



Transgressing Culture/Nature and Human/Animal Divides:

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Introduction

The rapid intensification and urgency of the environmental crises, largely stemming from a prioritisation of the human agency within the environmental developments, has been a pressing topic spanning multiple disciplines, ranging from politics to socio-ecological studies. Consequently, scholars plead for re-conceptualisation and transformation of the environment and a shift to post-anthropocentrism, that would lead to overcoming nature/culture and human/non-human binaries that are generally held in Western modern thought and practice. Post-humanist theorists, most notably Bruno Latour, Donna Haraway, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, argue for an in-depth understanding of the abundance in relations and disseminations of organisms, and their complex interactions with the environment as well as its comprehension as a non-hierarchical and all-inclusive. Latour, for instance, demands for a relinquishing of the dualisms present together with the “destruction of the idea of nature” itself and strives for a new way of comprehending the cultural-ecological relations.¹

However, when it comes to actualisation of the mandate extended by post-humanist theorists and providing the resources necessary to ground the new political and socio-ecological thinking within the society in its widest sense, there seems to be an apparent gap between what should be done and what is being done or, in other words, an absent method to employ theory as practice and vice versa. Therefore, a proclaimed all-inclusive environment in which the constructed boundaries cease to exist remains an aim rather than lived reality. What seems to be missing is a tangible entry point, or, simply put, guidelines that would allow for an actual exertion of a post-anthropocentric understanding of the environment.

In parallel, scholarly writings on the environmentalism and ecology often discuss the necessity to reconsider ritualistic practices, which aided past societies in maintaining the intimate bond with their inhabited environment, nurturing links between culture and nature, and human and animal.² Reinstalling the prominence of such practices that are principally absent from the contemporary Western secular societies could have the capacity to transform the current anthropocentric viewpoint

¹ Bruno Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 25.

² Most notably, Roy Rappaport in his seminal *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)

towards the environment and help to reimagine it as a dynamic, synchronised system of interconnected agents in which the culture and nature are entwined. In turn, the shifted attitude would possibly prioritise tackling the urgent environmental issues that are rapidly affecting the world.

Even though ritual has been repeatedly defined as a universal category of human experience, both in time and space, it could possibly be perceived as a more traditional concept, since it came to be a lot less pronounced in the secular, especially Western, societies. While, arguably, various kinds of rituals are performed willingly and unconsciously every day by each individual, it seems that the awareness in performing ritual as well as comprehension about what it stands for and why it has to be performed, have been mostly obliterated. Ritual can be seen as an overarching method of breaching the constructed boundaries of culture and nature, and eventually transforming or even eliminating these boundaries. Since it is placed in the liminal zone, between the realms, bridging the gap between humans, animals, natural forces as well as different temporalities, spatialities and realities, the re-installment of its prominence in the society could be seen as crucial. The question remains on how to effectively reinstall a practice that has seemingly been lost in a way that would appeal to and resonate within the contemporary individual and his/hers expanded worldview.

Thus, the key aim of this dissertation is to discuss in what way ritual could be understood as having the intrinsic force to transform the environment as a whole as well as each individual, in a practical, actual way that would yield a devised mode of relationality between living entities and revise their very being in the environment. Its purpose is to analyse in what way ritual brings theory and practice together in a double bind that reveals, grounds and implements a new approach towards the environment simultaneously in its performance, thus, making ritual a powerful method for generating an all-encompassing change. Since bioart seems to be positioned in the zone of 'in-betweenness', resting on the threshold of art and science, known and unknown, living and non-living, human and non-human, reality and virtual reality, this thesis will finally speculate that bioart could be considered to have the capacity to point us to ritual practice and mediate ritual's transformative force in a manner that would appeal and immerse society as a whole, and convert environmental aspirations into lived realities. Thus, in this thesis, I will firstly underline the theoretical framework for the nature/culture and human/animal

dualisms, as well as ritual and bioart. I will then proceed with an objective to delineate the way in which intrinsic dynamic of rituals induce transformation that generates a realm, which allows for reaching beyond the nature/culture dualism and in which both human and non-humans enter in a devised mode of relationality, as discussed by aforementioned post-humanist theories. Furthermore, I will aim to emphasise that intrinsic transformational force of rituals has the capacity to affect both the sole individual and the society as a whole practically, actually and bodily and, thus, have enormous implications on felt relationships between humans and animals - the necessity, which is stressed by Donna Haraway. Finally, since the post-anthropocentric reconstruction of this relationship remains one of the pressing issues present in the discourse of politics of ecology, stemming from the increasing urgency of environmental crises, I will attempt to demonstrate that the enormous potentiality of ritual practice could possibly manifest itself through bioart. I will aim to demonstrate that bioart has the capability to direct its own inherent force to that of a ritual, which in itself can become a fruitful method to shape the new politico-ecological approach, contesting the dominating position of the human, and aiming to install a different kind of ecological niche in itself. I will do so through the analysis of three case studies, namely, Kathy High's *Embracing Animal*, Ai Hasegawa's *I Wanna Deliver A Dolphin...* and Art Orienté Objet's *May the Horse Live in Me*.

1.

Theoretical Framework

CULTURE/NATURE DIVIDE

The culture/nature divide, that perceives both domains as interconnected but primarily separate and often opposing poles of reality, could be seen as central to the modern Western thought. However, scholars concerned with the politics of ecology and environment find this dualistic approach deeply problematic and attempt to move beyond it, in order to re-conceptualise the world in new terms, founded on interconnectivity, all-inclusiveness and non-hierarchy. Stemming from the environmental threats posed by pollution, global warming and depletion of the ozone layer among others, these disciplines propagate a view in which the dichotomy between culture and nature would be breached, and both humans and non-humans would be perceived as having an equally important agency in the shaping of the environment. Paradoxically, whereas this kind of rhetoric could still be understood as based on the presupposition and maintenance of the existence of the culture/nature division as it often strives to either protect the natural domain from the cultural domain, or aims for the blurring of the boundary between the two, it is also crucial for inducing the dialogue.

A number of scholars go as far as arguing that the notions of culture and nature are non-existent, as the natural realm has been usurped by the cultural exertion of power. For instance, environmentalist Bill McKibben argues that climate change itself has inflicted nature to the extent that it renders every part of the Earth wholly man-made and artificial, resulting in the death of nature, as it is precisely nature's independence from the human that is fatal to its meaning.¹ Whereas such concerns are, no doubt, well-grounded, such drastic dismissing of the culture/nature division might, in fact, strive to move away too quickly from the concepts still deeply embedded within the modern thought. This is not to say that nature and culture do represent actual domains of our lived reality. Nature and culture, as well as the dualism itself, are entirely constructed notions, however, they seem to function as

¹ Bill McKibben, *The End of Nature* (New York: Anchor, 1989), p. 58.

points of departure, from which the rethinking can begin. Therefore, in the words of Latour:

Far from “getting beyond” the dichotomies of man and nature, subject and object, modes of production, and the environment, in order to find remedies for the crisis as quickly as possible, what political ecologists should have done was *slow down* the movement, take their time, then burrow down beneath the dichotomies like the proverbial old mole.²

In this research, I will, therefore, follow Bruno Latour, Donna Haraway, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s post-humanist philosophical approach towards the environment, new politics of ecology as well as culture/nature and human/animal divides. As previously mentioned, Latour demands for interspecies’ environment in which the idea of nature becomes ephemeral and the life fabric becomes one. Nonetheless, he stresses that the concept of nature is practical as a research tool and functions as a so-called plug-in or a point of reference from which the change can be directed.³ Similarly, Haraway urges moving away from the fantasy of human exceptionalism and beyond the Great Divide⁴, and aims for the future that resembles a “global ecology rather than a monoculture”.⁵ She also maintains that nature is both constructed and necessary as it functions as a place or a ‘topos’, in which a dynamic negotiation and reconfiguration of the very same idea can take place.⁶

Perhaps, paradoxically, in order to move away from the culture/nature and human/non-human binary oppositions, one needs to utilise these dualisms, as entry gates to a provisional space, which would enable transformation. Therefore, while the culture/nature dualism remains problematic, in this thesis, it will function as a method of approaching the sensitive subject, and as an “ultimate reference point even as it vacillates between multiple meanings”.⁷

² Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*, p. 3.

³ Colin Barron, ed., ‘A strong distinction between humans and non-humans is no longer required for research purposes: a debate between Bruno Latour and Steve Fuller’, *History of the Human Sciences* 16:2 (2003), pp. 78-81.

⁴ Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), p. 11.

⁵ Eileen Crist, ‘Cat’s cradle with Donna Haraway’, review of *When Species Meet*, by Donna Haraway, *Social Studies of Science* 40:4 (2010), p. 641.

⁶ Donna Haraway, ‘The Promises of Monsters: A regenerative Politics of Inappropriate/d Others’ in *Cultural Studies*, eds. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula Treichler (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 296.

⁷ Katharine Dow and Victoria Boydell, ‘Introduction: Nature and Ethics Across Geographical, Rhetorical and Human Borders’, *Ethnos* (2015), p. 15.

HUMAN/ANIMAL DIVIDE

Maintaining the same anthropocentric approach, when addressing the relationships between humans and animals, much scholarly work focuses on the extension model that displays a tendency to identify human characteristics in animals and achieve common ground through, essentially, imposing the hegemony of humanness over non-humans.⁸ Advocates for the reorientation of environmentalism, however, urge for revised modes of such polarised life fabric. Latour and Haraway envision the environment as an interconnected network of actors, of whom each has its own agency, emergency and contextuality. Deleuze and Guattari propose a complete de-hierarchisation and depersonalisation of entities that, instead, function as multiplicities, rather than singularities.

All the aforementioned theorists proceed from the concept of hybridity that contests the purification of categories through the process of differentiation and promote ontologies that encompass hybrids, cyborgs or multiplicities – forms of life that are neither fully human nor animal, residing outside any possibility to be attributed to either culture or nature. Latour argues for an instantiation of the new politics of ecology by summoning the collective – a non-qualitative multiplicity of humans and non-humans.⁹ The collective is achieved, not by simply adding together the two oppositions or perceiving them as separate, but by mutual exchange of properties between active agents “endowed with will, freedom, speech, and real existence” in order to compose in common the raw material of the collective that is still sensitive to differences.¹⁰ He, therefore, proposes a system in which not only humans and animals, but also things have their own say in the new politics of ecology. In relation, Deleuze and Guattari dismiss dominant evolutionist approaches and instead argue for a “symbioses that brings into play beings of totally different scales and kingdoms, with no possible filiation”.¹¹ They propose that entities are never confined to their own being or fixed identity, but instead always function as assemblages, alliances or becomings, in which subjectivity comes undone and, instead,

⁸ Phillip McReynolds, ‘Overlapping Horizons of Meaning: A Deweyan Approach to the Moral Standing of Nonhuman Animals’, in *Animal Pragmatism: Rethinking Human-Nonhuman Relationships*, eds. Erin McKenna and Andrew Light (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004), p. 78.

⁹ Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*, p. 55.

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 61.

¹¹ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 238.

is always already part of a substance. Whereas both approaches are fundamental in transforming anthropocentric views, tangible means to execute them in practice, that would appeal to society as a whole, seem to be missing.

While one comes across similar tendencies in Haraway's theory concerning cyborgs in which she argues that a cyborg 'infolds organic and technological flesh and so melds that Great Divide', she, nevertheless, specifically strives to underline the attitude necessary to establish actual respectful relationship with non-human others.¹² Haraway's approach focuses on heralding a new, more politically open world, where binaries in thought and the modes of power they entail, are rendered obsolete.¹³ Crucially, focusing on companion species, she outlines virtues to be aimed for and emphasises a new way of being in the environment, which enables one 'to become coherent enough in an incoherent world to engage in a joint dance of being that breeds respect and response'.¹⁴ While Haraway primarily concentrates on dogs, she proposes that such approach should be eventually extended to every scale and to all entities, where everyone is perceived and valued in their own right. In Haraway's words:

To knot companion and species together in encounter, in regard and respect, is to enter the world of becoming with, where *who and what are* is precisely what is at stake.¹⁵

Although Haraway's approach, in which she urges proceeding from a personal relationship with companion species and progress further, could be argued to underline actual guidelines for revised modes of being in the environment, considering the rapidness in which environmental crises are escalating - more drastic, immediate means could be seen as crucial. Since inaccessibility to theory would, essentially, mean inaccessibility to transformation, it is primarily in practice that such guidelines could become available to parts of society that, perhaps, are unaware of the urgency of this issue and the need to tackle it. As, in the words of Donna Haraway, "theory and practice are one unit intertwined like a DNA strand", effective means of theory-practice that would quickly and instantaneously reach a large part of the society in

¹² Haraway, *When Species Meet*, p. 12.

¹³ David Inglis and John Bone, 'Boundary Maintenance, Border Crossing and the Nature/Culture Divide', *European Journal of Social Theory* 9:2 (2006), p. 278.

¹⁴ Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003), p. 62.

