

CHAPTER 5

'GRACIAS A DIOS'¹

THE EVENT AND GUATEMALAN BUSES²

5.1 INTRODUCTION: MAKING SENSE OF THE OTHER AND THE DOUBLE READING OF TIME

Making sense is orientation by the 'event'. The event is the 'forced movement'³ of affective differentiation introduced in the previous chapter by way of Deleuze's reading of Freud through Nietzsche. Where the previous chapter was most of all about a self-affirmation of the own will for life in the co-existence with the unpleasant, this chapter will look at the event as a making sense of the 'other'. The other is what attracts the attention of a self's will for life in the present. In this sense, the previous chapter and this chapter are two halves of the same theme. The previous chapter showed one side of the event. This chapter shows the second half of becoming-active. In the previous chapter, what here shall be called the 'other' was introduced as 'object'. The point was that becoming-active starts with the contraction of a virtual, not an actual object. The recognition of an actual object rests on a generalisation from a contracted virtual object. Deleuze is against recognition of the actual other, because he emphasizes the freezing of the manifold virtual movements that actualisation implies. Deleuze keeps the dynamic that emerges in-between the will for life of a self and its virtual other as far away from the actual other as possible – going so far as to claim that the event is 'expression of a world without Others'⁴.

1 Engl.: 'Thanks to God'. *Doña Toria* and *Doña Maria* used this phrase constantly. It affirms chance, and at the same time it expresses the hope that one's destiny will go in a favourable direction. See above chapter 2, section on 'temporalities of Saints'.

2 See photo 13 in appendix .

3 Deleuze 1969, p. 239.

4 See Michel Tournier-reading in the appendix to Deleuze 1969.

In line with the argument from the previous chapter, this chapter will argue that the Deleuzian event is indeed an expression of a world without actual others. However, virtual others are essential to it. This introduction will open up the theme of the other in the event by way of three possibilities. First, there is the actual other (that has emerged from a contracted virtual other). Second, there is the virtual other. Third, there is a chance that there is no other at all. The position of Deleuze on the other will be contrasted with the position of inter-relational psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin⁵. Benjamin's argument emphasizes what one might call the significance of the recognition of an *actual* other – especially as regards the encounter with the *unpleasant*. For Jessica Benjamin, recognition of the actual other would be crucial. Where Deleuze's attempt to get away from the actual other is reminiscent of Nietzschean anti-humanism in that the human is understood as operating on the plane of the actual and the world of the will to power is understood as operating on the plane of the virtual, prior to the actual, Jessica Benjamin unfolds what one might read as an account of the event that is explicitly inter-subjective. For her it is not only important to recognise that there is an actual other implied in the contraction of a virtual other, but also that this actual other might be another human being.

Jessica Benjamin expresses her position through the psychoanalytic core-concept of triangulation. The following text will show in what way her account is compatible with the Deleuzian event, and in what ways the two positions depart from one another. In both the J. Benjaminian and the Deleuzian event, the exposure to newness is crucial. The first chapter of this book showed how Bergson distinguished between habit as a mode of relating to the world that reproduces the given and recollection as a mode of relating to the world that produces something new.⁶ In reminiscence one could say that habit enables the encounter with a known other, while the event enables the encounter with an unknown other.

In the *Logic of Sense*⁷, Deleuze defines the event with the Stoics. The Stoic theory of the event is a theory about language. The Stoics wanted to understand the relation between language and the material given that a proposition (a statement) can express. The key for them in this relation was sense. Sense is an immaterial surface constituting the border between the material surface of the given and the proposition that expresses the given. Sense still belongs to the realm of time. Yet it is already linked to language. Sense is the outcome of the affective

5 Jessica Benjamin 1988: *The Bonds of Love. Psychoanalysis, Feminism and the Problem of Power*.

6 See Bergson 1896, pp. 77-88.

7 Deleuze 1969.

differentiation of the event. Though the Stoic event is not conceived as a theory about self and other, the present chapter will show how this is implied in it. In the immaterial surface of sense, the self that utters a proposition has inscribed itself into the given to which it relates. According to Deleuze's reading of the Stoics, the temporal surface of sense emerges when a double reading of time takes place: a movement must be grasped both as present (Chronos) and as past and future (Aion).⁸ Chronos, this text wants to argue, is the time of the actual other. It is given independently of the self. Aion, by contrast, is the time of the event. Aion is the effect of an organisation of time that rests on the contraction of a virtual other. If the event, and thus Aion, does not build up, there is what Bergson called 'duration', an undifferentiated whole where everything remains on the level of singular images. Duration is an expression of the absence of any other whatsoever. Then the actual others of the material world do not function as others in the world-view of the perceiving self.

"Thus time must be grasped twice, in two complementary, though mutually exclusive fashions. First, it must be grasped entirely as the living present in bodies which act and are acted upon. Second, it must be grasped entirely as an entity infinitely divisible into past and future, and into the incorporeal effects which result from bodies, their actions and their passions. Only the present exists in time and gathers together or absorbs the past and future. But only the past and future inhere in time and divide each present infinitely. These are not three successive dimensions, but two simultaneous readings of time."⁹

5.1.1 The Event and the Notion of the 'Other'

Deleuze emphasizes that the event starts from pre-individual singularities and not from entities like self and other.¹⁰ Entities like self and other refer to symbolic representations. In Deleuze, a symbolic representation appears as actual other in a negative sense. Orientation by symbolic representation towards the other abstracts and thereby generalises from the play of singularities in a concrete encounter.¹¹ Encounters then get pre-channelled by expectations, so that what really takes place in the realm of affect gets overlaid by expectations con-

8 Ibid, pp. 61-65 & 162-68.

9 Ibid, p. 5.

10 See *ibid*, pp. 111-117. This is a general position that goes through the entire work of Deleuze. See for example the Tournier-reading in the appendix to Deleuze 1969 (pp. 301-21), and Deleuze 2001: *Pure Immanence. Essays on A Life*, chapter 1.

11 See the Bergsonian definition of habit, chapter 1 of this book and Bergson (1896, chapter 2).

cerning what should take place. Symbolic representations in this sense prevent any real encounter. Deleuze's most explicit anti-example of the pitfalls of relating affective differentiation to symbolic representations of actual others is given in the book *Anti-Oedipus*¹² that Deleuze wrote in collaboration with Guattari. The Oedipus complex is the Freudian model of differentiation.¹³ In the Oedipus complex, affective differentiation is regulated through symbolic representations of the most important actual others of the child-self. The differentiation of the affective capacity of the little child is the outcome of the triangular relation in the kernel family. The child, this theory says, escapes a primal merging in a dyad with the mother (Oedipus' wish to marry the mother) through turning towards the father. (Oedipus' wish to kill the father in order to replace him). The father's role is to say 'No' to merging both with the mother and with himself. This differentiation opens the way for the individuation of the child. Deleuze and Guattari depict the Freudian theory of individuation in its link with the 'daddy-mummy-me-triad'¹⁴ as the founding cliché of psychoanalysis. The unique play of singularities remains invisible due to their general explanation by symbolisations within the Oedipal triad.

The event, though, which may be the kernel of the entire Deleuzian adventure in philosophy,¹⁵ rests on a triangular dynamic that is surprisingly similar to the Freudian model. Every production of sense rests on a self's initial merging with an other and a subsequent distancing from this other. It is just that this other is virtual. The relation of the event to the virtual other is elaborated in the work of Jessica Benjamin. The temporal space that Deleuze calls 'event' is called the 'energetic third' in Jessica Benjamin.¹⁶ Deleuze and Jessica Benjamin have in common that they find in the pre-symbolic realm of affect the possibility of transgressing actual boundaries between self and other. Jessica Benjamin assumes, on the basis of contemporary child research¹⁷, that there is from the beginning of life an affective relation between a self and its other. This is in contrast to the Freudian notion of differentiation. Freud insisted that there is no other prior to the ac-

12 Deleuze/Guattari 1972.

13 For a general introduction see Mertens/Waldvogel (ed, 2000, pp. 514-22). For the Freudian original to which Deleuze and Guattari refer in their critique see Sigmund Freud 1923b: *Das Ich und das Es*. GW XIII.

14 See Deleuze/Guattari 1972, p. 28.

15 This qualification has already been made in the previous chapter. Here, it refers to the same dynamic as in the previous chapter, just under a different name and in a different context.

16 Jessica Benjamin 2004: 'Beyond Doer and Done To. An Intersubjective View of Thirdness'.

17 Daniel Stern 1986: *The interpersonal World of the Infant*. Guattari also grounded his work on processual subjectivity and the refrain in the work of Daniel Stern. See introduction to chapter 3 of this book.

tual other. According to Freud, prior to the capacity for symbolisation, the child merges with the mother on the level of affective experience. The mother appears not as an other, but as one with the child. In the language of Deleuze, the felt other would be a virtual series. In the Deleuzian event, ‘singularities’¹⁸ organise themselves into series. In Deleuze, series always appear as a triad.¹⁹ The series of sense can emerge due to the tension between two former series. To recall Jessica Benjamin, these two former series can be termed the virtual other and the virtual self. In-between the virtual other and the virtual self, the differentiation of sense can set off by a tension between resonance and distanciation that is reminiscent of the Freudian dynamic. It is just that the Freudian triangular dynamic is driven by a tension between the affection of a self and the representation of an other within the mind of an individual person, while the triangular dynamic of the event takes place thanks to a tension between the affection of a self and a virtual other out there, in the world.

At this point, Deleuze and Jessica Benjamin’s interests take them in different directions. Jessica Benjamin is interested in transgressing boundaries between actual self and actual other in order to share experience with an other person. A crucial part of her work is the elaboration of a positive notion of an actual other: a symbolic representation emerges out of experiences with the felt other. The experience of this representation induces in the self the awareness that the other, in relation to which an event emerges, has an existence also outside the will of the self, despite the sharing of affect. By maintaining the tension between the affective relation to the felt virtual other and the cognitive relation to the actual other, what one might call the ‘Benjaminian event’ becomes a relation with the actual world.²⁰ Deleuze, by contrast, is interested in transgressing boundaries between actual self and actual other in order to free the emergence of the new. He emphasizes that the event is pre-individual, because he wants to keep the channels in which singularities organise themselves open. The Deleuzian event is a model of differentiation that is maximally flexible. It is free from any specific actual relation. Time is liberated from space. The virtual other is liberated from the actual other. The self in the Deleuzian event is a ‘citizen of the world’.²¹ It relates to the present only through virtual others. The contraction of these is explicitly unpredictable.

18 Singular entities within the realm of lived time. These might be singular images or singular forces of intensity, depending on the context in which the concept is employed. See Deleuze 1969, pp. 100-08.

19 See Deleuze 1969, pp. 36-41. See also Bergson’s definition of matter (Bergson 1896, p. 20).

20 See J. Benjamin 1988, chapter 1 and J. Benjamin 2004.

21 See Deleuze 1969, p.148.

5.1.2 Chronos: The Time of the Actual Other

The event in Deleuze's reading of the Stoics begins on the level of bodies.²² Bodies move in the time of Chronos. Chronos measures the present.²³ In Deleuze, the temporality of Chronos remains marginal to the over-all argument. It is there, but it seems to be there simply so that we may depart from it. Chronos kicks off the event and that is all. It is not what Deleuze is interested in. From the perspective of Deleuze, this is understandable. Measuring is a spatialising of the other. Spatialising is keeping the other present through representation. Representation in Deleuze is freezing and determining the free play of singularities within time. When taking into account the work of Jessica Benjamin, by way of contrast, Chronos becomes crucial. Then, representation becomes the realm that affect cannot reach and Chronos becomes the time of the actual other.²⁴ Taking into consideration the work of Jessica Benjamin, the time of the actual becomes the time of the other as other. It is the time of that which moves and acts according to its own inner logic, independent of the will of the self. Chronos, in this sense, limits the power of the self. If the self accepts this limitation, it can inter-act through the event with the actual world. The actual world is the world of others. If the self forecloses the limitation that Chronos imposes on its power, it remains stuck in the virtual. The virtual is a world without others as independent of the self's will. The virtual is a world without others as others.

In Jessica Benjamin, what responds to the representation of the other as actual other emerges gradually through a long-term process of experience.²⁵ First, there is affective attuning. Both self and other temporally dissolve as distinct entities in an energetic in-between space of mutual experience. There emerges trust. Gradually, the good experience with the other gets bound in a representation of the other as the source of this good experience. At some point, the experience of difference between self and other comes to the forefront. It challenges the experience of unity. The self realises that the other follows his own projects, leads his own life and thus is only at certain times available for responding to the will of the self. If the binding to the other as something good and important can be held despite the felt frustration, then over time the inner representation of the other transforms itself. The other becomes part of the actual world. Now, the encounter with the other receives a new, more mature dimension. While affective attuning transmits an experience of in-between-ness, holding the will of

22 See *ibid.*, pp. 4-11.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 162. See also Bergson 1896, p. 32.

24 See on the usage of an object: Winnicott 1971: *Playing and Reality*, chapter 6 and J. Benjamin 1988, pp. 36-42.

25 See J. Benjamin 1988, chapter 1 and J. Benjamin 2004.

the other in tension with the will of the self allows for mutual differentiation in this space of in-between-ness, rather than domination of one will over the other.

