

**ANUSHKA NAIR**

# **BECOM(TH)INGS:**

**POSTHUMANISM,  
SUBJECTIVITY,  
PERFORMANCE ART**

**HOME OF  
PERFORMANCE  
PRACTICES**

**GRAPHY**  
**FORMANCE ART**  
**ES**  
**ODY**  
**PERFORMANCE**  
**OGRAPHY**  
**RT PERFORMANCE ART**  
**ATRE PRACTICES**  
**SCIPLINED BODY**  
**EOGRAPHY**  
**CE ART**  
**PRACTICES**  
**ODY**  
**NCE**  
**PHY**  
**PERFORMANCE ART**

**BECOM(TH)INGS:**  
**POSTHUMANISM,**  
**SUBJECTIVITY,**  
**PERFORMANCE ART**

**ANUSHKA NAIR**  
**MA PERFORMANCE PRACTICES**

A Thesis presented by Anushka Nair to Master Performance Practices, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Master of Arts in Performance Practices, 2021.

**HOME OF**  
**PERFORMANCE**  
**PRACTICES**

**2021**



## SYNOPSIS

The dissertation project Becom(th)ings: Posthumanism, Subjectivity, Performance Art is a phenomenological artistic research culminating in the performance installation Roo(u)ting. The research is an artistic-philosophical-material inquiry into processual Becoming with objects, both organic and inorganic, from everyday life. It is driven by the desire to make visible the rhizomatic and fluid relations between human and more-than-human bodies through making apparent the agencies of objects, our liquid entangled ontologies and the ethics of care for per/forming intra-active affective relations with bodies of the world. It applies phenomenology, autobiography and diffraction as methods to attend to emergent phenomena, difference making practices and an inquiry into the practices of self/other. It hopes to make malleable and expand fixed notions of human subjectivity by offering a rooted but routing approach—stable yet seeking contingent paths of relations with matter. An approach, that attends to the merging of personal and material knots of identity.

The research through Roo(u)ting, a participatory performance installation, offers the figuration of multitudinous body—through embodied materiality—as emergent collective yet personal subjectivity/ies, for a practice of fluid self-

identification. It attempts to bridge the increasingly growing isolation, dominance, exploitation and crisis of the human in the Anthropocene epoch. It envisions doing this, by making transferable the ethics of care, intimacy and interconnectedness, to human-human relations via material practices of becoming with everyday objects (that we share our intimacies and life with). This thesis offers the theoretical foundations and my conceptual and creative methods of working with posthumanist philosophies and performance art, to create performance ecologies of material embodiment. The project desires to inculcate a fluid sensibility and sensuality, as bodies of and in the world, to dissolve the boundaries of 'self' and 'other', to flow towards a 'we' and 'our'.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to, first, express my unending gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Nishant Shah, who has been pivotal in enriching the research with his nuanced feedback and insights. Thank you for supporting and challenging me, thinking with me in the academic and artistic process, always expanding its horizons, and offering interesting dimensions to the research. I would like to express my deepest gratitude for your time, generosity and encouragement; it has inspired me to trust myself and the process even more.

To my external mentor, Charlotte Grum for truly being a match made in heaven, as we would say. I want to thank her for establishing an enriching, encouraging and truly inspiring relationship of exchange, interest and faith that I truly treasure. Thank you for supporting and nourishing my ideas and always encouraging me to embrace my voice. I am grateful for your dramaturgical, artistic and theoretical assistance and questions that helped me address the details of the artistic work.

To my second external mentor, Eve Katsouraki, thank you for your words of encouragement and helping me fine-tune the thesis.

I would like to thank Dr. Pavlos Kountouriotis, the Head of the Masters Performance Practices programme, for being a part of this research from its genesis up to its current outcome. Thank you for introducing me to the field of my research and for giving me direction to think with and beyond all the interlocutors. I have deep gratitude for your generosity in supporting and refining my work, for challenging my thoughts and helping me see what is below the surface. Thank you for holding space, academically and emotionally, and being a wonderful guide throughout these two years.

To my professors, daz disley, Fenia Kotsopoulou, thank you for your invaluable and abundant assistance through every step of the way. I am grateful to you for fuelling me with new possibilities with material and sustainable ways of approaching my work. Also, my deepest gratitude to you for documenting the final performance with such care and attention to detail. I would like to extend my gratitude to professor João da Silva who welcomed me into the world of artistic research, helped me understand it further and instilled ways to channel my interests. Thank you for your nuanced receptiveness and feedback for my work.

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude and warmth to Luisa Haddad, my right-hand woman and dearest friend, who has been with me right through the conception to execution of the artistic work. Thank you for always offering

support and solutions, both practical and emotional, when I struggled. Thank you for facilitating the performance with care and commitment and for always having a curious, creative and generous heart. I treasure all the time you invested in brainstorming with me, motivating me to follow my intuition and believing in the work. You made life and work, inseparably, delightful.

To my professor Maeve O'Brien Braun, I thank you deeply for your guidance and input on writing techniques and for holding space for questions and constant improvement. I extend my deepest appreciation and gratitude to Ulrike von Meier for always extending her support and help. Your warmth and care has always been a source of comfort. Thank you for your open heart.

I thank my peers for our beautiful sisterhood. I cherish all the moments of joy, struggle, resilience and transformation that each of us have had and held space for. Thank you for your valuable work that has inspired and nurtured me through these two years and opened so many different ways of thinking and creating. Luiza Jaffe, Eryfili Drakopoulou, Foivi Psevdu, Ella Tighe, Antrianna Moutoula, Irina Baldini, Emily Welther, Korina Kordova, Barbara Lehtna Jessica Renfro, thank you all for your vast ocean of love and acceptance.

I extend my gratitude to Roel for his excitement and support

for this project by supplying leftover beetroots from his vegetable market. I extend my gratitude to The Fruit Company, for the additional supply. Without the support of both of you, I wouldn't have managed to work sustainably. My deepest gratitude to my friend and designer Max van de Veerdonk for his generosity and practical support in building objects for the performance. Thank you for your patience, energy and incredible workshop space and materials for manifesting my vision.

To my parents and artists, Anjum Chaturvedi and Sasidharan Nair, I extend my deepest warmth and gratitude to you, for always being in tune with my creative process and offering artistic and emotional support. Thank you for thinking with me during the creative process of the artistic outcome, and for always being there for me, when I needed it the most. Without you, it would not have been possible for me to pursue this Masters Program, for which I am eternally grateful.

Last but not the least, I would like to thank ArtEZ University of Arts and the department of Master Performance Practices for offering a nurturing environment to grow, challenge and develop my practice. Thank you for the scholarship, resources, opportunities, and care provided during the past two years for helping me manifest my aspiration of completing this master's programme.

## DECLARATION

I, Anushka Nair, hereby certify that i have personally carried out the work depicted in the thesis entitled, 'BECOM(TH) INGS: POSTHUMANISM, SUBJECTIVITY, PERFORMANCE ART'.

No part of the thesis has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma prior to this date.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Synopsis</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>ii</i>
<i>Declaration</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>Table of Contents</i>	<i>iv</i>
<b>INTRODUCTION:</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>Search for Oases</i>	
<b>CHAPTER ONE:</b>	<b>11</b>
<i>Discovering Wells</i>	
<b>CHAPTER TWO:</b>	<b>21</b>
<i>Liquid Ontologies and Theoretical Flows</i>	
<b>CHAPTER THREE:</b>	<b>29</b>
<i>Creative and Material Flows</i>	
<b>CONCLUSION:</b>	<b>55</b>
<i>World is an Ocean</i>	
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>64</b>

# INTRODUCTION

## SEARCH FOR OASES

Becom(th)ings: Posthumanism, Subjectivity, Performance art is a phenomenological artistic research, currently, culminating in the performance installation Roo(u)ting, that explores performing affective wet relations of processual Becoming amidst human and more-than-human bodies. I work with everyday objects (organic and inorganic), commonly regarded as mundane, inanimate, and devoid of agency. 'Objects' serving solely as functional entities is further pushed by tool analysis in Heidegger's work Being and Time (1962). The final performance aims to undo aforementioned humanist perspectives by making visible the innate vitality of objects through live durational action of grating with beetroots; participatory interventions that engage with modified (solid, semi-solid, liquid) forms of beetroots; everyday household objects; video works; and audio. In a haptic spatio-temporal assemblage of these elements, human subjectivity is transformed by loosening permanent notions of subjectivity through offering a rooted but flowing experience of relationality and subjectivity. 'Rooted' as stemming from pre-existing ingrained personal-cultural identities, and 'flowing' as influx of –finding varying routes/paths of material relations in a network of interconnected bodies.