¹⁵ Haraway, *When Species Meet*, p. 19.

order to shift their anthropocentric dominant position into that of respectful relationship needs to be devised.¹⁶

Therefore, inspired by Haraway's approach and following her lead, I would like to exclusively concentrate on the human/animal divide as the first point of entry into a possible exertion of a new mode of relationality. Possibly, eliminating the divide between the human and the animal could serve as a trigger that would unfold in a chain reaction that would permeate the environment as a whole and establish space for the radical imagination of a new kind of ecology. This can be perfectly illustrated by Giorgio Agamben's words, despite of being tied to an anthropocentric perspective: for "a humanity that has become animal again, there is nothing left but the de-politicisation of human societies by means of the unconditional unfolding of *oikonomia*, or the taking on of biological life itself as the supreme political (or rather impolitical) task".¹⁷ Hence, once the dichotomy between human and animal is blurred, it undoes the current state of politics and establishes a space for a new kind of envisioning.

RITUAL AND THE ENVIRONMENT

When it comes to addressing the establishment of a revised ways of being in the environment, scholars often propose numerous strategies that reform the morality and suggest new types of political legislation. However, these strategies proceeding from a political realm could be understood as insufficient, as they lack a concrete method of instalment of the post-anthropocentric approach within the society, which is based on action rather than idea. Even if, speculatively speaking, these theories would be eventually utilised politically, what they would be missing is the grounding of these views within the society itself – experientially, bodily, in a way that is felt and, therefore, understood. After all, relationships need to be built in and within the experience – one cannot read about it and feel it or be told to do so, before knowing what it entails. Relating to Haraway's proposal for interspecies relationship, it needs to first and foremost be grounded within each individual and his/hers relationship with the immediate surroundings and only then move to a political legislative realm.

¹⁶ Donna Haraway and Thyrza Nichols Goodeve, *How Like a Leaf. Donna J. Haraway: An Interview with Thyrza Nichols Goodeve* (New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 59.

¹⁷ Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 92.

Hence, if politics do not suffice as a method for a change, which affects a large part of a society, a practice that would have an intrinsic power of change is needed.

Ritual has been mostly absent from the contemporary Western secular societies, which in part stems from the juxtaposition of ritual with out-dated anthropological ethnographic approaches that place it within the tradition in “savage” societies.¹⁸ However, despite its diminished importance in society, among scholars, ritual has long been considered as a practice in which living beings ‘discover, then embody and cultivate their worldviews, attitudes, and ethics’.¹⁹ Ritual is understood as an instrument of re-unification at the time of rupture and crises²⁰, in which a ‘sense of harmony with the universe is made evident, and the whole planet is felt to be *communitas*’.²¹ Ronald L. Grimes, a notable ritual theorist, goes as far as arguing that in a globalised and commodified world, ritual, despite it seemingly being out of place, remains invasive like a weed or pest, ‘making troublesome appearances in unlikely places’.²² He further argues that ritual is a principal technique of becoming attuned to the planet, which induces a higher degree of responsiveness and, consequently – responsibility.²³ Thereby, given that the present is marked by alienation and upheaval, it might be worth reconsidering the instalment of the ritual practice.

Most notably, Roy Rappaport, could be seen as the pioneer in stressing that ritual is intrinsic to the environment. He proposes that ritual should be considered when attempting to establish a new order grounded in the concept of the ecosystem and re-defining being human within it.²⁴ Rappaport emphasises the universality of ritual and argues that ritual, as a set of formal properties, transcends spatial and temporal boundaries and is found not only among humans, but also birds, beasts and insects.²⁵ Fascinatingly, he advocates that ritual is ‘the social act basic to humanity’

¹⁸ For instance, James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1924)

¹⁹ Ronald L. Grimes, ‘Ritual Theory and the Environment’, in *Nature Performed: Environment, Culture, Performance*, eds. Bronislaw Szerszynski, Wallace Heim and Claire Waterton (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p. 33.

²⁰ Victor Turner, ‘Are there universals of performance in myth, ritual, and drama?’, in *By Means of Performance: Intercultural Studies of Theatre and Ritual*, eds. Richard Schechner and Willa Appel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 8.

²¹ Eugene d’Aquili and Charles Laughlin, ‘The Neurobiology of Myth and Ritual’, in *The Spectrum of Ritual: A Biogenetic Structural Analysis*, eds. Eugene d’Aquili, Charles Laughlin and John McManus (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), p. 177.

²² Ronald L. Grimes, *Rite out of Place* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. x.

²³ Grimes, ‘Ritual Theory and the Environment’, p. 33.

²⁴ Rappaport, p. 460.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 25-26.

that enables organised social life.²⁶ Therefore, ritual could be perceived as an endeavour of humanity to communally coalesce with the natural realm and to articulate the capacity of nourishing and nurturing these relationships. However, despite being highly ecologically charged, Rappaport's approach primarily stems from the concept of holiness and religion, and could be perceived as highly formalistic and conservative, not allowing for its further application beyond sacral realm. Nonetheless, the crucial aspect of Rappaport's theory is that it embeds ritual with urgency, by arguing that ritual sustains the very vitality of the environment and, therefore, has the capacity to restore it. Thus, his attitude highly inspired the approach taken in this thesis.

Despite ritual's most usual placement in the context of religion and the sacral, it could be perceived as representing merely a subcategory of ritual as a whole. For instance, in their book on secular ritual, Sally F. Moore and Barbara G. Myerhoff, have argued that secular ritual or collective ceremony, as they propose to call it, 'can traditionalise new material as well as perpetuate old traditions', which, in turn, enables the conjunction of differing or detached individuals into a collective dimension in which the interpersonal dynamics are altered.²⁷ This, perhaps, reveals that the intrinsic transformative power of ritual perpetuates itself in a variety of contexts, transgressing constructed boundaries of religion. The force, that ritual in itself encompasses, therefore, will be the underlying approach on ritual in this thesis. Don Handelman's non-external approach that highlights the dynamics embedded within ritual itself will function as the point of departure as it does not presuppose itself to any specific context. Handelman aims to transgress the commonly accepted comprehension of ritual as a cultural representation and seeks to reveal its intrinsic value and force, through the analysis of its structural, processual and transformational features.²⁸ Concerning the definition of ritual, Handelman suggests that it is "a class of phenomena whose forms, in greatly differing kind and degree, are characterised by interior complexity, self-integrity, and irreducibility to agent and environment".²⁹ These properties are imperative as they validate ritual's capacity to transpire and

²⁶ Ibidem, p. 31.

²⁷ Sally F. Moore and Barbara G. Myerhoff, 'Introduction: Secular Ritual: Forms and Meanings', in eds. Sally F. Moore and Barbara G. Myerhoff, *Secular Ritual* (Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1977), p. 7.

²⁸ Don Handelman, 'Introduction: Why Ritual in Its Own Right? How So?', in *Ritual in Its Own Right: Exploring the Dynamics of Transformation*, eds. Don Handelman and Galina Lindquist (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2004), p. 4.

²⁹ Ibidem, p. 10.

sustain itself in a range of settings as well as the possibility to produce a different reality, facilitated by the radical transformation as evident in Handelman's words:

When self-organisation becomes highly complex, a ritual has more to live on, or rather, to live through, and we may speak, rightly so, of a separate world of causation and action, one in which, perhaps, all tenses exist simultaneously within self-same space.³⁰

Therefore, whereas, ritual seems to potentially have the means needed for the environmental transformation, the question remains whether installing ritual as a practice in the contemporary society is feasible, given that today's Western societies are generally secular, technological, human-centred and resisting anything that appears tradition-laden. Such detachment potentially means that the conscious performing of rituals as well as thorough understanding of what ritual practice stands for and why it is required have been largely eliminated. For instance, Grimes argued that the 'state of the world nest is reflected in the failure of the old "services" to service that nest', in which he refers to traditional rituals.³¹ However, I would like to propose that a new form of ritual attuned to contemporary individual's worldview, is needed.

BIOART AS RITUAL

Bioart is a relatively new mode of art that intersects technology and life sciences. Bioartists employ techniques most commonly used in laboratories and often utilise bioengineered life as their medium. Crucially, bioart is not merely an innovative method of artistic expression, but 'a subtle shifting and bending of the relationships between sciences and humanities, and between the inside and outside of biology labs'.³² While definitions of bioart remain abundant and largely differing, I would like to draw upon the characterisation put through by Robert Mitchell, who proposes that instead of unproductively distinguishing between "immaterial concepts" and "material media", one should embrace this problematic and 'see both concepts and media as tactics of linkage within a larger social-material field: that is, ways of establishing new connections between bodies, institutions, and ideas'.³³ Therefore, I

³⁰ Ibidem, p. 14.

³¹ Grimes, *Rite out of Place*, p. 149.

³² Robert Mitchell, *Bioart and the Vitality of Media* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010), p. 10.

³³ Ibidem, p. 12.

would like to analyse case studies that all-together encompass the whole artistic practice that utilises biotechnology as a concept as well as media, ranging from speculative works to those that directly engage with biotechnology, however, limited to works that engage with the human/animal divide.

As mentioned beforehand, establishing an entirely new approach, in regard to the environment and the relationship between humans and animals, not simply requires empathy towards animals from the human perspective, but strives for solidarity, for common ground of interspecies in which all agents are freed from bordering facilitated by dominance, as both humans and animals while being different are the same. Similarly, bioart practices go beyond mere means of sympathising with the animal and induce events that are paradoxical, contradictory and open-ended. Humans and animals seem to be both and neither at the same time, dwelling in a unified experience beyond any established categories. Thus, this particular artistic practice could be seen as having the aptitude to tangibly transform the anthropocentric views on relationality, as the ‘in-between’ position of balancing between the artistic and scientific domains it occupies, seems to keep bioart perpetually attuned to the vigorous speed of life of the contemporary society. It reflects the tensions and paradoxes of the contemporary individual and, therefore, embodies an expanded worldview in itself.

Thereby, I will aim to demonstrate that bioart has the capacity to point us to the practice of ritual and mediate ritual’s transformative force through identification of intrinsic dynamic elements embedded both in the ritual practice and bioart that function as tools of transforming object/subject divide into that of a process, content into context, certitude into questioning. This transformation would, in turn, provide a charter for individual behaviour as well as communal, social behaviour.³⁴ Therefore, the argument will be based on ritual’s inherent aptitude to transform actually, practically and bodily. Whereas Handelman’s approach will function as an underlying approach towards ritual as a whole, other key theoretical concepts in ritual studies will be extensively used, in order to delineate how ritual’s transformation unfolds in action. Victor Turner’s theory on ritual liminality and Bruce Kapferer’s model of ritual virtuality will be instrumental in the second chapter, whereas theories from scholars

³⁴ Colin Turnbull, ‘Liminality: a synthesis of subjective and objective experience’, in *By Means of Performance: Intercultural Studies of Theatre and Ritual*, eds. Richard Schechner and Willa Appel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 80.

including Ronald Grimes, Michael Houseman and Piroska Nagy, will be employed in the third chapter.

* * *

It is important to note that the adopted theoretical approach will distance itself from any specific indigenous customs and ritual practices, and will tackle ritual as mostly removed from any specific context, in avoidance of making parallels between significantly differing cultures, both in time and space, and unwillingly reinforcing the out-dated anthropological and ethnographic approaches. In addition, it is crucial to underline, that the final part of this thesis that considers the intersections between bioart and ritual does not attempt for bioart to be illustrative or instrumental of the ritual or vice versa. Rather, it is about examining and questioning bioart through the lens of ritual studies, analysing how bioart can direct us to the practice of ritual in order to find permeating tropes of transformation. Finally, I would like to stress that in this thesis bioart is not equated to ritual. Equating in itself is a means of an end and, therefore, produces a limited utility, while an open-ended tension has the capacity to induce a dialogue. In order to induce a provocative polemic, I would like to highlight that bioart can function as ritual, therefore, paradoxically differentiating the two while arguing for the connectedness. Precisely this double valence of the argument is what, I believe, can lead us into a productive approach that can be utilised in a tangible way.

2.

Ritual, Transformation and Instigation of New (Environmental) Realities

We need new social and aesthetic practices, new practices of the self in relation to the other, to the foreign, the strange – a whole programme that seems far removed from current concerns. And yet, ultimately, we will only escape from the major crises of our era through the articulation of: a nascent subjectivity; a constantly mutating socius; and an environment in the process of being reinvented.¹

As so eloquently articulated by Félix Guattari, new practices, which would allow for a reinvention of the environment without the construction of boundaries, are critically required in today's world. Consequently, in this chapter, I will discuss how transformational and generative qualities possessed by ritual possibly have the capacity to materialise the mandate extended by Bruno Latour, Donna Haraway as well as Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze, who strive for a revised being in the environment. I will focus primarily on Victor Turner's seminal theory on liminality as well as Bruce Kapferer's theory on ritual's dynamics as virtuality as they argue for either transformation that provides a permanent change both within the domain of rituals and in the external reality, or for the inherent capability of rituals to generate their own realities. I ensue from a hypothesis that, whereas, theory prepares a ground for experiencing the world in devised ways, it virtually remains accessible to a small fraction of society that already proceeds from an apparent interest in the issue in mind. Since, the majority of the society remains ambivalent to the existence of these specific theories, ritual as an inherently communicatively and transformatively charged practice could be understood as having the capacity to channel those same foundational principles and implement an affective theory-practice that would lead the society out of anthropocentrism.

¹ Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, trans. Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton (London: Athlone, 2000), p. 68.

