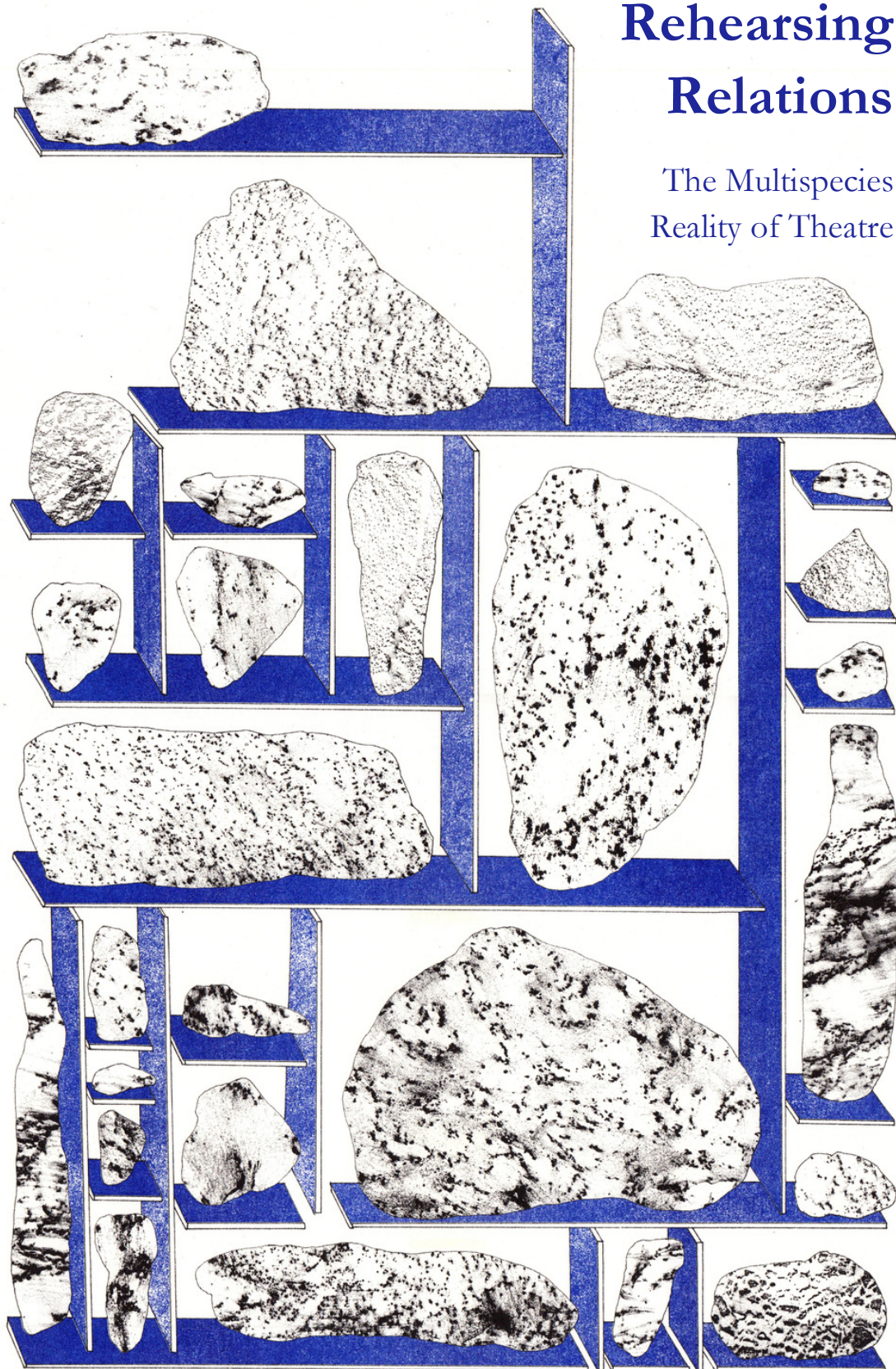


# Rehearsing Relations

The Multispecies  
Reality of Theatre



Mélanie Coore 25/25

Babette Kalker  
MA Thesis Contemporary Theatre,  
Dance and Dramaturgy  
Utrecht University

*Rehearsing Relations*  
*The Multispecies Reality of Theatre*

Babette Kalker

6927157

MA Thesis

Contemporary Theatre, Dance and Dramaturgy

Utrecht University

Supervisor: Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink

Second Reader: Laura Karreman

April 2021

15.398 words

Cover illustration: 'Formation' by Mélanie Corre, 2020

“[Here] lies a beautiful opportunity to respect the planet in the way the ancient Greeks defined respect – which was to “look again”. Indeed the time is very much here to look again – and in doing so, to begin putting the world back together.”<sup>1</sup>

- Gary Ferguson

---

<sup>1</sup> Gary Ferguson, *Eight Master Lessons of Nature: What nature teaches us about living well in the world* (London: Doubleday, 2019): xvii.

## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the ecological contribution of the performing arts with regards to changing our current anthropocentric ethos towards a multispecies one. The time we live in, called ‘the Anthropocene’, is defined by the irreversible changes humans have made to the natural cycle of the earth, which include global warming and the sixth extinction event. The anthropocentric ethos, the reigning ethos of this contemporary epoch, implicates that in most societies, human culture, wellbeing and wealth is prioritized over having sustainable relations with other-than-human species. Inter-human relations are lived and embodied with attention and care, whereas our relations with other-than-human species, cultures and matters are often neglected, disrespected and merely organised for human profit and resources. The disconnection between kinds has led to a tyranny of mankind, which has allowed people to exploit, destroy and systemically disrespect their nonhuman co-inhabitants of this planet. Following gender scholar Esther Jansen, this thesis explains the need to change towards a ‘multispecies ethos’, in order to change the destructive course of the Anthropocene and move towards a sustainable future and argues that theatre can contribute to making this move. For moving towards a multispecies ethos, this thesis proposes the need to gain what I call *relational attentiveness*: we need to become able to attentively perceive (physical and cultural) human/nonhuman co-presence and relationality. I argue that *relational attentiveness* can be gained through the embodied experience of the performing arts. In principle, theatre is about paying full-body attention; theatre audiences attentively participate in and perceive their here-and-now circumstances, through both cognitive interpretation and sensory stimulation. When aligned with ecology, audiences can be stimulated to attentively experience and physically (re)acquaint with the multispecies relational here-and-now of the performance. While experiencing a performative artwork, human audiences can ‘rehearse relations’: the ‘audience-witness’ can practice with embodying a multispecies ethos. To support this argument, this thesis analyses three performative artworks – *Als we wortelen* by Naomi Steijger, *Ice Watch* by Olafur Eliasson and *Ruup* by Birgit Öigus – that all create embodied ecological experiences of human/nonhuman encounters. Through these case studies, this thesis will examine theatre’s potentiality to stimulate *relational attentiveness* and thus to contribute to moving towards a multispecies ethos.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Firstly, I want to thank my supervisor Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink. Thank you for your guidance, your honest feedback, your very helpful associations and personal thoughts on the subject. But most of all, I want to truly thank you for your kindness, patience and attentiveness during this entire process.

I also want to thank my dear friends, family and love, who have been with me during this pandemic. Even though writing a thesis in a pandemic is an isolated process, I have never felt lonely.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>7</b>
0.1. METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	10
<b>CHAPTER 1 TOWARDS A MULTISPECIES ETHOS: FROM ANTHROPOCENTRISM, TO NEW MATERIALISM AND BEYOND</b>	<b>13</b>
1.1 THE SPECIES OF MAN: AN ANTHROPOCENTRIC ETHOS	14
1.2 WITNESSING A MORE-THAN-HUMAN WORLD: FROM ANTHROPOCENTRISM TO NEW MATERIALISM	17
1.3 RELATIONAL ATTENTIVENESS	20
<b>CHAPTER 2 THE AUDIENCE-WITNESS: WITNESSING, RELATIONALITY AND EMBODIMENT IN THE THEATRE</b>	<b>24</b>
2.1 THEATRE, WITNESSING, EMBODIMENT	25
2.2 THEATRE, THING-POWER, RELATIONALITY	29
2.3 THEATRE, DISCOMFORT, ETHOS	31
<b>CHAPTER 3 (DIS)HARMONIZING WITH NATURE</b>	<b>34</b>
3.1 ‘ALS WE WORTELEN’ BY NAOMI STEIJGER, 2017	35
3.2 ‘ICE WATCH’ BY OLAFUR ELLASSON, 2015	39
3.3 ‘RUUP’ BY BIRGIT ÖIGUS, 2015	43
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>50</b>

## INTRODUCTION

The time we live in can be described by the term ‘the Anthropocene’. The Anthropocene is defined by the irreversible changes humans have made to the natural cycle of the earth. In a lecture about this contemporary epoch, philosopher Donna Haraway states that the actions of people “have changed the planet forever and for everyone” – and many of these changes have been very harmful.<sup>2</sup> The era of the Anthropocene entails – amongst many other environmental disasters – what is called ‘the sixth extinction event’: this describes a rapid decrease of biodiversity caused by the activities of humans that “eliminate the habitats of millions of species in all corners of the world”, as gender scholar Esther Jansen describes.<sup>3</sup> For example, from June 2019 until May 2020, the forests of Australia were burning, continuously, as a result of drought and land reclamation. Approximately 18.800.000 hectares of the forest were destroyed, and 3.000.000.000 animals died from which some of them are now extinct. These numbers are dazzling, the losses beyond our imagination. What struck me was that most of the media attention at that time was still focused on the 445 deaths of people due to smoke inhalation.<sup>4</sup>

People relate to people: we care for other people, we emphasize with other people, we pay attention to other people. We attentively perceive the species of “Man” and have built our societies upon the relations within this kind. This exclusive, human-only-oriented attitude is what is often called “anthropocentric” (hence, the denomination of the ‘Anthropocene’): this concept describes how the human (in Greek “anthropos”) and the relations between humans are central within our daily conceptions. Our cities, values, habits and economies are designed to maintain inter-human connection, justice and wellbeing.

Yet, our relations with other-than-human species, cultures and matters are currently very often neglected, disrespected and designed for human profit and resources – which also caused the Australian bushfires. Anthropocentrism makes us pay attention to other people and their wellbeing, whereas our relations with other-than-human species – with animals, plants, fungi, bacteria, rocks or other natural matters – seem to be designed on systemic apathy, exploitation and short-term profit. Climate crisis can be viewed as an ethical, relational problem. In my opinion, not global warming or the sixth extinction event, but the disconnection between kinds is

---

<sup>2</sup> Lecture by Donna Haraway, ““Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene: Staying with the Trouble”, Anthropocene: Arts of Living on a Damage”, by *Studio Olafur Eliasson*, DOI: <https://vimeo.com/200992946>. Website consulted on April 2, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Esther Fiona Jansen, *S/Cenic Encounters: Towards a Multispecies Ethos for the Anthropocene*. Master Thesis Gender Studies (Utrecht: Utrecht University, 2019): 6-7.

<sup>4</sup> BBC News, “Australia Bushfires: Hundreds of deaths linked to smoke, inquiry hears”, published on May 26, 2020. DOI: [https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-52804348#:~:text=Smoke%20from%20the%20massive%20bushfires,Tasmania%20told%20tht%20Royal%20Commission](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-52804348#:~:text=Smoke%20from%20the%20massive%20bushfires,Tasmania%20told%20tht%20Royal%20Commission.). Website consulted on April 7, 2021.

the real issue that defines our current climate crisis; global warming and the sixth extinction event are symptoms.

If people would be more-than-human connected, the climate crisis would not be as severe as is currently so. We know that the icecaps are melting and that sea levels are rising due to climate change; we know that animal species are getting extinct due to the dominance of mankind. However, because most of us do not feel connected with icecaps, because most of us are not involved in caring relationships with cows, we have not been able to truly empathise with the grandiosity of the events of climate crisis. In her book *When Species Meet* (2008), Donna Haraway argues that true connection and empathy comes forth through touch, through physical involvement with one another.<sup>5</sup> In our anthropocentric societies, where almost everything revolves around inter-humanness, there is little to no room to physically or emotionally acquaint with other-than-human species, matters and cultures in an equal way; to learn to actively engage with them. We have the numbers that enable us to learn about the magnitude of ecological issues; however, we lack embodied connection with the other-than-human victims of climate crisis. Knowing is just a cognitive act, but to truly comprehend, the full body has to attend; climate crisis is a multi-layered problem and thus demands a multi-layered approach.

In this thesis, I will argue that the performing arts can attain this multi-layered-ness, through including the senses, including the body in an ecological experience of more-than-human presence. In his book *Performance & Ecology: What can Theatre do?* (2018), theatre scholar Carl Lavery argues that the ecological contribution of theatre does not lie in merely sharing information, but in creating ‘ecological experiences’: “The objective here is not to communicate environmental information but to produce ecological experience, to actualise ‘new ways of attending and perceiving’.”<sup>6</sup> Lavery argues that during these ‘ecological experiences’, as an addition to our scientific discoveries and facts about ecological transgression, people can acquaint themselves with also physically perceiving the presence of other-than-human cultures.<sup>7</sup> In this thesis, like Lavery, I aim to forefront the need for embodied ecological experiences; of physical, sensory understandings with regards to our ecological situation, as an addition to the informational knowledge we have about global warming and the sixth extinction event. The performative arts can create such embodied experiences through both corporeal and cognitive address. The embodied ecological experience might be of the essence for actually changing our relational attitude with regards to nonhumans from *using-for* to *living-with*.

