webs. Thereby, it is impossible to isolate an individual as the fundamental cause of an event. As participants and parts of assemblages, we can never be certain of the consequences of our actions since they would always provoke, to some degree unintended effects. This is an invitation to welcome experimentation as in

the ethics of joy: try out new connections, new combinations, new relations by embracing vulnerability, openness and uncertainty to the unexpected.

The studio space in the decolonisation of the body is an assemblage of an assemblage. It is an assemblage that continuously desires the new. It is therefore, an assemblage that consist of endless potential assemblages. Nonetheless, how to open up the assemblage of the studio space to the outside world which usually has a tendency towards stasis? Esther Arribas and I have decided to open up our assemblage by consecutively changing environments. The desire to wander as an assemblage in different environments can be interpreted as a challenge, in search for the limits to the question: what can our assemblage do. Therefore, we began retiring from our safe environment in search for new spaces, new environments. This aspiration for the new led us to the city. We took the tubes, the joints and the chain and started wandering through the streets of Amsterdam. A different environment brings different relations. We were surprised by the shift in dynamics. The enormous scale of affects. Tilting the structure in an urban environment brought up many different relations: the structure in relation to the architecture, the reverberating high pitch sound of the collision between metal and aluminium, the moving on uneven concrete floor, the rain that was falling from the sky, the crowd of people that were grouping around us, etc. Every relation was affecting our wandering tremendously. By the time we got back to our studio, we decided to raise the stakes and challenge our assemblage even further. The desire for new assemblages guided us to the desert. For around two weeks, we wandered in the desert, in extreme conditions, around the lowest point on earth: the dead sea. To be wandering in such conditions made us highly aware of the interconnectedness of the world and the highly complex web of interrelations we call a human body. On every return to our studio we realise the necessity of the outside, the singularity of the world and its influence in shaping our practice and vice versa. Following Spinoza's ethics of joy, one can only obtain adequate ideas by endlessly encountering other and different modes, in different environments. The studio space as a machine of desire therefore, requires the outside world, one cannot exist without the other.

A FIELD NOTE: BECOMING-ENVIRONMENT

It is the last day of our residency in Arad. As usual, we gather the tubes that have become extremely heavy after a two-week residency. My neck is extremely painful. Esther asks me if I want to wander. I reply by saying: "Of course. It is our last day." We collect the tubes and lay them on top of the car's roof. The preparation process usually takes around twenty minutes. Once this has been completed, Esther and I enter the dirty and dusty car and head towards a predetermined location. We decided to end our residency at a location near the city, where one can see the city of Arad. It is an in-between location dividing the city from the desert mountains. The location we chose is also a path for Bedouins to enter the city.

*At our destination we start unpacking the tubes. The afternoon is beautiful. The peach-coloured sun is slowly going down which comes along with a blowing unexpected oven hot wind touching my red sweaty skin. This collision of sweat and wind results in goosebumps. The intimacy with the surrounding evokes a sense of relief in me, an awareness that I am part of this environment, I am co-composing with it. I am penetrating it; it is penetrating me, simultaneously, with every movement. The writer and choreographer Erin Manning tells us in *Relationscapes: Movement, Art and Philosophy* (2012): "Stillness is always movement." (Manning 2012, 43) One can never be still. To be still is more difficult than to move because in order to stand still one must go through constant corrections of the body. These corrections are not conscious but they are necessary to keep the balance. "They are virtual micro movements that move through the feeling of standing still. When these micro movements are felt as such, they take over the event of standing..." (Manning 2012, 43) Becoming aware of the multiplicity of things outside my consciousness makes me feel vulnerable but complete. I feel part of the event's assemblage. I am in this assemblage that consist of many more assemblages with the sand, the mountains, Esther, Esther's organs, Esther's fluids, the insects, the plants, the bird's shit, the rock, the microbe, my toe, etc....*

With every session we install a camera that rotates clockwise. The rotation is made possible by a device that is installed on top of a dark grey tripod. We set the single rotation for this particular wandering session to 1'15". Our choreography or wandering is directed by the rotation, by the speed of it. The camera moves very slowly, which is almost imperceptible without the passing of time. Our choreography tries to follow the camera's frame, adapting and readapting our speed to the camera's movement. The camera, like all other elements present during this event is part of the assemblage that makes us wandering in space. It is a component like all others that influences the whole.

