ZANDILE DARKO

BECOMING TURTLE:

POSTHUMAN STRATEGIES OF PRACTICE

2022

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SYNOPSIS

BECOMING TURTLE: POSTHUMAN STRATEGIES OF PRACTICE is an artistic research engaging with different temporalities both human and non-human bodies hold, leading up to the performance TIME TURTLE in May 2022. Questioning current ways of knowledge production, singular narratives and categories, it is a search for strategies which encompasses a multitude of layered, nuanced and complex temporalities, stories and voices. Engaging in questions around epistemic violence, mislabelling and misplacing of bodies, this research offers empowering strategies of practice to rearrange temporal orientations and frameworks within a movement-based practice-led research. Unlearning and undoing on a physical level are at the centre of the employed strategies of practice which seek to make a different knowledge production possible. Through the exploration of embodying turtles and their stories I propose a critical rewriting of animal-human relation from a posthuman perspective, formulating the ground for a decolonial approach to artistic processes and academic discourses.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

DECLARATION

I, Zandile Darko hereby certify that I had personally carried out the work depicted in the thesis entitled, BECOMING TURTLE: POSTHUMAN STRAEGIES OF PRACTICE.

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

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FOREWORD

We live in a world where we are habitualised to squeeze everything into singular, narrow narratives and categories. This results in a tacit epistemic violence which we have learned to take for granted. Our continuous urge to quantify, name and identify is part of the colonial legacy which has naturalised itself in the name of science. Even in the sphere of artistic processes there seems to be limited space for things to emerge which are layered, complex and that do not fit into our categories and singular narratives. With this practice-led research I am searching for the fluid, layered, experiential and nuanced processes which allow us to enter the unknown territories of not already defined/existing categories. It is an endeavour that seeks to stay with the uncomfortableness of not knowing and learning to endure contradictions and complexities. Questions around epistemic violence are largely looked at as a textual question. This is also where I started, by questioning and experimenting with language. Yet, I have realised that this often leads from one misnaming to another, using words which have the same function of the ones I wanted to tear down. Temporality was key for me to question the very function of the name rather than the political correctness of the same.

INTRODUCTION
APPEARANCE OF TURTLES

(…) time turtle is calling
to leave
our paths and follow her through temporalities and time capsules. We can
become a particle of her armour, a bone of her vertebra- we can become the
material from which life springs since millions of years. Her richness makes
us humble
as we start to forget the origin of stories- where she began- where we started
to follow her. (…)
(Darko, 2022b)

This artistic research looks at the temporalities different bodies hold. Throughout the past two years I have been engaged with questions of how bodies are shaped by time, language and space. Which bodies can assert control over their time? How does time define whose bodies are taking up space/are allowed to take up space? Whose bodies' utterances are read and heard as language and how does this change through time?

At the beginning of my research turtles began speaking to me – through family members, embodiment and books. Turtles have led me to ask how creatures who are often portrayed by humans as characters of wisdom and temporality in stories and folktales[1] and which have been described as the gatekeepers of time itself, can help me engage in a different temporality?

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1 E.g. Kassiopeia in the 1973 published fable „Momo: oder die seltsame Geschichte von den Zeit-Dieben und von dem Kind, das den Menschen die gestohlene Zeit zurückbrachte" by Michael Ende.

Turtles and their stories came to me within the first two months of my research. I was editing a video in which I was embodying primates and reptiles, more specifically a giant tortoise. My father saw the material and asked me whether I knew that my great-grandfather had two turtles as pet animals just in front of his porch in Abofour (Ghana) and that my father loved to take care of them. My great-grandfather Kwabena Darko lived from approximately the 1880s, when Ghana was the British 'Gold Coast Colony', until the 1960s, witnessing Ghana's gaining of independence as the first African state in 1957. His two turtles, who survived him, witnessed pre-colonial times somewhere in the woods of West Africa as well as the nation building of Ghana[2]. While I learned about my great-grandfather on my father's side, my maternal grandmother surprised me when she told me her great-grandfather used to have a pet turtle in his garden too. My great-great- grandfather Theodor Thomas lived between 1870 until his death in 1932 in Silesia before it became Poland. Gathering from the descriptions my grandmother and my father provided for me, the turtles might have been related.

I did not search for the turtle, it found me. In this research I not only learned about these stories, I also learned that I am the mediator, the body in which these stories intersect and cross. The body who holds these different (imagined) times and geographies. TIME TURTLE is and becomes with and through me simultaneously symbol, animal, mythical creature, spirit animal.

In my use of the title TIME TURTLE, I am referring to my graduation piece TIME TURTLE as well as to turtles of various time periods, among them a mislabelled turtle in the 'Zoological Museum Hamburg'. TIME TURTLE stands also for the many turtles of whom we do not know their stories. To engage with her stories is a temporal experience. Another portal opened when I learned that a female turtle was archived in the Zoological Museum Hamburg, in my hometown (Hallermann, 1998). Her story of being brought to Hamburg in 1901 as a colonial object and being misplaced and mislabelled for almost a century became the centre of my graduation performance TIME TURTLE. Having been categorised as a new species from the Seychelles, DNA analysis showed much later that she is most likely not a new species but a West African mud turtle, very similar to the ones my father described to me and which are very common in Ghana (Akst, 2013). These stories led me to use interviews and conversations as a primary source of knowledge, engaging in autohistoria as developed by Chicana feminist theorist, author and activist Gloria Anzaldúa.

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2 The stories these two turtles could tell would be worth another paper and artistic research project.

In the first chapter "BODIES HOLDING DIFFERENT TIMES" I will be exploring how capitalistic time measurements and the construction of bodies are closely interrelated. Thinking with Cameroonian philosopher and political theorist Achille Mbembe and American philosopher Judith Butler I will engage with how control over movement of specific bodies is a timely matter and how language is not just descriptive but closely linked to our being in the world. I am deepening my arguments thinking along with British-Australian feminist scholar and writer Sara Ahmed.

In the second chapter "ENGAGEMENT WITH UNFOLD TECHNIQUE" I am showing how my engagement with the movement method UNFOLD TECHNIQUE[3], developed by Argentinian dancer, choreographer and teacher Valentina Bordenave, has shaped my research and how it helped me develop my own set of strategies of practice. I am underpinning the movement principles of undoing und unlearning with theoretical concepts from a postcolonial perspective with Spanish Scholar María do Mar Castro Varela, who refers to the postcolonial Indian scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, stating that unlearning is an active and critical act of intervening in hegemonic knowledge production (Castro Varela and Heinemann, 2016).

The third chapter "TIME TURTLE – EMBODIMENT OF DIFFERENT TEMPORALITIES" gives an insight into my findings through my graduation performance TIME TURTLE and the developed posthuman strategies of practice. Creating my own strategies of practice involved questions around unlearning, deep listening, presence and stillness, all temporal activities. What does it mean to be still and in motion at the same time? Can we experience a body as time? Can an awareness and attunement to the tiniest and smallest movement of the body create a different temporality/ a different experience of temporality for the performer and the audience? Jamaican dancer, choreographer and teacher Elsa Wolliaston and Gloria Anzaldúa have greatly influenced my work and the creation of the strategies of practice. This is also where I will briefly introduce the concept of intra-action with American feminist scholar Karen Barad and the posthumanist notion by Philosopher and feminist scholar Rosi Braidotti.

In chapter four "BODIES AS TIME" I will engage with the artistic interlocutors who have been on my side throughout this process and how their work influences my practice, consisting of a multidisciplinary art collective Black Quantum Futurism, Afro-American artist Nick Cave and Afro-American interdisciplinary theatre creator and director Diane Roberts.

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3 In the last days of writing this thesis I learned that the name of UNFOLD TECHNIQUE will be changed into UNFOLD method. More information will soon be accessible here https://www.unfoldmethod.com/

In the conclusion I will summarise my work and findings and forecast the possible advantages and limitations of this research as well as discuss possible future trajectories.

Spoken word and sound has played a major part in this research, therefore there are some hyperlinks in the text which lead to sound fragments which were part of the performance TIME TURTLE.

BODIES HOLDING DIFFERENT TIMES

Every time you decide to do what you want, you free an ancestor who is told 'get that water' when they wanted to rest or 'go clean that house!' when they wanted to be with their children or anything. So, every time you decide what to do with your time, it's a spell to undo time, isn't this fun?
(Black Quantum Futurism, 2020)

Time as a concept has been used as a measure to oppress and break specific bodies, to put them back together in measurable units which can be used and exploited. Time is an invisible force which can subjugate and (re)write/take away whole lives (Rasheedah, 2019). Yet, as an invisible force it is often not questioned and seen as an objective force which cannot be altered.

As mentioned before, within this thesis I will refer to TIME TURTLE as my graduation performance as much as the many stories which yet have to be told. The following paragraph gives you an idea about the performance itself[4].

In the performance myself and TIME TURTLE, a human female body and a turtle's mask are moving on a linear path, slowly crossing the space from house[5] right to house left over a period of 45 minutes, illuminated by spotlights positioned left and right on stage.