---

<sup>5</sup> Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008): 36.

<sup>6</sup> Carl Lavery, *Performance and Ecology: What can theatre do?* (London: Routledge, 2018): 84.

<sup>7</sup> Lavery, *Performance and Ecology*, 81.



As I argued above, I approach the climate crisis as a relational crisis, defined by the lack of human attention to other-than-human species. In order to change the current course of ecological destruction, we must “learn to pay attention” to “species interdependence”, as Haraway argues.<sup>8</sup> Theatre is essentially a space of attention. A performative artwork invites physical and cognitive participation by enhancing the here-and-now-situation and the presence of everyone and -thing that lives in it. In contemporary performance, more and more often, other-than-human things are positioned as matters of attention, are made ‘actants’ – in the words of Jane Bennett.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, theatre can be a medium in which human audiences can practice with reinventing their attentiveness and receptivity for other-than-humans and their relations with them, can attentively explore a sense of being physically co-present with nonhuman actants. They can *rehearse relations*, as the title of this thesis suggests.

In her thesis *S/Cenic Encounters: Towards a Multispecies Ethos for the Anthropocene* (2019), gender scholar Esther Jansen argues that, in order to slow down the current course of the climate crisis, we need to become able to “live our relations differently” and argues that this can be accomplished by changing our current anthropocentric ethos into a ‘multispecies ethos’.<sup>10</sup> Our *ethea* (plural definition of ‘ethos’) shape the way we perceive, care for and relate to our surroundings. With proposing this change of ethos, Jansen advocates the need for an inclusive, more-than-human relational attitude through which humans can become able to co-exist with other-than-humans attentively, to respect and connect with their multispecies world.<sup>11/12</sup> In this thesis, I will adopt Jansen’s proposal of moving towards a ‘multispecies ethos’ and analyse the potential of the performing arts to contribute to this change.

In order to do so, I focus on two elements that I approach to be central in our ecological crisis: the lack of *embodied* knowledge about our other-than-human co-inhabitants of this planet, and the current disharmonious human-nonhuman *relationality*. I will demonstrate that through the performing arts, audiences can engage with both issues; during an intensified here-and-now experience that is a performance, spectators can be stimulated to attentively perceive their multispecies relational reality through their senses, as well as through interpretation. This thesis will argue that the ecological contribution of theatre thus lies in its potential to stimulate

---

<sup>8</sup> Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 4/19.

<sup>9</sup> Jane Bennett, “The Force of Things: Steps toward an Ecology of Matter,” *Political Theory* (Vol. 32, No. 3, June 2004): 355.

<sup>10</sup> Jansen, *S/Cenic Encounters*, 14.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 90-91.

<sup>12</sup> Jansen’s term ‘multispecies’, I interpret as a description of all human and other-than-human organisms, animals and natural matters. In one of my case studies in the third chapter of this thesis, I analyse the physical co-presence of humans and ice; the latter, I also approach as a ‘species’, through the understanding that the term ‘multispecies’ is also describing natural matters as animated beings, worthy of respect, empathy, autonomy and justice.

audiences to attentively experience the physical co-presence of humans and other-than-humans, to witness our multispecies reality, to rehearse relations. My central research question will be:

*Can embodied experiences of more-than-human relationality during a performance contribute to moving towards a multispecies ethos?*

## 0.1

### Methodology and Theoretical Framework

Throughout this thesis, I will centralise the two before-mentioned elements of *relationality* and *embodiment*. Thus, firstly, in this thesis I address the *relational* crisis of the disconnection (and consequently of the apathy and disrespect) of humans with regards their more-than-human world. Secondly, I will argue that in order to truly feel the urge to change the way we relate to this more-than-human world, we need to gain *embodied* understandings of our ecological situation. I will argue that for moving towards a multispecies ethos, we need to gain what I call *relational attentiveness*. With this concept, I aim to combine the elements of embodiment and relationality; the concept of *relational attentiveness* describes a more-than-human relational attitude that comes to the fore through an embodied sense of multispecies co-presence and interdependence. I will research if *relational attentiveness* can be gained through experiencing the performing arts.

However, before I arrived at the concept of *relational attentiveness*, I firstly researched the concept of *ethos*, and more specifically, the ‘multispecies’ one, in the first chapter of this thesis. The principal authors discussed in this analysis are gender scholar Esther Jansen, and philosophers Deborah Bird Rose and Thom van Dooren. Like Jansen, Rose and Van Dooren also argue that people should move towards what they call a ‘more-than-human’ ethos, in their article “Encountering a More-than-Human World: Ethos and the Arts of Witness” (2017). Comparable to Haraway, they argue that only through paying attention – which they call *witnessing* – to other-than-human species, we can change our relations with them and eventually our ethos.<sup>13</sup> Rose and Van Dooren’s concept of *witnessing* describes an embodied act of paying attention to one’s surroundings and one’s relations with these surroundings; a full-body participatory and attentive activity with regards to one’s physical here-and-now.<sup>14</sup> Inspired by their theory on

---

<sup>13</sup> Deborah Bird Rose and Thom van Dooren, “Encountering a More-than-Human World: Ethos and the Arts of Witness”, in *The Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities*, edited by Ursula K. Heise, Jon Christensen and Michelle Nieman, 120-128 (New York: Routledge, 2017): 122.

<sup>14</sup> Rose and Van Dooren, “Encountering a More-than-Human World”, 125.

*witnessing*, I formulated the concept of *relational attentiveness* and recognize this as an embodied consciousness we need for changing our ethos towards a multispecies one.

For further explaining this more-than-human attentiveness, I will tap into the new materialist approach: a philosophy that advocates the agency and power of all matter, human and nonhuman. The most important scholar used to explain this new materialist attitude is philosopher Jane Bennett. In the conclusion of the first chapter, I will connect this new materialist, more-than-human attitude with the ecological necessity of embodied comprehension, of *relational attentiveness*.

For changing the way we live multispecies relations, we need to truly and entirely *witness* our multispecies surroundings: we need to touch, smell and be physically and attentively co-present. Early on in my research, I recognized a connection between the concept of *witnessing* and the attitude of theatre audiences; both can be defined by a full-body participatory activity of paying attention to one's surroundings, to co-presence. In the second chapter, titled 'The Audience-Witness', I therefore analyse different theories from theatre and performance studies on participatory audiences – which I will connect with the concept of *witnessing*, on co-presence – which I will analyse through the concept of *relationality*, and on whole-body audience-experience – which I will describe as *embodied*. Through these analyses, I aim to demonstrate that performative artworks, when aligned with our ecological reality, have the potential to make their audiences *witness* their more-than-human surroundings and might help their audiences to gain *relational attentiveness*. The main authors discussed in this chapter are theatre scholars Jacques Rancière, Josephine Machon and Carl Lavery.

This second chapter will function as a steppingstone from which I will analyse three performative artworks in the third and last chapter of this thesis. Chapter 3 will discuss three case studies: one audio-guided performance-walk and two spatial performative installations. The first artwork, the audio-guided performance-walk, is made by Dutch theatre maker Naomi Steijger and is called *Als we wortelen* (2017). In this performance, the audience was guided into a forest and could learn about the communication systems of trees and plants, about their rhythms and ways of living, about the culture of the forest. They gain this knowledge, not only through information, but also through the experience of physical co-presence and sensory stimulation. The second artwork is *Ice Watch* (2015) by Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson. In Paris, during the UN Climate Change Conference in 2015, Eliasson placed twelve giant, approximately two by two meters, blocks of ice on the square adjacent to the building this conference was held. These blocks of ice were collected in the seas of Greenland, now standing in Paris. The citizens could touch the ice, could feel and see them disappear. With this work of art, Eliasson confronts his audience with

global warming and human-nonhuman relations in an embodied way: he presents the process of melting ice caps on a material and sensory level, as well as on a political level given the context of the UN Climate Change Conference. The third and last artwork discussed is *Rump* (2015) by Estonian artist Birgit Õigus. This artwork consists of three 3-meter wide wooden megaphones, placed in the Estonian forest. These megaphones amplify the sounds of the forest; people can enter the megaphones, which allows them to take time to attentively listen to and perceive their natural surroundings.

In this thesis, I explore the ecological contribution of these performative works through theories discussing the medium of ‘theatre’. Even though these three artworks do not clearly define as theatre, they are suitable for theatre analyses, as they all urge their audiences to *do* something with their bodies, to participate through touch, sound or movement; they set in motion a sensory attentiveness with regards to one’s here-and-now circumstances – a participatory attentiveness we know from the theatre. These case studies can thus be approached through the theoretical framework based on theatre theories.

All three artworks position their audiences as ‘witnesses’ of their more-than-human circumstances and their own position in it; they urge them to look ecological reality in the eye by confronting them with current and/or possible future relations with other-than-human matters, species and cultures. In the concluding chapter of this thesis, I will grasp back to the concept of *relational attentiveness*, analyse how this might have been gained by the audiences of *Als we wortelen*, *Ice Watch* and *Rump*. Through these final analyses, I will try to answer the central research question of this thesis.

## Chapter 1

### TOWARDS A MULTISPECIES ETHOS

#### From Anthropocentrism, to New Materialism and Beyond

The denomination of the Anthropocene has a fairly negative note, as it mostly describes how the human species has violated the earth through their consumerist and capitalistic systems, through merely using other-than-human species as ‘natural resources’ instead of co-existing with them harmoniously. “The asymmetrical power relations [between humans and other-than-humans] have resulted in the massive transformation of the Earth through industrialized agriculture, resource extraction, energy production, and petrochemicals”, Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin write in their essay “Art & Death: Lives Between the Fifth Assessment & the Sixth Extinction” (2015).<sup>15</sup> Davis and Turpin write that “[i]f we are to learn to adapt in this world, we will need to do so with all the other creatures; seeing from their perspective is central to re-organizing our knowledge and perceptions.”<sup>16</sup> Or, in other words, humans should learn to connect and empathize with the cultures of other-than-human species, with their ways of growing, living and communicating in order to sustainably co-exist with them through gratitude, interdependency and reciprocity. In this chapter, I will argue that in order to move towards a more sustainable future, the (western) human has to become morally reacquainted with other-than-human species; the more-than-human natural world has to become integrated into our understandings of moral responsibility.

This chapter begins with analysing the concept of ‘ethos’. As this thesis argues for the necessity for moral inclusion of other-than-human species, organisms and matters, I turn to the eco-critical debate that advocates that we should replace the current western anthropocentric ethos for a ‘multispecies’ or ‘more-than-human’ one. To further elaborate on this new ethos, the philosophy of ‘new materialism’ will be explained. This contemporary strand in philosophy and cultural theory explains how all matter, human and other-than-human, is agential and therefore to be treated as equally important. As a consequence of this new materials attitude, this chapter subsequently explores the possibilities for what I call *relational attentiveness*. By paying attention to our (currently often troubling) relations with other-than-human matters (which we do not very

---

<sup>15</sup> Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin, “Art & Death: Lives Between the Fifth Assessment & the Sixth Extinction”, in *Art in the Anthropocene. Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies*, edited by Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin, 4-22 (London: Open Humanities Press, 2015): 7.

<sup>16</sup> Davis and Turpin, “Art & Death”, 13.

often do because of our anthropocentric attitudes), we might become enabled to see possibilities of changing these relations and of moving towards a more sustainable future.

## 1.1

### The Species of Man: an Anthropocentric Ethos

Firstly, in order to write about a ‘multispecies ethos’, I will shortly discuss a few theories that describe the concept of ‘ethos’. The Greek word ‘ethos’ is often translated as ‘character’: traditionally, ethos was perceived and understood to be practiced through a profound sense of ‘right’ or ‘wrong’.<sup>17</sup> Following authors Deborah Bird Rose and Thom van Dooren, I will refute the idea of being naturally born with such a moral compass, by arguing that ethea (the plural definition of ethos) are cultural. In their article “Encountering a More-than-Human World: Ethos and the Arts of Witness” (2017), Rose and Van Dooren argue that ethea develop through narratives, traditions and times, and thus should be capable of change.<sup>18</sup>

‘Behaviour’ does not stand on its own; this concept only exists in relation to others. Through different theories discussing ethos, I will thus argue that ethea are *relational* phenomena, circumstantially developed attitudes towards one’s self and surroundings (human and nonhuman). Ethea shape the ways through which we perceive one another, decide how we relate to one another. The notion of an ethos being an attitude with regards to oneself and others is described in the article “Ethos, World View, and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols” (1996), written by anthropologist Clifford Geertz. In this article, Geertz argues that an ethos is an ‘underlying attitude’: “A people’s ethos is the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood; it is the underlying attitude towards themselves and their world that life reflects”.<sup>19</sup> As Geertz describes, an attitude never exists independently; it always entails a relationship-with. As I described in the introduction chapter, relationships-with or attitudes-towards are either lived attentively or not; in each ethos, some entities move about in the area of attention and care and some do not. Our ‘underlying attitudes’ – in the words of Geertz – and thus attention and sense of care and justice, are reserved for only the entities that we feel connected to, that we recognize as ‘our own’.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Nicholas Ridout, *Theatre & Ethics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009): 9.