Deleuze, by contrast, does not have time for long-term processes. The Deleuzian event celebrates superficiality. The encounter between self and other takes only the time of an instant.²⁶ This is the minimal amount of Chronos, the time that it takes to produce an affection. Orientation remains on the level of pre-verbal surface tension. The notion of the body, however, entails the conceptual otherness of the actual other. Through the concept of the body in the Deleuzian event, the otherness of the other is set up as a principle of thinking. In the Deleuzian event, the notion of the body frames perception according to values implied in the concept. The concept of the body adds to the orientation by pre-verbal surface tension a representation of the other as actual other. The body is introduced as actual through its materiality. Its materiality suggests that it exists outside the will of a self. Moreover, the body in Deleuze's reading of the Stoics is unpredictable and unreliable. Bodies always appear in states of affairs.

"First, there are bodies with their tensions, physical qualities, actions and passions, and the corresponding 'states of affairs.' These states of affairs, actions and passions, are determined by the mixtures of bodies. [...] The only time of bodies and states of affairs is the present."²⁷

The notion 'state of affairs' suggests a snapshot of something diverse that is constantly rearranging itself according to chance. The moment of unity that affection produces comes together with an actual state of affairs that goes its own way. As representation of the other as actual other, the notion of the body and the temporality of Chronos receive a surprising importance, given their marginal position in the text. It is an ethical dimension that this positive notion of the actual other adds to the event. There is an ideal of letting loose from expectancy and generalisation. The market-chapter showed how the self has to dissolve its notion of actual self-hood in order to enter the realm of lived time. In the same way, the self has to let loose from any notion of the actual other in order to enter the realm of lived time where encounters can take place. However, where in Jessica Benjamin letting loose implicates that the other as actual other is emotionally important for me, despite leading her own life; and I am emotionally important for the other, despite leading my own life, Deleuze intimates another message: the other as actual other is unpredictable; let yourself be affected, have fun, but in the end don't rely on anyone but yourself.

26 See Deleuze 1969, p. 147.

27 Ibid, pp. 4-5.

5.1.3 Aion: The Time of the Event

The event is not about actual others, but about virtual effects of actual others. The Stoics, according to Deleuze, characterized events as ‘incorporeal effects’ of bodies and their actions. Aion is the temporality of the event. It consists in incorporeal effects of actual others:

“[...], all bodies are causes in relation to each other, and causes for each other – but causes of what? They are causes of certain things of an entirely different nature. These *effects* are not bodies, but, properly speaking, ‘incorporeal’ entities. [...] They are not things or facts, but events. We cannot say that they exist, but rather that they subsist or inhere (having this minimum of being which is appropriate to that which is not a thing, a non-existing entity) [...] They are not living presents, but infinitives: the unlimited Aion, the becoming which divides itself infinitely in past and future and always eludes the present.”²⁸

Aion, in distinction from Chronos, is reminiscent of the virtual in distinction from the actual. Aion as the temporality of the virtual in the event is, however, much more Nietzschean than Bergsonian. Deleuze argues that Bergson confined himself to the virtual as the pure past. Memory opens up a realm where time just is, in co-existence with the present that passes.²⁹ The Deleuzian event, by contrast, is about the virtual as an emergent movement. Reminiscent of Deleuze’s reading of the Nietzschean doctrine of the eternal return, Aion is a virtual movement that emerges in an encounter of the pure past with the actual present. Both the passing present and the pure past are just pre-conditions for Aion as a virtual emergent movement.

Aion gets activated through signs. Signs make out of memory a force that points towards the future, rather than towards the past. The interpretation of signs, Deleuze argues, is not so much about recollection of the past as it is about an apprenticeship of the present by way of the past.³⁰ Signs translate an actual other into the virtual. Through the contraction of signs, the actual other enters the realm of the virtual. Through the contraction of signs from the actual, the virtual opens up the actual towards something else. Through signs, Aion opens up the actual given to a virtual communication with the world.

The pure form of Aion is ‘univocal Being’.³¹ Univocal Being is the condition of the virtual. In line with what has been said so far, in

28 Ibid, pp.4-5.

29 See Deleuze 1966. As well in his book on Marcel Proust, Deleuze (1964, pp. 58-9) argues that Bergson confined himself with the virtual as the pure past.

30 See Deleuze 1964, chapter 3.

31 See Deleuze 1969, pp. 172-180 on univocal Being.

the Deleuzian event, univocal Being is a condition of the emerging movement of Aion, rather than a condition of the pure past in general. In contrast to what one might assume from the name of the concept, univocal Being is as much about difference as it is about sameness. On the one hand, Aion provides the conditions for opening up the given to a communication with the world: in Aion, the distinctions that give form to actual others fall away. The contracted sign provides one point that is univocal among everything that Aion takes up. This point establishes resonance among all the events that take part in a given event. On the other hand, it is difference that is univocal. Everything that responds to the sign that set off the temporality of Aion maintains its singularity while communicating through the point that established resonance. The affirmation of the distance between the different moments that take part in opening up a given event is as important a condition for communication as the moment of resonance. The most diverse events can communicate with each other under conditions of univocal Being, because there is one moment that provides unity *and* because there is an affirmation of the difference of each of the communicating entities in relation to each other. Univocal Being is a balance between difference and sameness.

“The univocity of Being does not mean that there is one and the same Being; on the contrary, beings are multiple and different, they are always produced by a disjunctive synthesis, and they themselves are disjointed and divergent, *membra disjuncta*. The univocity of Being signifies that Being is Voice that is said, and that is said in one and the same “sense” of everything about which it is said. That of which it is said is not at all the same, but Being is the same for everything about which it is said. It occurs, therefore, as a unique event for everything that happens to the most diverse things, *Eventum tantum* for all events, the ultimate form for all of the forms which remain disjointed in it, but which bring about the resonance and the ramification of their disjunction.”³²

Deleuze’s reading of univocal Being as the mode of Aion manages to keep the event apart from notions of self and other. The abstract notion ‘univocal Being’ lets the balance between difference and sameness appear as an ontological given. The bringing together of the Deleuzian event with Benjaminian triangulation, however, makes it possible to search for a concept of the self in the balance between the difference and sameness of univocal Being. In the context of an ethics of the event, Deleuze implicitly introduces, with the Stoics, a notion of the self. The Stoic ethic consists in ‘willing the event’. Willing the

32 Deleuze 1969, p. 179.

event is an attempt to formulate the attitude through which a self can set off events.³³

“The (Stoic) sage waits for the event, that is to say, *understands* the pure event in its eternal truth, independently of its spatio-temporal actualisation, as something eternally yet-to-come and always already passed according to the line of the Aion. But, at the same time, the sage also *wills the embodiment* and the actualisation of the pure incorporeal event in a state of affairs and in his or her own body and flesh.”³⁴

Willing the event consists in three sequential steps: understanding, willing and representing the event. The idea is very Nietzschean and basically reiterates, with the help of a different terminology, the ideas introduced and set to work in the previous chapter. First, the actual self is left behind through passively understanding the affective dynamic within a given state of affairs. At this stage, whatever there is shall be affirmed, no matter whether it is pleasant or unpleasant. (This affirmation produces the *understanding* of the event.) Second, the self lets itself be attracted through its will by something within the given. (This is the *willing* of the event.) Third, the self feels sense emerging. Sense *expresses* the event. The self can represent this expression. The Stoics limited the representation of the event to language and thus to thinking and speaking. The previous chapter has shown, however, that an event can be represented by any kind of action.

Deleuze emphasizes the fact that the Stoic ethics of the event does not consist in actualising the given, but in counter-actualising it. The actual other has been altered unpredictably through its exposure to virtual communication in the univocity of Being. In this sense, the univocity of Being appears in Deleuze as ‘universal freedom’. Through the univocity of Being, Aion liberates the present from its material givenness. When taking into account the work of Jessica Benjamin, however, the focus gets laid on the fact that everything that the will understands, selects and represents remains within the realm of the affective perception of a self. In Aion, the communication with the actual other remains within the realm of the own virtuality. To qualify Aion as the affective impression of a self is to see the ‘universal freedom’³⁵ that Deleuze ascribes to the realm of univocal Being in much more relative terms. When taking into consideration the work of Jessica Benjamin, therefore, the balance between sameness and difference that characterizes Aion becomes explicitly a balance between a self and its other.

33 See *ibid.*, pp. 142–154, 109–26.

34 *Ibid.*, pp. 146.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 178.

5.1.4 The Event as Virtual Balance between Self and Other

Within Aion, there emerges sense. If Aion is the time of the entire event, sense is the surface of the event. It is part of Aion.³⁶ In Deleuze's reading of the Stoics, the movement through which sense emerges is at one point characterized as a 'point-line-surface'-dynamic.³⁷ This notion allows us to understand Aion as an organisation of time that rests on the virtual balance between a self and an other. It is a descriptive notion. It describes how the emergence of sense feels. The compound term will serve here to describe the emergence of sense as it is explained in the *Logic of Sense* more generally. First of all, the notion 'point' refers to the setting off of the event. If the event is understood as an organisation of time that rests on a virtual balance between self and other, then the points that set off the event can be said to link a self and an other. The link sets the stage for the event. The notion 'line', then, expresses the process of the unfolding of the event in 'series' over time. If the event is conceived as an organisation of time that rests on a virtual balance between self and other, then the unfolding of the lines brings volume into that which takes place in-between self and other. The surface is immaterial. It is a feeling of orientation. In relation to the virtual balance between self and other, the notion 'surface' expresses the idea that something has built-up in-between self and other.

In Deleuze, points are singularities. In the virtual, everything is singularity. In their pure state, singularities are in complete disorganisation. In the event, singularities organise themselves. For a given event, certain singularities act as points that set off the event. The event starts from a virtual point taken up from the material surface of the given state of affairs. This point becomes the 'cause' of the event. It has been taken up because it triggered resonance with another point. This other point acts as 'quasi-cause' of the event. In sympathy with the Benjaminean notion of triangulation, one could say that the contraction of a point produces an other out of something within the given. Other-ing starts off from an actual other, but takes place on the level of the virtual. At this stage, other-ing works through sameness: the quasi-cause is a point within the time of a self. The link between cause and quasi-cause is established by an affection. The affection takes up something from within the actual other that responds to the will of a self as the virtual dimension of an actual self. The link of self and other through affection sets the stage for the event. This happens passively. It is unconscious and therefore unpredictable.

36 See *ibid*, pp. 164 – 168.

37 See *ibid*, p. 241.

"This is to say that incorporeal sense, as the result of the actions and the passions of the body, may preserve its difference from the corporeal cause only to the degree that it is linked, at the surface, to a quasi-cause which is itself incorporeal. The Stoics saw clearly that the event is subject to a double causality, referring on one hand to mixtures of bodies which are its cause and, on the other, to other events, which are its quasi-cause."³⁸

In Deleuze, the point that caused the event attracts further singularities. These organise themselves in such a way that the point unfolds into a series.³⁹ The series actualises within the virtual the affective potential from within the point taken up from the material surface of the actual other. Taking into account the Benjaminian notion of triangulation, therefore, this series could be called the series of the other. The point that acts as quasi-cause for the event attracts singularities as well. These also unfold within the virtual into a series.⁴⁰ One could call this series the series of the self. The series that emerges from the quasi-cause displaces in each of its singularities the series that emerges over the cause of the event. From the perspective of a Deleuzian understanding of singularities as pre-individual, this seems to be no problem. Series are by definition singular. There will never be two points that attract exactly the same singularities. However, in sympathy with the work of Jessica Benjamin, where the event becomes an organisation of time that rests on the virtual balance between self and other, the displacement of the series of the other into a series of the self depends on the differentiation of the self from the other and at the same time on the maintenance of a certain resonance between the two. If differentiation has been successful, the merging that the affect produced opens up into a field of tension in-between the series of the other, the series of the self and all other relevant context-conditions that are in play in any given event.

The field of tension of sameness and differentiation in-between self and other establishes virtual communication. The amount and intensity of virtual communication that takes place gives volume to the event. In Deleuze, this communication is a momentary adventure. Deleuze highlights the importance of the quasi-cause as the entity by means of which all the different series communicate. Though the singularities that organise themselves into series come from all past and all future, in relation to the quasi-cause all series are simultaneous.⁴¹ The immanent communication between present, past and future displaces the given other that has been contracted. Deleuze is interested

38 Ibid, p. 94.

39 See *ibid*, pp. 102-104.

40 *Ibid*.