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4 A link to a video documentation can be found in the appendices.
5 All directions are house left and house right, referring to the directions on stage from the perspective of the audience.

Figure 1 Performance TIME TURTLE photo: Fenia Kotsopoulou

The path is visible as well as the lights which show the path. TIME TURTLE's stories live in our linear world. This, however, does not mean that there are no alternative temporalities which can be experienced (Rasheedah, 2019). Between the middle and house left a green, sparkling costume is floating in space, steadily moving throughout the performance. During the slow, subtle movement a soundscape is filling the air. As she moves slowly across the stage, a projection shows TIME TURTLE in an interview setting – a clear white room with a giant microphone – and we hear her voice speaking in German, English subtitles projected onto the screen.[6]

In the interview we learn about TIME TURTLE's way of being in the world as well as her story of being misplaced and mislabelled and spending a huge amount of her time in museums, accompanied by what researcher and science writer Jeff Akst calls "taxonomic confusion" (Akst, 2013, p. 1). We learn that TIME TURTLE's existence was questioned over time again and again, leading to DNA analysis and forensic examinations long after her death (murder), in the end scientists denied her existence altogether. When the performer reaches the sparkling green costume hanging in midair, she puts it on, transforming into one of the many shapes of TIME TURTLE and revealing another costume

hanging underneath the first, this one holding different plates similar to a turtle's shell, edged by golden sequins.

MISLABELING

With her theory of the performativity of language Judith Butler shows how our bodies are linguistic beings. Butler is explicitly concerned how the power of linguistic utterances can injure subjects. According to Butler (referring to French Philosopher Michel Foucault and to British Philosopher J.L Austin) language is not only descriptive, but holds the performative power to name, create and destroy. Referring to philosopher Louis Althusser and his concept of invocation, Butler argues that subjectification is constituted by language. An invocation does not describe an existing reality but introduces it first. Thus, an invocation first lends an identity to a subject and does not describe an already existing one. The possibility for a social existence of a subject is shaped and constituted by the temporal life of language (Butler, 1997). Butler further explains how a bodily existence is bound to being 'recognizable' in order to be addressed by the Other. This dependence on recognition by others can also be interpreted in the opposite direction; Not being able to position oneself linguistically can be equated here with a loss of one's social existence (Butler, 1997).

Understanding language as a means to measure and categorise, to name specific bodies and to decide if and

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6 The interview can be found in the appendices (in German and English) and can be listened to here (in German) https://soundcloud.com/user-836916281/time-turtle-interview/s-lAQRShxegK2

where they belong is always a temporal linguistic endeavour. We can see with TIME TURTLE's story how her body has been given and denied social recognizability through names in a timespan of roughly hundred years. She became what Butler describes as "an impossible scene, that of a body that has not yet been given social definition, a body that is, strictly speaking, not accessible to us, that nevertheless becomes accessible on the occasion of an address, a call, an interpellation that does not "discover" this body, but constitutes it fundamentally." (Butler, 1997, p. 5).

TIME TURTLE has been categorised as Pelosius seychellensis, a species from the Seychelles of which only three examples were ever found despite intensive researches, and therefore thought of as extinct (Stuckas, Fritz and Gemmel, 2013). Its existence was constituted (as Pelosius seychellensis) and denied (extinct) at the same time. Based on later findings through DNA analysis, researchers then categorised TIME TURTLE as a West African mud turtle, named Pelosius castaneus: "Consequently, we place P.[Pelosius] seychellensis into the synonymy of P. castaneus and delete P. [Pelosius] seychellensis from the list of extinct chelonian species and from the faunal list of the Seychelles" (Stuckas, Fritz and Gemmel, 2013, p. 6). Naming TIME TURTLE temporally categorised her into an existing framework of a species only to then 'delete' her again and deny her existence altogether, for time spans making her unrecognisable.

In her book "The Cultural Politics of Emotions" Sara Ahmed refers to Judith Butler and points out how performativity has a temporal dimension. In order to function, a performative speech act always has to reiterate what has been already said in the past in order to reformulate the convention and constitute what is not yet materialised. Therefore, it always refers to a past and points towards a future. The power and authority of Performativity "depend[s] upon how it recalls that which has already been brought into existence." (Ahmed, 2010, p. 93). We have seen how mislabelling and renaming has denied TIME TURTLE a social existence. A subject which has not been brought into existence cannot be called upon as we do not have any references in the past. Therefore, any phenomena which lacks words, which would need new words to be described because it has not yet happened or has not yet been witnessed, cannot exist due to its non-referentiality. TIME TURTLE's very existence did not fit into any frameworks – linguistic, timewise nor body wise, therefore her existence was denied within human made categories.

BORDERIZATION
The stories of pet turtles within my family happened on two continents at about the same time, yet in different temporalities, linked by the thread of shifting national borders. Upper Silesia, where my German ancestors came from, became Poland. The former British Gold Coast where

my Ghanaian ancestors came from became Ghana. Borders are a highly timely matter as Philosopher Achille Mbembe points out in his lecture "Bodies as Borders":

> *Borders are increasingly turned into mobile, portable, omnipresent and ubiquitous realities. The goal is to better control movement and speed, accelerating it here, decelerating it there and, in the process, sorting, recategorizing, reclassifying people with the goal of better selecting anew who is whom, who should be where and who shouldn't, in the name of security. (Mbembe, 2019)*

In the 20th century borders have shifted from tangible lines on paper and in geographies, to bodies which became themselves borders, to borders within and through our bodies (Mbembe, 2019). Mbembe analyses how borders and national territories are guarded by timely measurements, accelerating and decelerating the possibility to cross these borders for specific people. Speaking of the 'borderization' of bodies Mbembe states how human mobility became a key feature of a fragmented planet defined by separation, which operates at multiple speeds (Mbembe, 2019). Specific human bodies are denied working permits, they are held at airports and have to live in suspense awaiting travel permits.

The process of 'borderization' can be retraced in the herstory of TIME TURTLE. Her story of being displaced again and again by scientists who brought her from a private collection in Hamburg to the Zoological Museum of Hamburg and ultimately to Vienna to run DNA tests, unfolds over a period of almost one hundred years (Stuckas, Fritz and Gemmel,

2013). Hundred years in which TIME TURTLE became the epitome of a displaced and borderized body. TIME TURTLE was not just given different names - Stenotherus nigricans seychellensis, Pelosius castaneus, Pelosius seychellensis – but was allocated and categorised into very different geographies and timelines. Each name signified a different heritage, the Seychelles having a completely different flora, fauna and weather than West Africa. Each categorization and name incarcerated and enclosed her into a defined territory contained by borders. As stated above, Mbmebe goes even further, arguing with his term 'borderization' that there is a shift happening from geographical borders to the moving body being a border itself. This shift is happening because of "a new global partitioning between potentially risky bodies vs. bodies that are not." (Mbembe, 2019, p. 9). TIME TURTLE not being categorised meant her becoming a body as a potential threat, a risk where scientific measurements failed to bring forth clear and comprehensible answers. The Uneindeutigkeit[7] of her very being put the entire archiving institution into question. TIME TURTLE's body itsself became a border which was denied mobility and freedom. The ability to hold power over her own time and therefore over her own body was denied.

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7 This German term is part of my strategies of practice and will be elaborated in chapter three "EMBODIMENT OF DIFFERENT TEMPORALITIES".

ENGAGEMENT WITH 'UNFOLD TECHNIQUE'

As part of this research, I did a traineeship to learn about UNFOLD TECHNIQUE, a method developed and taught by Valentina Bordenave. The technique combines dance, improvisation and Alexander Technique and works on 'undoing' and 'unlearning' movement patterns and releasing muscular tension which most of us hold unconsciously within our bodies. To acknowledge that movement patterns and habits we have been practicing all of our life are not the best for our posture and health is an exercise to being able to stay with the unknown, as new habits and movement patterns are not-yet-there, not-yet-integrated. The foundation to engage in this process is an awareness in movement. The unlearning of movement habits becomes a tool to acquire a different knowledge which is mediated and transmitted through the body first. To bring movement habits to a conscious level and change them means to unlearn our habits on a cognitive level. To coordinate the bodily system in a new way is ultimately a mental process. Even though the work is focused on movement, a substantial part of the work happens in stillness, using the mind to direct one's attention to specific muscles, joints and parts of the skeleton. UNFOLD TECHNIQUE can therefore be seen as a practice of a defamiliarization of mental habits.

UNFOLD TECHNIQUE stands in contrast to many movement techniques which train the body to 'become better' at something. Using Alexander technique as a springboard, UNFOLD TECHNIQUE means practicing 'doing less'.