Through my artistic practice, I explored the affective hospitable encounters of objects and flesh to create conditions for porous, processual Becomings, always in transformation with other bodies rather than Being, which assumes a certain isolated fixity. A posthumanist lens in my practice, allows for the emergence of fluid boundaries of our –human and more-than-human–bodies. It challenges the dualistic assumption of the seemingly useless, inferior, passive ‘other’ (objects), and the superior and agential ‘self’ (human), through performing intra-active modes of encounters that embody the Deleuzian concept of Becoming and Assemblage from his work *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze, 2004), and the concept of wet relations by Astrida Neimanis from her work *Bodies of Water* (Neimanis, 2016), along with other interlocutors from posthumanism and performance art that I will introduce.

I would like to point out the intentional use of ‘our’ throughout this thesis, as a way to linguistically confront the habitual practice of dualism in the cognitive and behavioural approach towards ‘things’ (everyday organic and inorganic objects) and nature as ‘out there’—as bodies that are separate from the so called ‘human’. I find it imperative to address the concretised ‘othering’ of materiality other than flesh, to not only question the emergent states of disconnection, power, exploitation and perceptual limitations, but also the barricades it forms around the practices of self-identification and the notion of a separate ‘self’, itself. Quoting Jane Bennett from *Vibrant*

Matter (Bennett, 2010),

*“[...] the its outnumber the mes. In a world of vibrant matter, it is thus not enough to say that we are ‘embodied’. We are, rather, many an array of bodies” (Bennett, 2010, 112-113).*

This research seeks to embrace the It-self—a departure from the essentialist filtration of identity towards a diffracted, contingent body of and in the world, which is continually reforming its subjecthood within the matrix of materialities.

The research is powered by affective wet relations with everyday objects that are essential to daily life through our co-dependent entanglements. The recognition of our ‘wet relations’ (Neimanis, 2017, 3-4)—understanding embodiment as fluid, and materiality as interchangeable and porous—makes the potential for the expansion of subjectivity—that arises from diving into these waters—immense. The vibrant objects and vegetables constituting daily life have the power to enable desire, movements, internal shifts, affects and transformations of other bodies—physiologically and emotionally—through intra-active encounters. The intention of this thesis is to articulate performative encounters to display the modes—“to mod(e)ify and be modified by others” (Bennett, 2009, 22)—of emergent transformations and becomings of our materialities in Roo(u)ting. It disseminates my findings through the body I inhabit (formally human but a constitution of many) and organic and inorganic objects from daily life, that enter the ecology of my practice, to become

with one another.

I share my devised methods to engage in a vital materialist process of fluid self-identification. It intends to increase the awareness of our formally different yet ontologically same bodies, through a diffractive (instead of a reflective) approach. In *More-than-reflective practices* (Hill, 2017), Cher Hill, defines diffraction as a metaphor for inquiry that involves “attending to difference [...], the effects of difference-making practices. Diffraction creates something ontologically new, breaking out of the cyclical, inductive realm of reflection” (Hill, 2017, 2). Through looking at what else takes place in watery embodiments, the tensions and intensities that arise from the paradoxes of self/other, subject/object and human/more-than-human, invariably open the discourse and practice to the politics of location. Subjectivity, through this politics, becomes not a space of separation and fixity, but rather a rooting and routing of nomadic subjecthood through embodied materiality. I propose new figurations and modes of bodies engaged in embodied concepts which emerge from and feed back into daily life, memory and subjectivity.

The action of grating beetroots, motivated by preparing a family dish ‘pacchadi’, is derived from the everyday ritual of cooking and memories of personal and cultural roots, which when re-contextualised in a posthumanist performance space create different subjectivities that transcend the purely

functional and semiotic relation with matter. According to Donna Haraway in *When Species Meet* (Haraway, 2008), figurations are “material-semiotic knots” (Haraway, 2008, 4-5), referring to the conceptual power of bodies, but also to their inseparability from the material world. These figurations, in my practice, work as experiments to negotiate the paradox of our bodies, and to propose a rooted but flowing perspective of the self. By diffractively analysing these material-semiotic knots, the emergent figurations enable reimagining other ways of living—becomings—that are anchored in reality through transferability of embodied knowledge for hospitable encounters with objects in daily life.

My journey into this artistic research began two years ago, when I decided to pursue a Masters in Performance Practices to deepen my practice as a performance artist. With a background in Theatre, as an actor I cherished the malleability of the self, to inhabit the body of another person/character. The porosity of the self to get into the skin of another was a quenching of a thirst, unknown. I suspected this yearning for embodying the ‘as if’ (which was limited to the ‘human’ realm) had a deeper cause. Beginning from an introspective space, questions emerged: what does it mean to embody another kind of subjectivity? How do I become another and what does it do to me? What affective and transformative capacities were unlocked through this practice of the ‘as if’? To quote Rosi Braidotti from *Nomadic Subjects* (Braidotti, 1994),

"it is 'as if' some experiences were reminiscent or evocative of others; this ability to flow from one set of experiences to another is a quality of interconnectedness" (Braidotti, 1994, 5). The boundaries between self and other were crossable and interchangeable. The most important question was: what constitutes the 'I', more existentially speaking, who am I? This rather stiff humanist view of self-identification was liquefied by an eye-opening realisation of my inherent tendency to find modes of identification, conceptual and material connections with other bodies of the world.

This revelation manifested through my artistic practice, which moved from acting towards performance art, primarily because of its deep engagement with materiality and relational action. The search and desirability for, from and with the 'other' steered me to dive deeper into the assumedly 'alienated' self that responded to the 'call of things' (Bennett, 2010, 4), to find solace. These modes of identifying parts of my interiority with objects outside of my form led to the emergence of this research. It might seem like a deeply personal need, but its urgency transcends into the politics of the 'other' and its ethical implications for present and future worlds. The growing human disconnect, dominance and their exploitation of the material world can be reformed by re-imagining what it means to be a body that is human and also more-than-human. An entangled body, instead of the alienated body, brings to awareness the undeniable

"entangled agencies" (Barad, 2007,33) of materialities other than flesh, that affect and transform the self, as they in turn are transformed too.

Through material engagement, the emergence of embodied knowledge feeds back into transforming these theories within our bodies. I am reminded of Roland Barthes', "'third meaning', they are immanent and erratic, in contrast to the 'obvious meaning' of semantic message and symbolic signification" (Barthes, 1970,318). Kathleen Stewart in *Ordinary Affects* (Stewart, 2007) expands this by stating, "They work not through 'meanings' per se, but rather in the way that they pick up density and texture as they move through bodies..." (Stewart, 2007, 2). I relate the creation of knowledge of the research, to the exchanges, movements and transformations amidst bodies of the Roo(u)ting assemblage. It offers a space to experiment with the patchwork of bodies connecting and departing, modifying one another, giving rise to feelings and thoughts, physiological and material changes, choices, and finding "routes into a 'we' that is not yet there but maybe could be" (Stewart, 2007, 116). Roo(u)ting proposes the figuration of 'multitudinous body' which contributes knowledge back to theory through making visible and visceral our affective relations, but also between (formally) human to human bodies. The synergies, energies, dissonances, ability to respond affectively to one another, make boundaries of self and other softer, enabling I and Them to simultaneously flow

towards a We and Us, becoming Our—inculcating an ethos of care and community beyond and amidst humans, to combat the anthropocene epoch.