RITUAL LIMINALITY AND ITS POTENTIAL TO TRANSFORM THE ENVIRONMENT

Ritual as a transformational internal process was first introduced by the renowned cultural anthropologist Victor Turner, who refuted ritual's static model, namely, ritual being an expression of timeless enduring cosmological order and drawing from Van Gennep's *rites de passage*, emphasised ritual's liminal phase in which change, transition and transformation could take place.² Whereas Van Gennep primarily concentrated on the process in which rites influence or mark transitions, Turner significantly advanced on Van Gennep's theory and proceeded from the phenomenon of ritual action itself. For Turner, a pivotal characteristic of the liminal stage of rituals, revealing the most potent imaginative and generative events, was their anti-structure, achieved through the negation of formal classifications and hierarchies and subsequent potency to conceive alternative cosmological and cultural categories in which different relationality can be created. He defined liminality as follows:

Liminality can perhaps be described as a fructile chaos, a fertile nothingness, a storehouse of possibilities, not by any means of random assemblage but a striving after new forms and structure, a gestation process, a fetation of modes appropriate to and anticipating postliminal existence.³

Liminal phase of rituals could be perceived as having a capacity to disrupt not only its internal structure, but extend beyond itself, infiltrating the external personal, social and political reality in which rituals emerge. The chaotic threshold of liminality or what Turner calls "a no-man's-land betwixt-and-between the structural past and the structural future" seems to have an inherent capability for an all-encompassing change, at the time of escalating rupturing of the interconnectedness of life and escalating environmental crises.⁴ Turner argues that transformational ritual functions as a remedy (redressive process), which is employed after the emergence of a breach and the following crisis in the external reality. After passing through the liminal stage, those undergoing the 'social drama' are reintegrated in a transformed environment.

² Turner draws from Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), originally published in 1909 and, consequently, re-introduces and re-formulates the notion of liminality for the first time in a chapter 'Betwixt and Between: the Liminal Period in Rites de Passage' in *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1967), pp. 93-111.

³ Turner, 'Are there universals of performance in myth, ritual, and drama?', p. 12.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

Most importantly, ritual liminality as the process of transformation at work in itself provides a permanent change that has immense implications, despite being detached from an ordinary social reality.⁵ As put by Colin Turnbull:

The importance of this liminal state in societies that are aware of it, and have developed techniques for moving in and out of it, or of invoking it, is enormous. It provides a perfectly integrated point of view that enables those who can move freely in and out of the liminal state with the ability to make rational judgments that seem infinitely wise because they are so infinitely effective and functional.⁶

Distinctive of this liminal stage is the disengagement from the ordinary, which is characterised by, among many others, the occurrence of open-ended mindsets, alienating and uncanny imagery, ordeals, humiliations, gender reversals, anonymity and the emergence of “symbolic types”.⁷ The last one embodies an open-ended inconsistent paradoxical meaning, as symbolic types mediate between contradictory contexts and possess a fundamental ability to generate transformation.⁸ According to Bruce Kapferer, who elaborates on Turner’s theory, ritual transformation essentially means a transformation of a context – a relational matrix of constituent elements, which in its togetherness and interconnectedness composes a certain framework of meaning.⁹ A transformation of the context inherently encompasses a transformation of each separate element. However, the direction of transformation from the element to the context does not produce the same effect.¹⁰ Since monstrous figures reside beyond the everyday life, they “tend to mould context to their own internal consistency” – they are their own context.¹¹ Immanently transformational symbolic types are, therefore, partially responsible for bringing ritual’s congregation into the ‘in-between’ dimension, which is bursting with the potentiality of change and could be perceived as essential in relation to yielding a new life fabric.

⁵ Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction 2nd ed.* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 52.

⁶ Turnbull, p. 80.

⁷ Turner, ‘Are there universals of performance in myth, ritual, and drama?’, p. 11.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

⁹ Bruce Kapferer, ‘Introduction: Ritual Process and the Transformation of Context’, *Social Analysis* 1 (1979), pp. 3-4.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

¹¹ Don Handelman and Bruce Kapferer, ‘Symbolic types, mediation and the transformation of ritual context: Sinhalese demons and Tewa clowns’, *Semiotica* 30:1/2 (1980), p. 41.

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Fascinatingly, ritual's liminality encapsulates the possibility for an altered mode of being in the world, expressed by Latour, Haraway and, especially, Deleuze and Guattari. It provides a charter of existence for Latour's "heterogeneous entities in a homogeneous hierarchy", Haraway's engaging "in a joint dance of being" as well as Deleuze and Guattari's symbioses of totally different entities.¹² Liminality, essentially, strips off any structural, hierarchical or classificatory tropes and, as a realm of infinite possibilities, induces a state in which entities are separate but one, striving for a devised mode of relating. The hierarchy of ordinary structures is overturned, bringing about the possibility of structural subordinates starting to possess equal agency. As a no-man's-land, it removes the most commonly implicit domination of the human and merges one's identity with what seems to be a flow of transformative being, a transcendence of any dichotomisation. Most importantly, ritual's liminal stage seems to correspond immensely to Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical theory on becoming-animal, in which they propose that becoming in its totality allows for an individual or collective existential state in which being is immanent and that escapes framing, defining and factoring, but, instead, perpetually entwines new links and trajectories. It is a state in which the subject is destabilised and stripped of its identity and folded into a rhizomatic structure, or instead a movement "from unity to complexity, that is, from organisation to anarchy, which is the mode of being of whatever is uncontainable within an order of things".¹³ Deleuze and Guattari, thus, state:

To become animal is to participate in movement, to stake out a path of escape all its positivity, to cross a threshold, to reach a continuum of intensities that are valuable only in themselves, to find a world of pure intensities where all forms come undone, as do all the significations, signifiers, and signifieds...¹⁴

Therefore, one could possibly argue that becoming-animal, which contests a stagnant governing position of humans and breaches the boundary between humans

¹² Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*, p. 139; Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto*, p. 62; Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, p. 238.

¹³ Gerald L. Bruns, 'Becoming-Animal (Some Simple Ways)', *New Literary History* 38:4 (2007), p. 703.

¹⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 13.

and animals, forming non-hierarchical post-structural life fabric, could be attained through ritual's liminality. Crucially, the liminal stage does not merely mark a formation of a random assemblage, but aims for a remedial, tying re-structuration, which is informed by previous crises that brought about a dividing, alienating schism. Thus, possibly, since current time is marked by rupturing of the ecological fabric, if employed, ritual's liminality could be seen as inhibiting an enormous capacity of a permanent resolution – re-establishment of a consistency within a new form, that is a connective ecological tissue, which would render human domination obsolete.

Furthermore, the monstrous figures that Turner links with the opening up of the liminality could be linked to the concept of hybridity that emerges in all three of the theories employed in this thesis, be it Latour's hybrids and networks, Haraway's cyborgs, or Deleuze and Guattari's demonic animals, multiplicities and rhizomes. For the latter, becoming-animal is, principally, only possible when it takes place in proximity to a demonic animal, which emits particles to form a context, analogously to symbolic types.¹⁵ Demonic animals are also in themselves transformations, residing “between substantial forms and determined subjects, between the two” and, therefore, embodying the threshold itself.¹⁶ This, again, highlights the capacity of ritual's liminality to disable static modes of being and turn them into continuously fluctuating means of becoming. Although arguing from a different standpoint, Donna Haraway also maintains that a cyborg, a human-animal-machine hybrid, represents a “multispecies alliance, across the killing divisions of nature, culture, and technology and of organism, language, and machine”.¹⁷ Similarly, according to Latour, hybrids are essentially heterogeneous collectivities that deny the subject/object divide and are mergers of both natural and cultural domains. Hybrids are, fundamentally, transformative, dynamic, and affective disjunctions of forces. Hybridisation functions by instituting connections and networks among its elements, and stands for an act of connecting and transformation in which agency is never homogeneous.¹⁸ As Latour argues, “[hybrids] become mediators – that is, actors endowed with the capacity to

¹⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, pp. 240-241.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 253.

¹⁷ Donna Haraway, ‘Sowing World: a Seed Bag for Terraforming with Earth Others’, in *Beyond the Cyborg: Adventures with Donna Haraway*, eds. Margret Grebowicz and Helen Merrick (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), p. 137.

¹⁸ Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), pp. 34-43.

translate what they transport, to redefine it, redeploy it, and also to betray it”.¹⁹ He further states:

[W]e live in a hybrid world made up at once of gods, people, stars, electrons, nuclear plants, and markets, and it is our duty to turn it into either an “unruly shambles” or an “ordered whole,” a cosmos as the Greek text puts it...²⁰

Such approach is important as it proposes that the potentiality of transformation is already inherent in contemporary reality, however, one needs to find appropriate techniques to transcend into a post-anthropocentric ecological unison. It corresponds to the previously cited argument by Turnbull, in which he argues that liminality possesses immense effectiveness as long as people are aware of it and have established methods of moving in and out of it. Bruce Kapferer has argued that in today’s realities, rituals are continuously being (re)invented, frequently taking the shape of the heterogeneous realities to which they belong, stating that “[t]heir very hybridity is a vital dimension of their potency”.²¹ Essentially, such approach creates a space for the emergence of new types of rituals, attuned and tailored to the worldviews of contemporary individuals and allowing for the emergence of unfamiliar, previously unknown rituals, possibly including that of bioart practice.

RITUAL VIRTUALITY AND ITS POTENTIAL TO GENERATE A NEW ENVIRONMENTAL REALITY

In part drawing from Turner’s theory on liminality, Bruce Kapferer introduced ritual virtuality – “a thoroughgoing reality of its own, neither a simulacrum of realities external to ritual nor an alternative reality”.²² He proceeds from ritual dynamics, encompassing both change and statics, which he argues ‘constitutes a dynamic field of force having affect and effect upon those who are involved in its domain’ through a complex interrelation between various aesthetic and

¹⁹ Ibidem, p. 81.

²⁰ Bruno Latour, *Pandora’s Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 16.

²¹ Bruce Kapferer, ‘Ritual Dynamics and Virtual Practice’, in *Ritual in Its Own Right: Exploring the Dynamics of Transformation*, eds. Don Handelman and Galina Lindquist (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2004), p. 45.

²² Ibidem, p. 37.

symbolic processes.²³ Essentially, what Kapferer argues for is that virtuality is simultaneously its own reality, which opens and coexists with ongoing existential realities. Understanding ritual virtuality as having its own intrinsic transformational quality, as opposed to it being installed from the outside, is crucial as it de-politicises rituals, which instead of mirroring social reality produces a new reality that is just as real and, thus, has tangible, intrusive and interventional implications. Virtuality, however, differs from Turner's liminality in a sense that whereas, as with the liminal, the virtual operates as a switching, reorienting point, however, it does not correspond to a moment within a linear process of transition and transformation, but rather intense (re)structuration, braiding into and penetrating beneath the surface to interfere in the very process of personal and reality construction.²⁴ The ritual space, then, is "a highly active space (a shifting field of force), a habitus that, as part of its vital dynamic, is orienting and reorienting the bodies of participants, directing them into meanings", which correspond to the ritual gathering in its entirety.²⁵ As with liminality, such reorientation and (re)structuration is partially achieved by radically slowing down, manipulating, curving or suspending the tempo of everyday, ordinary life, its perspectives and structures of contexts. As so well put by Don Handelman, writing on Kapferer:

[R]itual is not out-of-time but utterly full of time, bursting- with-time, with all of the possibilities (of becoming, being, existing) that time potentially enables, and therefore bursting no less with creative potential.²⁶

Don Handelman further elaborated on Kapferer's theory and proposed to use the notion of moebius ring in order to fully grasp the realm of virtuality. Moebius ring is, essentially, an ongoing dynamic condition of 'becoming' extending beyond itself as moebius surface is "twisted on itself so that the inside of the surface continually and continuously turns into its own outside, its outside into its own inside", which

²³ Ibidem, p. 40.

²⁴ Bruce Kapferer, 'Virtuality', in eds. Jens Kreinath, Jan Snoek and Michael Stausberg, *Theorizing Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts*, eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 683-684.

²⁴ Kapferer, 'Ritual Dynamics and Virtual Practice', p. 40.

²⁵ Ibidem, p. 42.

²⁶ Don Handelman, 'Epilogue: Toing and Froing the Social', in *Ritual in Its Own Right: Exploring the Dynamics of Transformation*, eds. Don Handelman and Galina Lindquist (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2004), p. 216.

produces different rhythms and, hence, different potentialities.²⁷ As an entirely its own time-space, virtuality is essentially the means of engaging with the very ontological ground of being, through its reconstruction, restoration or introduction of radical new elements that can be achieved through means such as aesthetics, repetitions, careful detailing, slowing of tempo, shifting position of participants or decontextualising, among many others.²⁸ Thus, it is an anti-determinant dimension in which realities are not only interrupted, but reimagined and forged anew, “so that ritual participants are both reoriented to their ordinary realities and embodied with potencies to restore or reconstruct their lived worlds”.²⁹ Fundamentally, Kapferer’s virtuality as understood through Handelman’s non-linear moebius ring framing, point to a possibility for ritual practice to recursively generate its own framing, as it does not exist until it exists, but must exist in order to come into existence.³⁰ This points to the fact that rituals need to be practised in order to exist, however, leaves the possibility of the emergence of new types of rituals.