> (…) the goal of practicing non-doing is not simply to relax or quiet down but to give muscles a chance to release into length, which is quite different from relaxation because it requires a certain kind of energy, a toning up of muscles that cannot be achieved through relaxation. But there is another reason that non-doing is crucial, and that is that unless we stop our habitual activity, our muscles cannot release into length.
> (Dimon, 2015, p. 147)

As a performer and performance maker I have trained in various martial arts, yoga, and different dance styles. At the centre of my training stood an achievement; better coordination, more strength of specific muscles, better speed, more endurance etc. However, training with Valentina Bordenave the contrary was the focus: rather than 'doing more' it is all about 'doing less'. It is a technique which helps us to become aware of how habitual most of our movement patterns have become. Learning to differentiate the nuances between the sense of a released, lengthened muscle, relying more on the bodily support system and understanding on a cognitive level about the anatomy behind our movement is an ongoing process. There is no shortcut but to practice and train our sensitivity every day. It is not sufficient to feel the difference once, it is a daily process of remembering how the 'doing less' worked and actively applying it. The process of unlearning requires one to learn to become aware of one's habits in order to break, change and go beyond

those. Training in UNFOLD TECHNIQUE I learned to attune my muscles, joints and skeleton, to become accustomed to sensing the slightest shifts in my body and the subtle changes in my posture. It is an active doing and it can only be achieved through time and commitment to this practice. However, undoing lifelong habits is not something that comes naturally or easily. 'Doing less' often leaves one with a sense of not-yet-knowing, of entering a terrain of movement which is unknown and therefore often uncomfortable. This awareness within the body is an awareness which has to be trained first in stillness and can later be applied in movement. Therefore, the starting point in UNFOLD TECHNIQUE is always lying in semi supine for about 30 minutes, listening to one's body and directing one's attention to very specific muscles, joints and skeletal areas.[8]

UNLEARNING AND UNDOING AS EXERCISES OF TIME

> It seems to us that unlearning can be read and understood as a concrete decolonising strategy. What has to be trained is the production of agency without an imperial positioning and the feeling of supremacy that goes hand in hand with it.
> (Heinemann and do Mar Castro Varela, 2017, p. 265)

The training in UNFOLD TECHNIQUE I have described in the previous chapter is focused on the body and its structure.

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8 Semi supine is one of the classic Alexander positions on the floor, also known as 'constructive rest' position. To learn more about my traineeship, Valentina Bordenave and UNFOLD TECHNIQUE visit my blog "learning UNFOLD TECHNIQUE" https://learning-unfold-technique.jimdosite.com/ (last accessed 10 June 2022)

I believe that training the mind to rearticulate bodily movement is also a cognitive training to being able to hold back one's habitual responses to new encounters. Having learned about the story of TIME TURTLE I had my very own inner response to it, my mind firing habitual reactions, aptly inserting the story into all the schemes of knowledge I hold. Yet, the most interesting material appeared, when I took a step back and tried to consciously 'do less' on a cognitive level when engaging with the TIME TURTLE. This is how the text in the interview situation for the performance TIME TURTLE developed. Before responding to a question with my habitual tool set, I took a step back, allowing time to seep into the conversation, slowing my usual, habitual way of immediately responding down to a level where I could almost watch my thoughts pass by until something else could emerge. What emerged was often an uncomfortable feeling of not-knowing, a state of deep listening[9] to another source. I felt like a different temporal dimension opened up and I was able to give answers without making sense of them in that instant. Referring to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, María do Mar Castro Varela and Alisha Heinemann see 'unlearning' and 'untraining' as possibilities to forge new ground and as a concrete decolonising strategy. Unlearning and untraining means questioning our habits and understanding of what

'truth' means, entering in a state of the unknown which bears confusion and insecurity. Varela and Heinemann see this as part of a 'productive undoing' (Heinemann and do Mar Castro Varela, 2017, p. 265). The unknown, not yet stable ground gives us possibilities to find new ways of dealing with unforeseen circumstances, to look at situations from an unfamiliar perspective. Many improvisation techniques in acting are designed to achieve exactly this state in which new stories can emerge which are not necessarily bound to our individual experiences and which might not make sense immediately on a conscious level. I am not claiming that I have managed to be in this state of deep listening throughout, yet the conscious drifting in between these states and the awareness of this shift became one of the main parts of my practice.

The temporal experience I gained through the engagement with UNFOLD TECHNIQUE and implementing it into my own practice, is the core building block of my strategies of practice. Every aspect: from the sound, to the visual, to the movement and to the text is dedicated to this process of unlearning, undoing and unfolding in time.

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9 Deep listening became a part of my 'strategies of practice' which will be elucidated in the next chapter "TIME TURTLE – EMBODIMENT OF DIFFERENT TEMPORALITIES"

TIME TURTLE – EMBODIMENT OF DIFFERENT TEMPORALITIES

STRATEGIES OF PRACTICE

(…) maybe it is exactly this process of questioning
where my being begins and ends
where we meet
where our margins form another entity altogether.
In movement I can feel waves of you
moving through and with me.
Maybe you are my voice and vice versa.
Maybe I am much closer to you, who has been around for more than 200 million years, than to my fellow humans.
On stage and when I call you I can feel that you are with me, different spirits of past and present filling the air, giving life to animated objects like my costumes.

Maybe trying to find words is not the right approach.
Our connection can become visible through our joined movement.

Connecting to you is not the challenge.
The challenge is to make this connection visible.

(Darko, 2022a)

TIME TURTLE has been around for approximately 240 million years.[10] This is why she is on stage when the audience enters and continues to move when the audience leaves after 45 minutes. There is a slowness to her movement, an unfamiliar pace which invites everyone in the room to follow her rhythm, to slow down their breath and to enter TIME TURTLE's temporality. The process of perceiving even the slightest, subtle changes in the performer's body attunes the

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10 Reptiles are some of the oldest living creatures on earth, mammals, which have similar features evolved approximately 200 Million years ago, humans slowly started to appear approx. 6 Million years ago.

audience's senses to a deep listening, a process which might feel unknown in our fast paced world. Practicing UNFOLD TECHNIQUE gave me very concrete tools which I developed for my own strategies of practice. I have employed these strategies of practice to create the performance TIME TURTLE in which different stories and perspectives stand beside each other: A turtle is not just a turtle but transforms into many turtles. Her shell transforms into armour, which transforms into fluid protection; isolated body parts and costume become something else altogether, not human, not animal. The turtles I wish to engage with are of the past, present and future as well as creatures which belong to the realm of my imagination and a different temporality altogether. The process of transformation and mediation of turtles and their stories was brought on stage through sharing the strategies of practice in a performance setting, dissolving the lines between practice, process and performance.

This practice-led research was conducted within a posthumanist frame. Rosi Braidotti states "The posthuman subject needs to defamiliarize their mental habits. Thus, granting equal status to natural and post-natural organisms is an explicitly post-anthropocentric move that illustrates the far-reaching implications of thinking in a posthuman frame" (Braidotti, 2019, p. 77). With a posthuman approach I wish to not just acknowledge the structural interdependence and interrelations of species, but to actively search for ways to

let the turtle (metaphorically and literally) be a "knowledge collaborator" (Braidotti, 2019, p. 77). How to "defamiliarize" one's mental habits is one of the key questions of this practice-led research. The strategies of practices which I developed in response to and through the engagement with the movement method UNFOLD TECHNIQUE, and which will be described in detail in this chapter, offer possibilities for unlearning on a physical and cognitive level.

With the concept of intra-action by Karen Barad I am engaging in a diffractive approach, seeing the material I am working with as animated, in the process of becoming through and with me. Becoming diffractive with the material allowed me to observe "how particular entanglements become agential, co-constituting reality." (Cher M., 2017, p. 7). This means to acknowledge that bodies, humans and non-humans including my own body, have fluid boundaries and are in a constant process of becoming-with others (Cher M., 2017). With Barad I understand that differentiation or separation are always forming and existing within relations. In this section I will go into detail of what my strategies of practice consist of and how they emerged through a diffractive approach of integrating practice and theory and how they operated in a performance setting.

I wish to make the tools I used explicit by defining elements of my strategies of practice. Yet, the Uneindeutigkeit, which

will be elaborated further down and which is a large part of my practice also applies here and my aim is not to give an overall, intelligible, route of 'how to'. I would rather invite you to see these different strategies as part of the same strand, interconnected, interlinked and not as separate entities. My performance TIME TURTLE mirrors each of these strands yet shows also how they are all always connected.

DEEP LISTENING

"I believe that by changing ourselves we change the world, that travelling El Mundo Zurdo path is the path of a two-way movement – a going deep into the self and an expanding out into the world, a simultaneous recreation of the self and a reconstruction of society."
(Anzaldúa and Keating, 2009, p. 49)

Elsa Wolliaston always starts her choreographies and improvisations from the 'de marche'- the walking. Her students start each sequence with a steady, slow rhythm which increases into complex movements (Wolliaston, 2010). Yet, the 'de marche' is always there, an underlying force which connects the performer to the earth and to the initial movement of humankind, the walking. Just as Elsa Wolliaston always starts her choreographies from the "de marche", from the walking, I am starting my movement practice always from the breathing. I lie on stage in an embryo position when the audience enters. This is where TIME TURTLE's movement starts, the breath. The chest slightly moving up and down, the spine moving, shoulders slightly bending back. Listening to

one's own breath one becomes aware of the nuances of the movement the body already performs, the up and down of the chest inevitably also moves the limbs, until we can feel breath in our entire body, slowly emphasising and increasing the intensity of the movement, making it visible. In a timely manner which allows the constant listening, movement unfolds, each gesture filled with the presence of one's own breath.