<sup>18</sup> Rose and Van Dooren, “Encountering a More-than-Human World”, 122.

<sup>19</sup> Clifford Geertz, “Ethos, World View, and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols”, in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1996): 127.

<sup>20</sup> Geertz, “Ethos, World View, and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols”, 127.

This idea of ethea dividing different entities in terms of ‘our own’ and ‘others’, is described in the article “Encountering a More-than-Human World: Ethos and the Arts of Witness” (2017), written by philosophers Deborah Bird Rose and Thom van Dooren. They argue that ethea define groups, kinds, species: “an ethos is what makes a group or “kind” distinct [...]”<sup>21</sup> Their theory describes the concept of ethos as a shared understanding of moral responsibility to common group-members; they argue that ethea therefore define the distinctiveness of a species.<sup>22</sup> Subsequently, as ethea can differ between cultures, species and times, Rose and Van Dooren refute the presupposition of an ethos being something natural, a pre-installed moral compass that gives guidance towards right or wrong behaviour. They write that “ethos is not an essence”; it is bound to groups and times and develops through relating to one another.<sup>23</sup>

Today, in many (western) societies, anthropocentric ethea prevail. Through these ethea, the group of ‘humans’ gets morally separated and elevated from another group that is often labelled as ‘nature’. In his book *World Ethics and Climate Change: From International to Global Justice* (2010), Paul G. Harris describes that the “communitarian conceptions of ethics and justice largely restrict the scope to fellow citizens.”<sup>24</sup> In the reigning anthropocentric ethos, our sense of moral responsibility only goes as far as fellow humans: we are attentive to, listen to and care for other people; our legal justice systems only apply to people; we would not use, exploit or destroy people as we use, exploit and destroy other-than-human species, organisms and matters. For the last century, the greater part of mankind has been abusing other-than-human species for their own benefits, only respecting the needs and culture of their ‘own kind’.

In her thesis *S/Cenic Encounters: Towards a Multispecies Ethos for the Anthropocene* (2019), gender scholar Esther Jansen researches the anthropocentric narrative that divides the ‘kinds’ of “Man” and “Nature”. She describes the relationship between ‘Man’ and ‘Nature’ as morally disconnected and imbalanced, and argues that this disconnection is co-causing the sixth extinction event and global warming.<sup>25</sup> Aligning with Rose and Van Dooren’s theory on ethea dividing groups from one another, Jansen proposes a new ethos, a ‘multispecies’ one, in which the hierarchical dualism of ‘Man’ versus ‘Nature’ is deconstructed towards a harmonized relationship of co-existence and reciprocity.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Rose and Van Dooren, “Encountering a More-than-Human World”, 121.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Paul G. Harris, *World Ethics and Climate Change: From International to Global Justice* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010): 4.

<sup>25</sup> Jansen, *S/Cenic Encounters*, 2.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 14.

Like Jansen, also botanist and poet Robin Wall Kimmerer advocates a more-than-human perspective, through which other-than-human beings are also recognized as worthy of moral attention and justice. In her book *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (2013), Kimmerer writes that a mere inter-human moral attitude is embedded within our western languages. She particularly writes about the English language, and about how the English language ascribes ‘animacy’ and ‘inanimacy’ to humans and nonhumans. She writes that “[i]n English, you are either a human [s/he] or a thing [it].”<sup>27</sup> However, in Native American, indigenous languages – such as Potawatomi, Hopi or Seminole – all natural things are addressed as ‘she/he/they’; humans, plants, animals, water and mountains are natural creations, and therefore to be perceived as equal beings. Everything that is curated and designed by humans (a wooden table, a wool sweater, a metal bridge) is described as ‘it’.<sup>28</sup> Kimmerer argues that the dualism in the English language between animate (human) and inanimate (other-than-human) species reveals the human arrogance that exempts them from the moral inclusion of other-than-human beings: “The arrogance of English is that the only way to be animate, to be worthy of respect and moral concern, is to be human,” Kimmerer writes.<sup>29</sup> She argues that humans should think of other-than-human species to be animate as well, to be respected as neighbours, as subjects, as teachers, and therefore to be taken care of.<sup>30</sup> Kimmerer writes that a new perspective on more-than-human animacy “could lead us to whole new ways of living in the world, [...] a world with a democracy of species, not a tyranny of one – with moral responsibility to water and wolves, and with a legal system that recognizes that standing of other species.”<sup>31</sup>

In his book *Theatre & Ethics* (2009), theatre scholar Nicholas Ridout asks: “Can we create a [social, political, moral] system that everyone will agree with?”<sup>32</sup> Aligning with Kimmerer’s theory on more-than-human animacy, the word ‘everyone’ should refer to all natural beings on this planet. By adapting our ideas of animate or inanimate species, of beings that are worth attention and respect, new relations, new ethea and therefore new cultural and societal systems could emerge in which humans would gratefully carry moral responsibility for ‘everyone’. The next section will further elaborate on the proposed multispecies ethos, by explaining the philosophy of ‘new materialism’.

---

<sup>27</sup> Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2013): 56.

<sup>28</sup> Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 56.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 57-58.

<sup>32</sup> Ridout, *Theatre & Ethics*, 13.



## 1.2

### **Witnessing a More-than-Human World: from Anthropocentrism to New Materialism**

In order to arrive at a more in-depth understanding of a multispecies ethos, I now turn to the philosophical discourse called ‘new materialism’ – especially focussing on the theories of new materialist philosopher Jane Bennett. New materialism advocates a more-than-human perspective, comparable to the theories of the scholars discussed in the previous section. In this section, I will deepen my argument of the urgency of multispecies attention, as new materialists advocate the acknowledgement of more-than-human presence, autonomy and power. They aim to explicate the power of more-than-human ‘things’: new materialists examine and acknowledge the agency and vital energies of all matter – human and non-human, organic and artificial. They steer away from the anthropocentric attitude that allows other-than-human matter to be exploited, to be seen as ‘objects’ that can either serve or disrupt human activities. “At base, the new materialism takes seriously the idea that all matter is agential and that agency is distributed across and among materials in relation”, theatre scholar Rebecca Schneider describes in her article “New Materialisms and Performance Studies” (2015).<sup>33</sup>

One of the leading scholars within the new materialist discourse is philosopher Jane Bennett. In both her book *Vibrant Matter* (2010) and her article “The Force of Things: Steps toward an Ecology of Matter” (2004), Bennett discusses the agency of matter, of ‘things’. In her theories, she prefers the term ‘things’ instead of ‘objects’ to denominate matter, as an ‘object’ is commonly perceived as in a hierarchical lower position than a ‘subject’, which commonly only refers to humans.<sup>34</sup> Through the denomination of ‘things’, Bennett includes all matter, our entire material surroundings (human and nonhuman), and with that, aims to decentralise the human and to equalize the relationship. She argues that all things are a source of energy – “matter-energy”, she calls it – as all matter, human and non-human, is part of active ecosystems in which energies are continuously exchanged between things.<sup>35</sup> In the earth’s ecosystems, not only humans, but other things have the power to do, influence, create and act as well.<sup>36</sup> Bennett therefore describes all things as ‘actants’: “Unlike the term “actor”, an actant can be either human or nonhuman: it is that which *does* something, has sufficient coherence to perform actions, produce effects, and alter situations.”<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> Rebecca Schneider, “New Materialisms and Performance Studies”, *TDR: The Drama Review* (Vol. 59, No. 4, Winter 2015): 7.

<sup>34</sup> Bennett, “The Force of Things”, 351.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 349.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 355.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

Comparable to Kimmerer's theory on 'animacy' and 'inanimacy', Bennett, in her book *Vibrant Matter* (2010), describes that the anthropocentric attitude divides "the world into dull matter (it, things) and vibrant life (us, beings)".<sup>38</sup> As the title of this book suggests, Bennett does not only acknowledge that 'life' is 'vibrant', but wants to raise awareness for 'vibrant matter' as well.<sup>39</sup> In her article "The Force of Things: Steps toward an Ecology of Matter" (2004), Bennett explains that we can include 'thing-power' and 'matter-energy' into our everyday awareness, and explains how to do so by giving an example of herself actively relating to 'trash'. Trash is essentially a collection of matters that lost their ability to serve the human culture. When things are in a garbage bag, humans have decided that these things have lost their human purpose, and therefore their right to exist.<sup>40</sup> 'Trash' is an anthropocentric concept, and Bennett argues that through a change in perspective, these 'useless objects' can regain their agency through being perceived as 'things', relating to and exchanging energy with other things. They will then transform from 'inanimate' to 'animate', from 'dull' to 'vibrant'.<sup>41</sup>

In *Vibrant Matter*, Bennett also discusses 'thing-power' and connects this concept with ecology and climate crisis. She argues that the lack of thing-power-receptivity causes hierarchical and environmentally damaging relations between humans and nonhumans.<sup>42</sup> The value, fragility and necessity of thing-power are often neglected, which allows humans to mistreat their environment.

Why advocate the vitality of matter? Because my hunch is that the image of dead or thoroughly instrumentalized matter feeds human hubris and our earth-destroying fantasies of conquest and consumption. It does so by preventing us from detecting (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling) a fuller range of the nonhuman powers circulating around and within human bodies. These material powers, which can aid or destroy, enrich or disable, ennoble or degrade us, in any case call for our attentiveness, or even "respect" [...].<sup>43</sup>

New materialism invites attentiveness to, care for and insight into the matters that shape our planet, which could help with opening up the anthropocentric ethos. In the quotation above, Bennett advocates for a greater receptivity for thing-power, for a more attentive relational attitude with regards to other-than-human things.

A strategy to bring this change of a more-than-human perspective about, is staging. In the trash-example, Bennett envisions a collection of things, that could be defined as 'trash' – a glove,

---

<sup>38</sup> Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (London: Duke University Press, 2010): vii.

<sup>39</sup> Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, viii.

<sup>40</sup> Bennett, "The Force of Things", 350.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 351.

<sup>42</sup> Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, viii.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., ix.

a pod, a rat, a cap and a stick – neatly staged in relation to one another on an asphalt platform in the sun, with her watching them.<sup>44</sup> When witnessed – in a context of active perception as opposed to a context of usage – these things will not be garbage anymore; instead, they are things that radiate in relation to one another and generate power: “each is shown to be in a relationship with the others, also with the sunlight and the street, and not simply with me, my vision, or my cultural frame. Here thing-power comes to the surface.”<sup>45</sup> In her book *Vibrant Matter*, Bennett explains more explicitly that ‘thing-power’ cannot exist on its own and can only arise to the level of perceptivity when it is “interactive” with other things (human or nonhuman):

[The] efficacy or agency of [things] always depends on the collaboration, cooperation, or interactive interference of many bodies and force. A lot happens to the concept of agency once nonhuman things are figured less as social constructions and more as actors, and once humans themselves are assessed not as autonomous but as vital materialities.<sup>46</sup>

Bennett argues that agency, or thing-power, can only rise to the surface when it is perceived; the concept of agency is thus dependent on the communication of different parties. In other words, thing-power can only come to the fore through being attentively perceived, through co-presence, through *relationality* (one of the central elements throughout this entire thesis, as I proposed in the introduction chapter).

Philosophers Deborah Bird Rose and Thom van Dooren, also discussed in the previous section of this chapter, also speak about the ecological need for people to pay attention to other-than-human species. They argue that a ‘more-than-human’ ethos would imply an embodied attentiveness to other-than-human species. This attentiveness, they call ‘witnessing’.<sup>47</sup> Bennett’s advocates the need for thing-power-receptivity; in essence, Rose and Van Dooren aim to do the same through the activity of witnessing. Rose and Van Dooren describe the “arts of witness” as a participatory embodied practice being attentive to and consciously present in our more-than-human reality.<sup>48</sup> For them, witnessing is not merely looking, it is a multi-layered way of paying attention, of being present in the here-and-now and attentively perceiving this here-and-now. They argue that as a witness, one can become aware of human and more-than-human co-presence: “to witness is [...] to participate in the world in its *relational* becoming”, they write.<sup>49</sup> With this concept of *witnessing*, Rose and Van Dooren call for “the cultivation of attentiveness to,

---

<sup>44</sup> Bennett, “The Force of Things”, 350.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 351.

<sup>46</sup> Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 21.

<sup>47</sup> Rose and Van Dooren, “Encountering a More-than-Human World”, 122.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

the divers living beings and forms of liveliness that constitute our world.” – exactly what Bennett advocates as well.<sup>50</sup> They argue that through witnessing, we can learn to encounter and be attentively amongst other-than-human species, cultures and matters – or, if I may, to gain more-than-human ‘thing-power’-receptivity.