This thesis emerges from a performance art practice, embedded in posthumanist philosophies, that presents a lexicon—an operational vocabulary devised by creating new concepts and re-working existent ones—for a posthumanist performance art practice, in tandem with my artistic work, Roo(u)ting. The work aims at: making visible the agential capacity of everyday objects and the environment in performative encounters; the rhizomatic relations of objects and I (traversing across private, public, natural and cultural landscapes); per/forming Becomings with more-than-human bodies, through durational performance, with an eye to expand the singular and fixed perspective of human subjectivity. Using my lexicon as a guiding force throughout the thesis, Chapter 1 introduces the lexical entries: Ontological hybridism and Matrix, to establish the lens of the project. It links with the theoretical field of posthumanism and performance art to illustrate the foundations upon which my practice has been built and how this thesis situates itself within it. The 3 main theories—Becoming, Wet Relations and Assemblage—will be expanded in Chapter 2, to set the conceptual ground of my work. I will expand on Posthumanist concepts proposed by Rosi Braidotti, Karen Barad, Jane Bennett, Astrida Neimanis and Deleuze and Guattari. I indicate the impact of the ordinary

on subject hood, through the work of Kathleen Stewart to contextualise transcorporeal and fluid relations with objects.

Furthermore, Chapter 3 introduces the lexical entries: Dialogic relations and Graftification to elucidate my methods. Taking conceptual intangibles into the tangible realm of my creative process, I untangle my methods of embodiment, encounter, labour, duration, and altered mental and physical states. I introduce the influences of artists Charlotte Grum, Monali Meher and Annette Arlander, on my process of devising methods. I present Objectiography—reprinting objects in biographies of entangled ‘self/ves’—a participatory intervention to queer the methodology of autobiography (exercised in this research). The method of the call of things, meditating with objects, contractual relations and assemblage will be expanded to present my practice of deconditioning the human body to be a relational, becomings-in-process body. Finally, I throw light on certain dramaturgical choices that confront the problematics of gaze and decentering my body in the Roo(u)ting assemblage.

In the Conclusion, after establishing the roots of my thesis I find routes to explore, diffractively, the emergence of multitudinous body and “material-semiotic knots” that reflect on the research development, in order to account for the figurations I come from and the new figurations I seek to create. The lexicon Nomadism and Object decolonisation

support how to think about figurations. I also cite limitations of this research as an act primarily (but not wholly) motivated by a formally human body in an institutionalized context. I indicate the aspiration of this research to make transferable hospitable becomings with objects, to human relations. I expand on becomings as transitive propagating multifarious notions of subjectivity and offering roots and routes to connect with more-than-human bodies through attention, care and intimacy. Roo(u)ting aspired to create a multimodal ecology of my artistic research, intended to cultivate a fluid sensibility and sensuality with the bodies of this world.

## CHAPTER ONE: DISCOVERING WELLS

*“Our civilized distrust of the senses and of the body engenders a metaphysical detachment from the sensible world—it fosters the illusion that we ourselves are not a part of the world that we study, that we can objectively stand apart from that world, as spectators, and can thus determine its workings from outside.”*

*David Abram (Merleau-Ponty and The Voice of the Earth, 1988)*

### *Barad-Haraway-Neimanis Triad*

Posthumanists call out on the Western humanist perspective of human separation from the world as the root of disconnection emerging between bodies of the world. Barad counters the perspective of the isolated human through the concept of intra-action. She proposes this concept to rethink the nature of relations with more-than-human bodies. According to Barad in *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, intra-action is “pre-established bodies that participate in action with each other[...]agency as not an inherent property of an individual or human to be exercised, but as a dynamism of forces” (Barad, 2007, 141). Agency emerges from relational forces between bodies through encounters. The driving force of Roo(u)ting is to create amplified spaces of intimate, affective, performative encounters with objects that are embedded in daily life, to make visible their agency and our ontologically rhizomatic wet relations. The relational dynamism of forces give rise to interchangeability and fluidity of our materialities, fostering the seeds of Becomings with-, thereby offering new

figurations of subjectivity—multitudinous body. Practicing Haraway's 'material-semiotic knots' (2007, 4-5)—figurations of embodied concepts—in Roo(u)ting are key to imagining other ways of living, which have conceptual power rooted in material reality as I work with ontologies of matter and their semiotics, whilst transforming it to create a hybrid porous body through the assemblage.

Astrida Neimanis takes this thought forward when she states, "Figurations of bodies [are] an experiment to negotiate the paradox of bodies" (Neimanis 2017, 19). I see the tension between human-more-than-human, rooted-flowing, single-multiple subjectivities as resonant of some of the paradoxes that the research addresses. The former tension between my alienated and yearning self—reaching inward yet outward, fragmented yet unified, existential yet desiring—are reflective of the binaries propagated by humanists, to which I fell formerly, prey to. To quote Bennett,

*"vital materiality better captures an 'alien' quality of our own flesh, and in doing so reminds humans of the very radical character of the (fractious) kinship between the human and the nonhuman" (Bennett, 2010, 112).*

The very elastic nature of the paradox of alienated-desiring self and differences (not seen negatively), between bodies of human and more-than-human was the fuel to undo these binaries not from outside but from within the tension of difference and relations with materiality. It led me to participate in this artistic-philosophical-material inquiry into Becomings.

### *Hospitality*

Roo(u)ting situates itself in performance art, while nestled in the network of posthumanist philosophy and phenomenology, to bring intra-action with everyday objects and their vitality to the foreground, to move the isolated human closer to the ignored 'other', as co-dependent and co-habituating bodies. The works of posthumanist philosophers, especially Rosi Braidotti, Jane Bennett, Stacy Alaimo, Astrida Neimanis and Deleuze and Guattari address the 'entangled agencies' (Barad, 2007, 33) and becomings of our bodies. Applying hospitality as the foundation of encounters in the work is supported by Charlie Gere's non-relational aesthetics (Gere, 2008) which promotes receiving the 'other' through hospitality. An intimate caring intra-action with matter in Roo(u)ting is to inculcate hospitable communication amidst bodies.

The focus of the next Chapter will be Bennett's matter, as vital self-organisation of materiality; Neimanis's embodiment with more-than-human bodies as wet relations that mod(e)ify one another; Braidotti's subjectivity as nomadic becomings with desire as its propellant; Stacy Alaimo's porous bodies; and finally Deleuze's smooth and striated space, and becoming with. These concepts consider bodies as interconnected and open systems characterised by change and movement within assemblages. I am inspired by Stewarts work on affects emerging from the ordinary—the realm of the everyday

objects and events—as forces that map connections and “puncture and possess one, to make oneself its object, if only in passing” (Stewart, 2007, 116). Roo(u)ting invites bodies to puncture discrete boundary-making practices to contingently possess different subjectivities.

#### *Artist Interlocutors*

Simultaneously, engaging with methods of performance artists Charlotte Grum, Monali Meher and Annette Arlander, who explore the concepts of intra-action, affect and becomings, have inspired my methods. Charlotte Grum works in the multimodal intersections of subjectivity and materiality. In her work, *Becoming Sheep* (Grum, 2015), she connected herself to a sheep for 5 weeks to intra-act with the animal in the heath habitat. She explores the entangled becomings with a sheep by traversing multiple subject positions. De-subjectification and performative encounters with material and site in her work have influenced the way I approach working with space, as a non-human body, in Roo(u)ting. The creation of a multisensorial assemblage was important for me to find ways to assimilate ‘how matter comes to matter’ (Barad, 2007) through direct material engagement, and the emergence of the ‘social’ as entangled within the assemblage, embodied and performed through different modes of exchange.

Monali Meher’s works especially *Red Myth* (Meher, 2006),

where she wrapped objects in red wool to transform their ‘skin’, and *Old Fashioned* (Meher, 2003) where she performed with potatoes having politically charged words inscribed on them, which were then peeled and boiled, are reflective of her interest in material transformation. The element that particularly interests me is the fusion of matter and memory through ritualistic actions that are drawn from her Indian roots but seek to transform it. Thereby, both incorporating and transforming her personal identity, the meeting of the outer and the inner world. The variety of materials used is an amalgamation of her hybrid state of being—that which hails from a certain culture (Indian) and is now embedded in another (European). I find resonances with this re-location and creation of new figurations, not by abandoning but by drawing from figurations I come from (my Indian and past becomings) to seek new figurations (multitudinous body—Indian-born now in Europe, globalised, more-than-human body).