41 See *ibid*, pp.37-8.

in the productivity of the quasi-cause. The quasi-cause itself remains hidden, yet the entire event in all its series is an expression of it. Taking into account the work of Jessica Benjamin, by contrast, from a perspective on the event as an organisation of time that rests on the virtual balance between an actual self and an actual other, the quasi-cause is only an expression of the self's momentary virtual response to the other. Communication remains utterly unbalanced. One contracted sign taken up from the other receives a response from the entire virtuality of a self. Jessica Benjamin, in contrast to Deleuze, would be interested in the process of differentiation as a long-term process, because she is interested in a balance of communication in-between an actual self and an actual other.

The tension between all the series taking part in the event, releases the surface-series of sense. Sense is a feeling that something has emerged in the event. The fascination with the immaterial surface of sense in Deleuze rests on its newness in relation to the material surface of the given. Throughout the whole book, the *Logic of Sense* unfolds the event as taking place in-between two surfaces. First, there is the material surface from which the event takes off. Second, there is an immaterial surface that emerges through the event, that expresses the event and that displaces the first, material surface. In the later terminology of *A Thousand Plateaus*, one would say that the immaterial surface of sense 'de-territorializes' the given. From a Jessica Benjaminian perspective on the event as something that takes place in-between a self and an other, however, the event receives a much more existential dimension. The immaterial surface of sense that the event generates is something new in relation to the material surface of the given because in it, the self has inscribed itself into the given. In the surface of sense, the given gets perceived in its tension with the will for life of the self. The will for life of the self both selects the points from the other with which contact will be taken up, and holds the actual given at the distance that is a pre-condition for communication to take place.

It will have become clear by now that the event in Deleuze is not an expression of the absence of any other whatsoever. The building-up of a virtual series of the other is essential to it. If no series of the other build up, no event can organise itself and no surface can emerge. Time remains on the level of singular impulses. If time fails to organise itself,

"[...] the entire body is no longer anything but depth – it carries along and snaps up everything into this gaping depth which represents a fundamental involution. Everything is body and corporeal. Everything is a mixture of bod-

ies, and inside the body, interlocking and penetration. [...] everything is physical: [...]"⁴²

"[...], the entire world loses its meaning. (A proposition) maintains perhaps a certain power of denotation, but this is experienced as empty. It maintains a certain power of manifestation, but this is experienced as indifferent. And it maintains a certain signification, experienced as 'false'. [...], the word loses its sense, that is, its power to draw together or to express an incorporeal effect distinct from the actions and passions of the body, and an ideational event distinct from its present realisation. Every event is realised, be it in a hallucinatory form. Every word is physical, and immediately affects the body."⁴³

Deleuze, without using the terms self or other, describes how the absence of any other whatsoever feels. According to Deleuze, the surface of sense feels light. The failure of sense to emerge, by contrast, feels like a never-ending depth. The surface of sense feels like an immaterial balance between engagement with and distancing from the other. The failure of sense to emerge, by contrast, feels like the absence of both other and self. The surface of sense rests on a balance among all the contextual circumstances that impact a given encounter. The balance is 'good' if things keep flowing and sense emerges as the surface of this flow. The failure of sense to emerge, by contrast, rests on the absence of the immaterial surface of sense and of any immaterial dynamic that would transgress the realm of the given. Everything both in relation to the other and in relation to the self feels as if it remains on the level of the physical given. At the same time, the experience of the physical is fragmented into a vortex of singular images.

Following a J. Benjaminian perspective, the event as a virtual balance between self and other makes one understand how the absence of any other whatsoever emerges. In her work, the failure of the surface to build up is discussed as the intention of a self to be without others. A self might unconsciously choose to live without virtual others due to unpleasant experiences in the encounter with actual others. The vortex that results from the failure to affirm any important others whatsoever might be the limit of the citizen of the world.

The event consists in a double reading of time. For Deleuze this means that Chronos is the time of the actual given that sets off the event, and Aion is the temporality of the event where everything that he is interested in happens. Taking into account the work of Jessica Benjamin, by contrast, the challenge would be to maintain a virtual balance between Chronos as the time of the actual other and Aion as

42 Ibid, p. 87.

43 Ibid.

the time of the event that takes place in-between self and other, but that gets perceived exclusively from the perspective of a self. In making sense of the material of the present chapter, however, the Deleuzian version of the event proved to be particularly useful.

“Whereas Chronos expressed the action of bodies and the creation of corporeal qualities, Aion is the locus of incorporeal events, and of attributes which are distinct from qualities. Whereas Chronos was inseparable from the bodies which filled it out entirely as causes and matter, Aion is populated by effects which haunt it without ever filling it up. Whereas Chronos was limited and infinite, Aion is unlimited, the way that future and past are unlimited, and finite like the instant. Whereas Chronos was inseparable from circularity and its accidents – such as blockages or precipitations, explosions, disconnections and indurations – Aion stretches out in a straight line, limitless in either direction. Always already passed and eternally yet to come, Aion is the eternal truth of time: *pure empty form of time*, which has freed itself of its present corporeal content and has thereby unwound its own circle, stretching itself out in a straight line.”⁴⁴

5.2 EMPIRICAL EXPLORATIONS

The empirical material for this chapter is taken from a three-month-diary of bus-trips up and down Guatemala. The idea behind this was to capture the event as something that happens constantly in-between self and other in everyday life. The alternative would have been to explore the event as a quality of the other in itself. In that case, Guatemalan buses could have been better explored through the many sensationalist accounts of accidents, robberies and assaults given by television and newspapers. However, whether or not an event unfolds depends at least as much on the time available in a given setting as on the sign-intensity of the actual given. The temporal setting in the following material has been particularly favourable for the release of open time. Reminiscent of the film genre of the road movie, there is always some kind of destination that gives a loose frame to the setting. Being on the road in the following material is something in itself. It is a way of sharing Guatemalan everyday life from the perspective of the Deleuzian citizen of the world who is always on her way towards somewhere else. The density and unpredictability that often characterize the atmosphere within the buses suggests a pre-verbal orientation by equilibrium or dis-equilibrium of tension rather than an effort to communicate with the other as actual other. Vitalism has been ex-

44 Ibid, p. 165.

plored in this chapter as an orientation by exteriority on the plane of lived temporalities.

Bus-trips are described as events in the sense, first of all, that everything in the descriptions is principally singular and in constant movement. Where sense emerges, the singularities of open time organise themselves temporarily into larger units. On the other hand, the following text explores the event in its temporal dimension through the concepts of Chronos and Aion. Chronos entails representations of the actual given. Aion refers to the counter-actualisation of the given through the event. The given is taken not as given, but in its tension with the will for life of a travelling self. In this sense, lightness is an essential part of the Deleuzian event. Often in the following descriptions, the will for life expresses itself as will for joy and inner tranquility. There emerges a sense of jazzy ease, joy, playfulness and lightness despite the often challenging physical circumstances.

24.11. Antigua⁴⁵ – Xela

In the following example, states of affairs such as the way in which luggage is stored, the way in which tickets are bought, the interior of the bus, the presence of an assistant as an essential part of the bus personnel or the bus route, do not make sense. Orientation takes place through a double reading of time. First, there is Chronos. Bodies are described in their visible, concrete, material movements. Second, Chronos opens up to Aion. The movements of storing luggage set free affects (see in the following example the sweaty climbing, the waving and the singsong of the middle-aged man). The movements of the bus set free affects (see in the following example the expression 'riding on the back of a super-dimensional elephant'). The overload of passengers within the bus sets free affects (see the expression 'one-leg-ahead-heap-side-bent-bottom-turn-head-on-push-technique'). Changing buses sets free affects (see the description of the whirly movements of catching arms, and the sweet stains from ice-cream, nuts and candy). From time to time, there flashes up a hint of sense.

It takes a while before I find the right bus stop. Then there is a moment of pure amazement. With incredible agility a middle-aged man is climbing over the roof of the bus, or in-between roof and ground. He is loading a vast amount of cases, baskets and nets full of fruits. My rucksack seems to be one of the more simple exercises. Waving his hands, he directs the bus out of the narrow gap of the parking-bay. He is informing his immediate environment about the destination of the bus (Chimaltenango⁴⁶) with a Chimaaal Chimaaal Chimaaal singsong.

45 See map in appendix.

46 See map in appendix.

In front of the bus there are three men handling bundles of bank-notes. I try to buy a ticket from them, but they send me cheerfully onto the bus. Within the bus, there are three faces looking towards me from every bench. The aisle in the middle seems narrow, a jumble of arms, bags and bundles. In the last row – slowly I clear myself a path through – there is a spare seat. We are rocking up and down over the potholes of the car park as if on the back of a super-dimensional elephant. Once on the main road, going is much quicker. From time to time a man in the front utters sounds that I cannot understand. Probably they announce the next stop. Wow! How shall one orientate oneself, how shall one know when and where to leave the bus? At the side of the street there are neither road signs nor place name signs. I have to wait and see.

The gentleman in the front is called ‘*adjudante*’. He is the driver’s assistant. He is occupied with the recruitment and loading of passengers as well as with juggling luggage, collecting the fare and arranging the seating on the bus. He shouts ‘*Hay sitio*’ (There is a seat). He urges some passengers to squeeze closer together in order to make space for new passengers. Meanwhile the aisle is much fuller than when I got on the bus. I have no idea how the assistant manages to get through. He has a one-leg-ahead-heap-side-bend-bottom-turn-head-on-push-technique. Sometimes he worms his way through with arms wide and in front of him, before dragging his other extremities in tow. Nor can I understand how he remembers who joined the bus where and what has to be paid when. I have to pay Q2,50. This does not change even when I go one stop too far. I get alarmed by the half-empty bus. When I ask a passenger on the neighbouring seat where to change the bus for Xela, he just points backwards. I quickly leave and the bus goes slowly on its way. Luckily the assistant is climbing over the roof once again. When I call, he lets down the rucksack hand over hand from the already moving bus. The main road is found quickly, the right bus isn’t. According to my calculation, it should pass by in about 45 minutes time. I am waiting. Meanwhile I keep escaping the tentacles (literally) of the *adjudantes*. The *adjudantes* are leaning out of the front door of the moving buses. They keep hold with one hand. With the other they wave for passengers – Xela Xela Xela – every ten minutes another one tries to gather me in. Soon I know every single ice-cream-, nut- and candy floss-seller and I am stained from tip to toe. When the next ‘*Galgos*’⁴⁷ passes by, I give up. It’s not the ‘*Alamo*’-line, but somehow I will manage to orientate myself when leaving the bus. Travelling by ‘*Galgos*’ is familiar. Air conditioning system, one’s own seat, the luggage in-between the wheels in the boot and stop-less flying-by landscape.

47 Equivalent to the National Express in the UK.

26.11. Xela – Cantél

Sense is a fragile, immaterial surface. It originates in chance state of affairs on the level of Chronos. Chronos sets free chance affects on the level of Aion. Sense is the surface of Aion. In the following description, an apparently normal street-corner is treated like a bus stop because of the trust in the informal knowledge of local people who say it makes sense to do so. Buses pass by all the time. They provide information concerning their destination. However, the buses pass by so quickly and the information written on their front is so hand-made that it is the chance persuasiveness of a random assistant that leads to the emergence of a surface of sense that makes people finally enter. Then, a chance turn on the level of Chronos destroys the fragile surface of sense that has just been produced. The bus moves into the middle of nowhere. Post-facto, the trust invested in the bus assistant proves to have been sense-less. His information was wrong. Then new sense emerges. It starts from the movement of sudden running. Initially, this movement is just physical (its time is Chronos). Then a bus that is waiting a good bit ahead connects to the material state of affairs. The running now sets free an affect of hope in finally reaching the desired destination (the time of what has been set free is Aion). A new immaterial surface of sense appears.

June⁴⁸, Manuel, Mario⁴⁹ and I want to visit a glassblowing factory near Xela. The bus-stop is at the corner of *Av12 calle 6, zona 3*. That this is in fact the bus stop, one has to know in advance, for there is nothing that would point towards it. There is no bench, no rubbish container, and least of all a time table. Moreover, one has to know when the buses depart. At least Mario and Manuel are informed. Once again it is a complete mystery to me where to get the necessary information from. Many buses pass by, guys are hanging out of the driver doors, shouting something at us. Nevertheless I don't understand what is going on. Manuel explains to me that they are announcing the destination for the people who cannot read. Even if one can read, it does not help much. The buses are quick and the letters on the windscreen are difficult to decipher. Often they are painted by hand in bright colours and decorated lovingly with little stars and pictures. We wait. I try to counter the waving hands with a friendly smile and a '*no gracias*' (no thanks). With the noise from the motors, this is not understandable anyway. Sometimes Mario exchanges a few words with one of the men who are hanging out of the bus doors. Then we go on waiting. Some buses are yellow and named only with numbers. Probably these only run within the city. A bundle-carrying woman in colourful

48 A student at the Spanish school.

49 A teacher at the Spanish school.

local indigenous clothes is sitting down beside us. The top of her head only reaches my shoulder. Her hair is bound beautifully with diverse ribbons into a kind of plait round her head. Soon she gets on a bus. We keep waiting. Mario mentions that normally every five minutes a bus should pass-by in our direction.