Through ‘witnessing’ our more-than-human world, we might become able to consciously participate in more-than-human interactions through which ‘thing-power’ can arise. Through participation, we meet, we acquaint, we learn, we communicate, we connect; what we can gain through acknowledging and connecting with other-than-human matters, species and cultures, I call *relational attentiveness*. In the next and last part of this chapter, I will further demonstrate my theory on *relational attentiveness* by further explaining the concepts of ‘relationality’ and ‘embodiment’.

### 1.3

#### **Relational Attentiveness**

In the introduction chapter, I stated that throughout this entire thesis, the concepts of ‘relationality’ and ‘embodiment’ will be placed as central for analysing the possibility of moving towards a multispecies ethos. In this section, I aim to bring connect these concepts, by demonstrating my concept of *relational attentiveness*. The concept of *relational attentiveness* – inspired by Rose and Van Dooren’s concept of ‘witnessing’ and Bennett’s concept of ‘thing-power’ – describes an attentive, embodied attitude towards the more-than-human, multispecies relational reality of our world.

To explain *relational attentiveness*, I will firstly discuss the element of ‘relationality’ more specifically. Aligning with the authors discussed in this chapter, with the concept of ‘relationality’, generally, I aim to present the fact that there should be no strict division (nor hierarchy) between human and nonhuman matters, as the condition of existence of all matters is relational. As Donna Haraway argues in her book *When Species Meet* (2008), we exist through inter-species relations that are the essence of our bodies as well as of our ecosystems; all living matter is dependent on each other’s attention, resilience and wellbeing.<sup>51</sup> A way to come to understand and see this interdependency is through acknowledging ‘thing-power’, as I explained in the last section on new materialism. Bennett describes that for thing-power to rise to the perceptible

---

<sup>50</sup> Rose and Van Dooren, “Encountering a More-than-Human World”, 120.

<sup>51</sup> Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 19.

surface, co-presence and interaction is of the essence.<sup>52</sup> Thus, in short, thing-power can only be perceived through the notion of relationality.

Secondly, within the concept of *relational attentiveness*, I analyse the part ‘attentiveness’ through the concept of ‘embodiment’. An embodied experience can be defined by a combination of cognitive interpretation and sensory stimulation, as Josephine Machon describes.<sup>53</sup> With their concept of witnessing, Rose and Van Dooren also describe the act of truly attending not merely as a cognitive act; it implies the full-body participation of simultaneously perceiving and interpreting the different thing-powers that define the here-and-now.<sup>54</sup>

Rose and Van Dooren express the necessity of approaching the move towards what they call a ‘more-than-human’ ethos through embodiment.<sup>55</sup> They argue that ethea are embodied phenomena and therefore not explainable through words.<sup>56</sup> An ethos is lived – or as Rose and Van Dooren argue, an ethos is “a way of being” – and should therefore be addressed through the multi-layered-ness of embodiment.<sup>57</sup> As I argued in the introduction chapter, if we are to change towards a multispecies ethos in which “we live our relations differently”, as Jansen describes, we need more than informational knowledge about ecosystems and relational dependencies.<sup>58</sup> We need *embodied knowledge* about our more-than-human *relational* reality in order to change our ethos, change our relations, change our “way of being”; we need to gain, incorporate and live *relational attentiveness*.<sup>59</sup> *Relational attentiveness* might have the potentiality to describe the profound and embodied multispecies consciousness and more-than-human relational attitude we need in order to change our anthropocentric ethos towards a multispecies one.

Thus, in sum, the concept of *relational attentiveness* revolves around the connection of the concepts of relationality and thing-power, and of embodiment and witnessing. I argue that people could gain *relational attentiveness* through witnessing the multispecies relational reality consisting of different co-present thing-power-generating matters. However, currently, this multispecies relational reality is disrupted, disconnected and dominated by the tyranny of mankind. Hence, if we were to gain *relational attentiveness* of our current human-nonhuman relations, we will most likely get confronted with a great deal of ethical discomfort. In *S/Cenic Encounters*, for ecological purposes, Jansen points out that we should embrace this discomfort: she argues that the narrative of the Anthropocene – the one that separates ‘Man’ from ‘Nature’, the one that allows a tyranny

---

<sup>52</sup> Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 21.

<sup>53</sup> Josephine Machon, “Watching, Attending, *Sense-Making*: Spectatorship in Immersive Theatres”, *JDCE* (2016; 4(1)): 46.

<sup>54</sup> Rose and Van Dooren, “Encountering a More-than-Human World”, 125.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Jansen, *S/Cenic Encounters*, 14.

<sup>59</sup> Rose and Van Dooren, “Encountering a More-than Human World”, 122.

of mankind – is one that needs to become ‘discomforted’.<sup>60</sup> In order to change, unsettling as it may be, Jansen calls for disturbance, discomfort, trouble.

My aim is to defamiliarize, and hence trouble, this story in order to imagine other ways to tell, and respond both the current mass extinction and climate disruptions, expanding the limits of the taken for granted ways with which we have learned to think. By questioning seemingly taken for granted notions of the “human” and “nature,” different ways of understanding ourselves, our relations with others, and the world at large, can open up. By rethinking the ways in which we read, see, understand, think, and live, the familiar can become *unheimlich* – less familiar – thus enriching the position from which we speak.<sup>61</sup>

Jansen is in fact describing what Donna Haraway terms ‘staying with the trouble’, in her eponymous book *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (2016). Haraway argues that we can push sustainable change through hard and troubling ecological confrontations of the Anthropocene. In her book, she discloses the ecological benefits of being morally troubled through knowledge about our current relations and the circumstances of the environment. This feeling of discomfort is exactly what people need, Haraway argues, in order to actually start changing here and now, instead of discussing the past or predicting possible future: “staying with the trouble requires learning to be truly present, not as a vanishing pivot between awful or edenic pasts and apocalyptic futures, but as mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings.”<sup>62</sup> Once we know, once we have been ‘truly present’ – or, in other words, once we have witnessed (i.e. perceived attentively with our entire bodies), we cannot un-know; with regards to our climate crisis, this means that one will ‘stay with the trouble’. This (moral) trouble urges one to change.

Now, the question remains: how to find ways to gain *relational attentiveness* in societies where every communication, system and daily routine is based on inter-humanness and mere people’s wellbeing, in societies where there is little to no room for equal inter-species encounters? There is a space in which people can be ‘truly present’, in which people are offered space to witness, in which people are enabled to escape from their anthropocentric reality for a while, to rehearse inter-species relations attentively, to practice the arts of witness. This space, when staged in a certain way, can be the theatre. The next chapter will argue that theatre, and in particular new materialist performance, can be a space for witnessing relations, for rehearsing other perspectives on inter-species relationality and for gaining *relational attentiveness*.

---

<sup>60</sup> Jansen, *S/Cenic Encounters*, 96.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>62</sup> Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (London: Duke University Press, 2016): 1.



Even though I have now brought the elements of ‘embodiment’ and ‘relationality’ together in the concept of *relational attentiveness*, I will again analyse them as separate in the second and third chapter, in which I will connect them with theories from theatre and performance studies and use them as tools through which I will analyse three case studies. In the concluding chapter of this thesis, I will analyse the potentiality of these case studies with regards to raising *relational attentiveness*.

## Chapter 2

### THE AUDIENCE-WITNESS

#### Witnessing, Relationality and Embodiment in the Theatre

The first chapter of this thesis proposed a change of people's ethos, from an anthropocentric towards a multispecies one, through gaining *relational attentiveness*. In order to become able to pursue this change, both anthropogenic climate crisis and our multi-species relational reality need to become tangible. Understandings gained through *relational attentiveness*, through witnessing thing-power, can transcend the layer of ecological information (that entail the dazzling numbers): "our practice of "becoming-witness" is a mode of responding to others that exceeds rational calculation, one that arrives through encounter, recognition, and an ongoing curiosity", Rose and Van Dooren write.<sup>63</sup> With regards to changing towards a multispecies ethos, I argue this embodied, multi-layered understanding about our more-than-human relational reality might be what is necessary.

In this chapter, I will argue that the performing arts can create here-and-now experiences through which spectators can be positioned as such witnesses, perceiving thing-power and multispecies co-presence in an embodied way. This chapter will argue that via witnessing, performing artworks can (re)acquaint their audiences with other-than-human matters, species and cultures, through which they might become able to reach a more tangible area from which they could begin to understand climate crisis and ecology.

To conclude, I will analyse theatre's potentiality to discomfort our anthropocentric ethos, to defamiliarize the human-nonhuman separation, as Jansen argues.<sup>64</sup> Performative art invites its spectators to witness their relational circumstances – which, in line with the ecological theme, can be ethically discomfiting. Theatre can make their audiences witness, to be 'truly present' in our (critical) ecological circumstances, which, according to Haraway, urges people to change.<sup>65</sup> The overall agenda of this chapter thus is to argue that theatre can contribute to moving towards a multispecies ethos.

---

<sup>63</sup> Rose and Van Dooren, "Encountering a More-than-Human World", 124.

<sup>64</sup> Jansen, *S/Cenic Encounters*, 14.

<sup>65</sup> Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 1.



## 2.1

### Theatre, Witnessing, Embodiment

A multispecies ethos requires *relational attentiveness*, as I have argued in the first chapter. I also argued that gaining *relational attentiveness* could be achieved through the activity of being *witness* with regards to our multispecies relational world – a concept of Rose and Van Dooren. They describe that “to witness is [...] to participate in the world in its *relational* becoming”.<sup>66</sup> They understand “becoming-witness” as a participatory act; a witness is an active and conscious presence of the lived moment.<sup>67</sup> The active, attentive and participatory attitude that the concept of witnessing describes, is one that is often explicitly practiced by theatre audiences. This adds, thus, to my argument that theatre may be a well suited place to practice *relational attentiveness*, to rehearse human-nonhuman relations and thus to exercise a multispecies ethos.

This section explains that (contemporary) theatre audiences are essentially witnesses. Contemporary performances – amongst which immersive theatre and performative installations – do not necessarily centre around the product of the maker anymore; they are often built on the here-and-now occurrence of participation, experience and gathering. This means that often in contemporary performance, the spectators cannot be perceived as mere art-consumers anymore: their presence, participation and interpretation have become integral to the performance; they are witnesses in the unique theatrical here-and-now.

One of the most important theatre scholars that describes the significance of the present and participatory spectator within contemporary performance, is Hans-Thies Lehmann. In his well-known book *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006), Lehmann describes that in more traditional theatre, the theatre text/writer used to be seen as the most important element/figure of the performance. In contemporary performance, as theatre makers began to experiment and test out the borders of theatre’s potentiality, the text lost its central position. Elements such as lighting, movement, sound, duration, location and audience participation were seen as elements that could be just as defining for the performance as text could be.<sup>68</sup> He argues that with the decentralisation of text, the necessity of fiction in the theatre became deconstructed as well: he argues that the experience of performative arts is often based on the real, here-and-now situation, and not on a fictive story anymore. “Theatre is emphasized as a situation, not as fiction.”<sup>69</sup>

As the text, the author and fiction resigned from their reigning positions, there was room to explore the theatrical element of ‘experience’, of the spectator more thoroughly. Karen Jürs-

---

<sup>66</sup> Rose and Van Dooren, “Encountering a More-than-Human World”, 125.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 124-125.

<sup>68</sup> Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006): 17.

<sup>69</sup> Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, 128.

Munby, the English translator of Lehmann's book and writer of the introduction, describes that because of these experiential-explorations, the practice of the performing arts made a "turn towards the audience".<sup>70</sup> She argues that "[t]he spectators are no longer just filling in the predictable gaps in the dramatic narrative, but are asked to become active witnesses who reflect on their own meaning-making [...]."<sup>71</sup>

Nevertheless, audiences are still often understood and theorized in the traditional sense of being observers of artistic products, as philosopher Jacques Rancière states in his book *The Emancipated Spectator* (2007). Rancière refutes this understanding of 'passive audiences' by arguing that we should understand theatre essentially as audience-participation, as audiences are always participatory and active through here-and-now attention and interpretation.<sup>72</sup> Like Lehmann with his theory on theatre being an emphasized situation, Rancière advocates for audiences to become 'emancipated' in the here-and-now of the performance, as the title of his book suggests. Rancière proposes a new way through which we look at audience attitudes, one through which the spectators "become active participants as opposed to passive voyeurs."<sup>73</sup> With the term 'participants', Rancière does not necessarily imply the physical involvement of audience members; he rather aims to describe an active attitude, an awareness of one's own presence and interpretative agency.

The spectator also acts, [...]. She observes, selects, compares, interprets. She links what she sees to a host of other things that she has seen on other stages, in other kinds of place. She composes her own poem with the elements of the poem before her.<sup>74</sup>

Comparable to these modes of thinking, in his article "Aural Acts: Theatre and the Phenomenology of Listening", theatre scholar George Home-Cook writes about theatre and attention. He argues that theatre is in essence "a motivator of attention".<sup>75</sup> He argues that in the theatre, audiences are positioned to actively pay attention. Theatre only exists because of the perceptive and attentive presence of audiences; how these perceptions are organised, is the art of the theatre-maker.