* * *

Kapferer’s analysis of ritual dynamics and virtuality, principally, creates room for an establishment of a revised mode of being in the world that in itself has been reformulated. Since it is bursting with infinite potentialities of becoming, being and existing, entities could be understood as functioning like inherent multiplicities that together weave a life fabric. According to Daniel W. Smith, writing on Deleuze, “[a]n individual is a multiplicity, the actualisation of a set of virtual singularities that function together, that enter into symbiosis, that attain a certain consistency”.³¹ For Deleuze multiplicity “is the true substantive, substance itself”.³² Multiplicity, essentially, is a revised mode of being, where dualisms, such as human/animal, subject/object, nature/culture and the like, are transfused into a network of

²⁷ Don Handelman, ‘Re-Framing Ritual’, in *The Dynamics of Changing Rituals. The Transformation of Religious Rituals within Their Social and Cultural Context*, eds. Jens Kreinath, Constance Hartung and Annette Deschner (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), p. 15.

²⁸ Kapferer, ‘Ritual Dynamics and Virtual Practice’, p. 49.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 51.

³⁰ Handelman, ‘Re-Framing Ritual’, p. 18.

³¹ Daniel W. Smith, ‘A Life of Pure Immanence: Deleuze’s Critique et Clinique Project’, in Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. xxix.

³² Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 182-183.

relatedness between heterogeneous elements. Since multiplicity acts as a flow, there is no longer a tripartite division between the fields of reality, representation and subjectivity.³³

The idea of virtuality being a reality on its own also greatly corresponds to Deleuze, when he argues that “[t]he actual and the virtual coexist, and enter into a tight circuit which we are continually retracing from one to the other [...] the two [become] indistinguishable”.³⁴ In addition, as it is seen as curving and folding past and future into the present, refuting the conventional three-dimensional comprehension of time, it allows for the ritual to remain open-ended and to generate an enormous creative potential and uttermost liberation from human praxis. Its non-linear temporality points to Latour’s yearning to move away from a linear comprehension of time as it is in itself hierarchical, allowing for labels such as ‘archaic’ or ‘advanced’ to exist, which is caused by an illusion of progression.³⁵ It also disrupts the historical narratives of ‘civilisation’ and ‘evolution’ that consign non-humans to marginal spaces and could be perceived as grounding anthropocentrism.³⁶ Similarly, Latour proposes to conceive time as a spiral, where time expands in all directions and through loops allows for remote elements to appear close and contemporary ones to become distant.³⁷ Haraway also attests to a non-linear conception of time and argues that “[t]he shape and temporality of life on earth are more like a liquid – crystal consortium folding on itself again and again than a well-branched tree”.³⁸ She further adds that human alleged exceptionalism is entirely grounded on a premise that humanity does not belong to the spatial and temporal web of interspecies dependencies.³⁹ Thus, virtuality could be seen as having the capacity to entwine humanness back into the connective ecological fibre. The temporality of virtuality is, thus, fluid and fluctuating, bursting with rhythm, trajectories and intensive converging forces. This, in itself, could be seen as reducing the dualism of human/animal or culture/nature as a whole, since something that is perpetually dynamic can never be enclosed in definitions as opposed to anthropocentrically charged – static and predictable environment. It corresponds to Latour’s promise: “instead of a single

³³ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, p. 22.

³⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), pp. 150-151.

³⁵ Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, p. 75.

³⁶ Sarah Whatmore, *Hybrid Geographies: natures, cultures, spaces* (London: SAGE Publications, 2002), p. 11.

³⁷ Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, p. 75.

³⁸ Haraway, *When Species Meet*, p. 31.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

space-time, we will generate as many spaces and times as there are types of relations”.⁴⁰

* * *

In this chapter, I intended to demonstrate that the foundational principles voiced by key theoretical thinkers that in theory allow for a shift away from anthropocentrism, correspond to the very core on of the intrinsic dynamics of ritual as a practice. Since it inherently encapsulates the mandate extended by Latour, Haraway, Deleuze and Guattari, ritual, therefore, could be seen to have the aptitude to channel the groundwork necessary for reshaping the prevalent human-centred attitudes within the society. It could possibly channel theory through practice and simultaneously ground it in practice and induce catharsis that is both theoretical and embodied.

⁴⁰ Bruno Latour, ‘Trains of Thought: Piaget, Formalism and the Fifth Dimension’, *Common Knowledge* 6:3 (1997), p. 174.

3.

Action, Embodiment and Transformation of Relationality in Ritual Performance

The previous chapter has focused on ritual's capacity to encapsulate the very principles of post-anthropocentrically charged theory, which could be understood as allowing for a possibility for the theory to be accessed through ritual practice, in which society could establish a groundwork for a new type of environmental understanding. However, as I have previously discussed, in order for a real change to take place within the society as a whole, theory needs not only to be accessible but also put into practice. Ritual in itself cannot be comprehended in-depth without discussing it as a tangible process since its transformative force could be understood to manifest itself once practised. It could be said that ritual only becomes active once it is performed. Thus, if we were to understand ritual in the most general and basic terms, it could be seen as "a performance, planned or improvised, that effects a transition from everyday life to an alternative context within which the everyday is transformed".¹ The understanding that ritual cannot be detached from performance or that it is, in fact, performance, is usually thought to stem from Victor Turner and his collaborator Richard Schechner's fascination with the correlation between ritual, drama and theatre. In one of his last essays, the former wondered whether liminality as a multifaceted system of ritual, could be seen as a universal phenomenon that could be inherited by performance arts and theatre.² Schechner, on the other hand, argued that determining whether performance can be perceived as ritual depends on where in the scale of entertainment versus efficacy it resides; ritual is tightly linked with the latter.³ Nonetheless, the idea that ritual and its performance are inseparable, dominates the large part of ritual theory.

¹ Bobby C. Alexander, 'Ritual and Current Studies of Ritual: Overview' in *Anthropology of Religion*, ed. Stephen D. Glazier (London: Greenwood Press, 1997), p. 139.

² Turner, 'Are there universals of performance in myth, ritual, and drama?', pp. 12-13.

³ Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 120.

As a result, there is a prevailing tendency in scholarly debate, concerning rituals, to suggest that ritual is made up of distinctive performance components. However, when it comes to discussing ritual's form, it appears that none of the supposed characteristics occur in the ritual practice as a whole, and the ones that do more than others are not specific to ritual alone.⁴ Thus, what this chapter is concerned with, is not drawing parallels between specific elements between ritual practice and theories aiming to herald a revised mode of being in the environment. Instead, it focuses on intrinsic ritual dynamics and aims to understand how a practiced ritual can have a transformative affect on relationality and communication within the ritual gathering, and open up spaces in which given theories can be actively embodied, thus, becoming a medium through which ideas come to manifest themselves within practice and are understood through practice. Such focus on the inherent ritual capacity to transform allows for cutting it loose from any specific context. Whereas the previous chapter concentrated on heralding new kinds of realities that transcend conventional comprehension of time and space, this chapter will focus on a more directed, smaller-scale transformation that concerning the event of the ritual performance itself. Specifically, it will focus on how ritual works as an active realm and how it will provide a space for communication, which would, in turn, facilitate a new relationship between humans and animals founded on awareness and understanding of each other. I will do so by underlying that ritual transformation emerges through action, doing and embodiment that enables transformation both individually, intimately as well as within an extended ritual gathering, including performers and seemingly passive spectators, that forge new modes of relationality through enactment.

RITUAL ACTION AND EMBODIMENT

Ritual performances, essentially, could be understood as action-driven events. It partially led to a trend in ritual studies to perceive ritual as merely acting out known patterns prevalent in society. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, ritual action does not only mean that rituals include action in its constitution, for instance, patterns of movement, but that the ritual itself acts and has a capacity to produce. In

⁴Jan Snoek, 'Defining 'Rituals'', in eds. Jens Kreinath, Jan Snoek and Michael Stausberg, *Theorizing Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts*, eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2006), p. 3.

the words of ritual theorist Michael Houseman, rituals enact particular realities, meaning that they “do not so much say things [...] as do them”.⁵ Similarly, Edward Schieffelin has argued that socially nascent performative dimension, formed through the contact between performers and participants but irreducible to them, institutes a reality in which the actual work gets done.⁶ Thus, rituals are not illustrations that simply mirror and dramatise societal values but establish individual and societal realities through actions. Ritual performance may be perceived as constituting a unity between ideas and enactment, in which both are inseparably feeding into one another, simultaneously producing each other. Drawing from Mikel Dufrenne’s aesthetic theory, Bruce Kapferer argues that ritual is Work with a capital letter, which is irreducible to performance but can only be grasped through performance in order to pass from potentiality to actuality.⁷ He further states:

[Ritual] is a social practice where ideas are produced in a determinant and dominant relation to action, and it is a practice where action is continually structured to the idea. [...] I stress that in ritual, ideas, and not necessarily those framed or formed by the supernatural, are objectified and reified so much that they are made controlling and determining of action. [...] In ritual, ideas realise their full force, and can transform the world of experience and action in accordance with their illusory and mystifying potential.⁸

Such, so-called objectification of ideas that facilitates ritual’s capacity to transform, is effected through various media and features of performance. Such dynamic dialogue between action and idea could function as a ground for the enactment of theories, relating to politics of ecology. Barbara Myerhoff has argued that ritual could be understood as facilitating transformation as a multidimensional modification of the ordinary state of mind, breaching barriers between thoughts and

⁵ Michael Houseman, ‘Relationality’, in eds. Jens Kreinath, Jan Snoek and Michael Stausberg, *Theorizing Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), p. 414.

⁶ Edward Schieffelin, ‘Performance and the Cultural Construction of Reality’, *American Ethnologist* 12:4 (1985), p. 722.

⁷ Bruce Kapferer, ‘Performance and the Structuring of Meaning and Experience’, in eds. Victor W. Turner and Edward M. Bruner, *The Anthropology of Experience* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), p. 192.

⁸ Bruce Kapferer, *A Celebration of Demons. Exorcisms and the Aesthetics of Healing in Sri Lanka* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), pp. 3-5, as cited in Michael Houseman and Carlo Severi, *Naven or the Other Self: a Relational Approach to Ritual Action* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), p. 193.

actions.⁹ Thereby, it crucially foregrounds a possibility for ritual to turn theory into practice. Since, following Kapferer, ideas emerge in action and then become a determinant of action, such feature allows for individuals, with no prior knowledge of theories in question to discover them in the pure act of ritual performance.

In order to do so, the ideas need to be objectified or, in other words – embodied. Body could be understood to function as a matter through which ritual transformation unfolds. For instance, Theodore Jennings has argued that transformation that alters the world or ritual’s participant’s place in the world is primarily corporeal, since the ritual knowledge ‘incarnates’ itself, discovering through the body rather than performing presupposed actions, which, would imply ritual as a mere illustration.¹⁰ For Jennings, ritual transformation unfolds in a bodily engagement, whereas, ritual itself, following Turner, does not depict the world but founds and creates it. Similarly to Kapferer, he argues for ritual’s intrinsic reflexive work, stating that “ritual action patterns all action ‘governed’ or ‘epitomized’ by the ritual”, meaning that partaking in ritual action generates the particular ritual mode of action itself.¹¹ Therefore, ritual transformation generates “a particular form of knowledge [...] – it is corporeal where our knowledge is cerebral, praxological rather than speculative, engaged rather detached”.¹² Similarly, in his discussion on ritual’s intersections with the environment, Ronald Grimes has stated:

Well, okay, for the likes of us who’ve made it to the twenty-first century, it may be that ritual is possible only in a ludic-ironic-metaphoric, clowny-subjunctive-disjunctive fiddledeedee mode. But embraced-to-the-point-of-embodiment, metaphoric-ironic ritualising, however perverse and silly, is a way in.¹³

He, thus, argues for ‘a non-discursive, bodily way of knowing’, an embodiment of dynamics that evokes feelings and sensibilities, that encompasses the generative and formative force, shaping the outside realities.¹⁴ This is what Ronald Grimes termed as deep-world performances, which they become “only if their metaphors are embodied

⁹ Barbara Myerhoff, ‘The transformation of consciousness in ritual performances: some thoughts and questions’ in *By Means of Performance: Intercultural Studies of Theatre and Ritual*, eds. Richard Schechner and Willa Appel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 246.

¹⁰ Theodore W. Jennings, ‘On Ritual Knowledge’, *Journal of Religion* 62:2 (1982), p. 115.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 118.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 124.

¹³ Grimes, *Rite out of Place*, p. 155.

¹⁴ Ronald L. Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1982), p. 62.

– radically, to the bone, to the quick”, where one is lost in the ritual flow.¹⁵ Ritual participants are animated or ‘enspirited’ by the compelling force of ritual, which exceeds private ownership as it breathes life into the bodies of participants. Therefore, within the realm of ritual, the body becomes a site of transformation of one’s being in the world. Hence, especially in the context of contemporary societies, it is again the presence that is crucial for transformation during the ritual, be it somewhat playful, ironic or somewhat trivial, in which ritual’s overwhelming force has the power to seep into bodies present.