Esther pushes the record button. We enter the frame from the perspective of the camera. We grab the chains and start thinking while moving, thinking about our next step, feeling each other, feeling the materials, feeling the ground, the textures. I grab the chain and start collecting quite a lot of it in my hands. I grab it all in one hand and throw it mathematically over the two meter eighty high tube. The chain bounces back like a boomerang and I move rapidly to the side, for the chain to pass by me freely. I let it bounce back and forth, until gravity takes hold of it. By then I grab the chain and pull it towards the other side of the tube, a knot has just been made. This allows us to tilt the structure towards the direction the camera is moving. I embrace the chain and watch Esther throw her turn her part of the chain towards the direction I am already positioned. She embraces the chain as well and that is when we start simultaneously pulling. Slowly, we experience the structure tilt, this experience is made possible thanks to a multiplicity of physical sensations and collisions. My foot goes backwards touching a different part of the ground; a different structure, the chain in my hand becomes looser, my body straightens up, the tension in my body is partially gone, Esther is moving too, the rock underneath my foot moves, etc... A search for balance is necessary. The structure moves in little oscillations, I pull, until the balance is reached. Tension is floating through from the metal to my body and vice versa. This is a vibrant experience. Stillness has never felt so full of movement. The stiller I am trying to be which is necessary for the structure not to collapse on the ground the stronger the tension manifests itself in me. This tension is a becoming gravity. During this moment of tension, I enter a celebrated relationship with gravity - 'me' is not only my body but the mutualism of all the elements. It is me becoming with chain, becoming with tube, becoming with environment. While this moment of intensity is occurring, Esther is taking her part of the chain and moving across the other side of the structure, by entering and exiting its invisible walls. Moving to the other side, she slides the chain over the tubes. This makes a screeching sound, which adds to the tension. Esther is set, she stands, set to take over the weight of the structure. I pull more so she can take over. This is done attentively by feeling each and everyone/every thing's desire. I pull, and then in a split second I feel the relief, the tension jumps right into Esther's body. I see her holding the chain, strongly, aware of every little detail of her body that makes it possible for her to hold the structure. Little by little Esther lets the structure land on the ground. This scene is happening while I am positioned across waiting for the collision to happen. With every session of wandering we did in Arad, around eight to twelve tilts were realised by our assembly. Every tilt is fundamentally different, listening, feeling and thinking attentively to the needs of everyone and everything. Different constellations are necessary for us to wander. It all depends on the moment, the split second. This process is a thinking/feeling in which body and mind are not separated, it embraces multiplicity. The event unfolds the new at every instant. An eventful wandering.



Figure 01 - These two video stills were captured during our residency in the Negev, Israel. The top image shows us wandering as an assemblage. The bottom image shows us deconstructing the structure right before darkness hits.

AN EVENTFUL COLLISION WITH DELEUZE AND GUATTARI: BECOMING-IMPERCEPTIBLE AS FREEDOM

My search for freedom, which is the decolonisation of the body, tries to embody the becoming of the world and its events. But how can one become with the world? To answer that question, I believe one must understand and see the becoming in everything. This practice requires a new way of seeing, which Deleuze and Guattari call a 'perceptual semiotics'. Our society's temptation is to comprehend things as complete and stable rather than in the process of becoming. The key that was thrown by my grandparent's is the key that enables one to grasp things always in the middle. But how can one see and grasp things in the middle, in becoming?

In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari define the concept of becoming which they oppose to being. In contrast to the notion of being (this or that identity), Deleuze and Guattari regard identity as a continuous process of becoming. In their book, Deleuze and Guattari explore the multiple directions becoming becomes by discussing many types of becoming: becoming-woman, becoming-animal, becoming-imperceptible, becoming-music, etc. They claim that we can position the multiple becomings according to how far removed they are from stratification.

"If becoming woman is the first quantum, or molecular segment, with the becomings-animal that link up with it coming next, what are they all rushing toward? Without a doubt, toward becoming-imperceptible." (Deleuze and Guattari 2013, 325)

In order to reach Deleuze and Guattari's ideal: the end of all becomings, one must go through multiple becomings. But to understand who or what can become, Deleuze and Guattari turn to Spinoza, to re-think what a thing is, without turning to essential or substantial forms, which are always static (being) and can never become. Earlier in the text, we have seen that Spinoza differentiates bodies (modes) by the capacity to move or be moved (motion and rest). Spinoza's monist world is populated entirely with things that differ from one another in accordance to the ratio of motion and rest between their parts. These things (modes) enter continuously into compositions and decompositions. For example, when I ride a bike on a road in the city, three bodies (the bike, the road and me) enter into a composition that is always new (unique), and when I get off the bike again, me and other bodies enter into a new composition, which automatically means that the previous composition has decomposed. Deleuze and Guattari call the thing's ratios of motion and rest, the compositions and decompositions, 'longitude.' Longitude for Deleuze and Guattari, is the thing's relational and extensive view. The intensive and affective view of a thing, the philosophers call the thing's 'latitude'. This conception of a thing means that, a thing is its place. Wherever the thing moves, it changes and transforms accordingly. There is, thus, no answer to the question of what a body can do. Nevertheless, Spinoza's notion of a thing adds a very

different conception of what stasis means. Stasis is no more connected to a thing's essence but to the thing's ratio of motion and rest. This account of stasis is in complete correspondence to Deleuze and Guattari's notion of continuity. A thing is never fully static or essential but moves, indefinitely on the plane of continuity from one phase to another, each phase showing unique tendencies towards either stasis or change. Extension and intension are thus, interconnected. This thing, this mode or body that is exclusively defined by latitude and longitude, Deleuze and Guattari propose to call, 'haecceity'.