Annette Arlander’s live art and video works explore intra-actions with landscape. In her work *Performing with a Pine Tree* (Arlander, 2019); I perceive a contemplative approach, incorporating stillness and movement, and juxtapositioning of human and landscape, as a means of attunement with the environment. Her use of video to show vitality of matter and intra-actions with it, has inspired my incorporation of video as an object that intra-acts, and an apparatus of documenting

ontologies of other bodies in my research. Arlander's contemplative mode has inspired my method of 'meditating with objects', an attunement practice via engaging in dynamic meditation with objects. In Roo(u)ting, through the repetition of the live action of grating beetroots, a mode of dynamic meditation takes place, altering my mental and physical state, and through participatory interventions, the audience is encouraged to have a direct tactile engagement with material.

*Lexicon: Matrix and Ontological Hybridism*

Aforementioned interlocutors are vital in setting the subject area of this research, which undertakes the potentialities of Becomings through a multimodal approach (incorporating live action, installation, video, everyday organic and inorganic objects and flesh). I am interested in modulating spatio-temporal coordinates of the assemblage—routing and intra-acting with material-semiotic knots—through memory and material embodiment by dint of dynamic meditation through labour, duration and repetition (live action), and the audience's material and spatial engagement. My lexicon matrix and ontological hybridism provide the lens through which the assemblage of Roo(u)ting is formed. Matrix in my practice refers to the set of conditions of repetition, duration and interconnectedness of bodies that actively hold space for something to affect and develop, determined by co-dependency amidst bodies of matter. My practice aims

towards an ontological hybridism of our transcorporeal bodies—exchanging and transforming one another, to become one and many, simultaneously. The notion of 'hybrid' as a composition of mixed origin is helpful in thinking about our ontologies as a mixture of human and more-than-human, as opposed to boundary-making practices of separation.

In Roo(u)ting, material bodies—our physicalities and ontologies—are composed by sharing space with each other as "ontologically one, formally diverse" (Deleuze, 1994). The practice of embodiment, like Becoming, refuses the idea of differential separation between the self and other. Difference is tackled through diffraction as a metaphor for inquiry into Becoming with, by paying attention to changes, interferences and effects that create something ontologically new. Roo(u)ting looks at holding space for these flows, to open up multifarious subject positions. Through being attentive to the differences of our bodies, ontology becomes shared and hybrid in performative relations with one another. Ontologically hybrid bodies encountering each other in Roo(u)ting reveal synergies, tensions, unwritten contracts, embodied communication and shifts in subjectivity that take place in a matrix—a system of conditions allowing for the processual becoming with agential matter.

The matrix of Roo(u)ting, composes an affective assemblage for something to evolve. The material engagement of the



audience through grating beetroots; making beetroot paper; juicing beetroots; dyeing cloth; imprinting objects(Objectiography); and my durational grating of beetroots is situated among other more-than-human bodies such as audio and videos, manifesting a multisensorial affective matrix. Routing (choosing paths of relation) through this rhizomatic web approaches space as 'smooth and striated space' (Deleuze, 1988, 479), temporally and continually changing, and "has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things [...]" (Deleuze, 1988, 25). The ability of the beetroot to modify bodies intra-acting with it and for it to be modified into different forms in return, reveal the agency of materials to shift, create affects and different subject positions, based on the chosen route (the choice of encounter determines the nature of emergent affects and subjectivity) of engagement. The dynamism of our forces produce phenomena that bring about affects in our physicality and consciousness.

The matrix, as an ecology, fosters dynamic relations by consciously creating conditions of 'rooting' and 'routing' as that which is fixed but flowing, stable but contingent, through a composition of actions that require our bodies to work together. I have been driven to re-work the nature-culture dualism by bridging our materialities to become powerful agents that exchange and generate "phenomena-in-their-becoming" (Barad, 2007). As a whole the matrix

of ontologically hybrid bodies is an embodiment of wet relations, multifarious in its possibilities, as agency transfers from body to body, giving rise to a radical openness to the ever evolving world of the performance and beyond. To quote Braidotti from *Writing as a Nomadic Subject* (Braidotti, 2014) -

*"...material (matter-real) coordinates that, assembled and composed in a sustainable and enduring manner, allow for the qualitative transformation of the affects and the forces involved. They thus trigger the process of becoming" (Braidotti, 2014, 127).*

The triggers are transferable to our lives beyond the performance. My inquiry into the capacity of materialities to overwhelm the rationality of human consciousness, and to modify human bodies and minds, as they in turn are modified too, helps in expanding the concept of the self from who 'I am' (rooted) to what 'I can become' (routing) through performing wet relational encounters with objects.

## CHAPTER TWO: LIQUID ONTOLOGIES AND THEORETICAL FLOWS

*"When you remember to become what you are - a subject-in-becoming - you actually reinvent yourself on the basis of what you hope you could become, with a little help from your friends."  
Braidotti (2014, 172-173)*

The artistic research functions as an assemblage of theories and practices, forming symbiotic alliances to create experiential manifestations of key theories, in order to push them forward, via devised methods for a performance art practice. In this chapter, I am going to take you through: the connection between desire and affects as Becomings to understand how bodies modify one another; understanding how fluid embodiments break the notion of discrete boundaries; and flows of relationality amidst bodies of matter to understand how they cohabitate in an assemblage, creating a multitudinous body. The practice aims at performing our material entanglements with ordinary objects to offer embodied knowledge in return.

The relationality of theory and my practice is essential in making tangible the conceptual and material power vested in them. Initially, it was a struggle to grasp some of the theories as their multifarious interconnections can be a challenge to present coherently. Even though there are various sub-roots to the concepts I have engaged with, Becoming, wet relations, and assemblage remain a key to understanding the conceptual

forces that substantiate the work. Rooting them with my artistic practice has been a way to navigate the concepts and make meaning through material embodiment. For the purpose of the thesis, I would like to first set the theoretical foundation in this Chapter, in order to later elaborate on the creative process of theory-practice symbiosis. This helps me attend to the aforementioned challenge and thus hopefully make it accessible for you, the reader.

### *Desire-Affect-Becomings*

In Deleuze and Guattari's book *A Thousand Plateaus*, their concept of Becoming-animal has been influential for me to think/practice becoming-thing. They suggest that becoming-animal comes from the fascination for the pack, for multiplicity and for that which is 'outside' or perhaps related to the "multiplicity already dwelling within us" (Deleuze, 2004, 240). This fascination with the 'outside' has alliances to desire for the 'other', and with Jane Bennett's term 'call of things', as the agency of matter to have a pull towards it, as a result of matter's innate vitality. This relation with desire is further elaborated by Braidotti when stating, "Desire to know and to say is vital to the desire to become in the process of becoming-subject" (Braidotti, 2014, 169). The desire for 'other' heterogeneous bodies, multiplicity and becoming is a key element in the continual formation and reformation of subjectivity and the freedom to do so.

According to Deleuze, multiplicity is regarded the same as Becoming because of the symbiotic relations between heterogeneous elements that have dimensions that are constantly transforming and modifying one another. (Deleuze, 2004, 249).

He further states,

*"Starting from the forms one has, the subject one is, the organs one has, or the functions one fulfils, becoming is to extract particles between which one establishes the relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness that are closest to what one is becoming, and through which one becomes... This is the sense in which becoming is the process of desire" (Deleuze, 2004, 272).*

Desire to reach out, to touch, to embody, to affect, to think, to feel are all forces that drive the movements and rests, tensions and intensities that emerge through relations between bodies. Relations give rise to affecting and being affected through proximity and interconnectedness of our materialities. Affects are Becomings—in the affective state our bodies are becoming-molecular, emitting and extracting particles in relation. Becom(th)ings finds alliances with the Deleuzian becoming-molecular—the material elements bodies relate to, and the potential to affect within its given power. Roo(u)ting is attending to the process of subjectivity as negotiations and shifts between power and desire when intra-acting with the innate vitality of beetroots and everyday objects, through navigating paths of tactile relations.

The perception of subject-object, changes amidst relations

and movements of proximate bodies. Perceptions are in flux as bodies pass from one to another exchanging affects, as a result de-territorialising bodies and their boundaries. Through a molecular level of change in perception of what and who our bodies are, an expansive, inclusive, and ecological way of understanding the self as in and of the world materialises. This in turn has significant impact on the current socio-cultural and ecological crisis, offering potential reformations for it. The expansion of a fixed subjectivity is an inter-play of imagination and memory intra-acting with tactile relations amidst bodies of matter in haptic spaces. Braidotti gives weight to imagination and memory as aids in remembering these moments of intensities and affective forces experienced with the help of some 'friends'— everyday intimate objects that I share my life with.