Thus, since participation in performance is governed by the ritual action itself, it does not have to be conscious. It allows for spontaneity, opening up the possibility for any type of action to become ritual action. In addition, the idea that ritual is first and foremost an action or a deed removes the problematic of symbolic communication of specific meaning. Numerous scholars, including Grimes and Fiona Bowie, argue that “the action itself, rather than any symbolic meaning, may be the point of participants”, since anthropological research indicates that even societies that are still practising rituals cannot recognise the exact meaning of their ritual symbols.¹⁶ Transformation understood as essentially dwelling in the ritual action and ritual knowledge entering through the body, which dwells in the medium of performance, creates a possibility for an emergence of new rituals that are all-inclusive and do not presuppose any prior comprehension of specific recognisable cultural characteristics or affiliation to a particular belief system.

OBSERVATION AS ACTION

Ritual spectatorship could be seen as posing a problem, when it comes to analysis of the transformation of the ritual gathering as a whole. The question, whether encountering a ritual without being directly actively involved in its performance could still induce transformation, is crucial. Ronald Grimes maintained that the more intensely, deeply a ritual enactment is taken in by the audience, the more an audience becomes a congregation or ritual gathering and the more a performance becomes a ritual, therefore, making receptivity fundamental in rituals.¹⁷

¹⁵ Grimes, *Rite out of Place*, p. 150.

¹⁶ Fiona Bowie, *The Anthropology of Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p. 156.

¹⁷ Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies*, pp. 63-64.

Michael Houseman and Carlo Severi writing on Kapferer have argued that ritual performance, essentially, opens up an all-inclusive space, a realm in which ritual actions are being directed both to the participants and the audience, since they both reside in ritual's context, audience's viewpoint attunes itself with that of the participants.¹⁸ The engagement of the ritual gathering as a whole (including those not directly engaged in the ritual's production) into unified experience partially stems from the common isolation from the mundane reality at the time of the ritual. In fact, Fiona Bowie has argued that rituals can be understood as performances equally involving both audience and actors.¹⁹

This could be understood what Christopher Braddock, writing on ritualistic affinities in Ann Hamilton's artworks, termed as 'contagious participation'. He argues that it "conjures up associations of contamination by disease with its concurrent characteristics of *unwitting* participation or *unseen* networks that infiltrate bodies", essentially proposing that the event of the (ritual) performance becomes substance or an infinite essence which equals participation as it is participated in.²⁰ It, thus, "proffers a kind of force field of 'excess' that draws out performing agents, placing participants in contagiously aphasic ways of being".²¹ What is crucial in the contagious participation is that contagion, as a phenomenon, enters from the outside in. As a sort of epidemic affect or an outside force, it inserts itself into bodies and transforms the being from within. This would also, possibly, implicate that contagion may be immune to resistance or indifference as it affects everyone, not necessarily those, who are open to it – contagion has the capacity to overpower. The contagion draws the ritual gathering as a whole, including both human and non-human entities into an intrinsically transformative context. This corresponds greatly to what Deleuze and Guattari said about contagion or viruses: "we form a rhizome with our viruses, or rather our viruses cause us to form a rhizome with other animals".²² Furthermore, Jennings has argued that ritual action not only incorporates but also intends the role of the observer, since it not only allows but also invites, and even guides, attention to itself.²³ The observer, therefore, has a direct impact on ritual performance; the task of

¹⁸ Houseman and Severi, p. 195.

¹⁹ Bowie, p. 151.

²⁰ Christopher Braddock, *Performing Contagious Bodies: Ritual Participation in Contemporary Art* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. xiv, 14.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 25.

²² Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, p. 10.

²³ Jennings, p. 125.

the spectator is to understand reflectively what is known ritually, to recognise ritual knowledge and transfer it ‘outside’ the event of the ritual itself both in time and space.²⁴ The audience then is not only part of contagious ritual context but could be understood as vital for the completion of the ritual and its inherent dynamics, namely, receiving its generated knowledge and passing it on. The understanding that the audience is no less affected by the transformative ritual capacity or that its presence is no less important for the ritual dynamics to fully unfold is of utmost importance when it comes to devising new modes of ritualisation that would affect society as a whole. Since it is the exposure to the ritual, or being ‘contaminated’ by it that could be seen as enough for ritual’s force to seep into audience’s bodies and transform them from within, it allows and indicates a broader exposure and, consequently, diffusion within the society. It could be seen as parallel to what Turner has termed a ‘spontaneous communitas’ that emerges in ritual liminal stage, which is highlighted by an emergence of a certain condition of relatedness, which is unplanned, occurring between strangers but nonetheless generating a totality of equal being or of fluidity that directly and immediately confronts identities.²⁵ Turner draws his being in flow from psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi:

[Flow] is the state in which action follows upon action according to an internal logic, which seems to need no conscious intervention on our part. We experience it as a unified flowing from one moment to the next, in which we feel in control of our actions, and in which there is little distinction between self and environment; between stimulus and response; or between past, present, and future.²⁶

RELATIONALITY

An actively performed ritual has the capacity to transform entities that are enclosed within its matrix, specifically, the ritual gathering in its broadest sense. What is important, however, is also how it transforms the relationality between the participants and observers as well as the intrinsic dynamics of the ritual. Ritual relationships seem to entail a concurrent enactment of relationship modes that are

²⁴ Ibidem, pp. 125-126.

²⁵ Victor Turner, ‘Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow, Ritual: An Essay in Comparative Symbology’, in ed. Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982), pp. 47-48.

²⁶ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, ‘Play and Intrinsic Rewards’, *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 15:3 (1975), p. 43.

generally assumed to be contradictory. Grimes argues that in rituals, folding or stripping of identities deepens through coalescing of classificatory distinctions that are structurally separated, for instance, male/female, divine/demonic, human/animal.²⁷ According to Michael Houseman, in ritual relationality, assertions of one's identity are simultaneously testaments of difference, exhibiting authority is also displaying subordination, the presence of humans and non-humans is instantaneously validated and rejected, etc.²⁸ In ritual, contradiction is the norm. Such unordinary patterns of relationality tie interdependent ritual entities into a totality, making rituals extremely integrative. Most importantly, since ritual relationships are acted out and not simply indicated, they are not rational or symbolic links between abstract terms or categories, but, instead, personal intimate encounters sustained by purposefully and emotionally laden events.²⁹ For instance, Houseman's devised and conducted ritual for research purposes, that had no cultural or symbolic value or social function, led to a transformation of relationships within a particular group of students.³⁰ This led to a conclusion that ritual efficacy stems, principally, from the very enactment of particular relationships that the ritual performance denotes or, simply put, experiential grounding. It corresponds to what Haraway underlines when arguing that "actual encounters are what make beings".³¹

Thus, the particular realities that are enacted in rituals are, essentially, lived relationships or new totalities of both between human and non-human entities or what Houseman calls "an ongoing reciprocal involvement between subjects implying, for all parties concerned, the attendant qualities of agency, interaction, intentionality, affect and accountability".³² Ronald Grimes has termed this as a deep-world performance in which entities that form ritual gathering are so intensely and radically identified with each other that there is no difference, "even though everybody knows animals and humans are different".³³ He further argues that such performances reside in the deep world, which is the whole cloth of the planet, an imagined, performed

²⁷ Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies*, p. 58.

²⁸ Houseman, 'Relationality', p. 418.

²⁹ Michael Houseman, 'The Red and the Black: A Practical Experiment for Thinking about Ritual', in *Ritual in Its Own Right: Exploring the Dynamics of Transformation*, eds. Don Handelman and Galina Lindquist (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2004), p. 76.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 75-97.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 67.

³² Houseman, 'Relationality', p. 415.

³³ Grimes, *Rite out of Place*, p. 150.

cosmos, which is momentary and occasional, but also utterly real.³⁴ Thus, if we take into account that ritual is inherently paradoxical in a sense that it brings contradictory entities into a relationship, this could be perceived as a suitable medium to fulfil the mandate extended by Haraway, who yearns for species interdependence based on response and respect. In her discussion on interspecies partnership, she argues that partners do not exist prior to their relating, since “the partners are precisely what come out of their inter- and intra-relating of fleshly, significant, semiotic-material being. [...] [W]e are bodies in braided, ontic, and antic relatings.”³⁵ Therefore, rituals draw together seemingly incompatible, contradictory, ambiguous entities, be it human or non-human, into a non-hierarchical, all-inclusive, highly integrative relationality, which is afforded by the immediate, personal experience. Ritual gathering does not have to share similar cultural or religious values, as ritual in itself is a context that invites inner paradox. This holistic relationship, therefore, has real implications upon the lived reality, since the event itself is tangible and the relationships are physically enacted.

INTIMACY AND THE SELF

When it comes to re-shaping an anthropocentric approach that is prevalent in contemporary society, it is equally important to understand whether sole individuals can undergo ritual transformation on their own, namely, whether ritual can both perform and embody the ritual. Cultural historian Piroska Nagy proposed a new way to look at ritual process, one that occurs without social formalisation and ritualisation and, instead, functions as a self-transformative process – an intimate ritual.³⁶ She suggested that an individual can perform a somewhat inner ritual, through opening oneself up to the potential of cosmos, which, in turn, facilitates self-reorganisation. Don Handelman, in his discussion on Nagy, has stated that this type of ritual enabled intimacy “between the selves of ritualists, themselves as alter, and the interiors of cosmos and its other beings” through what he calls extremely complex, deeply interior

³⁴ Ibidem, p. 153.

³⁵ Haraway, *When Species Meet*, p. 165.

³⁶ Piroska Nagy, ‘Religious Weeping as Ritual in the Medieval West’, in *Ritual in Its Own Right: Exploring the Dynamics of Transformation*, eds. Don Handelman and Galina Lindquist (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2004), pp. 119-137.

recursivities within an individual.³⁷ Handelman himself has argued that the interior world of a person consists of beings that are multiple variations of the self that generate sociality through their webs of interaction with one another, making the innerness of a person no less social than the social world:

Radical personal change, self-transformation, occurs when the person takes himself apart (or is taken apart), thereby opening the way to possible re-configurations of existential being, of selfness. The conditions of selfness existing in interior variations and refractions that interact, in internal voices that contest and chorus, enable them to be further torn apart and utterly fragmented from one another as a precondition for possible, emerging reconfigurations of selfness, temporary and permanent.³⁸

Thus, the transformation can take place through the innermost sociality of self-to-self. Such internal dialogue is achieved through alienation and fragmentation of one's humanness, which initially passes through the body. The fragile, multiplex self, transfused with the inner tension embodies the contradictory relationality, whereas transformation itself is generated through rupturing of an individual, personal rather than social schism. It parallels what Haraway has termed as the body always in-the-making, specifically, "a dynamic entanglement of heterogeneous beings, times and scales stringed to a new of fleshly presence, always a becoming and permanently established in relating."³⁹ Furthermore, the comprehension that any entity comprises multiple selves could be seen as crucial when it comes to reshaping anthropocentrically transfused worldview of today's society. If we ourselves are always in fluctuation and ever-changing, how can we impose our domination over other entities? The need to be in-tune with the polysemous nature of being in itself is evident in the attention Haraway pays to the multiplex nature of humanness from a biological standpoint. She highlights that only 10 percent of cells in a human body are human genomes, whereas, the rest are various bacteria, fungi, etc., which "play in symphony necessary to my being alive at all".⁴⁰ The human is always in itself in a company with non-humans. Therefore, "[t]o be one is always to become with many".⁴¹ What is

³⁷ Handelman, 'Epilogue: Toing and Froing the Social', pp. 218-219.

³⁸ Don Handelman, 'Postlude: The Interior Sociality of Self-transformation', in *Self & Self-Transformation in the History of Religion*, eds. David Shulman and Guy G. Stroumsa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 238.

³⁹ Haraway, *When Species Meet*, p. 163.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 3-4.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

especially fascinating about such capacity to generate the sociality of the self, is that it particularly applies to contemporary individuals:

The recursivities contained wholly within the individual are at their densest in persons who are modern individuals in the fullest sense, who understand themselves as autonomous beings in and of themselves, and who, thereby contain ritual within themselves as the intimacy of self-giving integrity, indeed, intimacy.⁴²

Such approach opens up a possibility for reconfiguration of the self innerly, which, in turn, projects it outwardly. The inner sociality somewhat demonstrates how heterogeneity can be contained within supposed homogeneity, which then has the capacity to transform the outer social in the same manner. Transformation could then be understood as demanding for an introduction of ambivalence into what seems to be structurally grounded. Thereby, in ritual performance, be it in the group or within the individual, “we perform ourselves, we do not simply express what we already are. We perform our becoming, and become our performing”.⁴³ What is crucial to note in regard to an intimate ritual, however, is that it requires a trigger, something that removes the individual from a lived reality into a realm in which the transformation of the sociality of the self can take place. Nonetheless, it expands the view on inherent ritual dynamics and their capacity to transform not only the ritual encompassing the bodies within its own matrix, but the matrix of the individual’s body encompassing ritual.

* * *

In this chapter, I aimed to show how ritual dynamics, being inherently self-initiating and active, embracing contradiction, have an enormous capacity to transform the ritual gathering as a whole – be it humans or non-humans, individuals or groups as well as people belonging to various cultural systems and religious backgrounds – and their relationality. By releasing transformation actively and actionally, ritual transforms through the physical presence, consequently, grounding the

⁴² Handelman, ‘Epilogue: Toing and Froing the Social’, p. 218.