Spinoza's notion of a thing shows us that becoming occurs through intensities and affects but how can a thing, a haecceity become? To understand the ways of becoming, Deleuze and Guattari invoke a 'zone of proximity'.

"Starting from the forms one has, the subject one is, the organs one has, or the functions one fulfils, becoming is to extract particles between which one establishes the relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness that are closest to what one is becoming, and through which one becomes." (D&G 2013, 318)

A zone of proximity is what surrounds a haecceity, a place where intensities transform into one another. The permeable molecular boundary of a haecceity allows particles to pass through. In connection to this, Deleuze and Guattari make a distinction between the rigid segmentarity of the molar and the supple segmentarity of the molecular. Since only at the molecular level where the segmentarity is supple, can that proximity become relevant. At the molar level the passage between segments will always be blocked. It is therefore that identification and imitation will always be molar and not applicable to becoming, since imitation would just reinforce stability of a certain identity by going from one molar identity to another molar identity. Therefore, Deleuze and Guattari state that "all becomings are already molecular." (D&G 2013, 318)

Deleuze and Guattari argue that becoming is a virtue. Their notion of virtue is aligned to Spinoza's concept of virtue as power. Spinoza's understanding of virtue is that of entering into as many new combinations as possible in order to increase one's capacity to affect and to be affected. But where does this virtue lead to? To the end of all becomings: becoming-imperceptible. The becoming-imperceptible for Deleuze and Guattari means numerous things:

"Becoming-imperceptible means many things. What is the relation between the (anorganic) imperceptible, the (asignifying) indiscernible, and the (asubjective) impersonal?" (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 325)

My search for the becoming-imperceptible through my art practice consists of three characteristics as is stated in the previous quote: the imperceptible, the indiscernible and the impersonal.

But how to understand these characteristics? Let me try to explain the three characteristics from the perspective of Deleuze and Guattari by starting with the imperceptible. The imperceptible for the philosophers has everything to do with how we (the Western society) understand species. In traditional accounts, “species” were understood, in accordance with natural history, as representations of natural types (essences) that cannot transform into new or different species. In contrast to evolution, which asks how new or different species can be produced, natural history - given natural history’s account of species as static and asks about the relation between distinct species. Deleuze and Guattari state that natural history frames the relation between species in two ways: by way of structure and by way of series. The series organises species according to their resemblance. For example, jaguars resemble lions; lions resemble jaguars; jaguars resemble tigers, etc. These resemblances are ordered by an organising genus called: *Panthera*. The second relation compares structural similarities between species. For example, legs are used for movement on land; fins are used for movement under water. Deleuze and Guattari argue that these two types of relation between species have not been abandoned by Western society even though evolution has replaced natural history.

To think about the species in this way, which is still the dominant way, is molar in that it imposes segmented boundaries by categorising critters according to their relations. The imperceptible wants to destruct the biological stratum of the organism (organ-ised) by opening the boundaries to the environment and other organisms completely:

“We believe in the existence of very special becomings-animal traversing human beings and sweeping them away, affecting the animal no less than the human.” (D&G 2013, 277)

The indiscernible is in relation to the stratum of the signifying. For Deleuze and Guattari, signifying is a regime with a tendency towards stasis. The signifying regime’s first component is the centre, also characterised as the face or body of the despot, around which the entire regime is arranged. Around the despot (the centre) the signifying regime organises hierarchically all its signs, in concentric circles. The king or god is the centre around which all signs are organised. Everything is done according to the king’s will. To break the king’s will/law is illegal and interpreted as a direct offence against god/the king. For the signifying regime to remain hierarchically intact, the centre must always be occupied. Therefore, when a king dies, a new king immediately follows. It is from the centre that power radiates outwards to the concentric circles. The king’s signs are distributed to the circles through interpretation. The ones who have the power to interpret the king’s words/signs, are spread throughout the regime’s circles. Becoming-indiscernible detaches all the signs from the stratum. Hence, the signs stop referring to a hierarchical centre and are allowed to make connection to other signs, without falling into the regime of meaning and interpretation. In this regard, becoming from the perspective of the human does not start from the human, since the human is organised according to an endless set of molar dualisms and signs such as human/animal, human/nature, white human/ dark human, etc. To become is to detach from all the molar signs

and enter into an intensive zone of indiscernibility between a thing and things becoming.

The impersonal or the asubjective is akin to the signifying regime since it is in opposition to the subjectification stratum, on which subjects are composed through a detachment from the despotic, signifying regime:

“What happens in the second [postsignifying] regime, by comparison with the signifying regime as we already defined it? It is in the first place, *a sign or packet of signs detached from the irradiating circular network and sets to work on its own account, starts running a straight line, as though swept into a narrow, open passage.*” (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 141)