#### *Fluid Embodiments*

The question of boundaries with 'friends' are re-negotiated in relations that are de-territorialised. In *Ordinary Affects*, Kathleen Stewart regards the subject as being touched by a force that punctures and possesses to transitively become its object. (Stewart, 2007, 116). Bodies act as interfaces of subject-object exchange through blurred boundaries that can be punctured and possessed contingently. Stacy Alaimo terms it as trans-corporeal nature of bodies allowing for interchangeability, in a system of porous bodies, sustained by movements and flows of relation and exchange. Levi R.

Bryant reading Alaimo states that-

*"it is because bodies are characterized by this porosity that intimacy is an intimacy with a world beyond the boundaries of their membranes...Entities flow through each other, influencing and modifying each other". (Bryant, 2012).  
The subject-in-becoming does not end at one's own skin; it can be seen as that which surpasses established categories, made malleable through imagination and memory.*

Imagining other ways of being, through remembering embodied materiality in performance encounters, mobilises the process of becoming. In *Nomadic Subjects* Braidotti states-

*"The body, or the embodiment of the subject is to be understood as neither a biological nor a sociological category but rather as a point of overlapping between the physical, the symbolic and the sociological" (Braidotti, 1994, 4).*

Roo(u)ting pushes this forward by attending to the layered nature of bodies by conceptually and practically combining the established categories of culture/nature, human/non-human, material/semiotic by overlapping these layers to make visible the fluid nature of boundaries and subjectivities, with the hope to generate a fluid sensibility that is transferable to life beyond the space of Roo(u)ting.

In *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology* Neimanis's concept of 'watery embodiments' (Neimanis, 2017, 2) challenges humanist—bodies as discrete and autonomous subjects—understanding of embodiment. Neimanis proposes 'wet relations' (Neimanis, 2017, 3-4) of bodies because "our

wet matters are in constant process of intake, transformation, and exchange—drinking, peeing, sweating, sponging, weeping” (Neimanis, 2017, 2). Trans-corporeality challenges anthropocentrism by highlighting the nature of porous and fluid bodies, enfleshed in one another. “We are bodies that require other bodies of other waters to bathe us into being” (Neimanis, 2017, 3). Roo(u)ting per/forms these wet relations to liquefy boundaries of human and objects, to bathe us into becoming fluid subjects that question where the human ends and the object begins and what paths of relations, and thus subjectivities, are steered through an embodied materiality.

Rooting and Routing—rooted but flowing—comes from the fluid physical, symbolic, and sociological nature of bodies. Through a watery understanding of embodiment and subjectivity, Becom(th)ings proposes becoming-things as a dissolving of the concrete and discrete sense of self through practicing dynamic meditation with objects. In tandem to posthumanist thinking, this is not to say that all bodies are one, but rather all bodies are different, not separate. Like waves lapping on a shore—forming and reforming lines and boundaries on the sand, it is in the in-between space (wet shore) of entangled encounters amidst different bodies that the continual formation and dissolving of boundaries emerge. It looks to not only enhance the porosity of the human body but also to de-condition the field of human perception to absorb the potential of becoming-things.

### *Assemblage*

Material embodiments and my proposed dissolutions of self are not separate from the politics of location. It is situated in a contingent spatio-temporal assemblage of fixed and moving elements from the everyday, having flows of movements and rests, speeds and slowness in the performance space. Deleuze’s smooth and striated spaces, looks at spaces as:

*“smooth space is filled by events or haecceities, far more than by formed and perceived things. It is a space of affects, more than one of properties. It is haptic rather than optical perception. Whereas in the striated, forms organize a matter, in the smooth, materials signal forces” (Deleuze, 2004, 479)*

The assemblage of Roo(u)ting is influenced by this nuanced understanding of space and the combinations of relational tactile forces and flows at work. Flows continually create a space with intensities and tensions, connected by accumulation and repetition, through the bodies of objects, participants, duration and space. Bennett writes about the Spinozist bodies as modes comprising of extensive parts in self-organised assemblages. “[M]ode’, then, is to form alliances and enter assemblages: it is to mod(e)ify and be modified by others” (Bennett, 2010, 22). Alliances and modifications form assemblages, as it “acts on semiotic flows, material flows, and social flows simultaneously...” (Deleuze, 2004, 22-23). When working with objects, their materialities are not untethered from social and semiotic significances, and they are certainly not limited to it.

To incorporate knots of flows in the conceptual framework of the performance becomes essential to not reiterate the categorization of material and semiotic, nature and culture. Roo(u)ting takes into account these knots, and from there aims at rhizomatically co-creating via participation, new material ontologies, realities and subjectivities within the flow of the affective assemblage. Weaving theory and practice not only contributes in contextualising my practice, but it also contributes in putting these theories to tangible and experiential applications through performance art. Speaking diffractively, the practice also does something back to the theory. The entanglements of my material-bodily practices will be looked at in the next chapter, through the creative processes of Roo(u)ting, to anchor its conceptual forces with my methods, elucidating how I work through these theories with the desire to affect and transform it in return.

## CHAPTER THREE: CREATIVE AND MATERIAL FLOWS

*"The beet [root] is the ancient ancestor of the autumn moon, bearded, buried, all but fossilized; the dark green sails of the grounded moon-boat stitched with veins of primordial plasma..."*  
Tom Robbins, *Jitterbug Perfume* (1984)

Roo(u)ting, a conceptual and performance offshoot of the research Becom(th)ings, wishes to be one among many modes of reconfigurations of materialities and subjectivities through performance art, having the characteristic of multimodal becomings in a durational assemblage. Over the two years of research, the interplay of theory and practice resulted in an overlapping of practices and findings that coalesced to create the final performance. I will introduce the lexicon dialogic relations and graftification, and elaborate on how experiments with agency, affect, relations with objects, duration, endurance and mediums of video and audio, have been pivotal in devising certain artistic conditions, methods<sup>1</sup>, intuitive and conceptual processes for a postanthropocenic technique of communication. The research uses phenomenology, autobiography and diffractive methodologies to collect data and streamline the dimensions involved for creating the assemblage of Roo(u)ting.

<sup>1</sup> Refer to my Posthumanist Performance Art Manual: <https://anushka94nair.wixsite.com/performanceartblog/posthumanist-performance-art-manual>



**HOME OF  
PERFORMANCE  
PRACTICES**



figure 1

*The Call of Things*

It all began with a call, a pull, and a desire. Through deliberate experimentation, everyday objects began to beckon and daily activities, as conscious spaces of intimate entanglements, became my focus. I started attending to objects in private and public space that called out to me and affected my physicality via sustained and/or sudden intensities of attention. To attend to the 'call of things' (Bennett, 2010, 4) was my first method to decondition my perception, limited by my human form and habit. I practiced perceptive walking in the city of Arnhem by observing, relating and communicating with found objects that drew my attention towards them and compelled me to punctuate my immediate physical responses—per/forming an encounter with a conscious stopping and being stopped (attending to the phenomena of the 'call of things'). Emotions, memories and imaginations were stirred at the moment of encounter.

I used photography, videography and poetry as tools to document the encounters. The videos, *Water Lines* and *Breathing with Clouds*, in *Roo(u)ting*, were an extension of this practice. The focus was to not only expand the scope of my attention and instinct but also to take into account the self-organising power of abandoned objects in their temporal space, hinting at the organic creation of agential and affective assemblages—resultant of human and more-than-human intra-actions, as bodies move and compose their positions in

space. Their agency to physically and visually captivate me, the perceptive walker, was influential in priming my attention and instincts.

The seed of *Roo(u)ting* was planted with the intense desire to eat *pacchadi*, a dish prepared from beetroots ( a traditional South Indian recipe originating from my paternal lineage). I had never harboured a fascination for beetroots, until my very first encounter of cooking (an everyday ritual) with them. Grating beetroots to prepare the dish, was a captivating encounter for me, as the agential vitality of beetroots came alive through its inky passionate red colour spreading and being absorbed by my skin, as a result colouring my body intensely (even beyond the duration of the action). It provoked captivation through desire, imagination, material agency and its call. The actions of grating, eating, and drinking the beetroot juice, and my corporeal relation with the grater, were vital objects/actions for our intra-action to take place. A performative act tinted by the implicit tension of changing the form of beetroots for the purpose of consumption. The subsuming of an organic object has the power to affect my emotional and physical state, as I have the power to affect its form from whole, to grated to liquid, reflecting the entangled nature of our bodies. Grating worked in tandem with my second method, *Meditating with Objects* that focussed on furthering the deconditioning of human perception and expanding the porosity of my body.