The authors above essentially describe audiences to be 'witnesses': through active interpretation, physical presence and here-and-now attention, theatre audiences adopt the

---

<sup>70</sup> Karen Jürs-Munby, "Introduction", *Postdramatic Theatre*, by Hans-Thies Lehmann (Oxon: Routledge, 2006): 5.

<sup>71</sup> Jürs-Munby, "Introduction", 6.

<sup>72</sup> Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator* (London, New York: Verso, 2011): 4.

<sup>73</sup> Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 4.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>75</sup> George Home-Cook, "Aural Acts: Theatre and the Phenomenology of Listening", in *Theatre Noise: The Sound of Performance*, edited by Lynne Kendrick and David Roesner (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011): 108.

participatory attitude that Rose and Van Dooren describe as “becoming-witness”.<sup>76</sup> In the first chapter, I explained that Rose and Van Dooren argue witnessing to be an ‘embodied’ activity; in order to witness the here-and-now, one has to be truly present, with their minds and bodies. The participatory, sensory and immersive traits of the theatre actively address the audience as witnesses, invite an ‘embodied’ attentiveness with regards to their here-and-now circumstances.

In her article, Machon describes the concept of ‘embodiment’ as a combination between the corporeal and the cerebral, as a simultaneity of sensory and interpretative stimulation.<sup>77</sup> She argues that the theatre experience – especially in immersive performance – is always an embodied one, as she approaches spectating as “a whole-body pursuit”.<sup>78</sup> She argues that theatre asks their spectators for “whole-body attendance”: “sharply focused visual and tactile perception combined with the haptic, peripheral appreciation of the space activates whole-body attendance and invites multi-layered comprehension”.<sup>79</sup> This ‘multi-layered comprehension’, which I call embodied understanding, is more than mere informational knowledge, as it also includes sensory perception of and physical presence within an environment. ‘Whole-body attendance’ enables us to comprehend complexity, to face the multi-layered-ness of some issues (such as climate crisis).

Home-Cook writes that “theatre invites us to attend ourselves attending.”<sup>80</sup> Theatre is not only about audiences witnessing the presented; it also stimulates audiences to reflect on their own position of ‘being-witness’, of being entirely present in an environment, of participating in the here-and-now of the performance. In other words, as an audience-witness, one becomes aware of their own physical and interpretative, “whole-body” attendance.

Considering theatre’s potentiality of producing attentive embodied experiences, theatre scholar Stephen Di Benedetto argues that the audience-witness can become able to experience true and profound changes of world-views.<sup>81</sup> In his book *The Provocation of the Senses in Contemporary Theatre* (2010), Di Benedetto researches the neurological effects of stimuli of the senses, how these can change neurological pathways and understandings and how this stimulation can occur in the theatre. He argues that theatre can create intense sensorial experiences and therefore has the potential to actively change its spectator’s perspectives:

Recent neuroscientific discoveries have proved that the brain is plastic and all sensations it experiences continually modify how it perceives the world. Theatrical

---

<sup>76</sup> Rose and Van Dooren, “Encountering a More-than-Human World”, 120.

<sup>77</sup> Machon, “Watching, Attending, Sense-Making”, 46.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Home-Cook, “Aural Acts”, 99.

<sup>81</sup> Stephen Di Benedetto, *The Provocation of the Senses in Contemporary Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 2010): x.

performance has the potential to change our experience of the world and therefore, the potential to change our ability to perceive the world in a new way.<sup>82</sup>

Di Benedetto actively makes the connection between the embodied theatre experience and world-views, whereas Machon presents an in-depth analysis of the embodied theatre experience itself. Nevertheless, both argue that the theatre experience stimulates the corporeal, as well as the cerebral; the senses and interpretation. He argues that this fusion during an attentive theatre experience brings forth a personal sense of becoming-aware with regards to how one perceives and relates to their (theatrical) surroundings: “As we respond to a theatrical event, consciousness leads us to make personal associations with the material that is being performed in front of and around us”.<sup>83</sup>

What Di Benedetto calls ‘personal associations’ through embodiment, Machon calls “making-sense/*sense-making*”. In one of her other works, in her book *(Syn)aesthetics: Redefining Visceral Performance* (2009), Machon writes about the double meaning of the word ‘sense’: on the one hand, it refers to our physical senses; on the other hand, it refers to our interpretative capabilities of making sense. According to Machon, this “double-edged” meaning is not a contradiction; she argues that the process of “making-sense/*sense-making*” can be seen as one process, in which the interpretative act of sense-making is intertwined with, or even comes forth through, sensorial perception: “This fusing of sense (semantic ‘meaning making’) with *sense* (feeling, both sensation and emotion) establishes a double-edged rendering of making sense/*sense-making* and foregrounds its fused somatic/semantic nature.”<sup>84</sup> She argues that this activity of ‘making-sense/*sense-making*’ occurs as a conscious experience in the theatre, as this is exactly what the audience-witness is asked to do; to be attentive to the (corporeal and cerebral) stimuli that occur in the here-and-now of the performance.

As I argued in the introduction chapter, I claim that for moving towards a multispecies ethos, ‘multi-layered comprehension’ or embodied knowledge about our relational reality is necessary. On an informational, factual level, most of us know about global warming and the sixth extinction event. However, numbers about climate-change driven disasters are often too abstract to truly comprehend, as we have not witnessed them ourselves. Climate crisis is a multi-layered problem, thus demands a multi-layered approach. As described earlier, Machon argues that theatre can ‘invite multi-layered comprehension’ through embodied, whole-body attendance, of both sensory and cerebral stimulation.<sup>85</sup> Through organising this whole-body attendance is

---

<sup>82</sup> Di Benedetto, *The Provocation of the Senses in Contemporary Theatre*, x.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Josephine Machon, *(Syn)aesthetics: Redefining Visceral Performance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009): 14.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

within the context of ecology, within more-than-human co-presence, theatre can contribute ecologically, theatre scholar Carl Lavery describes. In his book *Performance and Ecology: What can theatre do?* (2018), Lavery argues that theatre's ecological capacities should not be sought through the sharing of ecological information on a narrative level, but actively taps into the realm of the embodied experience: "The objective here is not to communicate environmental information but to produce ecological experience, to actualise 'new ways of attending and perceiving'."<sup>86</sup> In her book *Theatre & Environment* (2019), Vicky Angelaki describes Lavery as being one of the first to use "the environment as a framing lens" through which spectators can actually experience their ecological circumstances, can perceive them both cerebrally and corporeally.<sup>87</sup> Angelaki writes that through theatre, "human transgression on nature [can go] from abstract and metaphorical to literal and physical."<sup>88</sup>

Exactly this addition of corporeal address as an addition to facts about climate crisis, is what I claim to be needed in order for people to truly comprehend and acknowledge multispecies co-presence, interdependency and responsibility. By allowing audiences to actively experience ecological complexity through the participatory act of witnessing, through full-body attention, through corporeal and cerebral emancipation, theatre can contribute ecologically.

## 2.2

### Theatre, Thing-Power, Relationality

As described in the first chapter, new materialist philosopher Jane Bennett advocates for a (re)valuation of the agency and power of other-than-human matter.<sup>89</sup> Bennett argues that for this (re)valuation, an openness for and attentiveness to nonhuman animacy and a receptivity to thing-power and matter-energy is required.<sup>90</sup> She argues that the latter can only be accomplished through the collaboration, communication and connection between different parties paying attention to – or, in other words, witnessing – each other's presence and power.<sup>91</sup> This section elaborates further on the connection of the concepts of 'thing-power' and 'relationality', and explores how these concepts can be found in the performing arts.

The new materialist relational attitude, of perceiving more-than-human agency and power, can be organised and practiced through the performing arts, argues theatre scholar

---

<sup>86</sup> Lavery, *Performance and Ecology*, 84.

<sup>87</sup> Vicky Angelaki, *Theatre & Environment* (London: Red Globe Press, 2019): 72.

<sup>88</sup> Angelaki, *Theatre & Environment*, 63.

<sup>89</sup> Bennett, "The Force of Things", 351.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 21.

Rebecca Schneider. In her article “New Materialisms and Performance Studies” (2015), Schneider describes that theatre is essentially a meeting between matter that can be human or non-human.<sup>92</sup> As argued in the last section on witnessing and embodiment, any theatre setting implies a multi-layered attentiveness to everything and -one present in the here-and-now of the performance. Schneider argues that theatre can therefore be seen as a gathering, as an exchange of animacy between things.<sup>93</sup>

Onstage, anything can become animated, Schneider argues.<sup>94</sup> She describes that in traditional theatre, animacy is only ascribed to human bodies.<sup>95</sup> Schneider argues that new materialist approach within theatre practices can change this; new materialist perspectives allowed also ‘things’ to take shape as animate on stage, to take the lead role, to perform and express their thing-power. Schneider argues that the performative arts therefore have the potential to confront audiences with what they automatically ascribe animacy to (read: humans), and with what they usually do not perceive as agential (enough) to be called animate (read: things).<sup>96</sup>

Theatre scholar Pedro Manuel also writes about nonhuman things as main actants in the theatre. In his dissertation *Theatre Without Actors: Rehearsing New Modes of Co-Presence* (2017), Manuel describes that a theatre can never be “empty”, as in the absence of actors, actants will take the stage and claim the attention: “[...] a theatrical space emptied of actors can be seen, in fact, to be inhabited by the realm of other “matters”.”<sup>97</sup> Manuel also writes about theatre’s potentiality to stage human/nonhuman co-presence in the theatre. He describes that traditionally, in the theatre, the concept of ‘co-presence’ commonly refers to human audiences and human actors in the theatre; the conventional spectator expects to perceive “someone”, a human actor “to engage with in a relation of co-presence”, Manuel writes.<sup>98</sup> Like Schneider, Manuel however argues that theatre also has the potentiality to organise co-presence between human spectators and “something” as well.<sup>99</sup> He argues that by doing this, theatre can allow people to “rethink relations of co-presence between spectators and their surrounding realities, and between humans and nonhumans.”<sup>100</sup> Theatre can enhance the thing-power-receptivity Bennett advocates, as theatre is built on the co-presence of matter, on the collaboration and interaction of different ‘things’, which can be human and/or nonhuman.

---

<sup>92</sup> Schneider, “New Materialisms and Performance Studies”, 11.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>98</sup> Pedro Manuel, *Theatre Without Actors: Rehearsing New Modes of Co-Presence*, PhD Dissertation Theatre Studies (Utrecht: Utrecht University, 2017);, 23.

<sup>99</sup> Manuel, *Theatre Without Actors*, 25.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 10.

Carl Lavery (also discussed in the previous section) describes that, like theatre, ecology is also fundamentally about the co-presence of – or in other words, about the relationality between – different multispecies cultures.<sup>101</sup> According to Lavery, theatre has the potentiality to do more than share ecological information, by producing ‘ecological experiences’.<sup>102</sup> He argues that theatre’s ‘ecological experiences’ can be organised through intensifying the experience of the co-presence of different human and nonhuman cultures.<sup>103</sup> The concept of ‘culture’ is often understood to be human-bound, whereas Lavery argues that also other-than-human species have their own cycles, lifespans, rhythms and interaction – or in other words, their own culture.<sup>104</sup> In the theatre, audiences can experience such cultural traits; through being physically co-present with(in) other-than-human cultures, they can witness their rhythms, temporalities, materials and sounds.

Mankind often proved not to respect or acknowledge other-than-human cultures; the lack of attentiveness with regards to more-than-human co-presence, relationality and thing-power has brought us to the climate crisis of today. During performative arts, by experiencing the thing-power, audiences can learn to do pay attention to other-than-human cultures, matters and species. Through theatre’s potentiality of inviting human spectators to experience and collaborate with other-than-human matter and cultural understandings in an attentive way, they might start to understand that other respectful, connected and harmonious ways of co-existing, of being co-present in our more-than-human relational reality might be possible.

## 2.3

### Theatre, Discomfort, Ethos

Also shortly discussed in the first chapter, in her book *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (2016), Donna Haraway argues that people need to become ‘truly present’ for changing towards more sustainable relations.<sup>105</sup> She also argues that being truly present in our current ecological reality will probably raise a feeling of discomfort, of trouble. Haraway argues that trouble is necessary in order to actually change; Jansen argues that the defamiliarization of our current anthropocentric ethos is necessary in order to change towards a multispecies one.<sup>106</sup> Now, having analysed theatre’s potential of creating embodied experiences of multispecies

---

<sup>101</sup> Lavery, *Performance and Ecology*, 81.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>105</sup> Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 1.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 14.

relationality, I will grasp back to the concept of ‘ethos’ and will analyse if the performing arts could contribute to moving towards a multispecies one.