The postsignifying is the betrayal, the detachment from the signifying regime: a deterritorialisation. This detachment, or departure (the line of flight) from the signifying regime Deleuze and Guattari call ‘the point of subjectification’. But where is this point of subjectification heading to? A ‘proceeding.’ Deleuze and Guattari explain that proceedings are relative deterritorialisations that continuously segment themselves. They (proceedings) are linear, in contrast to the signifying’s circularity and follow a beginning, middle and end scenario. Because of the proceeding’s linearity (start and finish) Deleuze and Guattari remind us that subjectifications are still strata. The postsignifying regime is a deterritorialisation of signs but a segmented one, one that turns the line of flight into disconnected points. The distinction between the signifying regime and the postsignifying regime Deleuze and Guattari tell us, can only be done in principle, in practice these two regimes are always mixed. The result of the mix between these two regimes of signs, the philosophers call, ‘the face’. But how is the face related to the regimes of signs? Were there not faces before the regimes of signs? Deleuze and Guattari explain the face through a system they call, white wall/black hole. The signifying regime refers to the white wall and the necessity for a white wall to mark its signs on: “Significance is never without a white wall upon which it inscribes its signs and redundancies.” (D&G 2013, 196) The king needs a white wall for its face to be carved onto. The black hole refers to the postsignifying regime of subjectification. Subjectifications are deterritorialisations that become segmented: “Subjectification imposes on the line of flight a segmentarity that is forever repudiating that line...” (D&G 2013, 163) Deleuze and Guattari call the points of segmentation in the post signifying regime, black holes. They call them thus, since all the departures from the signifying regime tend towards a created set of endpoints. These endpoints can be understood as the death of a line. The face is what dominates our Western society according to a standard. This standard, which is the face, does not divide the regimes of signs according to an inside and an outside. The division made is an internal process constituting an assemblage with a tendency toward stasis. Although, how can we understand the assemblage of the face and what is its standard? Deleuze and Guattari flatly answer by saying:

“The face is not a universal. It is not even that of the white man; it is White Man himself, with his

broad white cheeks and the black hole of his eyes. The face is Christ. The face is the typical European...” (D&G 2013, 206)

Christ’s face is constituted by a particular white wall/black hole system that defines the standard and determines degrees of divergence from the standard. The furthest one is from the face of Christ, the furthest one is from the standard. The white wall/black hole of the face as an assemblage organises intensities by converting them into extensities and by allowing some combinations and blocking others. To be a person means identifying with the extensities (categories) expressed by the face’s assemblage. Becoming in relation to the subjectification is to escape the face and its categories (signs) not by returning to the primitive head (presignifying) but by becoming asubjective, impersonal:

“if human beings have a destiny, it is rather to escape the face, to dismantle the face and facializations, to become imperceptible, to become clandestine...On the road to the asignifying and asubjective. (D&G 2013, 200)

The full decolonisation of the body is freedom. It is Deleuze and Guattari’s ideal: the end of all becomings. It is the desire to be reduced to a single abstract line, a haecceity without subjectivity, a becoming that is one with the world: becoming-world or, in the words of Erin Manning, “worlding”. (Manning 2013, 3) To be one with the world is to approach the world through affectivity, by entering constant new assemblages with all that lives in the world. But what if becoming-imperceptible is death, not as the end of life, but rather as becoming, an opening up towards the possibilities of the non-human. This moment can be described as the dissolution of the I: “the moment of its merging with the web of non-human forces that frame him/her.” (Braidotti 2006, 154) The death of the self is perhaps what Spinoza calls virtue or freedom: the moment a mode/body, becomes its essence and therefore lives and exists only according to the potentialities of god and nature. But is the becoming-imperceptible reachable? and how can one reach such a sophisticated state of interconnectedness? The decolonisation of the body is not about reaching the final stage of all becomings, but rather an explosion of desire for what will come, which metamorphoses the present. The process of becoming-imperceptible is a life of experimentation and affirmation, a desire to experience and embody life as intensely as possible by continuously asking what a body can do, like a wanderer colliding endlessly anew, with new assemblages. This search for the final stage of all becomings constitutes my art practice. It is what makes the decolonisation of the body a process. Not interested in the production of outcomes/objects as artworks or performances. The decolonisation of the body is interested in events and the attractors events produce, which in turn can be appropriated by future events. The search for freedom is therefore, always in the middle, a continuous becoming with neither a beginning nor an end.

AN EVENTFUL COLLISION WITH WHITEHEAD: METHODOLOGY AS PROCESS

To understand how a becoming comes about as a qualitative change, it is important to point out that becoming entails temporality, endurance and duration. This temporal dimension is what Deleuze calls an event. Events do not have a distinct duration neither are they divisible. 'Aion' or events deal with the continuous, unmeasurable, indefinite becoming of haecceities. In other words, an event is always in the middle, in process. The question of the event, is an important question within philosophy and has been raised multiple times throughout history, most notably by the mathematician and philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead. Whitehead argues, that everything is an event. According to him everything, the entire world is made of events: activity is all there is. In order to think in activity one must rethink numerous concepts. As we have seen earlier with Deleuze and Guattari, an object is not static but rather a haecceity, going through continuous metamorphoses. Whitehead deals with the object similarly, by identifying the object as an event, or, better a series of events: a multiplicity. As an example, Whitehead brings up Cleopatra's needle on the Victoria Embankment in London. (Whitehead 1920/2004, 165) As we all know Cleopatra's needle did not just end up in London. It has a rich history. It was sculpted by humans, around 1450 BC. It was moved from Heliopolis to London. And some day, this object will probably be destroyed as we know it and take a different form, it will cease to exist as Cleopatra's needle. When Whitehead talks about Cleopatra's needle as eventful, he does not refer only to certain historical events; the object is eventful at every instant. It is active at every moment. The needle is always different: it is becoming.