⁴³ Tom F. Driver, *The Magic of Ritual: Our Need for Liberating Rites that Transform Our Lives and Our Communities* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1991), as cited in Bobby C. Alexander, ‘Ritual and Current Studies of Ritual: Overview’ in *Anthropology of Religion*, ed. Steohen D. Glazier (London: Greenwood Press, 1997), p. 140.

enacted relationships experientially and immediately. Such holistic relationship resulting from ritual transformation, which is physically, actually and bodily disposed, has tangible implications within the reality of everyday. Therefore, since rituals could be seen to proceed from the very same principles urged by the post-humanist theorists concerned with the forging of a new way of being in the environment and, thus, encapsulating the theoretical mandate within themselves, the transformation unfolding in ritual action could be said to be turned into doing within its practice. In ritual action, these theories gain substance and become dominant of action, therefore making ritual a theory-practice that exposes one to the required approach and ascertains it simultaneously.

4.

Ritual as Bioart, Bioart as Ritual

As we have seen in the previous chapters, rituals have the intrinsic force to open up different realities that do not conform to conventional perceptions of time and space, as well as transform both society and the individual in an aware, active sense, grounded in the embodiment. Since rituals have their own inherent dynamic, their context is free from any cultural or religious, as well as individual or societal presumptions and ideologies. It, thus, makes it a potent mechanism for societal transformation, which is all-inclusive and non-hierarchical. However, as previously mentioned, “[i]n a world of fast-paced globalisation and market-driven economies, ritual seems awkwardly out of place, a clumsy, tradition-laden cultural activity”.¹ Particularly in the secular Western societies, ritual as a practice is practically extinct, reduced to a somewhat mythically transfused concept. Such inaccurate, but, nonetheless, predominant approach that disregards ritual as ‘traditional’ and, therefore, irrelevant in today’s reality, poses a problem of its installation. On the other hand, somewhat ritualistic practices that are used in contemporary society, especially in the political domain, are quickly submerged within the power structures and used, instead, as tools for political and ideological persuasion and establishment of dominance. In fact, one cleverly executed trick of the ‘official culture’ is to create an impression that rather new rituals and values they express would appear old and stable, since such appearance helps to maintain official culture’s assertion of tradition and to claim that the status quo sustains social stability.² As a consequence, it could be argued that the transformative force inherent to ritual should be mediated through a practice that would appeal to contemporary society, resonate with the contemporary individual’s worldview and concurrent with contemporary tendencies, while at the same time maintaining a complete detachment from power structures, in order to remain non-appropriated and non-conformed. Consequently, in this chapter I will, first of all, aim to demonstrate why art as a whole is the most appropriate mediator of

¹ Grimes, *Rite out of Place*, pp. ix-x.

² Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction, 3rd Edition* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 81.

ritual's capacity to transform and remain outside of the homogenising dominant structures, which sustain anthropocentrically laden perspective, by pinpointing ritual and art's shared fundamental qualities. Furthermore, through analysis of the three case studies, namely, Kathy High's *Embracing Animal*, Ai Hasegawa's *I Wanna Deliver A Dolphin...* and Art Orienté Objet's *May the Horse Live in Me*, I will consider why, when it comes to ritualising specifically for a purpose of breaching the culture/nature and human/animal dichotomies, bioart could be understood as directing us to the practice of ritual and as having the most potency, in relation to the embodied dynamic between theory and practice.

RITUAL AND ART

Art and ritual could be said to be bound to each other since the time of their emergence. It is commonly accepted that, initially, all art was ritualistic in nature in all places and at all times, first in relation to magic and later on – religion.³ However, it would be a mistake to assume that since rituals often, if not always, employ artful means, be it music, visual arts or drama, the role of art in rituals is merely decorative. In fact, the experiential transformations and transitions in ritual could be understood as communicated, received, and engendered among ritual participants through the dynamic between aesthetic modes and ritual action.⁴ Despite the apparent detachment of the two in today's society, art and ritual could be understood as having the aptitude to perpetually dwell in a dialogue, feeding into each other, without being reduced to one another. It could be argued that both ritual and art seem to retain a component of each other that is always already inherent, even if not apparent. In such case, art could be assumed to be a potent, if not one and only domain, in which ritual's transformative force could be mediated through another practice.

Despite their connectivity from the outset, ritual and art could be understood to share fundamental intrinsic qualities. First of all, both practices could be said to produce an entry point into a unique realm that is simultaneously detached and embedded within the reality, opening up the gate to a domain that is bursting with possibilities and potentialities instead. The experience that one undergoes upon encountering an artwork or participating in ritual is exceptional and irreplaceable,

³ James Elkins, *On the Strange Place of Religion in Contemporary Art* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 5.

⁴ Kapferer, *A Celebration of Demons. Exorcisms and the Aesthetics of Healing in Sri Lanka*, p. 178.

which makes it significant in its own right. Both art and ritual allow for a world that is both outside as well as grounded within the everyday reality, a reality that is otherwise invisible or, in other words – a gateway to ‘beyond’ of everyday experience, a somewhat uncharted territory. In today’s realities, this could be done, for instance, by making it possible to come in contact with what societal power structures have pushed away or suspended as challenging disruptions of their homogenising narrative, which demonstrates a possibility for a drastic change within society.

Furthermore, Kapferer has argued that art and ritual share their aptitude to bring the particularity, individualness and uniqueness (the Particular) as well as universalising character of the (human) experience:

[T]he Particular and the Universal are brought together and are transformed in the process.⁵ The Particular is universalized beyond the existential immediacy of the individual’s situation so that it is transcended, even while its groundedness and specificity are maintained, to include others in what is essentially the same experiential situation. Concurrently, the Universal “is given a focus, an experiential content, in the immediacy of the individual’s situation”.⁶

This approach corresponds highly to what Mikel Dufrenne wrote on the arts, arguing that individual perspectives, experiences, feelings awakened by the Work of art, whereas account for particularity also somewhat converge at the same point, “like intentions which aim at the same object, or like languages which say the same thing”.⁷ Such ability is crucial in a sense, that it affects personal experiences, allowing for their individuality, while, simultaneously, tuning them into a higher order of things, into the underlying context, producing an inherent contradiction. It allows for undergoing the one experience in togetherness. Thus, the emergence of individual experiences, that are always already in unison with the universal, could be understood as the underlying quality of their capacity to transform.

Finally and most importantly, art, same as ritual “possesses a forceful and even demanding character of its own”, which makes it a practice with an autonomous existence.⁸ Arts’ intrinsic dynamics are capable of their own initiative and

⁵ Kapferer, ‘Performance and the Structuring of Meaning and Experience’, p. 191.

⁶ Ibidem, p. 191.

⁷ Mikel Dufrenne, *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, trans. and eds. Edward S. Casey, Albert A. Anderson, Willis Domingo and Leon Jackson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 60.

⁸ Edward S. Casey, ‘Translator’s Foreword’ in *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, trans. and eds. Edward S. Casey, Albert A. Anderson, Willis Domingo and Leon Jackson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. xxv.

transformative potency. This is evident in Dufrenne's approach that artworks awaken us to ourselves and gain lucidity in spectators through what they call forth within them as we exist in the artwork rather than vice versa.⁹ Thus, both art and ritual have the inner structure that consists of a frame and content that reciprocally and simultaneously define one another.¹⁰ The existence in the artwork alludes to the capacity of arts, parallel to ritual, to mould context into its own inherent consistency. Such ability to contextualise entities into the very matter of the artwork or ritual is what distinguishes these two practices from any other and makes them enormously potent vectors for transformation.

However, despite the profound embedded connectivity between the two, they cannot be simply reduced to one another. What distinguishes ritual and most forms of art could be understood as the line between imagination and invention. Grimes argues that when it comes to ritual, invention is a primary notion, since "we cannot invent without imagining, but we can imagine without turning what we imagine into an invention".¹¹ It is important to note that imagination here is understood not as opposing the real but a different kind of real. Essentially, Grimes proposes that invention endows imagination with 'teeth' or, simply put, active, practical dimension. Thus, whereas ritual, parallel to art, is a result of imagination, ritual always demands for an invention, a continuously renewed structure, on the basis of which physical, embodied, collective and social enactment is feasible.¹² Art, in this case, could be understood as, at least partially, residing in the realm of imagination, since, it most commonly functions in a manner of allusion, implication and signal. Similarly, Robert Innis has further argued that whereas both rituals and works of art move us, influencing the lived quality of our very existence, one learns to be so by being in a ritual, which, in itself, is a teaching act with a purpose to educate community and provide not only 'knowledge about' but 'knowledge by'.¹³ As explicitly discussed in the previous chapter, ritual always requires action and actuality, embodiment and corporeality, enactment and experiential grounding rather than a reference to them. In addition, ritual could be seen to exercise a certain amount of control, which could

⁹ Dufrenne, pp. 59-60.

¹⁰ Robert E. Innis, 'The Tacit Logic of Ritual Embodiments: Rappaport and Polanyi between Thick and Thin', in *Ritual in Its Own Right: Exploring the Dynamics of Transformation*, eds. Don Handelman and Galina Lindquist (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2004), p. 208.

¹¹ Ronald L. Grimes, *Deeply Into the Bone: Re-Inventing Rites of Passage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 4.

¹² Ibidem, p. 4.

¹³ Innis, p. 210.

be perceived as what makes it so easily appropriated by power structures. Hence, ritual transformation could be said to reside on an action-al ground, whereas arts' force, on the other hand, at least within the larger society, rather ensues as a whisper or an echo, which reverberates within the individual and larger society in a manner, which is imperceptible or ambivalent. It can lead to action but it does not derive from action or demands for action.

This is not to say that art as a whole has a somewhat reduced capacity to reshape the society due to its less directly action-driven nature. On the contrary, numerous recent scholarly works argue against art's supposed representational and aesthetic function and stress arts' capacity to transform. For instance, Krzysztof Ziarek has claimed that art is endowed with its own transformative force that functions as a non-power, an alternative relationality that calls into question the technicist view of being and dominant power structures.¹⁴ However, for such force to unfold and transform relationality, individuals are required to tap into the 'beyond' of artworks, beyond of seeing and evaluating, beyond of experiencing and feeling as well as beyond of themselves and others.¹⁵ Whereas the force of art, understood as such, has enormous potential in the transformation of the underlying power structures, it requires a very particular reception of artworks that instantly significantly reduces its scope to a small fracture of society. Essentially, those, to whom theory, that would potentially change the way to look at artworks, is inaccessible, would be virtually denied the possibility of transformation. In addition, individual personal experiences in the unfolding of art's transformative force, at least in Ziarek's terms, are a by-product of a grander transformation rather than the locus, which in the specific context of forging a respectful relationality to the environment may not suffice.

Such remaining in the ambivalent somewhat 'higher' domain that is not action-laden and experientially grounded may correspond to the fears expressed by Donna Haraway, in which she harshly criticises theorists writing on the human/animal relationship for perpetually remaining in the sublime, rather than earthly realm, resulting in their seeming ignorance of actual, felt relationships: "[n]o earthly animal would look twice at these authors, at least not in their textual garb".¹⁶ Thus, especially given environmental malaises, species alienation and human

¹⁴ Krzysztof Ziarek, *The Force of Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004)

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 27-29.

¹⁶ Haraway, *When Species Meet*, pp. 27-30.

destructive dominance that require a head-on, grounded, aware and approachable attitude, rituals that affect individuals actually and practically seem to be crucial. However, if we follow the understanding that ritual in itself is always already embedded within the arts and take their similar intrinsic dynamics into account, it could be argued that the intrinsic force of art has the capacity to direct itself action-ally and direct us to the practice of ritual. Consequently, I will further aim to demonstrate that when it comes to the mediation of ritual transformation, specifically concerned with breaching the nature/culture and human/animal divides, precisely bioart has the capacity to produce action-laden ritualistic practices. I will do so through analysing how bio art could be understood as having the previously discussed intrinsic ritual qualities that in itself already embodies environmental theories as well as functions as a performance that forges actual, felt relationships rather than alludes to them.

BIOART AS RITUAL IN THE CONTEXT OF ECOLOGY

Thus, as we have seen, ritual and art could be said to be identical in the way they mould context into their own inherent dynamics, in their simultaneous detachment and incorporation of everyday as well as their concurrent allowance for individualisation and universalising. However, the intrinsic dynamics or the transformative force they both possess could be said to diverge in the way they come to be within those, who experience them. Whereas ritual transforms more directly and more immediately, and, possibly, with more aim for a specific outcome, art transforms in a more underlying imperceptible way that destabilises, rather than directs, functioning as a somewhat undercurrent. However, I would like to argue that bioart, in fact, has the capacity to also function action-ally and that when it comes to the type of ritual that could be environmentally charged and able to breach the culture/nature and human/animal dichotomies, it could be understood as having the ability to mediate it.