The spine, which connects us to the turtle's anatomy, became the central part of my movement exploration. Having all four limbs on the floor, the movement started from the breath to the spine, then to the shoulder blades, the tailbone, elbows, hands, toes. Always conducting the movement slow enough that my awareness can travel together with the movement, trying to never let the mind be quicker ("now I am going to move my hand"), but to let the mind be part of the breathing rhythm of my body.

In order to engage in deep listening, I slowed the process of 'doing less' down to a degree where I was sitting almost motionless in the studio. I would attune into a deep sense of focus and guidance while at the same time learning to listen to my body and letting the motion come and go without determining beforehand where the movement should go. It is a practice of staying with the constant unknown.

VERLERNING AND INVISIBLE MENDING

The often cited quote "one must unlearn one's privileges as one's loss" by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak was originally coined in the 1980s (Spivak, 2017). During her opening talk at the Wiener Festwochen in 2017 she states that shortly after 1984, as she started working as a teacher, she realised that this was an impossible task as privileges are historically given and cannot be undone. This is when she decided to "use my privilege against the grain" (Spivak, 2017). Anyone who has ever stroked a grain from the bottom to the top knows how painful this is. To use one's privilege against the grain is an uncomfortable process.

Creating a mix of the German word 'verlernen' and the English word unlearning, Spivak speaks of 'verlerning' as a strategy to "affirmatively sabotage learning" in order to use verlerning in favour of those who did not have the right for intellectual labour. In this context she talks explicitly about how the privileges we hold are always historically built upon the backs of others, therefore we have to hold ourselves not just accountable for the damage we did, but use our privileges against the grain (Spivak, 2017).

Another process which has been theorised by Spivak is the concept of "invisible mending" (Castro Varela and Dhawan, 2009). The idea is that in order to change the very structure of the fabric we live in we need to sew invisible threads into the already existing fabric. The patterns are not predetermined, and the process of invisible mending is a slow, subtle work which can never be finished. Interestingly, here the weaver is not only the worker herself but also the fabric. Therefore, everyone who wants to see change, has to be willing to be changed themselves. This means we have to acknowledge our own positionality within the field we are working in; who am I, how did I become the person I am now and on whose cost was I able to become the person I am? Here, unlearning means to question one's position in the world which is often a painful process (Castro Varela and Dhawan, 2009, p. 350). To ask with TIME TURTLE; who am I and how did I become the body I am? How did I become the turtle that I am?

Becoming Turtle
Close your eyes and imagine you are lying in a drawer, in a museum far away from where you were born. In a place whose language you do not speak and the beings you meet walk on two legs. All life has disappeared from your limbs. The bony armour that has evolved from your ribs, pelvis and hind legs and thus formed part of your skeleton, has been rubbed with a corrosive-smelling liquid. Your armour-like skin has been preserved so that you inhabit this lifeless body forever, fully conscious, with no prospect of being returned by ritual to the earth and mud, the material from which you originally sprang. It is always dark and you can feel the infinite presence of once living beings next to you, preserved just as you are, stuck between worlds.
(Darko, 2021)

At whose cost was I able to become the person I am today– at whose cost can I now look at TIME TURTLE's body in the Zoological Museum? Why am I rubbed in this liquid?

As TIME TURTLE I am weaver and fabric in time-space, I am the one moving on TIME TURTLE's path and also creating it at the same time, creating new movement. With each movement I am weaving a new thread into the existing structure, bringing the invisible process into visibility and making it possible to experience it through time. Giving TIME TURTLE expression through me, taking the audience with me on this journey where I, as a performer, also don't quite know where it will leave me, and therefore us. It is neither a comfortable process for the audience nor the performer. Invisible mending is slow and subtle work and can be daunting at times. It is an offering to be in TIME TURTLE's temporality and to let us, our sense of what we perceive, be changed through this process.

In my studio practice I was able to understand the process of verlerning on a bodily level. As I said, I am used to training my body and working on strength, coordination, endurance and flexibility. The results were always measurable: stronger, quicker, more flexible etc. Letting go of unnecessary tension and practicing the 'doing less' is not necessarily a rewarding experience at first as results might appear slow, subtle, and the work is ongoing, never finished just as the process of invisible mending. Release and relaxation/meditation was already part of my practice, yet never part of the bodily training, I almost saw the two as two separate entities: body work and mind work. With UNFOLD TECHNIQUE these two came together for the first time. I would start my practice

from a lying down practice which involved both the body and mind, one not possible without the other, working together in order to practice verlerning on a movement and cognitive level. Even though the visible movement from the outside was minimised to the movement of my breath, the shifts in my body were immense. After a few weeks into the training, I started to have incredible pain in my lower back, so bad that I could often not lie continuously for the thirty minutes in semi supine. However, this very uncomfortable, painful feeling was part of my quadriceps, my lower back and my belly muscles finding a new way of working together. Years of tensing have made it difficult to let go of these muscles.

Everyone who wants to see change, has to be willing to be changed themselves.

This feeling of being highly uncomfortable and even in pain was a sensation that accompanied my process throughout. 'Doing less' requires becoming aware of what we do 'too much' of. The second step is to stop doing too much. Now, releasing a specific muscle is not as simple as it sounds, as we cannot control deeper layers of muscles consciously. It is a process of trying to navigate the focus of the mind to these deeper layers of muscles and tissue, giving oneself directions (e.g., to release each layer of the quadriceps from the knee up to the hip joints). Having achieved a release does not mean that our old habits are overcome. Everyday

is anew, an effort of the mind and the body to remember the sensation of the released deep layers of the quadriceps. The released state of muscles which we have often misused for many years of our lives, feels highly uncomfortable mostly because it is a sensation different to our habitual use of the muscle. Our habits, movement and otherwise, are our comfort zone. They give us the impression that we are safe. To stay in this state of not-yet-achieved newly balanced use of the body, still re-adjusting, means to get comfortable in the uncomfortable state of not knowing. A major part of the work is to understand how the mind has to guide the focus in order to keep the directions for our muscles and joints and for our movement. The work requires a deep listening to our inner processes while at the same time directing our awareness to the movement at the outside. One of the key components is this ongoing process of listening and tuning in to the inside while at the same time seeing the room, the other moving bodies, connecting to the outside world. This experience and practice of verlerning on a somatic level might seem very personal. However, this is exactly where we have to start: with us, verlerning and questioning our habitual use of the body and mind, learning to open up to other ways of being, of listening, attuning, learning to stay with the uncomfortableness of not-knowing; the Uneindeutigkeit which makes multiple existences possible. It is the first step towards understanding who we are and how to use our privileges against the grain, how to be weaved into and weaving a new fabric into the existing one.

AUTOHISTORIA

(…) this form [autohistorias] goes beyond the traditional selfportrait or autobiography; in telling the writer's/artist's personal story, it also includes the artist's cultural history—indeed, it's a kind of making history, of inventing our history from our experience and perspective through our art rather than accepting our history by the dominant culture. (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 62).

Gloria Anzaldúa's „autohistoria" or „autohistoria-teoría" played a big part in my research. Gloria Anzaldúa's voice lives in autobiographical short stories, poems, letters, interviews, and academic writings. She had the ability to merge the political and the personal, to create tension and friction between the mythical, the external and the internal world. Images of her personal history become visible in her writing, as well as the larger context in which she moved, and which shaped her life. Autohistoria opens a space of possibility in which I can merge autobiographical, poetic, mythical and theoretical texts, allowing me to speak and write from the border (Anzaldúa, 2015). Autohistoria is a subversive form of writing oneself into the world and allows to question hegemonic and historical narratives.

The self-reflexivity in Gloria Anzaldúas concept and theory of autohistoria is also about unlearning; learning to re-read and re-interpret our own stories through self-writing and self-knowledge (PITTS, 2016). TIME TURTLE's autohistoria is already mediated through my voice. Being asked if she would like to introduce herself TIME TURTLE answers:

You expe

e interesting situation that people

ght you were extinct

Yes, there are many names that have been given to me, I find some of them quite interesting, but I would rather describe myself as - mhh - that's always so complicated in your language, because so much is interpreted into it. So - mhh - yes, I'd rather leave it at that for now. Then there is not so much room for interpretation.
(Darko and Plate, 2021)

Agreeing to speak, to be interviewed, TIME TURTLE gives consent to be questioned in a human made setting for a defined period of time. However, she herself sets the rules of what she is willing to answer, which information to share. Her refusal to answer the question of "who/what are you", which is implied in the first question "Would you like to introduce yourself?" is a refusal to speak from the confined space humans have attributed to her. She does agree to speak, yet she is not willing to be subjugated once again.