"A physicist who looks on that part of the life of nature as a dance of electrons, will tell you that daily it has lost some molecules and gained other, and even the plain man can see that it gets dirtier and is occasionally washed." (Whitehead 1920/2004, 167)

In his metaphysics, Whitehead makes a distinction between events and 'actual entities' or 'actual occasions'. Actual occasions are individual becomings that inherit their data from previous occasions. Consequently, every singular actual occasion is unique and launches something absolutely new into the world. However, an occasion is not indefinite. Once an occasion has reached its final state it expires: "An actual occasion...never changes, it only becomes and perishes. (Whitehead 1933/1967, 204) An actual occasion perishes into a datum: some sort of raw material that any following actual occasion may embrace, in order to transform the data into a new process of actualisation. In opposition to the becoming and perishing of actual occasions, an event always involves a passage from one occasion to another occasion: a comparison and therefore, a change. This passage between actual occasion Whitehead also calls the "route of inheritance". (Whitehead 1929/1978, 279) Change, thus, always involves an event, he writes: "The fundamental meaning of the notion of 'change' is the difference between actual occasions comprised in some determinate event." (Whitehead 1929/1978, 73) In this regard, everything is an event, a change in the world.

Cleopatra's needle is an event constantly renewing and creating itself afresh. The needle, like me, is something that constantly needs to be produced, actively, anew. It is therefore, impossible to encounter the same needle twice. At every encounter, you, the needle and your perception of the needle will be different: a new event. This leads Whitehead to think and conceptualise the subject as something vibrant, constantly being actualised anew. Subjectivity is the "past hurling itself into a new transcendent fact. It is the flying dart...hurled beyond the bounds of the world." (Whitehead 1933/1967, 177) The subject is not so much a question therefore, of what someone or something is but what they (it) are becoming. Such a subjectivity is part of every creature: not only humans or animals, but also objects. His concept of subjectivity aims to avoid the thing (a human, an object, etc.) as a primal source for meaning or existence. Everything, every creature, in his words a "superject" is constantly in the process of becoming something new. Whitehead's concept of becoming always occurs in a unique environment and in a unique way. The 'how' of every becoming is what Whitehead is most concerned about. He therefore introduces the notion of 'prehensions'. This term is what makes an event, it is how an actual entity relates to its environment. Prehensions are the manner by which Whitehead demonstrates the completely relational character of his ontological world. They characterise the passage by which all actual entities/occasions are related. Therefore events do not happen to subjects or objects: things, rather events are themselves the things.

This text is a superject and is constantly changing, undergoing prehensions. Writing these words is an event, it is in process, in the middle. It constitutes a chain of events or what Whitehead calls, a 'nexus' of another process I call the decolonisation of the body. How is this text becoming? and what can this text do? is what concern me. These changing words are part of our assemblage as well as Igor's body, the chain, the tubes, Spinoza's ethics, Esther's brain, Whitehead's metaphysics etc. This piece of text is being written from within. It is written during the process of the decolonisation of the body and challenges, as all the other heterogeneous elements, the whole that is called the assemblage. This writing from within I call: writing-with. To write-with the nexus of events is to live the intensity of the present by acknowledging one's and the text's role in the event. Not telling/writing how things are in the world, the static state of things, but instead, as Bobjana Kunst argues, it is to embody the event in writing, in which one becomes "marked by the intensity of the change itself." (Kunst 2007, 17) Writing-with co-composes with all the other elements of the assemblage, not knowing where the assemblage, which consists again of multiple assemblages, will lead to. This text tries to be aware of its potentiality to change the course of the event and should always remember the potential non-hierarchical future relation with its reader. By reading this text, I would argue that the reader in his/her own turn enters the assemblage of the event by interpreting the words and their connections ludically. (Barthes 1989, 31) Writing-with is to invite the reader, his/her thoughts, sensations, affect and body to enter the assemblage, it is an invitation to partake in the unpredictability of the event. Consequently, this text is not trying to answer a specific research question but rather, this text challenges the present, the instant, the

ceasing to be, by thinking of its changing role in the nexus of events that constitute the process of the decolonisation of the body.