In this second chapter, I have argued that the performing arts create spaces in which the spectator is expected to be ‘truly present’ in the here-and-now of the artwork. As explained by Lehmann (discussed earlier in this chapter), this here-and-now of the artwork does not necessarily require fiction or even a theatre building, as the essence of theatre is ‘emphasizing a situation’.<sup>107</sup> This emphasized situation can be one from outside the theatre; the attentiveness of the audience-witness enables them to consciously experience the here-and-now, whether this is the theatre, in a forest or on a city square. In her article “Theatricality: The Specificity of Theatrical Language”, theatre scholar Josette Féral describes that also an everyday situation can be perceived differently because of the performing arts; like Lehmann, Féral describes that the attentiveness of audiences can also disclose the power and energy of our ordinary daily circumstances.<sup>108</sup> Hence, when aligned with or occurring within our current critical ecological reality, performing artworks can emphasize our everyday situation of problematic interspecies relations and can foreground the disharmonious co-presence of human and other-than-human species, matters and cultures.

Theatre evokes emotion, sympathy and connection; it can touch, challenge, defamiliarize and discomfort our ethos. In his book *Theatre & Ethics* (2009), Nicholas Ridout argues that theatre, because of its social nature, can enhance ethical situations: he describes that theatre is the most effective medium when it comes to ethically confronting its spectators, because of the social circumstances of spectators being amongst (and morally checking) one another.<sup>109</sup> During a performance, spectators are not only confronted with ethical issues, but they are also ethically engaged with each other: “We watch ourselves watching people engaging with an ethical problem while knowing that we are being watched in our watching (by other spectators and also by those we watch).”<sup>110</sup> Ridout describes that “the situation of mutual spectatorship raises the ethical stakes”.<sup>111</sup> In other words, a shared state of ‘witnessing’ enlarges ethical consciousness, about the other and about the self.

Aligning with Ridout’s theory on collective audience-consciousness, in her book *Theatre & Environment* (2019), theatre scholar Vicky Angelaki argues that theatre, for a brief time and space, turns audiences into ‘communities’; groups with the same values, behaviours and

---

<sup>107</sup> Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, 128.

<sup>108</sup> Josette Féral, “Theatricality: The Specificity of Theatrical Language”, *Substance* (Vol. 31, No. 2/3, Issue 98/99: Special Issue: Theatricality (2002)): 96.

<sup>109</sup> Ridout, *Theatre & Ethics*, 13.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*



circumstances – or in other words, a shared (temporary) ethos.<sup>112</sup> She argues that by “highlighting our shared ethics, responsibilities and mutual implications”, theatre can “enable a performance of ethically driven citizenship”.<sup>113</sup> Accordingly, Angelaki argues that if a performative artwork addresses climate crisis, it can confront their audience with mankind’s ethically unjust behaviour with regards to other-than-human natural matters and species.<sup>114</sup>

Through our anthropocentric ethos, we generally pay little to no attention to the wellbeing of other-than-human species, matters and cultures; the performative arts can create a different temporary ethos, through which audiences *can* attentively experience human/nonhuman encounters. The embodied ecological experience of multispecies relationality in the theatre can be seen as a training in *relational attentiveness*, in adjusting a multi-animate perception of the world. By allowing their audiences to gain an ‘embodied’ sense of multispecies ‘relationality’, performative arts may stimulate a feeling of ethical urgency with regards to changing the way they relate to other-than-humans.



The next chapter analyses three different new materialist performances that organise embodied human/nonhuman encounters, through which human spectators can learn to be co-present with other-than-human species and to get acquainted with their cultures. This second chapter functions as a theoretical groundwork through which I will analyse the potential of creating embodied ecological experiences. The analyses will thus be based upon the concepts of ‘relationality’/co-presence and ‘embodiment’/witnessing.

---

<sup>112</sup> Angelaki, *Theatre & Environment*, 10-11.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

## Chapter 3

### (DIS)HARMONIZING WITH NATURE

In this chapter, I will discuss three case studies, three performative artworks that all aim to organise a meeting between kinds, cultures, matters. As Robin Wall Kimmerer writes in her book *Braiding Sweetgrass* (2013), in Indigenous languages, all natural matter (rocks, water, plants, animals) is addressed as ‘he/she/they’.<sup>115</sup> These three case studies forefront such other-than-human natural matters and position them to be approached by human audiences as animated equals. In these artworks, the natural matters are the main actants, agential and present; the natural matters are staged by theatre-makers, which allows human audiences to attentively witness and relate to them. These performances all have the potential and ambition to reconnect their human spectators with their natural environments, through facilitating embodied experiences of relationality.

The three case studies exist of one audio-guided walk and two spatial installations. Even though these works might not clearly define as theatre, they do all have a performative and participatory character; they urge their audiences to witness. They are durational works that rely on audience attention and participation; they actively invite sensory awareness and focus on what is happening in the here-and-now. This makes these works of art suitable for performance analyses.

The first case study that will be discussed is the immersive theatre performance *Als we wortelen* (2017) by theatre-maker Naomi Steijger. The second is the spatial performative installation *Ice Watch* (2015) by visual artist Olafur Eliasson. Lastly, the third artwork that will be discussed is *Ruup* (2015), also a spatial installation by artist Birgit Öigus. The course and characteristics of these works will be analysed through the concepts of relationality and embodiment. I will also analyse the possible after-math of these works: I will estimate the lasting impact of possible ethical discomfort, caused by these works in relation to existing knowledge about our current climate situation. Through these analyses, in the concluding chapter of this thesis, I aim to demonstrate the possible ecological contribution of the performative arts in terms *relational attentiveness* and their possible contribution to changing our anthropocentric ethos towards a multispecies one.

---

<sup>115</sup> Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 56.

3.1

**‘ALS WE WORTELEN’**

*By Naomi Steijger, 2017*

The immersive performance *Als we wortelen* (translated: ‘*If we take root*’) took place as a guided walk through the forest of Maastricht, the Netherlands. The audience had to gather at a parking lot at the foot of the hill a little above the city, adjacent to the forest. The audience consisted of a group of eight people, who were all given a LED flashlight and headphones through which a recorded voice told them stories about their surroundings. Before the spectators entered the forest, they were asked to witness the parking lot they assembled on; the voice in their headphones asked them to look at how the bricks were made to size to create parking spots, how the parking spots were made to size to fit a car, how the cars were made to size to fit five chairs, how these chairs were made to size to fit human bodies. They then were asked to expand their attention by witnessing the city of Maastricht, to perceive how the entire city is made for human movement, efficiency and wellbeing.

After this, the audience went into the forest. Naomi Steijger, Dutch theatre maker and artist of this performance, was walking in front of the group, physically guiding them where and how to stand still, where to look and how fast to walk. The voice in the headphones shared information about the forest, about specific trees and about their culture. The voice spoke about the way the trees live together – with each other, fungi, plants and animals – and about how they help one another through a hidden infrastructure under the ground in which all the roots are connected. The audience of this performance learned about how they communicate with one another through this hidden infrastructure that is often called the *Wood Wide Web*. This theory studies that under the ground, trees communicate, support and also sabotage each other – just like humans do: “The hidden network creates a thriving community between individuals. When you’re next in woodland, you might like to think of trees as part of a big superorganism, chatting and swapping information and food under your feet.”<sup>116</sup> Their culture might be just as nuanced as human cultures, their language just as developed and their social networks just as thorough.

At one point during the performance, when the spectators reached the peak of the hill the forest was growing on/in, the group – which was just a handful of people – were asked to stand still in a circle. They were asked and guided by the voice to let go of their sense of having a human body in order to become members of the tree community for a little while. The recorded

---

<sup>116</sup> BBC News, “How trees secretly talk to each other – BBC News”, video on *Youtube*, DOI: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yWOqeyPIVRo>. Website consulted on October 25, 2019.

voice told the audience to close their eyes and to dig their feet into the ground a little. The audience was told that from their heels and toes roots began to grow. The roots would perforate their shoes to get into the soil; the audience would enter the invisible infrastructure of the forest. Through imagination, their roots grew until they found the roots of the other participants and trees. For a brief moment, the audience felt like they were entering the *Wood Wide Web*, the culture of the forest.

At twilight, right after the spectators had taken root within the culture of the forest, they were asked to walk back to the city. The spectators had to turn on the bright, artificial LED flashlights, which abruptly brought them back into human culture. Without the guidance of the voice, the participants walked back to the city in silence. They left the forest that they just intimately got to know, with new knowledge about the culture of the forest, that will continue to grow, live and communicate at their own pace, next to theirs.

In *Als we wortelen*, the audience was provided with the space to learn about a culture other than their own. At the start of the performance, while the spectators were standing on and witnessing the parking lot, they were asked to leave their culture behind and fully enter the culture of the forest. They were positioned as guests in the centuries-old society of trees, animals, plants and fungi. In other words, they were asked to decentralise their anthropocentric attitudes, in order to perceive the agency and power of the forest's culture. Not only were they specifically asked to let go of their anthropocentric attitudes through the recorded voice; they were also asked to do so in an embodied way, during the embodied exercise of 'taking root'. For a brief moment, the audience lost their sense of 'normal' human connectedness, and imaginatively and attentively tried to embody the perspectives of the species living in the *Wood Wide Web*. By abruptly having to turn on the LED-flashlight, created a hard contrast and confrontation of the current disconnection between the different cultures and the different relational attitudes.

In *Als we wortelen*, two distinct levels of co-presence came to the surface. On the one hand, *Als we wortelen* actively addresses the co-presence of two different cultures, two different worlds, two different communities: the culture of the forest and of the city. Even though the spectators were specifically asked to place their human culture on the background before and during the performance in order to get to know the relatively unknown culture of the forest, the spectators were also being frequently reminded of the existence of their own culture by having to draw implicit comparisons. The information that Steijger shared in her performance – about the trees taking care of the sick and the elderly, about how the trees build friendships and rivalries with other species, about the nuanced and elaborated communication and social systems of the forest – seemed to be chosen based on possible recognitions of and similarities with the human culture.

Already respecting the latter, Steijger might have aimed to raise a same kind of respect for the elaborated *Wood Wide Web* through implicit comparisons.

However, during the performance, at some moments of the performance, the spectators had to also directly shift between the contrasting cultures of the forest and of the city; by being asked to observe the trees as well as the parking lot, by ploughing through the dirt and by turning on the LED-flashlight. They thus did not only perceive the autonomy of the forest's culture, but they were also made attentive to the contrasting co-presence of these different cultures.

The second level of co-presence was set in motion by the physical, sensory encounter of the human spectators with the forest. The spectators of *Als we wortelen* were asked to be sensory attentive to other 'bodies' than their own kind's, and to attentively perceive how they physically relate to them. They were asked to touch the trees, to smell the forest, to enter the soil with their feet; they were asked to observe the mass and height of the forest's bodies, and to physically relate to their here-and-now material existence.

*Als we wortelen* did not aim to present a 'solution' to solve this disconnection between kinds, did not stress the urgency to change the course of climate crisis; it rather created an 'ecological experience', like Lavery describes: the audience could meet and learn about an other-than-human culture by being physically within it, by smelling its scent, by hearing its sounds, by touching its matter. As described in the second chapter, the concept of 'embodiment' can be described as a combination of interpretative and sensory perceptivity, between the corporeal and the cerebral. In *Als we wortelen*, both experiential elements have a clear and central position. *Als we wortelen* put its spectators in a position through which they could touch, care and learn – both through information and the senses. Informational knowledge about the forest through the headphones was combined with a material experience of actual physical co-presence. By learning about the forest through both the senses and information, by trying to emphasize with the trees, by physically entering in their culture, a new *embodied* sense of connection between different bodies and cultures, between the human and the forest could come to the fore.

As Lehmann argues, the theatre experience of attentiveness does not necessarily have to occur through fiction; it can also appear in our daily 'real' reality.<sup>117</sup> As theatre is about organizing attention and emphasizing situations, a theatre-experience does not necessarily have to occur in the theatre itself. With this performative artwork, Steijger did not create a new environment; Steijger rather emphasized the situation of physical human/nonhuman co-presence and created space for an attentive full-body exploration of the relatively 'unknown' world of the *Wood Wide Web* and of our (dis)connections with it. In *Als we wortelen*, the spectators were allowed to attend

---

<sup>117</sup> Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, 128.

their actual reality differently: *Als we wortelen* shone a (new) light on what already existed. The forest was no stage, no décor that would be cleaned up and put in storage after the performance. Actually, as you are reading this, the forest is still standing and growing there, on that hill in Maastricht. This causes the audience's new sense of more-than-human relationality to persist after the performance ends, as the spectators have been made aware of the actual existence of the forest and thus the daily co-presence between kinds.

However, as the spectator will bring this new experience into their human daily reality that is still very much disconnected from their newly acknowledged 'companions', a sense of discomfort can come to the fore. In this reality, forests are burning, their materiality is exploited, their cultures systemically disrespected, disregarded and destroyed. By enabling audiences to gain 'new' embodied knowledge about a world, a culture, a community, that has always existed next to the human world, Steijger indirectly confronted them with their anthropocentric ethos that has been separating human and nature, and with it raised the ethical need for a new one that would include their new natural companions more equally. During this performance, the spectators could rehearse with decentralizing the human culture, with co-existing and building companionship with other-than-human matter, with living new relations. As the forest is now their new companion, the spectators of *Als we wortelen* might take a step towards including the creatures of the forest more actively and attentively in the way they live their daily relations, in their ethos.