The persuasiveness of a further assistant finally inspires us to board a bus. As it moves I sway from one side to the other. The bus goes sharply around a curve. I worm myself through to a spare seat in the middle, Jun sits down one row in front of me. The brown plastic seats have seen better days, but the front is covered with little Christmas light strings. To the right hand and the left hand at the side of the street there are houses in the state of extension. Then there is a round-about with loads of dusty stalls. Soon there are only street, trees, streams and landscape in the midst of which we collect ourselves. Manuel is waving. We hurry to the front, jump down the quite high step onto the grass. How do frail people cope with this? The bus turns left. It starts winding itself up an incredibly steep and curvy track across the fields. We are waiting. It is drizzling. Mario explains that the assistant didn't give us exact information. Orientation seems to be a challenge for everyone. We are standing in the middle of nature, with no house, no shop, no sign – just some rubbish and a few cars passing by. Suddenly Manuel and Mario start running. Pretty far away, there is another bus. Jun and I catch up and get on. Hardly any people. This time the seats are green plastic. I do not know whether Manuel and Mario have paid. Before long we are off the bus once again.

Return journey

Beside the glassblower there is a bus stop. On the right and the left there are thick wooden beams and above this a roof – perfect, because it's drizzling. Every few minutes a car passes by, sometimes a lorry or a bus. Suddenly Mario raises his arm and we hurry towards the standing bus to get on. I am sitting next to Jun. We are talking. Time is flying by. Soon Manuel waves and we are getting off the bus. It is the same corner where we got on. The return journey, including waiting time, appeared to be much shorter.

27.11. Xela – Zunil

Within the dynamic of an event, a body is something that acts on its environment. It releases affects. In the following description, the raising of an arm makes a bus stop. A bus passing by induces a feeling of having missed the right one. The woman leaving her seat gives one access to the view out of the window. A group of indigenous women entering the bus makes the interior of the bus shine yellow and vibrate from chatting and laughter. Bodies always appear within states of af-

fairs. Their affects compete with each other. People waiting at the side of the street act less on the driver than do the people inside the already over-crowded bus. The bus does not stop. The cheeping from the cardboard boxes acts. Is this really a luggage area? Well, never mind – the tiredness of one's own body acts more. The bag gets stuffed next to the cheeping.

This time June and I give it a try on our own. We want to visit a steam bath near Xela. We already know the right corner. We've also learned that one just has to raise an arm and the bus will stop. Only the feeling of having missed the right one with every bus passing by needs some more getting used to. Jun seems to have the better eyes. She waves and yes, on the front of the stopping bus is written 'Zunil'. We enter. Everyone finds a seat, quite far towards the back of the bus. We let ourselves be rocked up and down through the landscape. The woman next to me gets off. This means that I get a seat near the window. Soon we are on the country road. Sometimes the bus stops and people get on or off. We are passing through a bigger village. I ask the woman in front of me its name. I don't have to worry as we are riding to the end of the line. At the next stop, about 20 indigenous women get on the bus. They are all wearing the same colourful clothes. The bright, yellow weavings make the interior of the bus shine. A few of the women are carrying a bundle or a basket on their head. The noise of the bus is accompanied only from chatting and laughter. The woman next to me smiles at me in a friendly way and I shove over obligingly, so that her friend also finds some space on the bench. Soon they are all leaving. What a pity. I would have liked to study the colourful adornments a bit more. Meanwhile the bus is nearly empty. When the assistant asks us to disembark, everyone else is leaving as well. Apparently we are there.

Return Journey

Freshly bathed, we are back on the country road. It is almost dawn and we are waiting together with about 15 other people for a bus. Before long one pulls up. Only three women and an elderly man with a stick look as if they are going to embark. Getting on I assure myself once more with a 'Xela?' that we are going in the right direction. Then I am busy with somehow organising arms, legs, bags and sweater. Many faces are turned towards me. Some passengers are already standing. I am by far the tallest. I remain standing in the front of the bus, balancing as it follows the curves in the road with one hand at the luggage net and the other one at the driver's seat. The driver also seems to think that the bus is full for he passes by quite a few people who are waiting at the side of the street. Seemingly the people are on their way back from work. They look tired. The bus often stops, but despite

some passengers leaving, the bus doesn't seem to get any emptier. Quite a few people leave the bus through the back door instead of manoeuvring themselves around those standing in the aisle. After a while I can sit down. There is cheeping above me. In the luggage net there are two cardboard boxes stapled one above the other. I stuff my bag next to them. Meanwhile in perfect position, I can doze in the nearly dark bus.

01.12. Xela – Momostenango

In the following example there is an ideal surface of Aion. The surface consists in a feeling of inner balance. This ideal surface is induced or destroyed through the state of affairs of material movements on the level of Chronos. The state of affairs consists in a curvy street and the jostling in the aisle. At first, standing is a way to maintain the ideal surface of inner balance in-between jostling and density. Then, relaxing and letting oneself be pushed to and fro while sitting take over as strategy. Inner balance is an open form of integrity. The affective integrity of the surface transcends the closed integrity of a body. On the level of Chronos, there is constant change. Although the surface is the effect of Chronos, there can emerge an equilibrium within all this change.

With Mara⁵⁰ and Manuel I visit the market in Momostenango. We go to the 'Rotonda'⁵¹ and take a bus for 'Cuatro Caminos'. This is a crossing about half an hour from Xela where four streets come together. 'Cuatro Caminos' is a central point for street vendors. One *comedor* next to the other, a few hotels in-between. Apart from the housed restaurants there are many sun-shed-covered mobile barbecues on which various kinds of food are prepared. It is quite dusty and the buses come with high frequency. Manuel finds out from which corner our bus departs and then we have to wait. I am chatting with Mara, and so we are losing any sense of time. A good deal of patience and the acceptance that quite a few things will turn out differently from how one thought are essential for the usage of public transport here.

Then we have to run, this time up to 30 metres. Everyone is running, but I don't know what we are running for. Is it about reserving a seat or about not stopping the bus for too long? Somehow funny, the slowness of the bus (low speed and frequent stops) in comparison to the hectic activity of the people who are entering the bus. We stand. After a while, Mara and Manuel sit down. I prefer standing. I found quite a good technique to keep my balance despite the curvy street. In the standing position it is more difficult to look out of the window, but

50 A student at the Spanish school.

51 A round-about and major bus interchange in Xela.

the jostling in the aisle is easier to ignore. This is why I am not very happy when the gentleman next to me points towards a seat in front of him. Two elderly, rather weighty gentlemen are already seated, leaving a narrow strip of bench free towards the aisle. I try to sit down. This turns out to be quite a challenge, due to the reluctance of the two to move over. I try to survive the next few kilometres leaning on the end of the seat, rather than sitting on it. The aisle seems to be bricked with elbows, feet, arms, knees, legs and shoulders, I can hardly believe that the assistant manages to find his way through. The street is so rough. The jostling is unbelievable. After a while I find out that the trick is to relax and to let oneself be more or less roughly pushed to and fro, no matter whether one ends up half in the aisle or on the seat of one's neighbour. It is also helpful to support oneself on sharp curves by leaning an elbow on the opposite back-rest. Despite the high density of people there is always a chance to admire the beautiful landscape through the window. Also, the space in front of one's torso is private, so that there is no danger of agoraphobia.

Return Journey

In the following diary entry, on the level of the surface of the event, affection has emancipated itself from specific bodies. It can, however, be brought back to these. First example: in the diary entry, on the level of the surface of the event, there is smiling. On the level of bodies, this goes back to the smiling pictures of the Virgin Mary as well as to the expectation, cheerfulness and relaxation released by lametta, Christmas balls and Christmas tree. Second example: in the diary entry, on the level of the surface of the event, time is creeping. On the level of bodies, this not only goes back to the gentleman's clock, but also to the discomfort that his macho outfit induces. The impression that time is creeping is also linked to the light smell of alcohol that is emanating from the gentleman, as well as to his intimidating actions, such as the kind of questions he asks, his closing of the window or the posing of his arm. Third example: in the diary entry, on the level of the surface of the event, there is density. On the level of bodies, this goes back to the bus driver's ignorance of people at the side of the street, the physical interference with other people's luggage or jackets, and the assistant hanging out of the open door of the bus during the journey. Smiling, creeping time and density are surfaces of events.

The bus is standing in the midday sun. It is empty, since there are about 15 minutes left until the one o'clock departure. We get on the bus and sit down in the front row. Mara and Manuel sit down on the left, I on the right side of the front door. The windscreen is richly adorned with Christmas decoration. Lametta, colourful balls and in the middle there is a small, snow-covered plastic tree. On the left side,

above the speedometer, two pictures of the Virgin Mary smile down. Above the door there are a few stickers of comic figures. Neither the driver nor the assistant is around. In front of the bus there are a few boys offering ice-cream and fruits. From time to time some weighty indigenous women get on the bus. They sit down towards the rear. A gentleman with a bright green baseball jacket, *sombrero*⁵² and a faint smell of alcohol is climbing up the steps to the front door. He is looking around. He is about 45 years of age and wearing huge sun-glasses. After sitting down next to me, he asks whether I am travelling on my own. I deny this, pointing towards Manuel and Mara. He asks me whether he should sit down somewhere else. I demur once again. There are still lots of spare seats and there is a desire on my part for him to sit elsewhere, but I want to remain friendly. When he closes the window and drapes his arm around my shoulder on the back of the seat, however, it starts to become uncomfortable. I protest and stare angrily into his eyes, such that the window remains open and the arm down. He is wearing a thick watch that can be seen only when he pulls up his sleeve in order to have a look at it. During the next 15 minutes this happens at least ten times. So I can see how time is creeping along. At 1.15 we are still there, but meanwhile the bus has become full. Everyone is sitting, with three people on a bench that has been made for two. From the noise on the roof it seems that quite a lot of things have been loaded. Music on and off we go.

During the first half hour we leave behind many waving, irritated people at the side of the street. The man next to me starts haggling for a reduced fare. I am glad that I have to pay only 1 *Quetzal* and can leave the bus after a short while. People who are carrying luggage are not very considerate in the way they treat their co-passengers as they leave the bus. In the jostling, a bundle often finds itself resting on someone else's shoulder or a jacket brushes against someone's face. If one is not sunk sleeping into the seat (as are many passengers), it is a good idea to assist disembarking passengers retrieve their luggage from the net above the seats, or else to defend the space in front of one's torso with one's hands. I am meanwhile quite comfortable, due to two slim ladies next to me who do not smell of alcohol. In San Francisco, many people get on the bus. During departure, the assistant is hanging far out the door, holding on with both hands. There is no space for him within the bus. Even on the lowest step inside the bus there are two men standing. A strong draught of air further comes through the open door, but no one falls out. Soon the two men have pushed themselves more towards the inside of the bus and the assistant starts to collect the money. The closer we come to the centre of

52 English: Sunhat.

Xela, the emptier the bus gets. Manuel talks briefly with the driver and the bus stops at the end of twelfth *Avenida* – is this a bus stop?

Music

In the following diary entry, the music by 'Los Tigres del Norte' raises the affective surface (Aion) within the bus to a maximal intensity. The state of affairs of material movements within the bus creates an impression of a life without make-up – unplugged. Things are as they are: difficult in all kinds of ways, but nevertheless joyful and intense. The state of affairs of material movements within the music produces a strikingly similar affect. The music by 'Los Tigres' picks up issues from the life of 'normal people' (in this context understood to be people with little money and little formal education) and expresses them in a way that will speak to them. It's all about affect. Direct and intense. The base gives a simple, accelerated, straight-forward, vivid two-beat-working rhythm. The accordion dances over this in a straight-forward, vivid melody-line. Together they produce the impression of a positive take on everyday life. The sound is full of energy. The lyrics are in stark contrast to this. At issue are all the local possibilities of social hardship that one can think of – adultery, US-emigration, alcoholism and child-death. The male voices integrate the lyrics that express suffering into the overall sound that expresses joy. The voices are unsentimental and straight-forward like the voice of a news-reader on TV. They let the social hardship be heard (on a level of Chronos), but not felt (on the level of Aion). The music gives an account of social hardship in such a way that the overall affect is: 'Life is hard', but at the same time the song seems to say, 'hey, don't worry. Life goes on.'