Not only is this text a component in our assemblage, it is itself an assemblage constituting different parts. One method that is used in the process of the decolonisation of the body is what Carolyn Ellis calls, autoethnography. Autoethnography is a writing style that is embedded in autobiographical and qualitative research. It is an exploration of the world through the experiences and relations of an individual. In the *Handbook of Autoethnography* (2015) Carolyn Ellis, describes the experiential research as the following:

“For most of us, autoethnography is not simply a way of knowing about the world; it has become a way of being in the world, one that requires living consciously, emotionally, reflexively. It asks that we not only examine our lives but also consider how and why we think, act and feel as we do...It asks that we rethink and revise our lives, making conscious decisions about who and how we want to be.” (Ellis 2015, 10)

In my opinion, ethnographic research can only be autoethnographic since one can only do research through her/his own experiences. I follow, radical empiricist William James when he argues, that experience is the sole principle of reality; we exist in “a world of pure experience”. (James 1996, 39-91) Nonetheless, the auto in autoethnography are not the experiences of a single individual: a subject. The “auto-” in autoethnography for me, is what Deleuze and Guattari would call a ‘multiplicity’. As we have seen earlier, Whitehead’s metaphysics replaces subjects and objects with events, therefore a subject is always a relational, a becoming-together. The subject can never be separated from an environment. The becoming of the environment in which the subject (the auto-) is part of is all there is. In order to experience that perspective of the becoming-environment, one must think beyond personal interests or even group interests. Interest separates individuals from other individuals or groups from other groups, it is what makes divisions. Autoethnography is relational, a collective individuation as an event, that surpasses all the individuals that are part of the event, it gives them a boost, this becoming-together is what Deleuze call an ‘extra-being’. The collective individuation as an event, replaces the concept of interest with the concept of affect. All the differences, the tendencies and the tensions that are part of the making of a collective individuation are what Spinoza would call the capacities to affect and to be affected. “Thinking affectively means thinking in terms of ecologies of potential and the events that express and vary them.” (Massumi 2015, 202)

The use of autoethnography in the process of the decolonisation of the body accompanies field notes. They are notes written in the process and are themselves part of the nexus of events. These field notes are often speculative, affective and sensorial. They are convinced of the urgency of absolutely everything: every colour, smell, heartbeat, sound, movement, etc. In this regard, my

research turns its back to the objective by including aesthetic considerations, embodied experiences and emotions. Consequently, I try to make absolutely no hierarchical distinction between the 'theory' parts and the 'field diary' parts. Neither do the field notes function as case studies. They are not demonstrations of a process towards freedom. The field notes are components in the assemblage as text: they are in relation, in alliance, to the other parts. It is by approaching this text and my research as such, that I refuse to start with an explanatory introduction and end with a concluding statement. This text is in process, in the middle and will always remain so. It is not fixed: parts can be added, things can be removed, it is becoming and constitute the assemblage of the decolonisation of the body. Will the assemblage ever attain some sorts of freedom is completely unknown, what is known though is that the process has/had tremendous effects in every event up until now. The significance of color, texture, emotions, affects, intensities etc. as elements of experience in every event is what Whitehead calls "eternal objects". He defines eternal objects as the following:

"Any entity whose conceptual recognition does not involve a necessary reference to any definite actual entities of the temporal world is called an 'eternal object'" (Whitehead 1929/1978, 44)

Eternal objects are therefore not substantive but adverbial; they decide and convey how actual occasions relate to each other. They are real but become only actual when they enter into specific becomings. Hence, they move from the virtual to the actual. However eternal objects are very different to actual entities since they cannot make something happen, unlike actual entities causal determinacy; they are the potentialities, the alternatives, the otherwise, the contingencies. This wall is green but it might have been purple. Therefore, the eternal object's role is always passive.

"An eternal object is always a potentiality for actual entities; but in itself, as conceptually felt, it is neutral as to the fact of its physical ingression in any particular actual entity of the temporal world." (Whitehead 1929/1978, 44)

The greenness as a pure potentiality is absolutely indifferent to the actual greenness of the wall. They have utterly no influence on an actual entity's becoming; they are completely neutral, indifferent, sterile and powerless. Every event, however, includes the actualisation of some of the eternal objects. In contrast to actual entities, eternal objects always have to be felt in experience and are as much real as actual entities even though eternal objects are only what qualifies actual entities. Experience is as much real as anything else. Whitehead argues, in accordance with James that nothing can be excluded in philosophy.

"To be radical, an empiricism must neither admit into its constructions any element that is not directly experienced, nor exclude from them any element that is directly experienced."
(James 1996, 22)

My autoethnography tries to include everything and care for everything. Not a care that applies to myself or other individuals but a care for the event, for what can arise or come from the events. This care for the event is relational and can bring freedom but it must be created by developing techniques of relation that have to be practiced and thought differently from techniques of personal expression. In relational techniques, one tries to become imperceptible, only thus, can freedom be achieved. "It is through relation that we derive greater potential, intensify our powers of existence." (Massumi 2015, 202-203) Freedom is relational by nature; It is activity; it is the ability to 'affect and to be affected'. Perhaps, the answer concerning freedom is life itself but in order to attain that freedom one must become-life, become with life. Liveliness.