Autohistoria-theoría gives myself as well as TIME TURTLE the possibility to invent and make knowledge, to merge the scientific, mythical, theoretical, poetic, personal and the political and create meaning through self inscriptions (Anzaldúa, 2015). It is an empowering, playful process as much as it is painful and daunting. To create new meanings means to inscribe possibilities into bodies which are usually denied these possibilities. In order to write autohistoria one has to acknowledge the borderization of bodies, has to acknowledge the categories which subjugate in order to write from these borders.

For me, writing is a gesture of the body, a gesture of creativity, a working from the inside out. My feminism is grounded not on incorporeal abstraction but on corporeal realities. The material body is center, and central. The body is the ground of thought. The body is a text. Writing is not about being in your head; it's about being in your body.
(Anzaldúa and Keating, 2009, p. 5)

Just as Anzaldúa describes in the above quote, autohistoria in this process was a somatic undertaking. Merging our stories, the writing practice itself became part of the physical studio practice and engagement with TIME TURTLE. To write oneself into existence means to acknowledge the body/bodies as source, medium and temporal portal.

What meaning can autohistoria have when one's mother tongue is an oral language that lives through the oral transmission of stories? Twi, the mother tongue of my father and half of my family, was not written down until the end of the 19th century by a German missionary and philologist. My father and I do not share a mother tongue. We communicate in a third language, each time creating anew a hybrid space in which communication becomes possible at all. The temporal hybrid space became an important part of this research and leads me to my next strategy of practice Uneindeutigkeit.

UNEINDEUTIGKEIT

Scientists, who bear meaning for the western hemisphere, categorised turtles in the "silent group", denying that sound production might play a role in turtles' behaviour altogether. Only in the 1980 researchers opened up to the possibility that their vocalisation plays an important role in their social behaviour (Giles et al., 2009). In 2012 A team around Brazilian Aquatic Ecologist Camila Ferrara was able to record sea turtles hatching sounds (Ferrara, Vogt and Sousa-Lima, 2012). They

produce these sounds before hatching, still in their eggs, to communicate with their hundreds of siblings underneath the sand as well as their parents, who swim back to the bay once their offspring hatch to show them the way to food supply - which is often several 100 kilometres away. Ferrara was also able to show that each turtle species has their own distinct sound and language (Glanz, 2016).

Just as human scientists thought of turtles as silent beings there are many things we cannot see, which we cannot hear, therefore denying them their presence. In order to hear or listen to a turtle we have to unlearn centuries of scientific measurements telling us these creatures are silent beings.

My aim was to create an approach in which animals and creatures can speak a language as much as I can speak a language. However, this brings forth many more questions; can I speak not just as the self but from and with the other? How do I speak as the other without producing the Other, without appropriating or just speaking on behalf of the other? The performance TIME TURTLE incorporated various languages, some translated for the audience, some possibly not even recognisable as a language. The soundscape I used in the performance is made of real turtle sounds, of their language which I cannot decipher[11]. Using the same

strategies of practice which I employed in my movement work, I engaged in a similar listening.

Using different languages, English and Spanish, 'Spanglish' is a distinct style Anzaldùa used throughout her writing - academic, theoretical and poetic. She describes this practice of 'code-switching' as a timely process, as a practice that she started to use consciously to make her readers stop and think, to slow down and question what they read and how they read it. "It's like taking the counterclockwise and injecting it into the clockwise. That's why I started code-switching." (Anzaldúa and Keating, 2000, p. 274). Code-switching which creates the multivocality of TIME TURTLE - German, English, Twi – and this research, became part of my strategies which did not always intend to be clearly legible. Enduring incomprehensibilities and not immediately evaluating and classifying them into existing categories and systems is part of the unfinished process of verlerning and acknowledging that systems outside our systems exist, also without us witnessing them. Twi for example, my father's mother tongue is an oral language, also referred to as a tonal language. How do you translate a language which transmits its meaning through sound, through intonation?[12] Even in an artistic process written language is still preferential, not to mention the system of referentiality of academic writing.

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11 https://soundcloud.com/user-836916281/soundscape-time-turtle-1/s-1do9Wc8Fn7B

12 https://soundcloud.com/user-836916281/soundscape-bernard-yaw-darko/s-ohjAMtfZ3nA

DISARTICULATION/DISLOCATION

The term disarticulation, borrowed from medical and forensic practices, where it refers to "a careful breaking of a biological unit in order to revive it from disrepair and decay" (Shah and Catelblanco, 2022, p. 3), is reframed by feminist researcher and theoretician Nishant Shah and multidisciplinary artist and researcher Felipe Castelblanco to break and fragment practices of communication "by establishing a new context within which communication can exist" (Shah and Catelblanco, 2022, p. 3). TIME TURTLE's disarticulated, slow movements established a different context for a temporal experience. Unfamiliar movements of a seemingly disjointed shoulder, a hand, the head gave time and space to focus on very specific body parts and their precise movement.

Turtles have a very sophisticated body. They are vertebrates as humans are, yet they are cold-blooded, and their shell is intrinsically connected to their skeleton. Shoulder blades, rips and hip joints are grown together with the hard shell, which makes part of their body (Lauterwasser, 2009, p. 290) (Hirasawa, Nagashima and Kuratani, 2013). Turtles are one of the rare animals which used to inhabit every centimetre of our planet, on land and in the waters. In Europe most of them ended up in a soup which led to extinction of most indigenous species, therefore seen as exotic in most European countries. The giant tortoises of which only some survived until today were mainly eaten by humans on whaling ships. To give an example about the scale; in only one year, in 1830, some 1000,000 giant tortoises had been taken as livestock food by whaling ships, mostly sailing under the flag of the British Empire (PD, 2004). Turtles and tortoises' bodies like so many non-human animals were objectified, dismembered and disarticulated to accommodate human needs. Breaking bodies and putting them back together into small units ready to be exploited and dislocated has a long history in human interaction with turtles – their skeleton, their shell ripped apart for medical and cosmetic reasons, their body a delicacy. This is also how TIME TURTLE's body was kept in dark, musty smelling drawers, her body – over time- made into disarticulated units; measured features; a tag attached to her leg; a piece of her thigh removed for DNA analysis.

REPETITION

My movement always started from the breath and each movement is connected to the movement of the spine. The strategy of deep listening and disarticulation allowed a slowing down of the present moment. Another strategy I used to support the altering of our temporality was repetition. The slowing down and deep listening made the repetition almost unrecognisable as the patterns unfolded too slow to be grasped immediately. Repetition was applied in movement, in the text (interview in projection) and the soundscape. Interestingly enough, just as TIME TURTLE explains her patterns on her shell; each plate might seem like

a repetition of the former, yet each one is different and no plate on the shell of a turtle's back is similar. This is also how no movement was the same and no text and sound was the same, yet specific patterns were repeated in order to alter our perception of time in each moment. Was this something I have seen/heard before? Can I anticipate what will happen next? Our brain is always searching for recognisable patterns to make sense of the current situation, drawing from past experiences, projecting them into the future. Suspending this process, offering a 'doing less' of these habitual processes of perceiving what we experience is an invitation to question exactly these processes of how we make sense of the world, how we attribute meaning. The repetition of Uneindeutigkeit through TIME TURTLE's movement, text and sound allowed an expanded experience of the presence, inviting the audience to leave the paths of knowing, suspending their anticipation, witnessing and making the process of becoming through time visible with their co-presence.

BODIES AS TIME

ANCESTRAL TIME

> *I don't feel exhausted because I also tapped into something that is maybe not particular to all Black but is very particular to the African Black, which is the ancestor. That's my profit; I call that motherfucker all the time. I don't do this work alone. […] it would be maybe exhausting to not conjure up this animist space of 'I am not alone' and so therefore I am always protected.*
> *(Chipaumire, 2019)*

This is the answer of Zimbabwean American performer and choreographer Nora Chipaumire being asked if she ever feels exhausted performing in predominantly white spaces. Talking about ancestral knowledge, ancestral presence and ultimately ancestral time still seems not to fit into academic knowledge production and settings. Yet there are scholars who fight to integrate these themes and alternative temporalities into academic contexts (Péan, 2021) (Chimine, 2021) (Rogerson, 207AD).

The director Diane Roberts has developed a methodology, a process in which artists access other temporalities through performance work. The 'Arrival Legacy Process' consists of six stages which guide the participants to reach a

> *(…) liminal, improvisational state, our bodies become a portal and we enter the crossroads where memory, intuition, imagination, and spirit lead. Time and space shift and expand to include multiple planes of existence. The present moment meets the ancient lineage of eras within; the I meets the We.*
> *(Roberts, 2016)*

Bridging time spans through performative practices creates possibilities for the artists to be in relation with their ancestors, learning their stories. Starting from an investigation on tangible archives and anecdotal information, to mapping the process, physical improvisations and receiving the stories, ceremony exercise, story-based introduction of all the ancestors in their own voices, called I-stories and the final embodiment of the ancestor (Roberts, 2016). Whereas Roberts works with a human centered approach, this practice-led research searched for the interconnected stories of human and non-human stories. Roberts methodology has inspired me to search for ways to listen to my human and non-human ancestors.