From the loudspeakers comes '*Los Tigres del Norte*'. The five-man-band was at the height of its fame in the eighties. However, this is still what one can hear from the music stalls in markets. This is also what I heard at the coast on the *patio* of Francisca from the transistor-radios of men picking coffee on the neighbouring coffee field. A local radio station called '*Radio Rancheras*' has '*Los Tigres*' on tap. Especially every Saturday evening, when there are two hours of music by the band.

Let's take a look at this one for example: the song starts with a long, full and loud accordion-harmony. The tension then releases itself into a vivid quaver-swerve. Like a horn to attract attention. Three times, different heights, small variations. The accordion-theme feels like a flash of life. The bass-movement transmits adventure-spirit. It develops surprising degrees of independence and the sound of each note is a bit cut off. The melody-movement fits into this. At the song's peak, the male voices come close to screaming. At one point a battery

pushes the energetic dynamic further up. The lyrics stand in contrast to such vividness. They address adultery. A boy and a girl are in love. The boy tells the girl to ask her father for permission to marry him. The father refuses. He confesses to his daughter that her fiancé is his son, the off-spring of an adulterous affair. The girl cries ceaselessly. Her mother solves the problem. When she is told what has happened, she encourages her daughter to marry her fiancé. The girl is not the brother of her fiancé. She is the result of her mother's adulterous affair. Here the story ends. Social hardship is integrated into the positive atmosphere created by the instrumental movements not only through the straightforward male voices, but also through humour. Adultery goes both ways and social hardship is pushed beyond what one would have expected. The exaggeration makes the reception of the miseries that '*Los Tigres*' sing about easy and enjoyable.

What is the next song about? Emigration to Mexico – a familiar theme for the people here. '*Irse mojado*' (to go wet) through the Rio Bravo that separates Mexico from the United States. Again, humorous exaggeration dilutes the seriousness of the issue. The protagonist crosses borders not once, but three times 'wet'. Someone from El Salvador went hidden over the border to Guatemala, then hidden over the border to Mexico and then hidden over the border from Mexico to the United States. He sneaked on foot through the respective countries. Easy, joyful, intense affection also comes from the movements of the instruments. A fresh accordion-melody makes the song stick immediately in the ear. Simple, bright, loud, sturdy. Somehow the sound fits to the colour and shape of the buses. The base is thrown into this, like flashes. Then the base accommodates to the characteristic base line. Pushing, steady rhythm, life goes on, hm-ta-hm-ta-hm-ta.

Fantastic, these indifferent, straight-forward, fresh, loud voices! The voices intensify the accordion. On the level of sound there is brightness. In stark contrast to this is the subject of the following song. The song is about alcohol. Someone is sitting at a table in the corner of a bar. He tries to drown his melancholy in liquor. The words go: 'Bring me the bottle so that I won't start to cry! [...] Here, at the table in the corner I will remember that never in my life I have cried [...] What I never would have dreamed of, happened: I fell in love. [...] Now, in glasses of liquor, I seek refuge [...]' For sure, this story of misery does not necessarily act on the listener as misery. It might add to the brightness produced on the instrumental level by the encounter with '*algo nuestro*' (something from us).

The next song? Child death⁵³! The child of a man falls ill. Nothing helps. The man gives in. The sad but common theme is expressed with heartfelt affection. The song starts with a local saying: 'People say when a child dies, the grandmother brings it back to God. [There] it will become an angel and be in the Heavens for ever at the side of the creator.' The song ends with humour by picking up this saying. The man starts arguing with God, negotiating with him like with a colleague. 'Suffering is a horrible illness in order to transform oneself into an angel. Lord, You have so many angels already. On the contrary, I have only one son.' The man responds to the death of his child on the level of affect, not on the level of rationality. On the level of affect there is no hierarchy. God and man are on the same plane. Ah – what a wonderful music!

05.12. Xela – Zunil

In the following examples, state of affairs are made particularly interactive in order to release events. The skinny man does not simply beg for money through telling a touching story. Going from the front to the back of the bus, he offers colourful pictures with moral messages to every passenger. This is independent of whether or not a passenger shows any interest in buying. As he moves once more from the front to the back of the bus, he collects the pictures back. Through physical contact over time, the chance of releasing an event is increased. The state of affairs increases the effect of the touching story. On the return journey, by contrast, the touching story is accompanied by the rattling of charity boxes. The noise of the rattling overpowers the sound of the spoken words. The state of affairs decreases the effect of the touching story.

The bus is rather empty and most of the time I talk to William⁵⁴. Due to the high volume of the music and the noise of the motor this is a difficult undertaking. At a curve, a skinny young man enters the bus. His torso is covered over and again with tattoos. Wearing an armless, threadbare T-shirt and worn, old jeans, he appears rather shattered. Shouting, in order to overcome the noise, he starts giving a pitch. I register the sounds quite well, but cannot understand the content. There are some words about war, wounds and imprisonment. Colourful pictures are handed out. I understand that they can be bought for a *Quetzal*. I do this. With the help of a dictionary I find out afterwards that mine says: 'You women, obey your husbands like the believer

53 45 children of 1000 live births die in Guatemala each year under the age of five. See <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/guatemala.htm>. (visited 20 November 2005).

54 A teacher at the Spanish school.

does God. You men, love your wives and don't get angry with them.' After collecting the unsold cards, he leaves the bus.

Return Journey

Also on the return journey, someone is asking for money. The bus is much fuller, but it does not make so much noise. The women rattle a charity box during their pitch so that I can hardly understand a word. It seems to be about street children and schools. Many Guatemalans give a few *Centavos*.

I wonder about the patience of the driver. Often he waits a good while when passengers come running to the bus from far away. Often one can see them hurry over the fields. At one point there is an entire troop of indigenous women with children. All are running as quickly as they can, some with baskets on their head and children holding their hand. It takes a few minutes until all of them have entered the bus. Somehow people smell differently. It is not bad, just different. It is not alcohol or sweat, nor dirt, perfume, oil, wood fire, washing powder – I don't know.

09.12. Xela –Tajumulco⁵⁵

In the following text, the unwell-being of Mara counter-actualises Chronos. Counter-actualisation takes place within Aion. Aion not only actualises an affect from a given state of affairs, but counter-actualises it by bringing it into resonance with past affections. The urge to defecate counter-actualises the open field into a toilet. The urge to vomit counter-actualises the touring bus into a waiting bus. Aion can induce counter-actualisation even where there seems to be no space for inter-action on the level of Chronos. The crowded bus stops in the middle of nowhere because there is one singular urge to vomit. Being counter-actualised by Aion seems to be local convention. On the return journey, again, a bus is waiting due to a signalled interest to join in by people who are still far away.

Mara and I want to climb the volcano *Tajumulco*. David, the son of a local guide, and his friend Edgar have been paid to accompany us. I am at 'La Terminal', the main bus stop in Xela. Wow, what shouting and running; what vast numbers of buses and people! How shall one find the right bus? Mara disappears to look for a toilet (an open field behind a row of houses at the edge of the market) and David decides that the bus to San Pedro is too full anyway. We wait for a while with the rucksacks. Mara comes back and David has found a bus (or did the assistant find us?). We push the luggage up onto the roof and the two

55 A volcano in the region around the town San Marcos. See map in appendix. Guatemala has 33 active volcanoes.

boys get on the bus through the back door. When it is my turn, I realise how high the step is, thigh-high. Also the ladder that leads to the roof does not reach much further down. I drag myself up. The two boys are sitting in the last row, towards the front there are two more spare seats. When the assistant comes to collect money, he ignores me. 'I pay for my two cousins,' David is joking with the assistant, pointing towards Mara and me, the two *gringas*. Suddenly the two boys are waving at me, the bus comes to a halt and we are leaving. Mara has asked the bus driver to stop and left the bus through the front door. She has diarrhoea and goes straight to the nearby sweetcorn field. The bus is waiting in order to take us further. No one is hurrying us, but we decide to stay. So the rucksacks are handed down and we find ourselves standing at the side of the country road.

Mara is in a very bad state. She disappears again into the sweetcorn field. An indigenous family is working there, even the small children are carrying corn cobs. Apart from them there is no one. One or two buses are passing by. Because of Mara's decision to try to continue the trip, David waves at the next bus which stops immediately to pick us up. David pays again. First standing, later sitting, we reach San Marcos. David explains that the next bus in the direction of *Tajumulco* will depart at 10.30 a.m, so there is considerable time left. Nevertheless we get straight on and the boys disappear – buying drinks and snacks. A girl with a basket full of *gaseosas* (soft-drinks) has got on the bus and is strolling down the aisle. She is balancing the load skilfully on her head. Two more soft-drink sellers come after her, despite the fact that probably all the thirsty passengers have bought from the first girl. The soft-drink sellers are followed by ice-cream sellers, a woman with fruits and two boys with sweets. When the bus departs, once again every bench is filled with three passengers.

Return Journey 10.12.

The boys are in a hurry. Descending the volcano, we can already see a bus in the distance, getting closer. However, we still have some way to go and are not capable of running down the hill in the same way as our two young guides. Edgar is running ahead to make the bus wait for us. We others go as quickly as possible. The bus is in fact waiting. One rucksack after the other is loaded onto the roof. I feel embarrassed because of the people waiting for us on board the bus. Once I have settled on a spare seat, I can feel my tiredness. I hardly register the people around me and let the sparsely settled landscape pass by. This time, we change buses in San Marcos. There is noise, hectic motion and most of all the bad smell from the running engines of the waiting buses. I do not understand why we do not take the bus for Xela, but David says (wrongly) that soon another one will depart. I buy some biscuits and water at the near-by kiosk. This turns out to be

unnecessary. Once again diverse kinds of drinks and snacks are on offer on board the bus. Again, I admire the sellers' sense of balance and the skilfulness of their elegant stride along the aisle. The sellers do not leave the bus through the back door. They have to work their way around each other with their loads on their heads. The ride from San Marcos back to Xela appears endlessly long. This time the return journey was longer than the journey out.

15.12. Xela – Cantél

Affection is the basis for the Deleuzian ethics of the event. It consists in the three subsequent movements of understanding, willing and representing an event. In the following example, an unprecedented break and the heaviness of the luggage come to be understood as the unavoidable given (Chronos). The way people relate to the given on the level of affect (Aion) exhibits a will to maintain inner balance. No one complains when the bus stops for 20 minutes without apparent reason. The heavy load is passed down from the roof as slowly as is necessary to maintain the well-being of the assistant. Patience characterizes the actions that represent the events that have taken place.

The Spanish school has organised a visit at a weaving collective in a village near Xela. We go to the 'Rotonda', nine people in all. The bus is nearly empty. One rucksack after the other is passed up onto the roof. Nearly everyone has a bench for him- or herself. The tour is meant to take 20 minutes, but then there is this petrol-station. We stop there without tanking up or for any other obvious reason. We stop and stop and none of the few passenger seems to be angry about that. Then the bus turns left into an extremely steep and curvy road. We are creeping ahead. Suddenly I can imagine very vividly such a bus falling down into a *barranco* (slope). When loading things off, the assistant again shows all the patience in the world. Slowly, one rucksack after the other appears at the brim of the roof and is handed down to us.

20.12. Panajachel⁵⁶ – Chichi⁵⁷

In the following example, Aion produces a surface of tension that integrates series set off by musical movements and series set off by other physical movements on the level of Chronos. The different series both affirm their distance from each other and enter into resonance with one another. What does the music do in this balance? The music underlines the dawning of the day at the start of the journey. The music drowns out the cheeping of the chicken-load. The music smoothes

56 See map in appendix.

57 Short for Chichicastenango. See map in appendix.

down the fight between two bus assistants, observed through the bus window. The music attracts all kinds of images of selflessness within the bus.

Around seven o'clock in the morning I slowly shuffle down the main road. There are two buses and I get on the one with the heading 'Guate'. There are only three other passengers, all at the front. The bus fills up quickly. Music on and off we go. What is it this time? Marco Antonio Solis, the ex-singer and leader of 'Los Bukis'. Heart-melting romance by a solo male voice. This is music for the teenager in love – and for anyone else who has remained young inside, or who is so much in love that they are capable of forgetting everything else. There is no politics, no social criticism. This is pure sentiment that expresses in all detail what one 'really' feels for the other.