A FIELD NOTE: THE NEVER-ENDING PROCESS OF THE DECOLONISATION OF THE BODY

My companion wakes me up. She is hungry. She scratches the black fabric wardrobe near my bed. The sound that the scratching produce hinders me from sleeping. I am going through a similar situation every night. Nora, Compost, Baby, Little One, the Brain, knows the effects of her scratching extremely well. The sound generates this itch in my brain and makes me stand up. My positive reaction in accordance to her desire manifest in joy; she knows I will give her food. I take around 15 steps, grab the shiny green bag, unseal it and pour some of its content in a bowl on the floor. Once the feeding is done I head back to my bed and look at the time on the broken screen of my phone. The screen communicates: 05:47, Tuesday 05 February. Irritated, I make an attempt at falling asleep. Irritation turns into happiness when I listen carefully to the slurping sound from afar. An agreement has been reached between all the elements that makes my body fall asleep, sleep is its result.

The chair is hard. The seat is made from wood. Wood seat and bottom are interacting closely. In between Esther and me stands a table. We are in a café in the centre of Amsterdam. We have been working at De Brakke Grond for the past week. Tomorrow's wandering as an assemblage will be open for a human public. People call it a performance although, we see it more like a new event, an event that is part of the nexus in the process of the decolonisation of the body. We are very excited about tomorrow's event. This excitement leads us to discuss the concept of the 'limit' regarding our current practice. Esther and me sit near the window. The sun is shining, making our skin roused by the warm and delightful contact. "What is the limit of our assemblage?" "The limit is not a fixed threshold, like a point, or a destination. The limit is rather, a vibrant attractor or a connector that must be experimented with, as to create lively cartographies of how much our assemblage can take." "What does it do to the whole when our walking ping pongs between different speeds of walking? How can we measure the intensity of speed within stillness? Where lays the limit in the precarity of the structure when the tubes are seeking to escape the cubical form?" Our boxing match gets interrupted by my uncomfortably numb behind. The wood has been penetrating my bones slowly, slowly without me being consciously aware of it, until this instant, whereupon I look out of the window and see people running from the pouring rain. How didn't I notice the change in weather? The change in the weather influences our conversation tremendously. The chair directs my thoughts. The waiter interrupts the continuity of our conversation in the possibilities and the effects of the unnoticed gestures within our ecologies. "You guys want another drink?"

Total darkness. I'm heading to the tube, relying on my sense of space. A sense that has been

formed by a great amount of repetition. The slow walk, with Esther towards the tube after around one hour and thirty minutes since our first tilt of the day, has been repeated a dozens of times. I know where the tube is. My body knows. The confidence is there, but even, so this will be the first time this action will be executed in the dark. I grab the tube. Esther grabs the opposite tube. I know she does. I can sense her through the light vibrations of the molecules that are caused by the impact of her hand touching the aluminium tube. I pull the tube towards me, while Esther pulls the opposite tube in the adverse direction. Tube comes out. The sound that is being produced by our assemblage through our actions is being captured by another assemblage: microphones, mixing table, early recordings of our assemblage and Schne. All sounds are being generated live, in the instant through complex interactions and liaisons. A third assemblage that is affecting and is being affected by the two previous mentioned assemblages, is the assemblage that consist of several lamps, a mixing table, a computer and Katinka. The light is unexpected, like the sound, it is operating in a non-hierarchical complex system of cohabitation: an ecology. Our assemblage (a hundred-meter-long chain, twelve tubes, eight joints, Esther and me), the light assemblage and the sound assemblage are wandering and colliding repeatedly, producing various unexplored effects.

Two tubes are sticking out of the cubical form, wanting to breakout. Will it be possible to proceed: to continue with our wandering, to tilt? Darkness is fading out, blue light is appearing, shining exclusively on the far end wall of the space catching us in the middle. I walk slowly towards the end chunk of the chain, passing along Esther. She looks pass me, transversing me as if she didn't have to look at me to know where I am positioned in space. Her look is movement, speed, temperature. I grab the chain. The sound is loud, having a repetitive beat, a smoky beat mixed with drone sounds; a cosmological beat, attracting dwarf planets. Esther walks slowly, very slowly through the entanglements of chain, caressing the shackles with each movement. she disappears in the vastness of chain. I throw the chain over the tube and catch it on the other side, moving extremely slow. Is slowness a limit? Slowness is the unbearable in today's society. Moving slow is a technique, a practice directly linked to the process of the decolonisation of the body. I walk with the chain, following the path in between the stands. Tomorrow these stands will be full of people, bodies. I wonder how a human crowd will affect us, in which way. White light is shining directly on the big structure, catching it fully, making the shackles shine. Esther is back in my sights. This time she walks towards me. She trows her side of the chain over the aluminium tube. We are positioned on a line facing the structure. Lights are blue, sound disappears which makes the tension intolerable. Will we manage to tilt it? How will the structure behave? Simultaneously we pull the entangled chain towards us. I feel Esther wants to go, it is a telepathic communication we developed for the past one and a half years. Imagine moving as an assemblage for months with very little usage of

language. How can one predict the other's desire? How can one communicate entirely without the use of language? I hold the chain, firmly with my entire body, finding the point of balance. While I am struggling with the weight, Esther crosses the undefinable structure attentively, slowly, taking all her time. Is she teasing me? Is she demonstrating a certain power? Power in this case is impersonal, it is a search for the limit of interactions. Bodies manipulate things and things manipulate bodies. But how far can we go before the limit takes over? Esther finally reaches the other side. I pull until all the weight has crossed from my side to hers. I see her wrestling with the weight. I decide not to help her but watch the event unfold itself. I hold to my chain when suddenly the sound reappears. The sound of the beat, techno like beats enter our bodies, make our organs dance, feeling optimistic about the next tilt.