Bioart as an entire practice could be comprehended as out-of-an-ordinary, open-ended, alienating realm as it extracts what humanity takes for granted and problematises it, stripping individuals of any supposedly grounded classifications and divisions, turning answers back into questions. It focuses on destructuralisation and aims to revise the comprehension of the environment as falling into clearly defined

categories, which is achieved through the production of forms that reside on the threshold, that are neither this nor that, be it art/science, living/non-living, human/animal, human/machine or culture/nature as a whole. There is no doubt that bioart possesses an enormous quality to affect those who encounter the artworks, leaving them somewhat alienated, estranged, deceived by their own beliefs, fragmented and in constant questioning. In his discussion on Eduardo Kac, Krzysztof Ziarek himself has argued for an immense capacity that bioart possesses to transform the power structures.¹⁷ However, whereas bioart exhibition visitors are certainly left somewhat disturbed and transfused with an uncanny feeling, knowing that something has changed, studies on visitors' experiences show that general public cannot pinpoint what their experiences are, finding it "hard to understand" and "too abstract" possibly because of an understanding that art requires one to understand something that is beyond what is there.¹⁸ Even if we assume that upon encountering bioart viewers are open to it, letting it awaken and tune them into the intrinsic transformative context, the supposed outcome of such a non-evident process does not seem to suffice the demand for a transformed environmental fabric that requires a very specific, active and instant approach. Nonetheless, I would like to argue that bioart practice possesses the ability to direct its capacity to transform not only in an artistic but, also, in a ritualistic way if it would be understood as such, meaning, the artwork being approached there and then, as an action-al performance in which the relationships established are real rather than standing for something else; therefore, meaning that if they would be approached as a ritualistic theory-practice and received as such, they could implement environmentally concerned theories in a tangible way. Thus, in this section I would like to, firstly, analyse how bioart, in parallel to ritual, encapsulates the post-humanist theories within its internal dynamic, meaning that they can be made familiar through and within the experience with the artwork. Furthermore, I will aim to demonstrate in what way bioart functions as an action-al, actual and embodied performance making the transformation immediate and felt.

¹⁷ Ziarek, pp. 89-98.

¹⁸ Wolfgang Kerbe and Markus Schmidt, 'Splicing Boundaries: The Experiences of Bioart Exhibition Visitors', *Leonardo* 48:2 (2015), p. 133.

CASE STUDIES

Kathy High's *Embracing Animal* (2004-2006) is a multimedia installation, involving transgenics. Whereas her project includes various artistic mediums, such as video or website, the fundamental part of her artwork is three laboratory rats that were microinjected with human DNA in order to give them autoimmune diseases, similar to those Kathy High has herself, which then were housed in an experimental playground at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art.

Ai Hasegawa's speculative design work *I Wanna Deliver A Dolphin...* (2011-2013) comprises a video work, a sculpture of an 'anatomical section' of a dolphin in a woman's womb as well as a dilemma chart, developed to aid one in making a calculated decision about giving birth to a dolphin. The artwork tackles the possibilities of human reproduction, at the times of overpopulation and environmental crises. Consequently, the project proposes giving birth to endangered species in order to satisfy the inherent human need for childbirth, without contributing to a further draining of the Earth or, alternatively, to utilise the offspring as a source of food.

Art Orienté Objet's (collaboration between Marion Laval-Jeantet and Benoît Mangin) *May the Horse Live in Me* (2011) is a bioart performance piece as well as extreme body art, in which Marion Laval-Jeantet was injected with horse's blood in



Figure 1

an aspiration to highlight the positive therapeutic effects of human/animal hybridisation. The one-hour performance took place at Kapelica Gallery, Ljubljana.

* * *



Figure 2

THE PRIMACY OF ACTION

As previously established, ritual transformation unfolds through and in action and it is precisely this quality that makes the practice so potent in enabling devised modes of relationality to come into being. Fascinatingly, bioart is also grounded first and foremost in action, rather than suffused with pre-text and it is only in doing and in experiencing directly that the ideas gain substance and momentum and are able to become dominant of action. In Kathy High's *Embracing Animal*, the process of the artwork coming into being could be seen as initially generated through the act of rats being microinjected with human DNA. Before the undertaking of the actual injection, encoding the course in which the artwork will find itself to be, could be assumed as impossible, meaning that it is the action that drives and guides the process in which the artwork and its context emerge. Similarly, Art Orienté Objet's *May the Horse Live in Me* as the artwork is, essentially, the action itself – that of the artist Marion Laval-

Jeantet injecting herself with horse's blood, which in turn cracks open a vector of possible trajectories in which the artwork can unfold (Fig. 1). The primacy of action is also apparent in the fact that despite of the danger attached to such undergoing, it is done rather than implied. Likewise, in Ai Hasegawa's *I Wanna Deliver a Dolphin*, the act of a woman giving birth to a dolphin shatters all possible preconceptions, making action the basis of the way in which the artwork gains impetus and reveals itself (Fig. 2). If we proceed in Grimes terms, these artworks exceed the realm of imagination and, instead, are founded on an invention, acquiring their potency in the primacy of doing. Thereby, given case studies could be seen to institute a reality on their own in which execution is actual and action-al rather than implicated or referred to, an invented performative realm that is grounded in reality and in which the process of transformation is experiential.

EMBODIED EXPERIENCE



Figure 3

The embodiment could be seen as dominating not only given case studies but the entire bioart practice, since the artistic media itself is vital, not only communicating and transmitting what it intends to, but also helping to bring new structures into being.¹⁹ In these particular case studies, the body quite literally functions as a matter through which transformation unfolds and in which a particular corporeal type of knowledge is generated. In *Embracing Animal*, the tangible corporeality of the rats could be seen to be the locus for the emergence of the transformational process that leads to the emergence of a hybrid. In addition, in the accompanying video, Kathy High herself is revealed dancing and interacting with animals in her purest bodily form – nudity,

¹⁹ Mitchell, p. 15.

suggesting that transformation is achieved through the bodily way of encountering and knowing (Fig. 3). Similarly, the injection of horse's blood into a human body, in the performance of *May the Horse Live in Me*, turns the artwork into a corporeal folding. Neither the body of a horse nor that of a woman stay bound to their supposed classification, as both become fragmented through either deduction or addition of corporeal matter. Furthermore, the predominance of the body in the artistic process is also evident in Laval-Jeantet's imitation of the horse's physical attributes, namely, wearing artificial hooves, which indicates that close relationality is aimed to be achieved through the bodily proximity (Fig. 4). In *I Wanna Deliver a Dolphin* the birth marks a negation of bodily boundaries altogether through what seems an unviable filiation in the most intimate, personal act in which the body functions as a site of transformation. In this case, the body functions not only as a stimulus but the very site of transformation. In all cases, the primacy could be seen as given to bodies as it is precisely through and in them that transgression of boundaries takes place and transformative force is released.



Figure 4

IMMERSION OF THE AUDIENCE



Figure 5

Upon encountering these artworks, spectators could be seen as compelled by the action-ally unleashed transformative force that manifests itself in and through the bodies. In *High and Art Orienté Object's* bio artworks this could possibly be achieved through the use of actual living beings that invite interaction. As noted in the previous chapter, the transformation may unfold itself within participants in a manner that can be of playful or even silly kind. Thereby, in *Embracing Animal*, through an interface with the rats in their experiential playground, the participants could be seen to engage in their own spontaneous ritualising whereas at the same time being inspired by the action-al force and engulfed within transformative ritual context (Fig. 5). Interacting with the rats, in themselves contaminated, enable contagious participation of spectators. On the other hand, whereas *May the Horse Live in Me* does not invite any direct interaction between performers and spectators, the latter, nonetheless, could be understood to be immersed in the ritual's context through the dynamics of its elaborate performance. This is achieved partially through the danger element that is inherent in the artwork, namely, the possibility of complications resulting in death upon injecting the blood. Such permeating feeling, no doubt, induces deep participation and full immersion in what takes place in the performance as the audience becomes unwillingly responsible. The contagious participation literally forces itself upon the audience. In addition, the ritualistic walk of Laval-Jeantet alongside the horse, circling the site of the performance, invites directed attention through the rhythmic sound of the hooves.

The affect on spectators and their role in *I Wanna Deliver a Dolphin* could be seen as of a different kind but, nonetheless, of equal potency. Despite the performance

of the artwork being mediated through a video that could allude to the artwork's inherent transformative force having a lesser capacity to affect bodies of the audience, the artwork could still be seen as unfolding only in and through the bodies. The moment of witnessing a woman give birth to a dolphin is enormously corporeally charged. The element of surprise could be seen to function as a vector that induces its own dynamic transformative context, which, in turn, means that spectatorship is fundamental in the artwork's unfolding. Thus, the audience, relates to the artwork entirely bodily as their minds become stripped of any presuppositions.

Therefore, these artworks induce a deeply felt participation through a variety of means and allow for the transformative force to spread contagiously and submerge those encountering artworks into a somewhat transformative matter. Since all of the artworks display clear patterns of detachment from an ordinary reality, the gathering as a whole, including performers, participants and observers, start dwelling in isolation that foregrounds their being in togetherness.

(SELF)-RELATIONALITY

The imperative characteristic of bioart that could be perceived as ritually disposed, is the emergence of relationships that are experientially grounded. In *Embracing Animal*, Kathy High herself initially expressed the fear she felt for rats upon their arrival, which, fascinatingly, stemmed from her not knowing how to relate to the animals. It could be understood as alluding to a schism that is apparent from the outset, which is also often a pre-requisite in rituals. However, upon injecting rats with human DNA, the mode of relationality is transformed into that of a unique relationship, since the merging of genetic information leaves the human fragmented due to the questioning of her bodily integrity, whereas the animal quite literally becomes an embodiment of multiplicity. Rats come to be transformational in their corporeality, in High's own words, they turn into "extensions, transformers, transitional combined beings that resonate with me in ways that other animals cannot".²⁰ Such approach directly indicates that the process of the artwork unfolding substantially altered the mode of relationality. In addition, an intimate, mutually considerate, felt relationship could be seen as simultaneously achieved upon the

²⁰ Kathy High, 'Playing with Rats', in *Tactical Biopolitics: Art, Activism, and Technoscience*, eds. Beatriz da Costa and Kavita Philip (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2008), p. 466.

human and the animal establishing a common ground, namely, sharing the experience of having autoimmune diseases. The relationality of the audience attunes to that of the performers – the artist and her rats, in which the animal, now partially human, becomes easier to relate to. This is achieved not only through the shared physical element, but possibly through empathy as well as understanding that if human contagion can have a felt effect on the rats, the boundary dividing human and animal is more of a membrane.

In parallel, *May the Horse Live in Me* delineates a similar pattern of relationality. The hierarchy of the relationship shifts as the woman surrenders herself to the horse in a way that the alien blood within her body can lead to her death. The animal comes to be known in the deepest, most intimate sense, through, literally, entering into the human. It becomes impossible to distinguish who is acting upon who and who is in charge, which turns the relationship into that of solidarity and mutual reliance. Audience's relation to the performers also shifts as they become engulfed in the responsibility to take action or pro-activeness if something happens, transfused with the feeling of uneasiness. In addition, spectators are brought closer to the horse through the body of a woman that becomes the embodiment of the two.

Both, *Embracing Animal* and *May the Horse Live in Me*, coalesce classificatory distinctions and display unordinary patterns of relationality. However, they are not mere allusions or references to what could be. Since the artworks include animals and humans that literally embody transformation, they are capable of instigating responses that are real and founded on experientially laden engagement. Especially if we take that art as ritual instigates a somewhat engulfing context, then observers could be understood to receive the same knowledge and relational experience as the performers themselves, meaning that their approach attunes to the new mode of relationality achieved between the artists and the animals.

In the case of *I Wanna Deliver a Dolphin*, it is precisely spectators or, specifically, each individual in the audience, whose relationality is transformed. It could be perceived as somewhat triggering and embodying transformation simultaneously. It functions in an intimate manner, as a self-transformative process. This is especially apparent in the open-ended character of the artwork and confrontation of the observer with a dilemma chart, which opens up a storehouse of possibilities on how to relate to the dolphin (Fig. 6). The dolphin mediates between different contexts, dwelling in its inherent paradoxes: whilst it is not an animal, as it was given birth by a

Dilemma chart (Why don't I get pregnant with...)

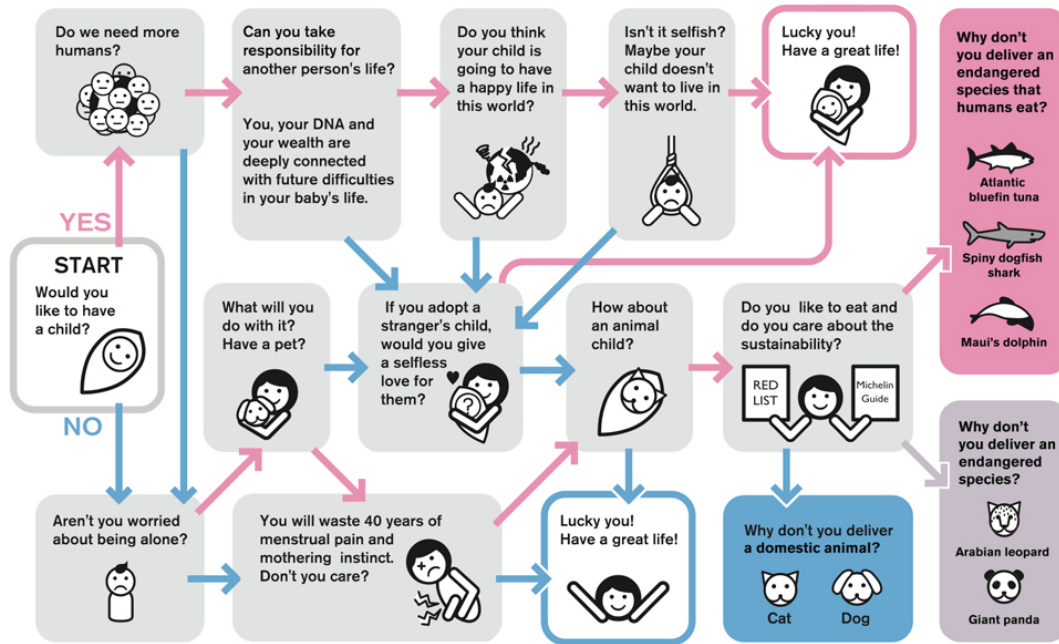


Figure 6

human, it is still not a human; whereas it can become a subject in an intimate relationship with a human, it can also turn into an object or commodity, sustaining human hierarchy. The spectator, thus, could be seen as fragmented in his/hers own inner self through the contemplation of the various purposes for the dolphin's birth. Since the dilemma chart indicates that the animal can be either adopted as a baby, used as a food supply or, in order, to help the extinction of endangered species, it induces a discussion between individual's other selves, since all of the selves are trapped in different scenarios. Thus, it transforms the individual's relationship to the animal precisely in this convergence of the possibilities of action. Again, it simultaneously induces feelings that are grounded in empathy and makes one question the nature of such feeling, namely, is it because of the 'human' element in the dolphin that makes it more difficult to determine its destiny, whereas humans choose regular animals' lives for them all the time.