3.2  
**'ICE WATCH'**  
*By Olafur Eliasson, 2015*



Figure 1. Source: <https://olafureliasson.net/archive/artwork/WEK109190/ice-watch/>.

The second artwork that will be discussed is *Ice Watch*; a spatial installation of Icelandic-Danish artist Olafur Eliasson, presented in Paris, in 2015. At that time and place, the UN Climate Change Conference was held. During this two-week conference, the United Nations negotiated the 'Paris Agreement', which describes global guidelines through which different countries could reduce climate change.

At that time, Eliasson positioned twelve big blocks of glacial ice – some of which were almost two meters high and wide – on Place du Panthéon, the square adjacent to the building in which the conference was held. The blocks of ice were collected in the seas of Greenland. They were free-floating icebergs, melting rapidly and therefore became separated from the Greenland ice sheet. This being the case, the blocks of ice had lost their natural purpose of creating a habitat for other species. Free-floating in the seas of Greenland, the blocks of ice, being approximately 15.000 years old, were now on their way to vaporizing because of anthropogenic global warming. Eliasson and his team fished these glacial icebergs from the water and brought them from Greenland all the way to Paris.

On Place du Panthéon, the twelve blocks of ice were circled out like a clock, representing time – the little time we have in terms of the melting icebergs. Audiences could touch the ice, be amongst the 15.000-year-old matter. The citizens of Paris could actually feel these blocks of ice

melting under their hands; they could see them shrink and eventually disappear, every day when they passed the square. They could witness the icecaps melting, instead of just hearing about it on the news. After ten days, the ice blocks had disappeared completely.



Figure 2. Source: <https://olafureliasson.net/archive/artwork/WEK109190/ice-watch/>.

Facts about climate change and global warming – for example, that the ice sheets are losing mass by 413 gigatons per year – implicate the speed of the problem, but also stay abstract.<sup>118</sup> In the artworks pamphlet, Eliasson writes that with *Ice Watch*, he tries to make the melting-process and thus global warming ‘tangible’, physically and psychologically.<sup>119</sup> The people in the city could actually see and feel these blocks of ice melting, instead of just hearing about it through numbers. *Ice Watch*’s audiences were handed an opportunity to not only learn about the severity of global warming on an informational level (assuming people knew about the UN Climate Change Conference and might have read in the artwork’s pamphlet), but also to experience the problem by actually *witnessing* the melting ice. Passing citizens can see and feel the natural matter being forced into an anthropocentric understanding of temporality, which causes it to disappear. Not only does the disappearance of the ice (re)present the melting icecaps and the temporal culture of nature; it also defines the spectator’s corporeal experience. By touching the ice, the ice melts. In this artwork, human touch has a direct effect on the matter of ice, as well as it metaphorically represents the effects of polluting human activities in terms of global warming.

In her book *When Species Meet* (2008), Donna Haraway writes about ‘touch’ and its potential to make ‘species meet’. She argues that through touch, we start to care and connect.

---

<sup>118</sup> Nasa, “Global Climate Change. Vital Signs of the Planet.” <https://climate.nasa.gov/>. Website consulted on October 24, 2019.

<sup>119</sup> Olafur Eliasson and Minik Thorleif Rosing, “Ice Watch”, artist’s booklet, 2015.



My premise is that touch ramifies and shapes accountability. [...] Touch does not make one small; it peppers its partners with attachment sites for world making. Touch, regard, looking back, becoming with – all these make us responsible in unpredictable ways for which worlds take shape. In touch and regard, partners willy nilly are in the miscegenous mud that infuses our bodies with all that brought that contact into being.<sup>120</sup>

In this quotation, Haraway explains that through touch, we grow into ‘accountability’ with regards to one another, we gain a sense of interdependency and responsibility, we built up relations that make our world. Haraway later describes that touch stimulates caring-for; caring sparks curiosity with regards to one another; from acting upon this curiosity comes forth knowledge; and through knowing about other-than-human species, we start feeling accountable for one another, we start feeling connected.<sup>121</sup>

The melting ice caps are generally perceived as an abstract and far-away threat to human wellbeing, with regards to rising sea levels and potential future floods. On an informational, factual level, politicians discuss climate crisis and the future consequences of global warming every day and are working hard in order to build human laws and agreements based on the analysis of numbers. On an embodied level however, urban and political cultures are often still very much ethically disconnected and physically separated from their natural environments, from their ecological realities. We perceive the ‘species’ of ice through an anthropocentric lens and thus do not perceive the agency and thing-power of ice. However, through being physically proximate with them, we can witness them in their own thing-power; through touching them, we can experience their material existence and – based on the theory of Haraway – might become able to connect with them, to start to care for them. In combination with knowing that they will disappear soon (referring to both the ice blocks on the square and ice caps in general), we can start to also empathise with their wellbeing and existence, instead of only with possible future consequences for mankind.

This more profound multi-layered understanding, coming forth from the combination of sensory perception and cognitive interpretation, can be called embodied knowledge. *Ice Watch* clearly combines both sensory and factual address: on the square outside, the audiences could feel the ice melting with their own hands, while inside, politicians from all over the world are trying to make very complicated global agreements to reduce their damaging cultures at the UN Climate Change Conference. With this artwork, artist Olafur Eliasson aims to establish a physical and sensory confrontation of the (dis)connection between human and other-than-human matters and

---

<sup>120</sup> Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 36.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

temporalities, he urges the audience-witnesses to engage themselves in an embodied ecological experience through ‘whole-body attendance’ (Machon), as an addition to the also very important political agreements that were made inside at the time.<sup>122</sup>

Comparable to *Als we wortelen*, also *Ice Watch* presents two layers of co-presence. Firstly, as just described, it stages a material physical co-presence of humans and ice. Secondly, it also organises a cultural co-presence of the urban and natural cultures. This co-presence of different disconnected rhythms and ways of being – of the melting ice and roaring city – is what mostly defines this piece of art. By bringing 15.000 years old matter into an urban situation, it rapidly disappears; nevertheless, the people from the city continue to live their lives undisturbed, as if these natural matters never existed. Displaying nature’s vulnerability within urban surroundings composes a confronting contrast that represents the domination and negligence of mankind with regards to other-than-human species, which makes it impossible for nature’s culture to persist and exist in their own natural duration.

Other than *Als we wortelen*, the artwork *Ice Watch* has a very direct and urgent ecological message about anthropogenic global warming which causes the ice caps to disappear. This ecological message comes to the fore through the contrasting and disharmonious co-presence of urban and natural temporalities, of human bureaucracy and environmental reality, of human warmth and melting ice. This embodied awareness of co-presence, which comes to the fore through the combination of physical touch and connection, and cognitive awareness about the occurrence of the UN Climate Change Conference and global warming, can bring forth a profound feeling of ethical discomfort, urgency and responsibility. This feeling of discomfort might push people towards wanting to change.

---

<sup>122</sup> Eliasson and Rosing, “Ice Watch”, artist’s booklet, 2015.

3.3  
**‘RUUP’**  
*By Birgit Õigus, 2015*



Figure 3. Source: <https://www.ruup.ee/what-is-ruup/>.

The last case study of this thesis is the spatial art installation *Ruup*, realised by a group of students of the Estonian Academy of Arts, initially created by Birgit Õigus. This piece of art consists of three giant wooden megaphones, with a diameter of three meters each, placed deep in the woods of Estonia. Inside the megaphones – because of the materials, shape and placing – the sounds of the forest are amplified. The audience members can enter the megaphones, lie down and listen to the wind, the songs of birds, animals moving, and plants growing. The megaphones were placed in the woods in 2015, and have remained there ever since. Everybody can come and go there whenever they please, stay as long as they want and listen to their natural surroundings.

With regards to human-nonhuman-acquaintance, this artwork facilitates a pure and simple relational experience; the purpose and activity of *Ruup* is connecting the human with their natural surroundings through the act of paying attention. Artist Birgit Õigus invited human audiences to enter the megaphones, to lay down in them, to take time for witnessing the forest through hearing and being amongst its inhabitants. With the megaphones, Õigus created a way that allows human audiences to learn and connect with the forest through witnessing the presence of nature's culture, through attentively perceiving nature in their own agential existence, as opposed to using it for leisure, recreation or resources.

With regards to the concept of *embodiment*, this artwork taps into the sense of hearing; combined with the attentive attitude of the audience-witness, hearing turns into listening.

Listening is a combination of the sensorial act of hearing while simultaneously interpreting the heard; it is a fusion of active corporeal and cerebral participation. “Listening is, in all senses, an *act*”, theatre scholar George Home-Cook describes in his article “Aural Acts: Theatre and the Phenomenology of Listening” (2011).<sup>123</sup> He writes: “Not only does the act of listening require us to *do*



Figure 4. Source: <https://www.ruup.ee/what-is-ruup/>.

something but listening itself is inherently theatrical: in listening we set both sound and ourselves ‘at play’.”<sup>124</sup> Through *Ruup*, the audience can pay attention to the sounds of the forest, but also perceive themselves immersing in and attending a more-than-human world. Home-Cook describes listening as an embodied act, as he argues that listening is a way of paying attention, and “attention is, fundamentally, a dynamic act of embodiment.”<sup>125</sup> Home-Cook argues that when one is attentive, one becomes aware of their physical co-presence presence of themselves and their environment; one becomes aware of the relationality of their surroundings.

Even more than staging sounds, *Ruup* ‘stages perception’, and in the words of Home-Cook, “[b]y *staging* perception, theatre invites us to attend ourselves attending”.<sup>126</sup> *Ruup* does not only stimulate audiences to listen to the existence of their surroundings; it also makes them ‘attend themselves attending’, makes them *witness* their own presence as well, makes them aware of the fact that they are engaging in a more-than-human relationality, in multispecies co-presence. With that, *Ruup* confronts us with the fact that generally, we do not listen, we do not witness and acknowledge the presence of nature in our daily reality. *Ruup* shows that other ways to engage in human-nonhuman relationality are possible; that we can pay attention to other-than-human cultures if we just do so. It reminds us that the way we currently live our anthropocentric relations, is just one way to embody relationality; we can also do so differently, more inclusively, more profoundly. By showing that other ways are possible, *Ruup* seems to indirectly suggest embodying different relations and with that, questions and troubles our current anthropocentric ethos.

---

<sup>123</sup> Home-Cook, “Aural Acts”, 97.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

## CONCLUSION

In her book *When Species Meet* (2008), Donna Haraway writes about “companion species”, with which she describes that no species is pure, that no organism consists of one-kind matter: all organisms exist out of and persist because of bacteria, fungi, and other natural organisms.<sup>127</sup> She explains that only ten percent of the human body can be purely defined as human, whereas the other ninety percent consist of other-than-human micro-organisms.<sup>128</sup> Our being is thus based upon the ‘companionship’ of different species. The same counts for our ecosystems; our world and all its beings exist because of what Haraway calls “species interdependence”.<sup>129</sup> She argues that we should start to value, respect and acknowledge this interdependency – or better companionship – with nonhumans, within both our bodies and ecosystems.<sup>130</sup> In this thesis, I argue that we can find interspecies companionship through ecological experiences in performing arts.

Haraway argues that for gaining a true sense of multispecies co-presence, we should start with paying attention to one another: “Species interdependence is the name of the worlding game on earth, and that game must be one of response and respect. That is the play of companion species learning to pay attention.”<sup>131</sup> In this thesis, I describe that the theatre experience is essentially about paying attention, about actively perceiving one’s body, one’s surroundings and the relations between the two. I also describe that this attention in the theatre is an embodied activity: the audience-witness is physically present in the here-and-now of the performance and can experience a greater attentiveness with regards to sensory stimulation. Throughout the entire thesis, I positioned the concepts of ‘relationality’ and ‘embodiment’ as two central elements for both the analysis of the theatre experience, of addressing climate crisis and of moving towards a multispecies ethos. In this conclusion, I will try to connect these analyses by formulating an answer to the central research question of this thesis: *Can embodied experiences of more-than-human relationality during a performative artwork contribute to moving towards a multispecies ethos?*

I believe that the performative arts have the potential to contribute to changing our anthropocentric ethos towards a multispecies one, by positioning their spectators as witnesses who can attend and experience human/nonhuman encounters and with that the relationality of our multispecies world in an embodied way. In the first chapter, I explained that ethea are relational, embodied phenomena; they can be seen as embodied attitudes that define the way we

---

<sup>127</sup> Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 16.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 36.

relate to our surroundings. As ethea are embodied phenomena, I believe that for changing one, we should do so through approaching our relations in an embodied way. In order to change towards a multispecies ethos, we should thus gain embodied relational experiences – or in other words, *relational attentiveness* – with regards to our multispecies world: theatre can create such experiences through its potential to empathize situations of co-presence through addressing both the senses and interpretation.