Outside, dawn is breaking. Inside piano and clarinet are building up. Then the soft male voice: 'Forgive me.' Going as far as it can go. Giving everything. Waking up with Marco Antonio Solis, this has style. Affirmation of life, of love and of pleasure. Heart-breaking heart-breaker. I get my legs up by jamming them against the back of the bench in front of me. Does the lady who is sitting there feel my legs in her back? At least she does not turn around. Her black hair is hanging over the back-rest. Like this we may as well be on the road for the next six hours, I would be fine with that. A bag full of *nachos*, these little corn crisps with cheese and chili flavour. Why does the driver keep the volume low? Maybe because it is still early in the morning? That would be more consideration than one expects from local bus-drivers. Maybe this is all that the loudspeakers have to offer.

The bus stops and an elderly man with a case full of young chickens gets on the bus. The cheeping is placed in the luggage net and off we go again. Now the driver turns the volume up. That drowns out the cheeping. Poor animals. How do chickens perceive music? Can they enjoy it? Or is it just noise? When Marco Antonio Solis makes some emotion-increasing pauses in a song, the cheeping comes through for a moment. It does not sound as if the animals were too happy about their present condition.

In Sololá, the next bigger village, about half of the people are getting off the bus. Some of those who get on are wearing *traje* (costume). Many are clothed in Western style. People appear to be going to work. What are we waiting for? Marco Antonio Solis keeps playing at maximum volume. Now his voice is accompanied by two rather angry male voices. An assistant from another bus has come to the open door of ours. He seems to have a quarrel with the assistant of our bus. Do the two know each other? Is there something old going on between them? They sound as if they are fighting. Wow. What is this? The two leave the bus. Something more serious seems to start. Are they going

to have a fist-fight? Marco Antonio Solis now appears more like softening washing-detergent, washing everything white and soft. It is like film music – you see these two guys outside, through the dirty window that has been opened a little bit, and you hear the electronic keyboard, clarinet and violins building up over and over to another crescendo, caressing Marco Antonio Solis's lyrics with their sound. Driver, please don't stop the Marco Antonio Solis cassette. Now we depart.

Marco Antonio Solis actually never sings about happy love, only about suffering, why? Well, do what you want, but do it at maximal volume. That is more fun. The lyric goes: 'There is no formula to forget you. You are my music and my best song. I know there is no other heart that feels the same for you. Please come back to me.' Ok. The self-less smile from the sticker with the face of the Virgin Mary above the driver mirror somehow gets mixed up with the lyrics. So do the green from the home-made letters sticking to the windscreen from the inside, taking away the upper half of the view, that say: '*Dios bendiga este bus!*' (God watch over this bus) and the plastic flowers tied around the mirror, never losing their bright redness, hopefully.

At the next stop I leave the bus through the back door. A guy takes my rucksack over his shoulder and directs me with a questioning 'Chichi? Chichi?' over the Interamericana. Before I really understand what is going on, I am sitting in the half-empty bus to the *Quiché*, the north-western region of the country. The space in the bus gets denser and denser. We often stop. Many people in traditional clothes, most of them in groups of three or four, get on the bus. A few rows ahead a tourist is angrily discussing the bus fare. I do not understand the sum and do not know how much there is to pay. For my part, I have to pay five *Quetzales*, and I am surprised how soon we arrive.

22.12. Chichi – Antigua

Orientation by the event treats people like bodies. As bodies, people in the following text are, first, matter that expresses an affect and thereby acts on its environment. In this way, the silence of the bus-driver serves for orientation, the smiling of the assistant or the attraction that is emanating from the advertisement by the sellers. Second, people appear as matter that occupies space. In the full bus what counts when choosing a seat is the size of one's neighbour, as well as the occupation of space through smell or other aggressive intensities. Third, people in the following example also appear as matter that brings in money. The bus moves with lightening speed, despite the danger involved in this, in order to catch more passengers waiting at the side of the street.

The bus drivers in Chichi seem not to be so obsessed with passengers. At least no one is shouting destinations and the driver in the bus with

the heading 'Guate' even hesitates at first to take us on board. In the end we can go as far as '*Los Encuentros*'⁵⁸. The assistant loads my rucksack onto the already moving bus. Then he hurries to the front and slowly starts collecting the money. We sit in the very back. The darkened window encourages one to observe what is going on inside the bus first of all. The assistant is wearing a beige T-shirt and looks as if he had been fixing the motor shortly before departure. His shirt is full of grease. By contrast, his smile is very bright – and soon ours are as well, as this is the first time that we do not have to pay the tourist fare on this route rather than the usual fare of 3 *Quetzales*. The radio is playing softly. Most of the passengers in the half-empty bus are dozing. It is nearly three o'clock. For most of the people, it seems, most of the week-end has been spent on the annual village festivity. The bus seems to be for local commuting, for it often stops and there is a frequent change of passengers.

Hardly anyone is heavily encumbered. So the bus driver can overtake quite a few lorries and *camionetas* (second-class buses). One of the buses that gets overtaken is the bus to Guate. Therefore in '*Los Encuentros*' I can hardly follow with my eyes as quick as my rucksack is packed onto the roof of the following bus. The assistant of bus two is in a hurry. I try to find a seat, which turns out to be quite a challenge. All seats are taken twice, no one seems to be ready to shove over just a little bit. What does the elegant lady with the black, shoulder long hair and the lipstick think? Where does she come from, where is she going to? At the moment, what counts more for me is that she seems to be sober and reasonably slim. And that she does not smell bad. A man shoves himself into the free space next to her that I had in mind. The manifold creases on his face testify to a long life. Under other circumstances it would be interesting to talk to him. At the moment, however, I perceive him in terms of matter, in terms of the space that he occupies and that I meant to occupy myself.

A man of about 30 years of age is trying to sell ice-cream to me. The big yellow ice-balls in the waffles are coming towards my face, together with a wide and friendly smile and the warmth of his eyes. A bit behind him a child, perhaps eight years old, is offering oranges for sale. His body energises the atmosphere within the bus. Energy emerges from the delicate act of balancing the peeled oranges on a wide tray on his head in the crowded bus. Energy emerges from the shining of white teeth out of his open mouth. It emerges from the eager, young and lively eyes. Energy emerges also from the child-voice offering the fruits for sale, and from the bright orange of the fruits on his head.

58 English: '*Encontrar*' means 'to encounter', to meet. '*Los Encuentros*' is a major bus interchange in the southern highlands of Guatemala.

I choose a bench with two rather skinny boys and just sit down next to them. This is how you do it here, although technically, the benches are constructed for two people only. There is little happiness about this from any of those involved, least of all by me. I am sitting for the next two hours with only half of my backside on the seat, the rest remaining in the aisle. The up-side: I have full view through the windscreen and a good opportunity to study the traffic and the driving-technique of the bus driver. The driver is in close co-operation with the assistant, who, often hanging halfway out of the driver door, gives the green light for scary overtaking manoeuvres. In a short space of time we have passed three further *camionetas*, four lorries and even a shuttle bus that departed before us in *Chichi*. People waiting at the side of the street are loaded on board. The bus fills up quickly. The overtaking frequency goes down the more people are loaded in. The speeding of the bus seems to have had success. Hardly any of those waiting is left behind for the next buses.

The boys next to me are sleeping. Due to the sliding of our bodies with the many curves in the road, I have become an equal bench-user. It starts to become rather comfortable, so I close my eyes as well. Again, I notice how noisy the motor is. The sound of the radio is hardly audible. It is of little help that the assistant plays around with its tuning buttons at every opportunity.

06.01. Rio Dulce – El Estor⁵⁹

The event is the effect of movement on the level of Chronos. In the following example, relaxation is described as event. It is the effect of passivity on the level of Chronos. Passivity here means in-activity. The weather seems to be passive; the drizzling appears like an in-active mode of rain. The assistants seem to be passive; they do not do much, only standing and chatting. The slow driving-mode appears passive. The passengers appear passive; most of them are travelling without luggage, often only a short way, sleepy. The sound-scape appears passive; there is no music and hardly any conversation. The vision-scape appears passive; the dominant impression are white T-shirts and the feeling that there is hardly anything to look at.

It is drizzling and there is a humid breeze. Maybe this is why the luggage is loaded inside the bus. The assistant does not offer any artistic exercises on, in or around the bus. Slowness characterizes the manner of driving, the manner of stopping, the manner of passengers getting on and off the bus and the manner of collecting the bus fare. The two assistants chat most of the time while they stand in the aisle in the middle of the bus. Most of the passengers are travelling without lug-

59 See map in appendix.

gage. Some of them carry a machete or a small bundle. Sometimes the bus stops next to a field with cattle. People get on and travel just to the next settlement. The bus is half empty. There is no music and hardly any conversation. Here, indigenous people are not wearing *traje*⁶⁰. I wonder about the many white T-shirts. (Probably the whiteness is due to a lot of chlorine.) Despite the rain and the closed window, the air in the bus is fresh. The rocking up and down over the hills makes me sleepy. There is little to look at apart from the incredibly green landscape.

07.01. El Paraíso – El Estor

Aion is the time of the self. Aion allows us to read the given in terms of the self's will for joy and the self's objective. In the following example, there is the will to maintain a positive, relaxed attitude towards the given. And there is the will to get from El Paraíso to El Estor. On the level of Chronos, there is chaos: the bus is broken and gets repaired on the street at the time of departure. The replacement bus looks nearly as scruffy (the envelopment of the US-declaration in the following example produces a flair of pre-history). The bus virtually falls apart upon touching it (as the anchorage in the following example) or looking more closely at it (as the foam material in the following example). On the level of Aion, by contrast, there is not chaos. The broken bus provides time for a coffee; there is hope, gratefulness, balance and pleasure.

I can see the bus from far away. It is standing at the side of the street and all its passengers are standing next to it. There is still time to have a coffee, whatever has to be repaired. 'Whatever' turns out to be something stubborn. However, since it is still early afternoon, I am hopeful. Some of the passengers are leaving to make the last bit of the journey by foot. I prefer to spend the 15 remaining kilometres on the bus. The *camioneta* that finally works itself up the hill seems to have been built before the American Declaration of Independence (Guatemalan second-class buses are old, used-up school-buses from the US). Shock absorbers, sound absorbers, driver door or luggage area? No extras – this is just about transport. Above the mirror there is the friendly advice, 'Before leaving please check for sleeping children under your seat'. One metre above there are various cables hanging out of the wall.

No spare seat. I try to stand in the middle. Due to both potholes and driving style this is quite a challenge. One woman clings when leaving the bus to the only vertical support pole. This promptly comes out of the anchorage, turns against the assistant and takes away the

60 The traditional indigenous clothes, consisting of *hupil* and *corte*.

ceiling construction its provisional support. For a short while there are also other cables hanging loose, then the assistant puts everything back in its place. A boy offers me a spare seat. I accept it gratefully. My sense of balance is not really able to cope with this journey standing up. Sitting down, the rocking up and down is much more enjoyable. Soon after the boy gets off the bus. An old man with a bag full of green tomatoes gets on. I look at the foam material coming out of the seat, the gleaming golden teeth of the assistant and the landscape through the backdoor of the bus. The big red bolt of the back door seems to be the most functioning part of the entire vehicle. Leaning back, I finally have a pleasant journey.

08.01. El Estor – St Cristóbal Verapaz

In the following example, the temporal experience of duration is described as event. Time seems to escape any spatialisation. On the level of Chronos, the impression of duration is the effect of the seemingly endless eight hour length of the trip, the merging of living-and working space in the bus (note in the following example the sleeping, the eating and the working), the apparent goal-less-ness of the route (note in the following example the frequent circling of the village, the stopping for people who are standing only 20 metres apart and the invitation by the assistant to travel further to a more interesting destination) and the dozing of passengers.

My trip is meant to start at six o'clock in the morning. At ten to six I am going around the market place in search for a bus. To be early means to secure a seat. This seems to be sensible, given the seven hour length of the trip. The bus with the sign 'El Estor – Cobán' is hardly visible in the dark due to its red colour. When I come closer, the electric light inside the bus switches on. A boy is getting dressed in shirt and trousers, while a man at the door wipes his eyes. Both assistant and driver have obviously slept on the bus. Without breakfast for the two we depart. We circle the village about three times, then the market place five times, and finally we pass the main street several times – all in search of further passengers. I might as well have slept for another hour, there would have been a spare seat in the half-empty bus at any time. Certainly none of the other passengers are going to Cobán. The bus seems to function more like a local shuttle. At the first school, four women are already leaving the bus. Are they teachers?

There is a frequent change of passengers. Many are travelling for only one or two *Quetzales*. The bus stops for everyone, even if the people who are standing at the side of the street are only 20 metres apart from each other. In front of a bridge, a group of men gets on the bus. Cowboy hats, machete, rubber boots and everyone is carrying at least one big sack (sweetcorn?) of incredible volume that is loaded

with combined power onto the roof. What a noise! In Panzón it is market-day. Everyone is leaving. The bus has to do a detour over an unfinished bridge, since the main road is full of market-stalls. A family is transporting a vast number of plastic chairs. The assistant uses the time to sell bottles of smelling salt that can be sprayed onto the floor of the half-empty bus. At the next settlement, children offer banana chips, newspaper, Coca-Cola and something baked. Whatever it is, 'something' turns out to taste really good.