> *Jelka: (…) have you been around for 240 million years? If you were to speak now of your body or your being, how long have you been around, specifically you?*
>
> *Zandile: That's a very good question because that again shows that you have many concepts that we don't think about that much. Whether I am me or I am my ancestors or I exist now or have existed, or somebody has existed before me through me or my body has existed for so long. (…)*
>
> *(Darko and Plate, 2021)*

Black Quantum Futurism (BQF) is a multidisciplinary art collective based in Philadelphia led by American poet, musician, and activist Camae Ayewa (Moor Mother) and artist, author, community activist and lawyer Rasheedah Phillips. In their 2015 published collected volume "Black Quantum Futurism: Theory & Practice" they describe their Afrofuturistic aim as: "(…) a new approach to living and experiencing

reality by way of the manipulation of space-time to see into possible futures and/or collapse space-time into a desired future in order to bring about that future's reality" (Phillips, 2015, p. 11). Through a multidisciplinary approach BFQ searches for ways to transform and heal negative cycles: "Our work focuses on recovery, collection, and preservation of communal memories, histories, and stories." (Ayewa and Rasheedah, 2020). Rasheeda Philips elucidates how in the Western world; our language, our behaviour, our thinking is shaped by a linear concept of time. We hold limited knowledge over the past, which is fixed and cannot be changed retrospectively, and have no access to the future (Phillips, 2015). Criticising this linear mode of time, BQF offers alternatives to experience time, stating that time for BQF consists of multiple dimensions. BQF offers a reading which shows how the principles of quantum physics applied in various ancient African traditions of timekeeping, cosmology and spirituality (Phillips, 2015, p. 16) . BQF develops practices to transform the present through future visioning, altering, and manifestation. (Phillips, 2015)

TIME TURTLE transforms the present, inviting the audience to be part of this alternative temporality through their co-presence. Referring to quantum physics and notions of retrocausality and drawing parallels to African ancient diasporan traditions of time, space and rhythm, Phillips expands on the cyclical nature of time and how she and BFQ

think about time as layered: "(…) time is layered because our ancestors are always with us, they don't die, they are on another kind of temporal plane." (Rasheedah, 2019). Through and with TIME TURTLE I reveal layers throughout time, accessing another temporal plane which can be described as an archaeological body experience through disarticulation of body parts. I am carefully moving body parts which have been dislocated over time, mending them to become part of many bodies again.

A major inspiration for my practice-led research is the work of Nick Cave who creates life-size soundsuits, sculptures which are exhibited in museums and galleries as well as worn by performers, dancers and the artist himself. His work can be located at the intersection of fashion, contemporary art, performance, sculpture, human, non-human, creature, dance, afrofuturism, and posthumanism. Being trained as a dancer and holding a degree in fine arts, Nick Cave describes how he made the first sound suit from twigs as an empowering means to protect his body and to hide his race, gender and class (in reaction to the Rodney King beating in Los Angeles in 1991). Therefore, the life-size soundsuits were initially created as a political weapon. The moving sculptures made out of various materials emit sounds which gave them their name. Each soundsuit has its own characteristic, they are unique even when made in big numbers and their outward appearance can be placed on an axis of human-animal-creature. Nick Cave has created a microcosm in which his creatures speak and communicate, yet not in a human language.

I was especially inspired by a live performance called "HEARD NY" which took place in Grand Central Terminal in NYC in 2013 and brings together costume, animal movement and live performance. Working with students from the Alvin Ailey School, they worked with the embodiment of movements of horses to bring to life life-sized horse costumes. In these workshops the students experienced the material of the soundsuits as entities which informed their movement, they learned to intra-act with the soundsuits and their materiality rather than learning a choreography. Nick Cave works with embodiment of the horses which goes beyond imitation. His work is an example of finding ways of not speaking as the self, but in his case, speaking from the costume/soundsuit. Nick Cave himself says "You know it is interesting, you could put on the same soundsuit that I put on and you are going to respond differently then I am gone respond" (Galloping in Grand Central Station - New York City, 2013). I would like to think that the costume in itself and the body language of the performer are communicating as much with each other as towards the audience. Similar to my own approach he searches for ways to attune, to listen to the material and its stories. I find it also very interesting to bring the performance outside of the blackbox, outside of the studio and into a space like Grand Central Terminal, making the bypassing audience part of the process.

HOME OF PERFORMANCE PRACTICES

Figure 4 Performance TIME TURTLE photo: Fenia Kotsopoulou

CONCLUSION

Zandile: (…) There are times when you go into other existences, but the information always remains there on the shell, these are the signals and they then transport themselves through this time and space. At the same time, we are also connected to the little things we eat, for example, and they are also stored as information. So, there is no such thing as, well, I don't know if that lives on in me, but it doesn't disappear, it just changes.
(Darko and Plate, 2021, p. 2)

At the beginning of this research stood the question of how bodies are shaped by time, language and space. Looking at these questions from a temporal perspective allowed a new way of engaging with questions around epistemic violence of misnaming, mislabelling and misplacing.

It has been shown how time is perceived differently by different bodies and implicitly shapes our bodies. The organisation of the Western linear time is a concept which molds bodies in their everyday life, in their economic undertakings, in the possibilities of planning for the future. With the question of how alternative, empowering temporal orientations and frameworks can look within a movement based practice-led research, TIME TURTLE revealed itself and the strategies of practice were developed. The performance TIME TURTLE was an experiment in embodying a different temporality and inviting the audience to experience a shift in their perception of time. With the developed strategies of practices, I created a toolkit which allows me to reorganise time through layered and nuanced processes that allows for a different epistemology of the body and the way we make meaning of it to emerge.

The strategies of practice are used simultaneously as practice, process and performance. I have developed a movement & writing practice which enables me as a performer to intra-act and transform into/embody non-human animals. Deep listening, verlerning and invisible mending, autohistoria, Uneindeutigkeit, disarticulation/dislocation, repetition are strategies of a practice which informed the process and provided very concrete dramaturgical tools for performance making and aesthetical decisions. The openness and attunement which I hone through the strategies of practice allows different stories to emerge through storytelling, voice and movement improvisations and therefore bring forth an unlearning as an active and critical act of intervening in current hegemonic knowledge production. The employed strategies of practice are means by which a different knowledge production is possible, formulating the ground for a decolonial approach to artistic and academic work.

Unlearning and undoing allow the performer to enter a different state of responding, a state which holds a lot of potential, to let our imagination go beyond the known, beyond the categories and singular narratives, inviting the manifold of stories, perspectives and lifeforms on earth. Thus, these strategies hold an empowering possibility to rewrite stories from genuine different perspectives, human and non-human, and to (re)imagine different realities and herstories through the rearrangement of our temporal experience.

This practice-led research is a crossing and synthesis of disciplinary boundaries, creating a practice which can be used in performative settings as much as in educational and pedagogical settings.

I envision at a later stage to share the strategies of practice in workshops, giving diverse groups of participants tools to use the strategies of practice for their work and personal development. Inspired by Nick Cave this research might eventually lead me to collaborate with many bodies, becoming visible through time in (public) spaces and share our many stories.

I cannot leave my human body and perspective of the world. However, I can engage in a process and a practice in which I take myself back and make space in a temporal sense. It means to pause and slow down the habitual way of categorising, judging and labelling everything we encounter and experience. This then allows a deep listening, becoming a mediator of different stories rather than their creator. The attunement towards the turtle and her stories became a practice which helped me recognise and reorganise my own patterns and habits, my prejudices and stereotypes. Learning one's habits also means acknowledging where and how we stand in the world, how we position ourselves which can be an uncomfortable realisation.

The engagement with temporality and questions around time has offered alternative readings and possibilities to rearrange the linear categories and narratives we have created. I am aware that time is yet another system. Yet, I believe the slow, subtle changes and mending this work offers are starting points for an interweaving of different approaches which leads to an openness to the plurality of our existence. The strategies of practice have the potential for an (in)visible mending and provide empowering tools for performance making as much as a critical rewriting of animal-human relation using embodied approaches to explore the (in)visibility of bodies and the explorations of voice(s).

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
TIME TURTLE INTERVIEW

Jelka: Magst du dich vielleicht erstmal kurz vorstellen?

Zandile: Ja also es gibt viele Namen, die mir gegeben wurden, da finde ich einige auch ganz interessant, aber ich selber würde mich jetzt eher so bezeichnen als - mhh - das ist in eurer Sprache immer so kompliziert, weil da dann wieder so viel rein interpretiert wird. Also – mhh - ja da belasse ich das lieber erstmal dabei. Dann gibt es nicht so viel Interpretationsspielraum.