We are standing outside, in the rain. Igor and Esther are having a cigarette. "You guys are crazy! What a humble practice. Whats next for you guys?" "Thesis." I Reply.

Esther is asleep. The Baby, Compost, Little One is asleep. I listen to her snore. Waiting for her to wake me up in about five hours with her scratching. Blending with the sound of her snoring I can hear Igor's question: "What's next?" Why did I make that separation? Next is now. My thesis is today, my thesis is now. Compost's scratching is my thesis, the structure is my thesis, Igor is my thesis. Next is now. An agreement has been reached between all the elements that makes my body fall asleep, sleep is its result.

...

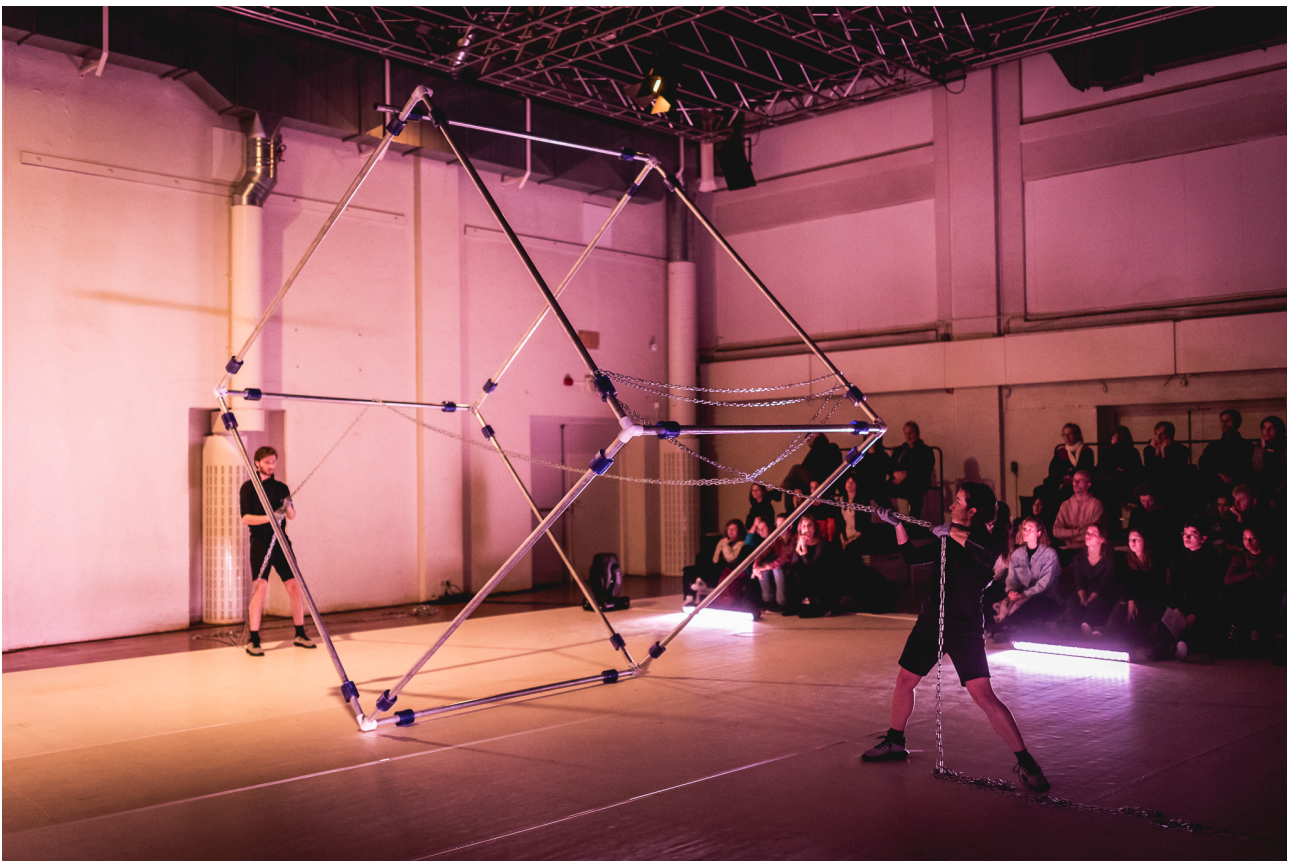


Figure 02 - These two photographs were captured during the second live performance of All Things Want To Run at De Brakke Grond Amsterdam.



Figure 03 - This photograph was captured by one of the audience members during the second live performance of All Things Want To Run at De Brakke Grond in Amsterdam and shared as a story on Instagram.

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