**HOME OF  
PERFORMANCE  
PRACTICES**

figure 2

*Meditating with Objects*

By studying Annette Arlanders *Performing with Pine Trees*, I observed her method of working with stillness and attunement. To push this forward, via a nurtured attention and intuition of my body through my first method, *Meditating with Objects*, focuses on attending to animations of objects that often go unnoticed by human perception. By consciously and durationally attending to the animations of the inanimate, I used this method for attunement/meditation with chosen objects based on attending to their call, through physical contact and conscious dissolving of the discrete self, by allowing my body to be porous to the subtle perceptions of objects, to become with-. My method involved the reversal of the negation of the self/other achieved by focussing on breath and sensations occurring in the 'human' meditator's body (as a result putting the focus on one's own body more than on the environment). My method is instead a dissolving with and into the chosen 'other' by being perceptive to the intra-relational subtleties of transformations.

The action of grating, juicing, pigmenting my body (skin absorbing the juice) and consuming the juice (object entering and fusing chemically), was developed as a dynamic meditative ritual with objects—grater, beetroots, sponge, bowl—to attune and attend to the fluidity of bodies via the exchange of materiality, perceptions, affects and mental and physical dissolution of boundaries (Neimanis' wet relations).

These processes affected my body physiologically, causing sensations in my throat; expanding my blood vessels; enriching it with nutrients and increasing oxygen flow; changing the texture of my skin, whilst the form of beetroots modified from solid to semi-solid to liquid, through the agential action of grating. Affects are Becomings as they instil perceptual, physiological and mental processes that alter subjectivities, thus allowing for a subject to be in the process of transformation and becomings.

*Relations*

The live action is situated within a particular nature of performing relations with objects. This brings me to the third lexicon, operating as a method, dialogic relations, where building a contractual relation in an intra-active encounter with objects requires the conditions of labour, endurance and duration. An approach of relation-building with objects through hospitality and care, to enable spaces for responsibility and negotiations in our encounters. Mikhail Bakhtin in *The Dialogic Imagination* (Bakhtin, 1981), proposes a linguistic philosophical theme—dialogic relations—where I/other in human relations are made through verbal interaction. I replace 'linguistics' with 'performance art' and 'human relations' with 'human-object relations'. My expansion of this lexicon looks at affective material communication as embodied and not merely verbal. With this method, our bodies encounter one another through specific performative



**HOME OF  
PERFORMANCE  
PRACTICES**



figure 3

intra-actions and conditions that depend on tactile dialogue.

Studying Charlotte Grums work *Becoming Sheep* and my findings from previous performances—I worked with performing intra-active encounters with objects through a contract of physical attachment/contact and enduring commitment to an action. I discovered that our relations need to be contractual; occurring over a duration of time (for material exchange and emergent subjectivities) while being involved in a labour-endurance based dynamic meditation. The ritualistic action situated in an interconnected space stems from these conditions, to sustain and make visible the affective capacities of our entangled materialities that have the agency to modify and be modified, cyclically flowing from one to the other, liquefying our boundaries. As Braidotti states, “what is mobilised is one’s capacity to feel, sense, process and sustain the impact with the complex materiality of that ‘outside’” (Braidotti, 2014, 172). The call of beetroots—‘outside’—and my body—assumedly ‘inside’—are co-dependent in a desirable becoming-molecular of mutual modification and subsumption, becoming ontologically hybrid. It makes this intra-action different from *Pine and Sheep*, as they are not subsumed. *Becoming-beetroot* is anchored by an invisible contract between/in our bodies, turning us both inside-out, through material exchange.

### *Material-Semiotic Knots*

The method of attending to call of things, meditating with objects and per/forming contractual relations revealed to me the ‘entangled agencies’ (Barad, 2007, 33/141) of becoming with objects and ‘wet relations’ (Niemanis, 2017, 2/3) as processes intrinsic in daily intimate becomings with everyday objects. To push this forward, creating conditions of intimacy—physical and emotional—are the key to constructing space for material embodiments. The entanglements dealt so far have been articulated via phenomenological and embodied impacts of our intra-actions. By the recurrent confluence of material affinity and symbolic forces in my practice, it became increasingly clear to me that the ‘material-semiotic knots’ (Neimanis, 2017, 5) of our bodies of matter are inseparable. This reflected in understanding Monali Meher’s work as I resonated with the interlinking of matter and memory through ritual (cultural/personal) and imagination (reconfigurations of memories). Ritualistic acts for me are rhythms that feed dynamic meditation by extracting memories from my cultural roots to create new becomings of a hybrid material-semiotic self—multitudinous body.

The personal-semiotic significances of beetroots as a family dish associated with daily comfort food originating from my paternal ancestry and the scientific-symbolic imaginations of beetroots—water laden root vegetables containing earthbound energies—as heart-blood-organ synchronised



**HOME OF  
PERFORMANCE  
PRACTICES**

figure 4

with their biological capacity to purify my heart by increasing oxygen flow (among other affects) and as opposed to all this, the sociological tendencies of treating beetroots as the 'other' among vegetables, as a historically neglected food, which people avoided touching because of its bleeding pigment, its strong earthy smell and challenges of its palatability that require adopting an acquired taste and developing a sensibility to appreciate its vitality. Thus, making it a vegetable to be loved or loathed. The beetroot's symbolic-sociological and material-molecular overlapping, and our inky passionate encounters, conceptually interested me. The beetroot and I are inextricably featured by an "overlapping between the physical, the symbolic, and the sociological" (Braidotti, 1994, 4). The material-semiotic knots of our bodies manifest in Roo(u)ting by combining the molecular and the cultural. Intra-active forces of the assemblage were created via participatory interventions, and transformations of material via handmade paper made from beetroots; dyeing cloth in beetroot juice; pulping; juicing; and grating beetroots. All these actions drive the assemblage forward, creating a multitudinous body of emergent subjectivities and Becomings-in-process.

#### *Graftification*

The accumulation of methods and conditions direct me towards the fourth method and lexicon that I term graftification situated in a matrix—a set of synergetic conditions for something to develop and affect. Graftification is a method

to compose assemblages of bodies in different forms and registers—beetroots in their different forms, participatory interventions of material embodiments through scores, audio and video bodies, smells, tastes, textures in a contingent spatio-temporal environment. The process of interfusing interventions is inspired by 'grafting' from biology, as a horticultural technique whereby tissues of plants are joined so as to continue their growth together. Through this conceptual and practical composition of matter in space, bodies of different temporalities and registers enter an assemblage.

As an artistic tool, this method is used to join, compose and layer the space to create different paths or routes of relation with different (not separate) bodies—creating paper from beetroot pulp; printing objects on beetroot paper (Objectiography); grating beetroots; dyeing cloth in beetroot juice; the movements of hung wet dyed cloth; an audio in the Malayalam language; videos of water forming and dissolving lines on a shore, and my body breathing with the movement of projections of clouds. Each has their affective capacities and temporalities that come together by the choice of routes taken during participation. This method is used to challenge boundary-making practices to cultivate a,

*"fluid sensibility[...]central to the creative process. It combines the accuracy of the cartographer with the hyper-sensitivity of the sensualist in apprehending the precise quality of an assemblage of elements" (Braidotti, 2014, 171-172).*

The aim was to create an assemblage where emergent subjectivities are facilitated through the call of things in space, sensuous material engagements and the agency to choose routes of relations within the spatio-temporal map of the assemblage.