Jelka: Ja ok. Kannst du stattdessen erzählen, wie die Umgebung in der lebst aussieht?

Zandile: Ja, das kann ich machen. Manchmal ist es nass, manchmal ist es trocken, manchmal ist es luftig, manchmal ist es sehr grün und schlammig und manchmal ist es dann aber auch ganz weich. Die Umgebung ist ja auch immer da und ich kann mich da immer rein zurückziehen. Das ist natürlich sehr angenehm, wenn es mir zu viel wird, kann ich mich zurückziehen und habe ein ganzes Refugium nur für mich.

Jelka: Bist du Einzelgänger/in oder wie habe ich mir das vorstellen, wie du in Kontakt bist mit anderen?

Zandile: Ja das ist interessant, da habe ich ja auch viel gehört, dass es da diese Studien gibt, die ihr da immer macht, wo wir dann als Einzelgänger beschrieben werden, was ja gar nicht stimmt, weil wir ja immer im Kontakt sind. Ohne Telefon. Und wir treffen uns ja auch regelmä-ig, also zumindest die weibliche Linie, die trifft sich regelmäßig. Dann muss ja auch geguckt werden, wie viele sind wir und dann geht das eben immer so weiter. Das ist ganz schön. Aber dazu muss man sich nicht immer sehen, man kann ja auch anders in Kontakt sein, das geht ja auch.

Jelka: Was habt ihr denn für Arten in Kontakt zu sein? Wie kommuniziert ihr miteinander?

Zandile: Da muss ich jetzt auch wieder gut überlegen, wie ich das beschreibe, damit das nicht falsch verstanden wird. Das eine ist, dass man natürlich die Stimme benutzen kann. Das ist auch immer schön.

Jelka: Kannst du mal etwas in deiner Sprache von dir geben oder ist das doof?

Zandile: Ja das ist sehr doof, aber ich mache das gerne.

Man hört Schildkrötisch

Zandile: Das funktioniert ein bisschen anders, als wie ihr das gewohnt seid, weil das sind jetzt nicht einzelne Worte, sondern da transportieren wir ganze Geschichten. Und dann kann man auch noch in Kontakt sein, indem man einfach Signale sendet. Die sind sozusagen auf unseren Panzern eingraviert und da können wir dann natürlich auch immer verschiedene Signale empfangen.

Jelka: (…) Wenn man den Katalog vom Zoologischen Museum Hamburg anguckt, dann tauchen unter dem Schlagwort der Reptilien die Testudines, also die Schildkröten auf… und dann gibt es da drei verschiedene: eine kommt aus Vietnam, das ist die Cyclemys pulchristriata, die wurde 1903 entdeckt. Dann gibt es noch eine aus Thailand, 50 km von Bangkok entfernt und dann tauchst du auf. 1906 von Herrn Siebenrock katalogisiert, da läufst du unter dem Namen Stenotherus nigricans seychellensis. Dann gab es ja so eine längere Verwechslungsgeschichte – die wollten wir ja vielleicht nochmal zusammen versuchen zu erörtern – aber ich wollte mal fragen: Wie ist das, so eine andere Identität untergeschoben zu kriegen?

Zandile: Ja ich war dann ja sozusagen undercover unterwegs.

Jelka: Du hast ja die interessante Situation erlebt, dass man

dachte, du seist ausgestorben, weil die Seychellensis, die der Siebenrock an dir dachte erkannt zu haben, die hat man dann ja nie wiedergesehen in der Gegend in der er dich gefunden hat – dachte gefunden zu haben. Da wurde ja im Grunde genommen um dich getrauert, weil man dachte, dich gäbe es gar nicht mehr. Naja trauern ….

Zandile: Eigentlich die beste Form, denn dann wird ja nicht mehr nach einem gesucht.

Jelka: Stimmt. So kann man das natürlich auch sehen.

Zandile: Viel Verwirrung macht ihr da um diese ganzen Namen.

Jelka: Dann gab es ja noch die Verwirrung, dass man dachte, dass der Herr Bauer dich auf seinen Expeditionen entdeckt hat, aber dann hat man ja irgendwann entdeckt, dass du diese Bohrungen an deinem Panzer hast, was ja anscheinend darauf hindeutet, dass du auf einem Markt gekauft wurdest, weil diese Bohrung ja anscheinend typisch war, um Schildkröten bis zu ihrem Verkauf festzuhalten.

Zandile: Und warum interessiert dich das alles?

Jelka: Weil man dadurch so viel erfährt über – also da hängt ja dann schon eine ganze Welt dran. Guck mal, man dachte,

du kommst von den Seychellen, dann hat sich jetzt aber herausgestellt, dass man dir im Museum irgendwann mal ein falsches Etikett angehängt hat und eigentlich stammst du aus West-Afrika. Wenn ich mir jetzt vorstelle, das würde man mit mir machen... Das ist ja schon interessant, weil ja die Wissenschaft schon immer versucht sehr gewissenhaft und genau zu sein. Und das ist ja schon ein relativ grober Eingriff in Zuschreibungen und in ein Leben.

Zandile: Also geht es in dieser Geschichte eigentlich wieder um euch, um eure Wissenschaft und wie ihr alles so einsortiert? Aber nicht um uns, oder?

Jelka: Das ist vielleicht so ein erster Schritt, sich überhaupt zu fragen, wie das gehen kann, so einen Perspektivwechsel hin zu kriegen, so dass es dann um euch geht. Das ist ja eine ganz große philosophische Frage, ob es überhaupt geht, seine eigene Perspektive jemals zu verlassen. Also kannst du anders als Schildkröte denken? Kannst du als Mensch auf die Welt gucken, wenn du dich lange genug mit uns auseinandergesetzt hast? Und ist das überhaupt notwendig in diesem Austauschverhältnis oder ….

Zandile: Das möchte ich auch lieber nicht ausprobieren. Nachher kann ich da nicht mehr zurück.

Jelka: Und gibt es noch eine andere Kommunikation als über

diese stimmliche Kommunikation?

Zandile: Ja, also das mit den Signalen, das ist schwierig zu erklären, aber ich hab da so verschiedene Muster und da gibt es verschiedene Kämmerchen sozusagen und in jeder Kammer und in jedem Streifen sind verschiedene Informationen gespeichert von meinen Kolleginnen, das ist vielleicht wie so ein email Postfach. Ich kann etwas empfangen und auch senden. Gesendet wird immer aus der Mitte der Platte, die Empfangszeiten sind immer besonders gut, wenn man gerade so unter der Wasseroberfläche ist und in der Dämmerung. Und manchmal hört man dann ganz lange nichts und dann weiß man, dass man da nicht mehr kommunizieren kann.

Jelka: Du hast dich ja jetzt bereit erklärt, mit einem Menschen zu kommunizieren. Wie würdest du denn das Verhältnis einerseits von dir oder auch allgemeiner von eurer Spezies zu der Spezies Mensch beschreiben und wie du dich wahrgenommen fühlst, also auch durch die verschiedenen Zeiten hindurch, denn du bist ja schon sehr alt. Das ist jetzt eine sehr große Frage, aber du kannst ja mal gucken, wo du da andocken kannst.

Zandile: Mhhh also ich muss sagen, ich wundere mich wie lange ihr dann doch geblieben seid, ich dachte, ihr geht schon viel früher. Deshalb haben wir uns zu Beginn mit

den Menschen gar nicht so sehr auseinandergesetzt, weil meistens sind das ja so Phasen und die Wesen, die sich lange halten, die kennt man dann ja schon. Aber jetzt seid ihr eben noch da und da muss man jetzt mal überlegen, wie man das handhaben kann. Wir sind aber nicht die, die jetzt so aktiv werden. Also ich würde mal sagen, wir kennen uns halt ein bisschen aus und da wundere ich mich dann eben immer ein bisschen, was ihr euch so denkt. Aber ganz konkret was machen kann man da jetzt nicht, da muss man abwarten, das hat sich immer gezeigt, dass Abwarten dann eigentlich immer Veränderung bringt.

Jelka: Wie lang gibt es dich schon in dieser Form?

Zandile: Also in eurer Zeitrechnung sehr lange, zweihundertvierzig Millionen Jahre würde ich sagen.

Jelka: Sagst du das jetzt, weil du dich deinen Vorgängerinnen so verbunden fühlst, dass du sagen würdest, dich gibt es auch zweihundertvierzig Millionen Jahre? Oder gibt es dich 240 Millionen Jahre? Wenn du jetzt von deinem Körper oder deinem Wesen sprechen würdest, wie lange gibt es dich dann, speziell dich?