For some time, the bus has carried only myself, a mother with three children and ten men, most of them dozing. The atmosphere is like the return journey from a school trip. Everyone seems tired, happy and no one seems to be ready for a conversation, until the bus driver finds a radio station. The loudspeakers are positioned in the luggage nets. So far it seemed not to matter whether hissing, noise or only crackling came out of them. Now, however, it's techno, at incredibly high volume. I ask myself how the bus driver, who is sitting directly under the loudspeakers, is able to stand that. He seems to be of a sturdy nature more generally. Apart from a tin of Coke that the assistant gave him in the morning, he has not eaten or drunk anything and we have been on the road for six hours already. From time to time he takes a small child on his knees while driving. It is probably that of the woman (wife?) who is sitting next to him. When the road reaches the paved street, we stop for a short lunch. We are nearly there. After the rocking up and down, the paved street is a pleasure.

The bus to San Christóbal is more familiar. It is crowded with people and luggage. The assistant offers to take me further to Uspantán. He cannot understand what one can want in San Christóbal. A man gets on the bus with his son. The little one is waving his two bags of sweets. The man is offering coloured pencils with a booming voice. It is a special offer for the start of the school year – only five *Quetzales*. The two do brisk business. A lady in the front buys something. Only the boy makes the effort to worm himself through to the back of the bus in search of potential customers. In *San Cristóbal* half of the passengers get off. Because of the Cobán *Chipichipichipi* (drizzle), most of them had left their luggage in the front of the bus. After the eight hour trip I am happy to reach my destination.

09.01. San Christóbal – Uspantán

Chronos is the time of the actual other. It is the time of the actual given. The actual given is the way it is, independent of the will of the self. The self has to live with its physical effects. The setting back manoeuvre in the following text provides an example of the physical effects of Chronos. The oncoming traffic functions as the concrete, physical given. The street is curvy and the driver cannot see whether there is oncoming traffic. The road is often bordered by nothing more

than a steep slope. Additionally, the road is badly paved at best. Potholes and landslides mean that the bus is always in danger of simply overturning. The street is too narrow for two vehicles. The only thing to do is setting back in the reverse gear. Speed increases the physical danger of overturning. That danger seems to make the experience a macho-game for the driver. The assistant hanging out of the back door is a very physical solution to the challenge of finding one's way through the temporalities of the actual given.

I am waiting at the marketplace. I have been assured by various people that the bus is meant to pass by at 10, 10.30, 11 a.m. When the bus finally comes, it really does pass me by. The bus stop seems to be about 100 metres ahead. Once there, however, it stops in quite a militant fashion for about 20 minutes. I get a seat next to a young woman. It is rather far towards the back of the bus and quite comfortable, even after another passenger joins us. The travellers are a heterogeneous group. There are all age-groups and all types from styled *ladina* to dusty *machete*- and cowboy-hat-carrier. The street is very narrow, curvy and hilly. Various slopes have to be circled, diverse potholes and landslides have to be passed. We are met with oncoming traffic and we have to engage in sharply improvised reversing. The assistant is hanging out of the back of the bus and shouting out the directions.

For lunch we stop at a kiosk with a shop. Some of the men are urinating at the side of the street. Nearly everyone has got off the bus. Many are taking the opportunity to stretch their legs for a while. The shop does splendid business with *gaseosas* and crisps. The girls who are offering *tortilla* are less successful. While I am waiting for my rucksack I admire the assistants juggling with remarkably heavy loads. Most of their work is to pass sacks down from the bus roof. How did they get all that luggage up there?

11.01. Uspantán – Huehuetenango: First Part

The time of the surface of the event is Aion. The surface is the fleeting impression of a moment. In the following example, this surface consists in a feeling of intimacy. The darkness of the night makes the interior of the bus seem like an intimate entity. Anyone who comes into the light of the headlamps becomes part of this entity. The impression of intimacy increases through further movements on the level of Chronos. For example, people move in such a way as to suggest that they know each other. Then there is the silence within the bus (as if no words were necessary), the routine movements of assistant and driver, and the hooting horn that gives the entity a unifying sound. The surface is fragile. A simple coughing might already destroy the impression of intimacy.

Departure 5 a.m. Sleepy, I stand with other people at the market place. It is completely dark, until a heavily floodlit bus comes around the corner. I sit close to the driver. Driving in darkness seems to be no problem for him. The next five metres are always illuminated as if by daylight. With a top speed of 20km/h, the gentleman has a good purview. It is quite dusty here in the front. Strong, thick clouds of dust enter through the window next to the driver, especially when the bus touches the grasses and bushes by the side of the road. Over and over again people emerge from the darkness into the light of the headlamps. The bus is full.

The driver seems to know most of the passengers. People are slapping each other on the back, there is a squabble and some of the passengers remain standing in the front of the bus. Many get off after only a few kilometres, in areas as rural as those where they boarded from. An assistant is sitting on a turned over paint-bucket. He is responsible for opening and closing the door. Usually he stares into the dark, ignoring what is going on around him. Seemingly automatically he moves the crank for opening the door always at just the right moment to jump out of the bus and help new passengers get on. The driver often pulls at a cord that is hanging from the ceiling, thereby blowing a horn so that the arrival of the bus can be heard from afar. Most of the passengers are probably travelling to the *Quiché*. Bags, suitcases and rucksacks are packed securely in the luggage net and onto the roof. It is very quiet. Many people are sleeping. I am admiring the sunset. The radio is humming at low volume.

Music

In the following example, the music counter-actualises the interior of the bus. Only those aspects of the bus-interior get actualised that relate to the content of the music. The music is about the pleasure and pain linked to desire for the other in Mexican cowboy-culture. The bus interior gets actualised through my cowboy hat wearing fellow passengers and a girl humming the melody. Sensations like cat-smell or physical pain do not get actualised. In the end of the following example, however, the desire to vomit competes with the music in counter-actualising the bus interior. Now the window becomes as important as the music. The concentration on the music can no longer fully achieve the non-actualisation of the curves.

Hmmm. *Vincente Fernández*. Sitting in a Guatemalan bus and a cassette of *Vincente Fernández* – this is it. *Rancheras clásico...Vincente* presents himself through his music as the ranch-owner, well situated, with a big heart, manifold adulterer – the charisma of someone who considers himself and who feels himself considered by others as a ‘real man’. He seems to be offering a share of his long and dear life-

experience. At issue are family, horse riding, lasso, cowboy hat, alcohol, and, over and over again, women. He presents himself as suffering from women he is engaged with, dreaming of or left by. This is about the vulnerability of someone who knows he is not vulnerable, because society supports his way of life and his position. This is about someone who knows that in the end, every ‘sin’ will be forgiven if you make people feel good. And if not, one can always go away. There is a strong sense of independence, just obeying one’s own will. More than anyone else, people in the Guatemalan countryside in non-indigenous areas listen to this. A Mexican dream. The music to endless well-known Mexican films.

Cries – then trumpets and violins in intimate interaction with the voice. ‘Look at me, kiss me, eat me with your kisses.’ Tradition, love and excess. God comes up frequently. As the one who shall bless an affair, not as the main subject of the song. God is the traditional background before which a particular love affair takes place. Like in this song: ‘*Señora*, how are you? God knows that I love you. But I don’t have enough money to make you happy.’ Hm. Again. *Vincente Fernández* is perfect for the build-up of tension. It all comes together. ‘You lied to me. You, the love of my life. Now I go through life like a vagabond, without your love.’ Sometimes the melody turns into spoken phrases, apparently when emotion gets so intense that it breaks up any melodic structure from within. What does the next song say? ‘I know that you always had doubts about the sincerity of my love.’ Now he starts whispering into one’s ear, ‘You have to help me to regain the trust that I lost with so much cheating.’ Forgiveness, the old theme. The next one: ‘I went so far away to find out whether I can live without your love. I sought the arms of many women, but nothing helped – I had to come back to you.’

‘*Por tu maldito amor*’⁶¹ – *Vincente Fernández* makes one forget the smell of the cat that the old man on my right side has in his arms, kept on a leash. Nor does it matter anymore that only one half of my bottom has a purchase on the seat – why bother? Yes, my thighs hurt. But, hey, ‘*auñce te amo*’, this is *Vincente*! This is emotion in drops and at maximal volume slipping out of the cheap loudspeakers. I try to relax and let my torso fall back, hoping it will gather through gravity the space that my diplomacy was not capable of taking from my two cowboy hat wearing middle-aged male neighbours. Just relax and enjoy yourself. Mmh, this voice is so *macho*, in the best sense of the word. Like on a high mountain, just floating above everything with the pitch, and at the same time on bended knees because of heartfelt engagement. A few guitar chords and everything is immediately clear. This song is such a hit here. The little girl standing between my legs

61 English: ‘Because of your cursed love.’

starts humming. Does she know the words? Uuh, this curve – when was breakfast? I feel the flavour of the tortilla with *chirmol* again on the back of my tongue. Concentrate on the music. Concentrate on the violin. Yeah, that is better. Give yourself to the music. I want the window to open up. Why does the second of my cowboy-hat bench colleagues sleep? Ok, I have to get up and open it myself. Hm, the music. In Sacapulas⁶² hardly anyone apart from me leaves the bus.

Second Part

Chronos is the time of the actual. The actual acts on others. In the virtual, movements have an effect only for the passive self. One perceives a sensation or links a certain memory with a perceived object. In the actual, by contrast, movements act on a reality outside oneself. In the following diary entry, the window gets closed and it is less hot inside. The bus passes over a bad road and reading for the passengers inside becomes difficult. The luggage is passed down from the roof towards the street-side rather than to the pavement-side and the receivers are endangered by the following traffic.

In the bus from Aguacatán⁶³ to Huehue it is *hot*. My T-shirt is sticking to the plastic seat from the midday-sun and my left side feels like it is burning. Then the boy in front of me closes the window. Despite the low density of passengers I feel close to suffocating. Soon, however, I realise that through the nearly closed window the high temperatures are much easier to stand than before. Here one can distinguish who is an experienced passenger. Through the closed window, less dust is breezing in and the dirty windowpane shields us from most of the sun. Also the draught flows much more pleasantly through the narrow gap that is left open.

Most of the passengers are reading. I cannot understand how they can decipher the letters, with the road in such a bad condition. '*Prensa Libre*'⁶⁴ is read much more frequently than '*La Hora*'⁶⁵. Many passengers seem to be pupils and students. They are chatting with each other and changing places. Some are flicking through yellow-marked pages. After a few kilometres some indigenous women, loaded with shopping from the market, are getting off. After that the bus hardly stops, until we reach the suburbs of Huehuetenango. There, the tempo increases, the passengers proceed towards the door with greater haste. The traffic behind is hooting. The assistants are hurrying. One of the assistants is climbing over the roof while the other one co-ordinates

62 See map in appendix.

63 See map in appendix.

64 The main Guatemalan newspaper. English: '*prensa libre*' means 'free press'.

65 A major Guatemalan newspaper. English: '*la hora*' means 'the hour'.

the stopping and descending. The luggage of some passengers is unloaded from the left side of the bus, so that the receivers have to confront the oncoming traffic. My rucksack is the last one. It is passed down from the already moving bus onto the pavement, luckily at the right side.

12.01. Huehue⁶⁶ – Chiantla⁶⁷

In the north of the town there is a bus stop for buses towards Todos Santos⁶⁸, Barillas⁶⁹ and Saloma. Sellers are standing around, chatting. Chips, fruits and drinks are on sale. There is no shouting and commodities are not proffered from raffia trays or plastic pots. The atmosphere is rather sleepy. It is Sunday. Some passengers, including us, are picky selecting a bus. There is only a short distance to travel and the frequency of buses passing by is high. We let two or three of the inter-regional buses pass by. Then Jenny, my local companion, gets bored and we jump onto a bus to Chiantla. Everyone finds a seat. This bus is more like an inner-city bus. There is no radio, no luggage net, no jostling as yet, no climbing over the roof of the bus – and little eagerness to do business on the side of the assistant. Since I don't know the name of the village we want to go to, I ask the assistant to ask Jenny, who is sitting three rows ahead, to pay for two. He does not ask her and my trip is gratis. Many passengers seem to have done some shopping in Huehue on the market. The luggage consists mostly of plastic bags. One woman is carrying a chicken under her arm. The bus is emptying out. So far, not a single passenger has gone on the bus. Soon we arrive.