### *Objectiography*

The use of autobiography as a method to account for the phenomenological processes of heuristic inquiry, through a posthumanist lens, urged me to rethink the human-centred writing practice of autobiography with 'authorship' and 'subject hood', relegated only to the human. Through Objectiography, I attempt to decentre the human auto/self by inculcating ethics of intra-action with everyday objects. The artistic intervention Objectiography addresses this queering of autobiography by reprinting objects in the entangled notion of the self. Participants were invited to submerge objects, which called out to them, in black ink and imprint them on beetroot paper. The medium of black ink (as done for writing textual language) was used to make visible the forms, textures and affordances of objects as material language—expressed through intra-acting with objects.

The inking of the participants' skin and of the object's peripheral surface, along with their imprints on paper, made visible the agential traces of material and emergent subjective processes. The embodied action offers insights

into emergent subjectivities through the abstract language of forms. The subject-object positions are made malleable as the imprinted objects become the language for self-expression, entangled and dependent on the agency of the object's call and form. Authorship becomes shared instead of hierarchical, thus making Objectiography an autobiography that makes visible the material exchange and traces of entangled bodies and subjectivities.

### *Decentring the 'Human'*

Simultaneously, it was essential for me to address the problematic of gaze<sup>2</sup> being singularly centred to the 'human' performer only. Thus, participation was crucial for fragmenting attention from spectatorship to material embodiment, and by decentering my body, through dramaturgical choices of my position in space as one among many bodies, which held implicit forms of engagement. Having no explicit engagement with participants was a choice made to avoid the tendency of human-to-human animacies to dominate the more subtle and intimate animacies of objects in space. Similarly, I worked with directing the movement of participants, as bodies that need not be fixed to one place but rather moving with periods of rest and speeds, in a multisensorial environment that has different calls. The participants and assemblage transform one another. In this sense, the assemblage was

<sup>2</sup> I understand that the dramaturgical choices of decentring the human, comes with the limitation of catering primarily to the human gaze and not the gazes of other bodies.



HOME OF  
PERFORMANCE  
PRACTICES

figure 5



composed as an intra-active space rather than inter-active, as objects in space are not waiting to be inscribed or moved by participants, but rather are agential in moving and touching the participants, as much as they are moved and touched in return. The touching<sup>3</sup> and penetration of boundaries of one another's bodies, extends to life beyond the performance through a vial of beetroot juice to drink and a recipe of pacchadi—a cultural and ancestral artefact—to enter the bodies and daily lives of the participants of Roo(u)ting.

### *Flows of Assemblage*

The methods articulated, create spaces for reaching states of Becomings, as a phenomena-in-process, occurring in encounters that grow, develop and affect as bodies flow from one into another whilst creating traces, shifts, slownesses and movements, rests, tensions and intensities in a 'smooth and striated space' (Deleuze, 1988, 479), where transformation and Becomings are in flow. Bodies in space find connections and interferences to create intensities through elements that are fixed and/or moving—rooted but flowing—in space. For example, if one chose to grate a beetroot, you could either eat it or leave it or choose to juice it in the dyeing station, where a white cloth could be dyed and then hung to dry,

<sup>3</sup> In the context of a global problematisation of human-human touch and relationality in a COVID world, urges me to think about the implicit forms of sociality and touch emergent via implicit forms of human-human touch. Bodies of objects being touched by 'humans', create a tactile dialogue between human bodies too, as they indirectly touch one another. How is this problematized in a post-apocalyptic world where physical and embodied materiality problematizes sociality? I see echoes of such transferability between social and material practices (human-object-human loop), when 'humans' suffer the hostile practices of social stigmas and as a result objects they touch are also contaminated by the politics of power. Thus, affecting the ethics of care for objects.

as part of the Breathing with Clouds video installation. Depending on each route/s taken, different subject positions emerged. Through creating routes or paths of relation with interventions in space, bodies of matter grafted with each other, shifting, transforming and accumulating, to develop the space and bodies in it, (as our subjectivities change and become with), by affecting and transforming one another. Through this model of relational interconnections driven by active engagements with objects, I hoped to offer a space for becomings as processual—the influx transformation of one another over time and space—in the performance installation of Roo(u)ting.



figure 6

## CONCLUSION: WORLD IS AN OCEAN

*"I am rooted but I flow"*  
- *The Waves*, Virginia Woolf, (1933)

Thinking diffractively in my practice, I read insights through one another (theory-practice cycle) to attend to what else takes place—unique patterns and transformations—by thinking with- bodies of wet matter. "We are bodies of water" (Neimanis, 2017, 1). Through Roo(u)ting, a system of porous bodies, I found an emergent nomadic accumulation of matter and its flows that I term as 'multitudinous body'—co-created by the dissolvable boundaries of different bodies of matter and grafted by dynamic relations of affects and movement. The ontologically hybrid body is nomadic as it is featured by movements and non-fixity that is manifested through multiple points of interim habitation of participants with matter, leading to continued routes of relations in space. The lexicon nomadism operating in Roo(u)ting offers the scope to liquefy the fixed subject position that bodies inhabit as indicative of their identity.

### *Nomadism: Multitudinous Body*

The essentialised, pre-conceived figurations of 'who I am'—a body as a singular home—is reconfigured by co-habituating with and within other bodies of matter as material exchanges

occur. Bodies find multiple homes as they are urged to re-locate in a contingent spatio-temporal assemblage. The absence of a fixed point A to point B route indicating a concretised 'right' way of engaging gave the opportunity for new, playful and unexpected ways of doing and moving in space. Even within the indicative structure of the interventions, participants found different ways of doing or resisting, relating, holding and becoming with each other through implicit and explicit forms of engagement, thus revealing the operation and distribution of different agencies and subjectivities across space and time.

The multitudinous body is not merely one body becoming the other but rather bodies coming together to create a new body, which is not 'third' but rather 'multitudinous'. 'Third' reiterates the categorised domination of a 'first' and a 'second' body, whereas 'multitudinous' suggests a distributed agency. This body is not marked by contradictions between bodies but rather contraries, where object and human are in one another already, not separate. The multitudinous body and its subjectivity/ies (singular-plural, one yet many, personal and collective) is marked by a politics of location that has traces of other bodies, textures and intensities, duration and space, movements and slownesses of that particular spatio-temporal environment. It is subject to change if re-performed in the same or different space, as the emergent flows particular to that new space-time-materiality, will have

different possibilities of relations and movements creating a different assemblage, and thus different subjectivity/vies.

### *Object Decolonisation*

Insights gained through bodies entering and leaving, shifting and accumulating the assemblage illuminates the de-territorialisation of bodies. Fluid boundaries of bodies enable material exchange and reduce separations between them, thus making what we hold on to, i.e. fixed subject hood, the 'right' way of doing things, resistance to engagement (because of territorialising practices of 'who I am'), malleable. The decentring and softening of concretised subjectivity is made possible via the lexicon object decolonisation—withdrawal of human domination through care and tactile dialogue as an act of decolonising objects. Regarding objects as passive, non-affective, and enslaved by solely functional roles comes from a narcissistic human exceptionalism fuelled by separatist thoughts, which act as defences for retaining control to protect the illusion of a subject untouched and not limited to forces of materiality.

Object decolonisation contextualises insights received from participants that engaged with the work. The understanding I gained is that entering the assemblage offered many possibilities which had a de-centring effect on the knowing, dominant, in control (human) subject. By being porous to the assemblage, the 'superior' human is pulled to withdraw

their control and leave the object independent to perform their agential affective calls, to which a porous human body can respond to with intimacy and care<sup>4</sup>. The shifts in subject positions from rushing through experiences, to doing something the 'right' way, to slowly forming sensuous relations with objects, to taking the time and space to allow fluid traversing of perceptive and material ontologies, are reflective of the contribution of object decolonisation as a practice of ethics of hospitality in per/forming wet relation with objects, freed from human enslavement and hostility. It combats neo-colonial politics of invisible relations of power that result in cultural and material notions of separation and territorialisation of bodies other than human.

### *Worlding*

Looking at effects of difference-making practices amidst bodies of matter brings forth the influence of "matter's dynamism [as] generative [...] in the sense of bringing forth new worlds of engaging in an ongoing reconfiguring of the world" (Barad, 2007, 170). The work gives me insight into the processes of worlding, as a negotiation of figurations of power, exploitation and disconnection through acknowledging differences and not separation; ambivalence and desire; and conflict and connection. It intends to embrace these differences by melting the barriers that "prevent us from

<sup>4</sup> I understand that there exists a larger structural violence built on capitalism and consumption, that objects are relegated to, which makes the ethics of care a privilege. But the nature of this privilege can be made inclusive through inculcating a fluid sensibility.

detecting (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling) a fuller range of the nonhuman powers circulating around and within human bodies" (Bennett, 2010, ix). Objects enable humans to become perceptive of their power to feel and gain insights into the dimensions of the self/ves. A self/ves, singular and plural, reconfigures its identity as rooted but flowing and a processual becoming with- which is entangled rather than alienated from the agencies of worlding.