Zandile: Das ist eine sehr gute Frage, weil das schon wieder zeigt, dass ihr viele Konzepte habt über die wir gar nicht so nachdenken. Ob ich ich bin oder ich meine Vorfahren bin

oder ich jetzt existiere oder existiert habe oder jemand vor mir schon durch mich existiert hat oder mein Körper schon so lange existiert hat. Es gibt Zeiten, da geht man in andere Existenzen, aber die Informationen bleiben immer da auf dem Panzer, das sind die Signale und die transportieren sich dann durch diese Zeit und diesen Raum. Gleichzeitig ist es auch so, dass wir verbunden sind mit den kleinen Dingen, die wir essen zum Beispiel und die werden auch als Information gespeichert. Also gibt es nicht so, tja, ob das dann weiter lebt in mir weiß ich nicht, aber es verschwindet nicht, es verändert sich nur.

Jelka: Wovon ernährst du dich?

Zandile: Am liebsten esse ich so eine Art Seegras, aber wenn ein Fisch vorbeischwimmt, dann esse ich den auch. Die Frage ist natürlich immer: Warum schwimmt der Fisch da vorbei und hat der Lust sich zu verändern? Aber meistens esse ich doch lieber so eine Art Seegras. Ja, ihr wißt ja, wir haben so einen süßen Zahn und ich esse sehr gerne Wassermelone, aber sowas habe ich lange schon nicht mehr gesehen.

Jelka: Hast du schon mal bei Menschen gelebt? Oder ist das etwas, was du eher vermeiden würdest?

Zandile: Das würde ich schon eher vermeiden. Weil dann ist es sehr schwer Kontakt zu halten.

Die Signale werden dann schwächer, man kann nicht zu den regelmäßigen Treffen und irgendwann setzt so eine Art Vergessen ein und dann naja ist das auch nicht so angesehen, wenn man bei den Menschen war. Aber ja, es gibt natürlich Schlimmeres, aber so richtig schön ist das nicht. Ist schon immer sehr beengt und tja, was soll man da machen? Ich würde dich ja auch nicht in diesem Raum halten wollen. Das ist eine Vorstellung, die verstehe ich nicht so richtig. Da wundere ich mich dann eben und denke …

Jelka: Ach so, du meinst einfach die umgedrehte Situation – du entscheidest dich, du hättest gerne so ein Menschlein, um das mal so ein bisschen zu beobachten?

Zandile: Nee. Viel zu anstrengend. Aber ich weiß ja nicht warum ihr hier seid, vielleicht ist das Teil der Erfahrungen, die ihr hier machen müsst, aber da muss ich ja nicht unbedingt mitmachen.

APPENDIX B
TIME TURTLE INTERVIEW

Jelka: Would you like to introduce yourself?

Zandile: Yes, there are many names that have been given to me, I find some of them quite interesting, but I would rather describe myself as - mhh - that's always so complicated in your language, because so much is interpreted into it. So - mhh - yes, I'd rather leave it at that for now. Then there is not so much room for interpretation.

Jelka: Yes, ok. Can you tell us instead what the environment you live in is like?

Zandile: Yes, I can do that. Sometimes it's wet, sometimes it's dry, sometimes it's airy, sometimes it's very green and muddy and sometimes it's very soft. The environment is always there and I can always retreat into it. That is of course very pleasant, when it gets too much for me, I can withdraw and have a whole refuge just for me.

Jelka: Are you a loner or how do I imagine you are in contact with others?

Zandile: Yes, that's interesting, I've also heard a lot that there are these studies that you always do where we are described

as loners, which is not true at all, because we are always in contact. Without a telephone. And we also meet regularly, at least the female line meets regularly. Then we have to see how many of us there are and then it goes on and on. That's quite nice. But you don't always have to see each other, you can also be in contact in other ways, that's also possible.

Jelka: What are your ways of being in contact? How do you communicate with each other?

Zandile: Now I have to think carefully about how I describe this so that it is not misunderstood. One thing is that you can of course use your voice. That's always nice, too.

Jelka: Can you say something in your own language or is that stupid?

Zandile: Yes, it's very silly, but I like to do it.

You hear turtle sounds

Zandile: It works a bit differently than what you are used to, because these are not single words, but we transport whole stories. And then you can also be in contact by simply sending signals. They are engraved on our tanks, so to speak, and of course we can always receive different signals.

Jelka: (…) If you look at the catalogue of the Hamburg Zoological Museum, testudines, i.e. turtles, appear under the heading of reptiles ...... and then there are three different ones: one comes from Vietnam, that is the Cyclemys pulchristriata, it was discovered in 1997, no, it was discovered 1903. Then there is one from Thailand, 50 km from Bangkok, and then you appear. Catalogued by Mr. Siebenrock in 1906, you run under the name Stenotherus nigricans seychellensis. Then there was a long story of confusion - we might want to try to discuss that together again - but I wanted to ask: What is it like to have such a different identity foisted on you?

Zandile: Yes, I was then on the road undercover, so to speak.

Jelka: You experienced the interesting situation that people thought you were extinct because the Seychellensis that Siebenrock thought he recognised in you was never seen again in the area where he found you - thought he had found you. Basically, they mourned you because they thought you no longer existed.

Zandile: Actually the best form, because then people are no longer looking for you.

Jelka: That's right. Of course, you can also see it that way.

Zandile: You are making a lot of confusion about all these names.

Jelka: Then there was the confusion that it was thought that Mr. Bauer discovered you on his expeditions, but then at some point it was discovered that you have these holes on your shell, which seems to indicate that you were bought at a market, because this hole was apparently typical for holding turtles until they were sold.

Zandile: And why are you interested in all this?

Jelka: Because you learn so much about - well, there's a whole world attached to it. Look, they thought you came from the Seychelles, but now it turns out that at some point they put a false label on you in the museum and you actually come from West Africa. If I now imagine that they would do that to me... That's interesting, because science has always tried to be very conscientious and precise. And that is already a relatively rough intervention in attributions and in a life.

Zandile: So, this story is actually about you again, about your science and how you sort everything out? But not about us, right?

Jelka: Maybe that's a first step, to ask oneself how it can be done, to get a change of perspective, so that it's about you. That is a very big philosophical question, whether it is possible to ever leave one's own perspective. So can you think differently than as a turtle? Can you look at the world as a human being if you have dealt with us long enough? And is

that even necessary in this exchange relationship or...?

Zandile: I'd rather not try that either. Afterwards I can't go back.

Jelka: And is there any other communication than through this vocal communication?

Zandile: Yes, so the signals are difficult to explain, but I have different patterns and there are different chambers, so to speak, and in each chamber and in each pattern there is different information stored by my colleagues, maybe it's like an email box. I can receive something and also send it. I always send from the middle of the plate, the reception times are always particularly good when you're just under the surface of the water and in the twilight. And sometimes you don't hear anything for a long time and then you know that you can't communicate there anymore.

Jelka: You have now agreed to communicate with a human being. How would you describe the relationship between you, or your species in general, and the human species, and how you feel perceived through the different times, because you are already very old? That's a very big question now, but you can see where you can dock there.

Zandile: Well, I have to say I'm surprised how long you stayed, I thought you'd leave much earlier. That's why we didn't deal with the people so much at the beginning, because they usually go through phases and you already know the beings that stay for a long time. But now you are still here, and we have to think about how to handle it. But we are not the ones who become too active. I would say that we know a bit and I'm always a bit surprised about what you think. But we can't do anything concrete, we have to wait and see, it has been shown that waiting always brings change.

Jelka: How long have you been around in this form?

Zandile: So, in your time calculation very long, two hundred and forty million years I would say.

Jelka: Are you saying that now because you feel so connected to your predecessors that you would say you have also been around for two hundred and forty million years? Or have you been around for 240 million years? If you were to speak now of your body or your being, how long have you been around, specifically you?

Zandile: That's a very good question because that again shows that you have many concepts that we don't think about that much. Whether I am me or I am my ancestors or I exist now or have existed, or somebody has existed before me

through me or my body has existed for so long. There are times when you go into other existences, but the information always remains there on the shell, these are the signals and they then transport themselves through this time and space. At the same time, we are also connected to the little things we eat, for example, and they are also stored as information. So, there is no such thing as, well, I don't know if that lives on in me, but it doesn't disappear, it just changes.

Jelka: What do you eat?

Zandile: I prefer to eat some kind of seaweed, but if a fish swims by, I eat that too. Of course, the question is always: Why does the fish swim by and does it want to change? But mostly I prefer to eat some kind of seaweed. Yes, you know, we have such a sweet tooth and I love eating watermelon, but I haven't seen any for a long time.

Jelka: Have you ever lived with people? Or is that something you would rather avoid?

Zandile: I would rather avoid that. Because then it is very difficult to keep in touch.
The signals then become weaker, you can't go to the regular meetings and at some point, a kind of forgetfulness sets in and then well, it's not so prestigious when you were with the people. But yes, of course there are worse things, but it's not

really nice. It's always very cramped and well, what can you do? I wouldn't want to keep you in this room either. That's an idea I don't really understand. And then I wonder and think…

Jelka: Oh, you just mean the upside-down situation - you decide you'd like to have one of those little people to observe for a bit?

Zandile: No. Much too exhausting. But I don't know why you're here, maybe it's part of the experience you have to have here, but I don't necessarily have to take part.

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