OBJECTIFICATION OF THEORY

What is important is that these artworks could be understood as objectifications or embodiments of the principles and visions voiced by the post-humanist theorists, through the literal embodiment of the zone of “betwixt-and-between” and mediation between contradictory, paradoxical contexts, intrinsic in their being. As outlined in the previous chapter, given case studies, same as rituals, could be seen to mediate theory and make it available to a larger community through action. In that case, practice could be seen to function as an access point to theory, which then would be reflected back onto practice. This would mean that inherent art’s dynamics that induce transformation demonstrate high potential to generate new realities in which a devised understanding and being in the environment could be established, as urged by Haraway, Latour, Deleuze and Guattari. Opening a portal to these realities could be understood to be achieved through the manipulation of the very grounds of existence, namely, foundational understanding of what constitutes life and death, progression of time and being itself, in the artworks.

For instance, *Embracing Animal* constantly shifts between life and death – the beginning and the end of the linear conception of time. It brings the two closely together, even parallel to each other. In relation to rats, High states that “[t]he skeletons of the Black Plague haunt these rats (...dirty, disease-carrying rats) and follows them everywhere”, but she, nonetheless, strives to make the rats live forever, as an immortal celebration of their kinship, merging distant past transfused with death with on-going ever-futuristic life as well as natural and cultural forces.²¹ Similarly, rats embody the manipulation of life as they are injected with a disease only to be cured. Death is also brought into the present in relation to the artist, since she and the rats share autoimmune diseases that eventually bring the latter to death, possibly acting as a prophecy to the former. Different trajectories of time open up a reality of altered modes of becoming, being and existing through overturning and manipulating the positions of the human and the animals both in time and space, which destabilises their positions, possibly enabling them to enter into a multiplicity.

I Wanna Deliver a Dolphin... could also be perceived as producing a realm on its own. Manipulating the very origin and fundamentality of the emergence of a new life,

²¹ High, pp. 468, 471.

as we know it, it suspends the everyday reality and turns it into its own reality. The act of a human giving birth to a dolphin, thus, questions the very ground of being. The dolphin, as a vessel of possible outcomes, could be perceived as the very embodiment of time perception as a moebius ring, “which is both external and internal, outside and inside to itself”, perpetually becoming something else within itself.²² The epistemological status of the moebius surface, then, is that of a shifter and transformer.²³ Its nature makes the dolphin both ‘the other’ and ‘the self’ not only to the woman, but also to oneself, turning it into a non-hierarchical connection. This corresponds to Handelman, who argues that rituals, or in this case – bioart, have the capacity “to imagine otherness, other-where, other-when, through its own self-organising media and their originary grounds”.²⁴ The anti-structural time of *I Wanna Deliver a Dolphin...*, therefore, establishes interconnectivity and transformation into a substance that holds in itself both the human and the animal, as it breaks through any confinements of linear time, questioning the narrative of life. In addition, it alienates the very act of being born human that induces questioning of the essence of being and instead point to the fragility of the constructed boundaries, since the margin of the woman’s own body has been transgressed and invaded by the animal.

May the Horse Live in Me could also be seen as suffused with the tension between life and death. Injecting the woman with horse’s blood, the very essence of life, so to say, enables the possibility for an emergence of a new form of life – a hybrid that embodies the paradox within itself. Nonetheless, what carries the ignition of a new life also becomes the bearer of death. Such perpetual tension could be understood to function as a vector, inducing a realm in which chaos becomes dominant and bursting with time. It creates a different reality, which is truly a ‘no-man’s-land’, as in both outcomes – life or death – the human becomes extinct. It comes to stand for the ‘in-betweenness’ itself, resulting in the elimination of a structure, hierarchy and classification. As the strict classificatory boundaries blur themselves, the mode of relationality changes from alienation and unfamiliarity to symbiosis and connectivity, forming a hybrid life fabric of mutual agency of the human and the animal.

²² Don Handelman, ‘Re-Framing Ritual’, p. 15.

²³ Ibidem, p. 15.

²⁴ Don Handelman, ‘Epilogue: Toing and Froing the Social’, p. 214.

* * *

In this chapter, I demonstrated that bioart has the capacity to function as ritual in a way that it disposes its transformational force action-ally and bodily and through forging devised modes of relationality that are grounded in experience rather than implicated or alluded to. Similarly to ritual, its transformation could be seen to unfold primarily in doing. In addition, the artworks themselves seem to be founded on questioning of what being and life itself stand for, therefore, embracing questioning. As these very same principles foreground the post-humanist theory, bio artworks could be seen as embodying them in practice, making it accessible and understood in the art's unfolding. Such capacity of bioart to function ritualistically could be seen as an effective method to induce new environmental thinking and breaching the boundaries of human/animal and culture/nature as these notions become extinct in the merging of forms of life. What emerges from the artworks could instead be perceived as an entirely new ecological niche that cannot be divided into structures, hierarchies or classifications. Thus, in regard to this specific purpose, bioart could be seen as endowed with an immense potential to have a tangible effect on contemporary society.

Conclusion

During the course of this thesis, the underlying impetus was, essentially, to discover a tangible method that would allow for an actual shift away from anthropocentrism that seems to be grounded on the nature/culture and human/animal dualisms, in an attempt to deal with the rapidly escalating environmental crises. Whereas means to shift the prevalent attitude towards the environment abundantly exist in the form of theory, an access point to such theory that would appeal to society as a whole, rather than its fracture, seems to be missing. In addition, ways to ground such theories in a personal, actual and practical way, which could be seen as fundamental when it comes to human/animal relationships, also seem absent. Consequently, this thesis has aimed to stress that ritual, as a practice that aided past societies in keeping the balance in their surrounding environment and maintaining intimate relationality with beings that inhabit those surroundings, could have the capacity to fill in this gap. As it was demonstrated in the course of the argument's unfolding, ritual's intrinsic dynamics generate transformation that has the capacity to affect entities that are varying in their being and in the background from which they stem from, making it a timeless method for an all-encompassing change. However, since ritual's instigation as an essentially extinct practice in the contemporary Western societies, especially given permeating prejudice that disregards ritual as tradition-laden, could be seen as problematic in today's reality, this thesis has outlined a possibility of bioart functioning as ritual.

What underlined this argument, was pointing out the apparent gap between theory and practice, stressing that 'what should be done' or what seems to be done in academic realm does not equal 'being done' in the major part of the today's society – the ever-present theory/practice dualism. Even though speculatively, the main discussion focused on action rather than implication, trying to find methods that could lead to implementation of the post-humanist theories as well as establish them in and through practice. Therefore, through analysing bioart case studies, namely Kathy High's *Embracing Animal*, Ai Hasegawa's *I Wanna Deliver A Dolphin...* and Art Orienté Objet's *May the Horse Live in Me*, in this thesis, an attempt to demonstrate that bioart has this capacity was made. Thus, theory/practice dualism could possibly be seen as reduced in bioart as it in itself stems from the very same approach towards humans,

animals, their relationality to themselves, the other and the environment in which they dwell, which is evident in Latour, Haraway, Deleuze and Guattari's post-humanist theory. Therefore, bioart could be understood to mediate these theories and somewhat 'translate' them through action executed in its practice, allowing for society to directly experience what it means to escape hierarchy, dominance, boundaries and opposing poles of reality, namely culture/nature binary, and, instead, emerge in an all-inclusiveness, connectivity and responsibility towards each other. In addition, as a practice that is founded on the actuality and action-ality, it makes the encounters between different species embodied and felt, forging actual relationships, that deeply echo in individuals, therefore turning Haraway's extended mandate for relationships based on respect and regard for each other, an actual reality. Bioart as ritual, thus, seems to allow for the society to gain access to a different understanding of the environment and learn from it through experience, which, in turn, could be understood to have tangible implications on their lives outside the reality of the encounter with these artworks. It has the force to alter the very ecological fabric from within, through addition of new life forms. Therefore, whereas claiming that bioart as ritual could instantly breach the boundaries of nature/culture and human/animal divides would be an overemphasis, it could be seen as opening a portal to what could possibly be achieved in a long run.

Understanding that bioart can function as a ritual, meaning, directing its transformative force actually and action-ally and inducing real changes, could be perceived as endowing bioart with a heightened status within the society. Instead of being approached as a choice, bioart could attain a status of a necessity, a practice that not only could, but also should be encompassed within the everyday routines of contemporary individuals. It is crucial to note here that such understanding does not reduce bioart to ritual. Bioart as an artistic practice would and should exist alongside bioart as ritual. In fact, as it was previously highlighted, bioart has the capacity to direct its force both artistically and ritualistically, meaning that it can also be received as such. Existing bioart works can already function as rituals, therefore, art itself does not need to change – only the way it is approached, meaning that a distinction between art or ritual would not be necessary at all. Bioart staying art could, in fact, be seen as vital even for its ritualistic disposition of transformative force as it provides a medium that safeguards ritual from being targeted and appropriated by the political and ideological structures.

However, if we were to understand bioart as functioning in a twofold manner, which embraces its ritualistic capacity without being equalised to ritual, the practice could be seen to be not only endowed with extra capacity to transform, but also with a heightened sense of responsibility in society. This thesis could, therefore, be understood to open up a discussion that would rethink the role of art at a time where rupturing crises have an effect on the world to its core. It could be argued that all possible means should be utilised in order to minimise the effects as the very being on earth is under threat. Hence, whereas perceiving bioart in ritualistic terms could seem to partially deprive art of its uniqueness as a practice and its self-maintenance as a detached realm, such seeming sacrifice could be seen as necessary for a purpose that underlines the very foundation of life. Therefore, I would like to conclude this thesis with a somewhat theoretically charged, practically directed, even self-teasing idea. As we have seen in the course of this thesis, folding time and destabilising its linear conception has the capacity to open up different realities that burst with potency and possibility. Thus, drawing ritual into contemporary bioart practice or, in other words, dragging past into the future, might as well open a vector for an all-encompassing change that would allow for moving away from anthropocentrism and towards being in the togetherness of the ecological fibre.

List of Figures

Cover Image: ArtStack: Create Your Own Museum from the World's Best Art, Free, *Subversion*, *Miriam Sweeney* < <https://theartstack.com/artist/miriam-sweeney/subversion> > [accessed 10 March 2017]

Subversion – an artwork by Miriam Sweeney – somewhat encapsulates the idea underlying this thesis, namely, the transgression of culture/nature and human/animal divides. However, the artwork is not further analysed in this thesis.

Figure 1: DesignBoom, *Art Orienté Objet: May the Horse Live in Me*
<<http://www.designboom.com/art/art-oriente-objet-may-the-horse-live-in-me/>>
[accessed 10 March 2017]

Figure 2: Ai Hasegawa: Expand the Future, *Works: I Wanna Deliver a Dolphin...*
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Figure 3: Embracing Animal, *Installation Views of Embracing Animal at MASS MoCA*
< <http://www.embracinganimal.com/installation-views.html> > [accessed 10 March 2017]

Figure 4: DesignBoom, *Art Orienté Objet: May the Horse Live in Me*
<<http://www.designboom.com/art/art-oriente-objet-may-the-horse-live-in-me/>>
[accessed 10 March 2017]

Figure 5: Kathy High: Visual/Media Artist, Independent Curator, Educator, *Embracing Animal* < <http://kathyhigh.com/project-embracing-animal.html> >
[accessed 10 March 2017]

Figure 6: Ai Hasegawa: Expand the Future, *Works: I Wanna Deliver a Dolphin...*
< <http://aihasegawa.info/?works=i-wanna-deliver-a-dolphin> > [accessed 15 December 2016]

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Declaration

I hereby certify that this work has been written by me, and that it is not the product of plagiarism or any other form of academic misconduct.

Gabrielė Sankalaitė

20/03/2017

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'G' followed by a horizontal line and a vertical stroke, likely representing the author's name.