The embodied knowledge gained through artistic expression contributes to new figurations of materiality and subjectivity as ongoing and temporary—becomings-in-process via an embodied knowledge-making practice which is not mediated. It is a direct material engagement where our bodies are not external to processes of knowledge creation. Embodied knowing, produced with bodies of matter, makes transferable the questions of ontology and what bodies are comprised of, and what they can do; the response-ability and accountability of material exchanges; ethics of care when relating with matter; practices of waste and consumption; and material relations when thinking as and through bodies of matter. "Learning, knowing, measuring, theorising and observing are all material practices intra-acting within the material world (Barad, 2007). Doing and thinking are entangled practices. The material-semiotic knots of the new figuration proposed—multitudinous body—reinstates through imagination and memory the kinship that bodies of matter

share, through intimate molecular commonalities and socio-cultural ancestry, thus making visible our rhizomatic intra-active relations.

Temporarily travelling in a rhizomatic assemblage of this nature opens up questions of interconnectedness of the material world outside the muddy waters of institutional spaces. A space influenced by its own political, physical and educational structure, characterized by limitations of being a studio space, a self-contained environment, which is removed from the natural environment, influences and determines the nature of the assemblage. The assemblage extends into the world beyond the studio walls, through the process of becoming as per/forming exchanges that enter the daily lives of participants and a simultaneous worlding—the figuration of multitudinous body. Roo(u)ting is transferable to the world beyond the art space as the experienced artistic work can function as an affective system that dilutes an anthropocentric lens of the world. Thereby, opening the floodgates to merge with the waters of everyday life.

#### *Transferability*

As juices enter my body and affect my material compositions whilst inculcating a fluid sensibility of intimacy, aliveness and connection, the entangled relations and affordances of matter with which we share domestic and public spaces, are made visible. Matter with which we share our intimacies,

desires and needs are inseparable from rituals of daily life. Co-dependency with everyday objects makes life possible—“We’ are in this together” (Braidotti, 2017). The transferability of the ethics of kinship—intra-active, co-habituating, and amorous bodies—via embodying the multitudinous body, can be transferable to human-human relations and relations with self, by dint of embodied knowledge that flows from body to body. The turbine of wet relations, generate an ethics of hospitable becomings, which if routinely powered towards everyday things can help reform human tendencies of conquest, consumption and hostility.

#### *Politics of Consumption*

The ethics of food waste emergent in Roo(u)ting, due to the large quantity of beetroots, was a challenge to address. It does raise questions regarding the politics of consumption addressed in the research. My attempt to attend to the micro-politics of waste was carried out by sourcing leftover beetroots from vegetable vendors, and objects from my household, and by recycling the materials after the performance. The abundance of matter, in the assemblage, coexisted with a fragile sense of scarcity, as the materials in question were not endlessly renewable. There was a limitation to the quantity of materials available which bring up questions of scarcity and abundance beyond the performance. The co-existence of scarcity-abundance, when thought diffractively, makes visible the patterns of behaviour and subjectivities that can

emerge from the so-called exhaustion of material. The notion of material exhaustion manifests from the assumption that objects become useless after their functional purpose is served.

The affective capacities of materials that are seemingly exhausted enable other affordances of movements and flows of subjectivity, possibly leaving a sense of no agency and/or a creative capacity to relate with materials beyond their prescribed functionality. A perceptive processual becoming body can find resonances with the precarity of scarcity and abundance of material with over consumptive human practices that exploit the contractual relations of the material world. Roo(u)ting hopes for the transferability of sustainable ecological thinking by nurturing the alienated, isolated self/ves towards a connected, creative and conscious ontology with bodies of the world. Roo(u)ting is conceptualised as one of the many potential offshoots of working with matter in a posthumanist performance art practice that can be transferable and modified to various other organic and inorganic bodies of matter in the future. I can use the model of methods proposed as a way to construct more performance assemblages that can per/form a desire and call towards my artist-researcher-'many an array of bodies' body.

### Conclusion

A recent diary entry illuminates a personal shift that the research has stirred within me,

*"I looked into the mirror and for the first time I felt truly real. My body as a material ('matter-real' (Braidotti, 170) was perceived in the reflection as more than a mere illusion. Her presence and tangibility came alive. I felt closer to her—my inner stranger...By being closer to the bodies of the world, I am closer to myself, and the cycle continues, rhizomatically" (Nair, 2021).*

The Search for Oases (introduction to the research) can be interpreted as a search for the self through navigating desert geographies of the alienated self, thirsty for the matter-real world as a bridge to subjectivity. Discovering Wells (Chapter One- elaborating posthumanist thinking), instead of oases, abundant with liquid ontologies and theoretical flows, (Chapter Two- streamlining key concepts) is dedicated to create roo(u)ting subjectivity/ies with creative and material flows, (Chapter Three- elucidating my artistic practice) of assemblages. World is an ocean (conclusion of the research)—comprising of ecologies of artistic practices, knowledge, ethics, politics, learnings and transitive becomings, reconfigure ways of living. The transferability of the tidal forces of the research attempt to hydrate the roots of our wet relations of matter—creating through performance art, fertile routes for processual becom(th)ings.

## REFERENCES

- Abram, D., 1988. *Merleau-Ponty and the Voice of the Earth*. Environmental Ethics, 101-120
- Arlander, A., 2019. *Performing with a Pine Tree*. s.l.: Stockholm University of Arts.
- Bakhtin, M., 1981. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Austin: :University of Texas Press.
- Barad, K., 2007. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning..* 18th ed. s.l.:s.n.
- Barthes, R., 1970. *The Third Meaning*. s.l.:s.n.
- Bennett, J., 2010. *Vibrant Matter: A political ecology of things*. 18th ed. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Braidotti, R., 1994. *Nomadic subjects: Embodiment and sexual difference in contemporary feminist theory..* 18th ed. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Braidotti, R., 2014. *Writing as a Nomadic Subject*. Comparative Critical Studies, 11(2-3).
- Bryant, L. R., 2012. *larvalsubjects*. [Online]  
Available at: <https://larvalsubjects.wordpress.com/2012/05/24/stacy-alaimo-porous-bodies-and-trans-corporeality/>  
[Accessed 6 April 2021]
- Gere,C., M. Corris., 2008. *Non-relational Aesthetics*. 13th ed. London: Arwords Press.
- Grum, C., 2015. *Becoming Sheep*. s.l.: s.n.
- Guattari, G. D. F., 2004. *A Thousand Plateaus*. 18th ed. London: Continuum.
- Haraway, D., 2008. *When species meet*. 18th ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Heidegger, M., 1962. *Being and Time*. 7th ed. Malden: Blackwell.
- Hill, C., 2017. *More-than-reflective practices: Becoming a Diffractive Practitioner*. *Teacher Learning and Professional Development*, 2(1).
- Meher, M., 2003. *Old Fashioned*. Belo Horizonte: MIP, CEIA.
- Meher, M., 2006. *Red Myth*. Utrecht: Uithof Library.
- Neimanis, A., 2016. *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Robbins, T., 1984. *Jitterbug Perfume*. Toronto, Bantam Books.
- Stewart, K., 2007. *Ordinary Affects*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Woolf, V., 1933. *The Waves*. London, Published by Leonard and Virginia Woolf at the Hogarth Press.



**CHOR**

**PER**

**THEATRE PRACT**

**DEDISCIPLINED BO**

**DIGITAL PERF**

**CH**

**PERFORMANCE A**

**TH**

**DEDIS**

**CH**

**PERFORMA**

**THEATRE**

**DEDISCIPLINED BO**

**DIGITAL PERFORMANC**

**CHOREOG**



1  
2  
0  
2

PERFORMANCEPRACTICES.NL  
FB / INSTA: HOMEOPPERFORMANCEPRACTICES