16.01. Huehue – Xela

The event builds up in series. Series take off from Chronos. In the following example, on the level of Chronos, bodies are penetrating with other bodies, coexisting and withdrawing. Some kind of contracted point kicks off serialisation. The movement of serialisation unfolds as far as it can, and then expires. Or the movement is prevented from unfolding its inner dynamic by an other contraction interfering and taking over the scene. Embarking the bus cuts off a first series. The two young indigenous seat-keepers kick of a new series. The assistant takes over when he leads the unsuccessful seat-keeper to a spare seat. For a while, the assistant dominates the scene, then the protest of the passenger who wants his change immediately takes over. This movement is cut off, but turns up again later, when the assistant sits down

66 Short for Huehuetenango.

67 See map in appendix.

68 See map in appendix.

69 See map in appendix.

next to him and starts invading his space by turning the pages of his newspaper.

As soon as I turn from the main street left towards the bus station, I am approached from all sides. 'Mexico, Mexico', 'La Mesilla', 'Guate, Guate', '¿a donde vas?' (Where are you going to?) It does not matter that the buses are still 30 metres away. I work my way through the thronged vendors of fruits, chickens and clothes. The buses are positioned in four rows behind each other. In the middle there is a narrow path. With millimetre-precision-work a bus with the heading 'Huehue – Xela' is directed through. I hand over my rucksack to a boy who (hopefully) is part of the bus team and will give it back to me when we are in Xela. I enter the packed bus.

In the back part of the bus a few passengers are still sitting on their own. Among them there are two indigenous boys. They seem in no way prepared to make space for the waiting woman with child in front of me. She is sitting down nevertheless. No problem, given a bit skilfulness. I find a place two rows ahead, next to a dozing man. At the next stop one of the two guys runs towards the door. The two seem to have tried to hold free seats for their families, who are now boarding the bus, loaded with bags and bundles. While the one who ran to the front helps his father and siblings to load the luggage, a boy with a Walkman pushes himself past the woman and child and towards the window. Speechless and a bit lost, the seat-keeper who got shoved down from the bench stands in the aisle, until the assistant leads him towards a spare portion of bench in the last row.

The hair of the assistant is shiny with styling crème. In more than this one way he looks as if he were a bit detached from everyday life affairs: he is wearing gleaming clean jeans, ironed shirt, mobile phone in pocket and pen behind the ear – he is probably responsible only for collecting money and not for the luggage. He starts his work at the back of the bus. Loudly, he shouts '*pasaje, pasaje por favor*' (bus fare, bus fare, please). Everyone searches in pockets and brassieres for money. Then there is weighty discussion. One of the male passengers wants his change now rather than later. He is waving angrily a paper noting the amount that he is entitled to. The assistant ignores him.

The assistant must be busy concentrating: certain groups of passengers have been scattered to different parts of the bus, and there is some confusion as to whom is paying for whom. An indigenous boy points to his relatives in the front. The father seems not to have enough cash at hand and so his other son starts to search through his own trouser pockets. All of them are wearing red and white-striped trousers, a black belt and white shirts with narrow, blue stripes. This is the costume of men from the mountain village of Todos Santos. The

collar is of a different material. Finely woven, wonderfully colourful and probably quite warm stripes of fabric augment the shirt.

Up here it is very cool. Thick clouds are hanging over the trees. The people getting on the bus are wearing woollen caps, gloves and thick jackets. The gentleman next to me opens the window. I wonder that it is not too cold for him, but he just throws his empty orange-juice bottle out of the moving bus and closes the window again.

All the passengers have received a piece of paper noting the amount of money that has been paid. After an hour and a half the assistant who stowed my rucksack, and who is looking much more dusty than his colleague, goes through the aisle and collects all the papers. We hardly stop. The collector comes from the front and gives out the change. Nevertheless the gentleman who was complaining earlier is making a grim face. This grows more intense when the assistant shoves himself next to the gentleman on the bench, borrows a '*Prensa Libre*' from a passenger and starts reading a newspaper. The paper intrudes not only into the aisle, but also some way into my neighbour's space and mine. From time to time the pages brush against my face as he turns them. On my other side the orange-juice-bottle-disposer is sleeping gently. He is sunk deeply into the seat. His head leans against my shoulder.

Suddenly everyone jumps up and stares out of the left- and rear-side windows. I realise that about 90 percent of the passengers are male. I cannot see anything, but we seem to have passed the scene of an accident. The bus slows to a walking pace and I can get a view of a lorry standing across the road. The men sit down again. The back door opens and the assistant enters, breathless. It seems he was running behind the bus. He goes to the front without comment.

The names of the villages are not announced during the journey. Only when we come to the suburbs of Xela does the assistant shout them out in a loud voice. He asks the passengers to proceed to the door minutes before the stop.

Music

Next to me sits someone who looks like a student in his early twenties. He is holding a small transistor radio to his ear. The sound drifting over to me is familiar. '*Canción Nuevo*'⁷⁰ – songs of resistance against '*la violencia*'⁷¹ that were prohibited in Guatemala during the sixties to nineties. Funny, how much that has to do with letting oneself be touched; with willing the event; with the urge to go into contact with the actual present; affirming the given chaos in order to become ac-

70 English: 'New song'.

71 English: 'The violence'. This is a common term for the massacres in the early eighties, and for the civil war more generally.

tive. This song for example is by *Silvio Rodríguez*. The lyric goes: 'Life is not worth anything if I keep sitting here after I have seen in my dreams how they call me for help from various parts of the country. Life is not worth anything if I hear a mortal cry for help and this is not able to touch my heart because my heart is switched off.' I look at the guy from the side. How did he pass the time of *la violencia*? Did he fight? How did the civil war become part of his present? How did he let himself be touched by the war? He looks serious, but friendly. Outside the changing point '*Cuatro Caminos*' is passing-by.

The next song is also about the capacity to let oneself be touched. Mercedes Sosa's booming but tender voice: 'Thanks to life that has given me so much. It gave me two eyes that, when I open them, perfectly distinguish between black and white. In the multitude they make me distinguish the man that I love.' This sounds like a love song, but in the end it is about politics. The ability to let oneself be touched by what is going on. The fine guitar accompaniment sounds like a stranger on these rough buses. One would not hear this kind of music on these buses normally. It is too intellectual, the meaning too hidden. Too abstract. The song appears altogether like a stranger, something from past times. It speaks of a time when these sounds expressed so much tension that people could be killed for producing them.

The next song is also about the danger of not letting oneself be touched anymore. It is again Silvio Rodríguez. This one expresses the danger of no longer being able to be moved by the violence and the social injustice around one anymore through a dream about snakes that are able to kill the ability of people to love and the ability to let themselves be touched by what is going on. The threat in this song comes from capitalism. Again, this is not said straightforwardly on the level of words. 'I dream of long and transparent snakes. Snakes from the ocean. [...] In their stomachs they carry what can eliminate love.' The guy takes the transistor radio down from his ear and switches the sound off. He puts the radio into his bag, stands up and starts manoeuvring himself through towards the front door. What a pity! I would have liked to talk to him about his music. The Tex-Mex from the bus loudspeakers is taking over the sound-scape again.

Nearly everyone has left the bus before we get to the centre of the town. At 'La Terminal' I briefly consider whether to wait and observe the huge baskets being unloaded from the roof of the bus. I decide against this.

22.01. Xela – San Francisco del Alto

Orientation by the event means being able to let any actual movement on the level of Chronos come and go as it wants. Any connection on the level of Chronos is at best preliminary. There is always the chance

that Aion will open up Chronos towards something else. Because the bus in front is quicker, the two women change to the other one. There is no loyalty; only the possibility of having to pay their fare again might check them. Probably they have not paid yet.

The bus is coming from 'La Terminal' and I am the second passenger. We remain standing for a while, proceed at snail's pace through Xela. Only at the 'Rotonda' does the assistant manage to recruit some passengers. The bus looks more or less Ok, but it makes some funny noises during the trip. Despite being on a country road we are not gaining much pace. At the next stop I can see the reason for the few passengers. Two buses in front of us are also going to San Francisco. It's market day there. When we stop for a moment, two women hurry towards the door and run towards the bus in front of us. The assistant of the front bus loads them in through the back door. Anyone else? He waves invitingly towards our bus. He is shouting 'San Francisco, San Francisco,' but the other passengers will not be wooed away. When the bus in front stops in the next village in order to take on more people, our driver manages to overtake the other bus, despite the narrow street. The next waving people at the side of the street are ours. At the steep turn-off to San Francisco, a lorry in front of us is having some problems. It is making its way up the hill in no more than walking pace. Three buses and a car overtake in sequence despite the curvy street. Having reached the top, the passengers disperse into the jostling of the market.

Return journey

Every few minutes a bus leaves for Xela. I enjoy the view a moment longer before getting on a half-empty one. I find a window seat above the back wheels. Sitting is more comfortable with my legs up. The bus fills up quickly, with commodities as well as with people. A chicken in the luggage area looks pitiful. It caught itself with the wings in the net. A boy has a little dog on his knees. A man sits down next to me and asks whether he can borrow my newspaper. He is wearing a fine straw hat and is reading incredibly slowly. He is moving his lips while reading. He turns the pages only once before the next village. Meanwhile the assistant is working hard. At the exit to San Francisco a group of indigenous people with heavy luggage join us. Two women are transporting huge baskets of chickens. A man is carrying about three baskets, each a metre high and wide, with strings and rope. In the shade of the bus I can observe the assistant arduously loading the heavy baskets one after the other on his neck and shoulder up the roof. When the third one is in place, he knocks loudly onto the roof and the

driver starts the bus. Unloading in 'Cuatro Caminos' is much easier. The baskets are kicked down, one landing in a puddle.

At the next stop there is a chaotic crushing and jostling on the over-packed bus. Then there emerges an ear-splitting squeaking. A woman is carrying a piglet and it seems that the poor animal is not really enjoying the trip. The assistant directs the last third of the passengers through the back door. Then he makes the younger of those waiting outside enter the bus through the back door. They fill up the bus from the rear while other passengers are still leaving the bus through the front door. I am glad about my seat at the window. Then there are passengers entering the bus from the front as well. Most of the passengers are pupils, as one can see from their rucksacks and school uniforms. The girls are wearing pleated skirts and knee socks as they probably do everywhere.

The gentleman next to me wants to leave the bus. He is preparing for this well ahead in time. He folds the newspaper carefully. He gives it back to me gratefully. Then he stands up, signals to the assistant that he wants to get off the bus and chooses the shorter way to the back-door. He loads a travelling bag from the luggage net onto his back. Since he is carrying a plastic bag in the other hand, he has to move free hand through the jostling. He does this skilfully and with great care. Over and over again he says 'lo siento' (I am sorry), 'con permiso' (excuse me) while waiting patiently for the people in front of him move a bit to the side. For me it is much easier: when we reach zone three, the bus is again half empty. Meanwhile, I know exactly where I want to leave the bus.

5.3 CONCLUSION AND LINE OF FLIGHT

The empirical descriptions in this chapter have expressed the conviction that orientation within Guatemalan buses takes place to a remarkably and characteristically large degree in the affective realm of the virtual. The readings of the diary entries in this chapter have expressed the Deleuzian theory of the event in that there is a tacit affect-oriented navigation through ever-changing virtual surfaces. The theoretical introduction to the chapter, however, argued through the juxtaposition of the Deleuzian event with the triangulation of Jessica Benjamin for the insufficiency of such a mode of movement: in the Deleuzian event, the other does not emerge as actual other, as a temporality that, despite affective interaction, exists also outside the virtual world of the virtual and the actual. For example, actual talking to the other as other can become a line of flight from the self-centrism of the virtual. In the following final example, the symbolic realm of language becomes a means that allows encountering the other as other.

09.12. San Pedro-Tajumulco

Sergio is on holiday. He tells me that this is the time when he usually has a break from travelling by bus. He is studying in Xela. Every afternoon around three o'clock and every evening around ten o'clock he is travelling the 45 minute journey with his friends. Since they live outside town, they are taking courses in the afternoon only. He thinks that travelling by bus in darkness is not dangerous. The driver would know his way. He likes travelling by bus with his friends. One is chatting and making nonsense so that time passes by quickly. Generally he is doing a lot with his friends. Every weekend they are off for trips to the seaside, to Xela, sometimes they even have a car. With the family (his parents and his three siblings) he has done a three week round trip through the Petén⁷² by car. He liked it in the Petén. At the moment he is not really sure where he is going. His father is working somewhere far out in the countryside. He forgot an important floppy disc, which Sergio is meant to bring him. The bus trip costs Sergio 10 *Quetzales*, so it must be far away. Sergio is annoyed about this trip. If one is travelling on one's own and does not have conversation one starts thinking and that is usually unpleasant.

72 The Petén is the region in the northern lowlands of Guatemala. It is the main rain forest area of the country.