Thus, throughout this thesis, I focussed on the concepts of ‘relationality’ and ‘embodiment’, which I approach to be very important when it comes to comprehending our current climate crisis. In this thesis, I argue that the performative arts can address both. Firstly, for a long time caused by anthropocentrism, human/nonhuman *relationality* has been disharmonious and disconnected; we mostly attend to our fellow humans and acknowledge their autonomy and presence, whereas our nonhuman surroundings are often not acknowledged as present, agential and worthy of honest attention. The performative arts can offer their audiences a multispecies perspective, as opposed to the before-mentioned anthropocentric perspective: in contemporary performative arts, not only humans can be positioned and perceived as present, but ‘things’ can also take the stage, can become the theatrical matters of attention, can be perceived as present, agential and animated. The three case studies discussed in the third chapter of this thesis (*Als we wortelen* by Naomi Steijger, *Ice Watch* by Olafur Eliasson and *Ruup* by Birgit Öigus) all direct the audience’s attention towards the *relationality* or co-presence of human and other-than-human matters, species or cultures; these performative artworks created space for audiences to attentively experience more-than-human receptivity, attention and relationality. A new sense of more-than-human presence might be necessary for including nonhumans in our perception of moral justice and care; more-than-human attention and perceptivity is the fundament of a multispecies ethos.

Secondly, people seem to lack *embodied* ecological knowledge or ‘multi-layered comprehension’ – in the words of Josephine Machon – that highly complex issues like climate crisis demand in order to be truly understood. In this thesis, I argued that by experiencing the performing arts, audiences can gain such embodied ecological knowledge. The three performative artworks discussed all stimulate an attentiveness to human/nonhuman encounters through an intensified address of the senses. By adding a highlighted sensory the sensory experience of ecological relations – by touching trees and smelling soil, by feeling ice melt under one’s hand, by listening to the sounds of the forest – to information about and contexts of climate change, the three artworks discussed have the potential to enable their audiences to gain embodied ecological knowledge, to gain a ‘multi-layered comprehension’ of more-than-human world. The audiences

were offered a space in which they could ‘witness’, in which they could pay multi-layered attention (both physical and cognitive) to the way they live their human/nonhuman relations.

All three artworks raise *relational attentiveness*. These artworks enable their spectators to practice with paying full-body attention to the variety of species, matters and cultures that make up our world and to physically experience the relations they have with them. During *Als we wortelen*, the audience was asked to physically communicate with the bodies of the forest, while simultaneously cognitively analysing the differences and similarities between the cultures of the forest and of the city. Through new knowledge about and interactions with the forest, through an embodied approach of decentralising anthropocentrism and through reflecting on human cultures and the (dis)connections with nature, the audiences of *Als we wortelen* could immerse in and got confronted with a different way of living human/nonhuman relationality, and could thus gain a new embodied sense of *relational attentiveness*. *Ice Watch* more directly confronts its spectators with problematic and disharmonious human/nonhuman relations that define the Anthropocene. Through both a sentimental activity of connecting through touch, and through a hard and physical ecological confrontation of intensifying the anthropogenic disharmony between kinds, *Ice Watch* forces its spectators to be *relationally attentive*. *Ruup* asks its audiences to become aware of the autonomous culture of the forest’s matters, and enhances *relational attentiveness* by stimulating a new sense of human/nonhuman connection by creating a space that mediates the attitude of paying attention.

As I have stated before, the three case studies are not clearly definable as theatre – especially *Ice Watch* and *Ruup* are located on the border of the visual and performing arts. Nevertheless, I specifically did choose to analyse these works of art, because they all centralise the audience-attention and -participation; they invite their audiences to actively participate in human/nonhuman relations, they urge their spectators to *witness* and to participate. This participatory attitude is exactly what the explained theatre-theories from the second chapter describe as the central element of theatre. In these works, the attentive participatory experience of the audiences is also of the essence. With that, all three artworks demonstrate the potentiality of the performing arts to create embodied ecological experiences as an addition to ecological information.<sup>132</sup>

If people were to gain true *relational attentiveness*, I believe that our anthropocentric attitude – or ethos – could change towards a more-than-human moral orientation and inclusion. Firstly however, we need to be made conscious that other relational attitudes are possible. Through the experience of rehearsing relations in the theatre, we might become able to truly comprehend that

---

<sup>132</sup> A possible follow-up research to this thesis could entail analysing the potentiality of more traditional, classical theatre of creating embodied ecological experiences, of making its audiences rehearse more-than-human relations.

a more-than-human relational orientation is possible, that a multispecies ethos is possible. With this thesis, I actually aim to present the human potential of embodying a more-than-human relational attitude, a multispecies ethos, and believe that experiencing and participating in the performing arts can help with bringing this potential to the surface.

### A final call

I started writing this thesis because of a personal urgency. I live in Amsterdam and have lived in urban surroundings my entire life. Although practically I have not experienced the consequences of climate crisis (yet), I always worry; I always feel the hypothetical discomfort of a problematic future and extinction of species. However, even though these worries are always with me, they still feel abstract: they feel estranged from my daily surroundings, in which human-nonhuman interdependence is almost never attentively practiced. My relational and physical surroundings are based on inter-humanness; there is little to no room for equal human-nonhuman encounters. Because I almost never get the opportunity to acquaint myself with other-than-human presence and importance, I feel like I cannot really embody and concretise my worries, like I cannot truly empathise with what is currently happening to our world. For example, when I heard about the Australian wildfires of 2019 and 2020 – in which approximately 18.800.000 hectares of the forest was destroyed, and 3.000.000.000 animals were killed – I did not truly *feel*, empathise and embody this absolutely devastating anthropogenic disaster. I experienced this incapability of true empathy as very troubling, as I got confronted with my disconnection with the existence of other-than-human species, cultures and matters. I realised that my relations, and thus my empathetic capabilities, are based on inter-humanness, that my ethos is anthropocentric.

Thus, I craved more knowledge about human-nonhuman interdependency and companionship. I started reading articles, books, watched documentaries and programmes about ecology. However, these seemed to only enhance the abstraction of my worries about the future. I found that only interpretative information was not enough to truly comprehend, to change the way I live my relations: I need *embodied* knowledge about the different ways I can co-exist with other-than-human species, cultures and matters. I want to connect with my multispecies reality, not merely through information, but through a sense of co-presence, respect, attention, companionship, proximity and reciprocity. This, for the first time, I experienced during *Als we wortelen*. After this, different performances have offered me a (highly craved) short escape from my anthropocentric daily reality and perspectives. Theatre might have been one of the only spaces in which I felt like I could learn to embody my relations differently.



This thesis can be considered as a call for artists and theatre-makers not to only share information about our ecological circumstances, but to highlight more-than-human ecological circumstances through which audiences can actually experience and gain *relational attentiveness*, to create opportunities in which the audience-witness, with her own body, can attentively immerse in multispecies relational worlds. People need to gain embodied knowledge about climate crisis and species interdependence, through which they can start to attentively experience their attitudes and ethea, through which they can get to know their potential of engaging in harmonious and respectful interspecies relations. With this thesis, I hope to inspire my readers to attend and/or to make performative artworks in which people can connect with and immerse in our multispecies relational reality. Let us take ecological advantage of theatre's potentiality to make audiences experience interspecies companionship; let theatre be a place in which we can rehearse relations in order to move towards a sustainable future, towards a multispecies ethos.

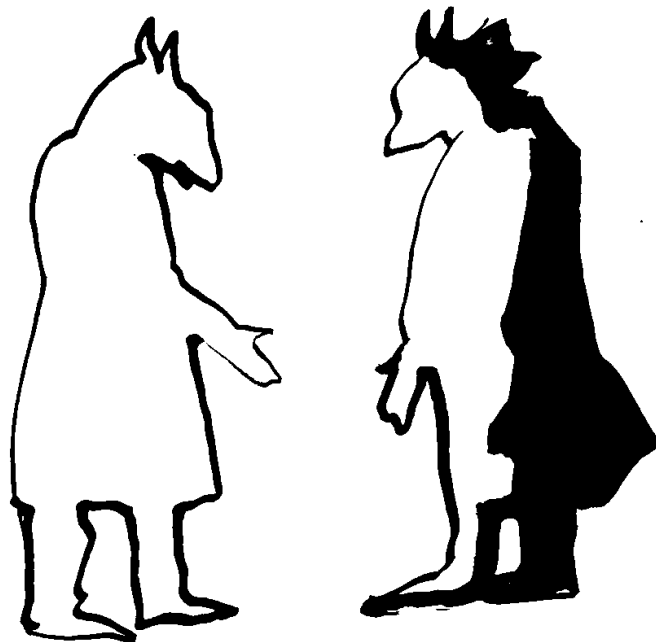


Figure 5. 'Ontmoeting' by Salomé Roodenburg. Source: <https://www.salomeroodeburg.com/illustraties/>.

## REFERENCES

### Bibliography

- Angelaki, Vicky. *Theatre & Environment*. London: Red Globe Press, 2019.
- Benedetto, Stephen Di. *The Provocation of the Senses in Contemporary Theatre*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Bennett, Jane. "The Force of Things: Steps toward an Ecology of Matter." *Political Theory*, Vol. 32, No. 3, June 2004: pp. 347-372.
- Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. London: Duke University Press, 2010.
- Davis, Heater and Etienne Turpin. "Art & Death: Lives Between the Fifth Assessment & the Sixth Extinction." In *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies*. Edited by Heater Davis and Etienne Turpin. London: Open Humanities Press, 2015.
- Féral, Josette. "Theatricality: The Specificity of Theatrical Language," in *Substance*, Vol. 31, No. 2/3, Issue 98/99, Special Issue: Theatricality, 2002: pp. 94-108.
- Ferguson, Gary. *Eight Master Lessons of Nature: What nature teaches us about living well in the world*. London: Doubleday, 2019.
- Geertz, Clifford. "Ethos, World View, and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols." In *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, 1996.
- Haraway, Donna. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. London: Duke University Press, 2016.
- Haraway, Donna. *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.
- Harris, Paul G. *World Ethics and Climate Change: From International to Global Justice*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010.
- Home-Cook, George. "Aural Acts: Theatre and the Phenomenology of Listening". In *Theatre Noise: The Sound of Performance*. Edited by Lynne Kendrick and David Roesner. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2011.
- Jansen, Esther Fiona. *S/Cenic Encounters: Towards a Multispecies Ethos for the Anthropocene*. Master Thesis Gender Studies. Utrecht: Utrecht University, 2019.
- Jürs-Munby, Karen. "Introduction." In *Postdramatic Theatre*, by Hans-Thies Lehmann. Oxon: Routledge, 2006.
- Kimmerer, Robin Wall. *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2013.
- Lavery, Carl. *Performance and Ecology: What can theatre do?* London: Routledge, 2018.
- Lehmann, Hans-Thies. *Postdramatic Theatre*. Oxon: Routledge, 2006.

- Machon, Josephine. *(Syn)aesthetics: Redefining Visceral Performance*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- Machon, Josephine. “Watching, Attending, *Sense-making*: Spectatorship in Immersive Theatres.” *JDCE*, 2016; 4(1): pp. 34-48.
- Manuel, Pedro. *Theatre Without Actors: Rehearsing New Modes of Co-Presence*. PhD Dissertation Theatre Studies. Utrecht: Utrecht University, 2017.
- Rancière, Jacques. *The Emancipated Spectator*. London, New York: Verso, 2011.
- Ridout, Nicholas. *Theatre & Ethics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- Rose, Deborah Bird, and Thom van Dooren. “Encountering a More-than-Human World: Ethos and the Arts of Witness.” In *The Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities*, edited by Ursula K. Heise, Jon Christensen and Michelle Niemann, 120-128. New York: Routledge, 2017.
- Schneider, Rebecca. “New Materialisms and Performance Studies”. *TDR: The Drama Review*, Vol. 59, No. 4, Winter 2015: pp. 7-17.
- Sontag, Susan. *A Susan Sontag Reader*. Middlesex: Penguin, 1982.

#### Other sources

- BBC News. “How trees secretly talk to each other – BBC News”, video on *Youtube*, DOI: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yWOqeyPIVRo>. Website consulted on October 25, 2019.
- Eliasson, Olafur and Minik Thorleif Rosing. “Ice Watch.” Artist’s booklet. 2015.
- Haraway, Donna. ““Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthuluscene: Staying with the Trouble”, Anthropocene: Arts of Living on a Damage”. A lecture organised by *Studio Olafur Eliasson*, DOI: <https://vimeo.com/20992946>. Website consulted on April 2, 2020.
- Nasa. “Global Climate Change. Vital Signs of the Planet.” DOI: <https://climate.nasa.gov/>. Website consulted on October 24, 2019.

#### List of illustrations

Cover image. ‘Formation’ by Mélanie Corre, 2020. Source:

<https://www.pattymorgan.net/melaniecorre?modal=lightbox&post=iC77CXZQv4rJJiWkZ/>.

Figure 1. Source: <https://olafureliasson.net/archive/WEK109190/ice-watch/>.

Figure 2. Source: <https://olafureliasson.net/archive/WEK109190/ice-watch/>.

Figure 3. Source: <https://www.ruup.ee/what-is-ruup/>.

Figure 4. Source: <https://www.ruup.ee/what-is-ruup/>.

Figure 5. ‘Ontmoeting’ by Salomé Roodenburg. Source:  
<https://www.salomeroodenburg.com/illustraties/>.