

CHAPTER 2

'POCO A POCO'¹: PASSIVE TIME AND THE TRADITIONAL HOME

2.1 INTRODUCTION: PASSIVE TIME AND THE LIVING PRESENT

The material circumstances of traditional subsistence in the present chapter produce an atmosphere that I have called 'passive time'. The notion of passive time builds on the reading of the passive synthesis of time that Deleuze unfolds in *Difference and Repetition*. Building importantly on Bergson's theory of memory, in *Difference and Repetition*², Deleuze introduces time on the three levels of past, present and future through each level's respective synthesis of the other two modes of time. (He asks: 'how does the past synthesise present and future? How does the present synthesise past and future? How does the future synthesise past and present?') For every level, Deleuze distinguishes between an active synthesis and a passive synthesis. The active synthesis works through representation. The passive synthesis works through affection. Deleuze is interested explicitly in the three *passive* syntheses of time. The passive syntheses take place within the realm of lived time. Read with Deleuze's theory of the three passive syntheses of time, passive time allows the present to be lived as a 'living present'³. Bringing then in Walter Benjamin, tradition is so much saturated with passive time, because of natural conditions that suggest living the present in the mode of a living present.

1 English: 'Bit by bit'. *Doña* Toria and *Doña* Maria used this expression constantly. It transmits what this chapter is meant to unfold. It means something like 'come down. Do it slowly. One step after the other.' It is about linear movements, about relaxed movements, and about adjusting one's movements to the temporalities of the given.

2 See Deleuze 1968a, chapter 2.

3 See *ibid*, p. 70.

2.1.1 Passive Time

Bergson's theory of memory describes time in a fascinatingly simple, yet highly consequential formula: time is a continuum from 'time that is' to 'time that passes'.⁴ The present is the time that passes, because the present is about action. The past is the time that is, because in past time, there is no need anymore for action. The time that is coexists with the time that passes in varying degrees of contraction and relaxation. As well, in Deleuze's theory of the passive syntheses of time, the past is not something past, but a passive mode of the present. As such, the past coexists with the present. It is the passive ground of the present.⁵ The more the emphasis is on passing, the more tense, ephemeral and thin time is. The more the emphasis is on passivity, the more time is, in all its weight. In passive time, all time is one. Passive time is absolutely relaxed. It is 'full time'. Passive time passively synthesises the full weight of present, past and future.

"[...] the past, far from being a dimension of time, is the synthesis of all time of which the present and the future are only dimensions. We cannot say that it was. It no longer exists, it does not exist, but it insists, it consists, it is. It insists with the former present, it consists with the new or present present. It is the in-itself of time as the final ground of the passage of time. In this sense it forms a pure, general, a priori element of all time."⁶

The more passive time is, the more it opens up and thereby unfolds a particular dynamic: in passive time, everything follows a logic of attraction. 'It is always Eros, [...], who allows us to penetrate this pure past in itself, [...]'⁷ There is only movement and affect. Every movement is a response to a received intensity, signalled by a sign.⁸ In Bergson's terminology, every action is a reaction.⁹ When the present is lived in a way that every action is a reaction to signs¹⁰, passive time unfolds its particular dynamic in the present. When signs signal intensities, they envelop other signs.¹¹ Envelopment characterizes the passive synthesis of time particular to the past. The more passive time is,

4 See *ibid*, pp. 80-83 and chapter 1 of this book.

5 See *ibid*, p. 80.

6 *Ibid*, p. 82.

7 *Ibid*, p. 85.

8 See *ibid*, p. 222.

9 See chapter 1 of this book.

10 See *ibid*, p. 73.

11 See *ibid*, p. 73. Deleuze distinguishes between natural and artificial signs. Natural signs refer 'to the present in which they signify.' Artificial signs, by contrast, refer to past and future 'as distinct dimensions of the present, dimensions on which the present might in turn depend.' (See *ibid*, p. 77).

the more signs envelop themselves into the present. Envelopment is a passive dynamic. Different intensities attach themselves to a given intensity, rather than being actively chosen to do so.¹² As well, envelopment is a non-directed dynamic: Intensities can be equally enveloped from all of the past, from all of the present and from all of the future. The dynamic of envelopment is unpredictable. It can only be reconstructed afterwards. Finally, envelopment is a plural and heterogeneous dynamic: there are always various intensities that get enveloped by a given intensity.

A belief in destiny expresses the presence of passive time in the present. It expresses a belief in chance connections of envelopment. In destiny, the present is seen as the chance outcome of something much more profound than the given. The present is seen as the effect of dynamics of repercussion and attraction within the passive ground of time. All of the past is organised on planes of varying degrees of contraction-relaxation. The more passive time is, the more the present will be experienced as the open-ended and chance dynamic of envelopment. Destiny...

"[...] implies between successive presents non-localisable connections, actions at a distance, systems of replay, resonance and echoes, objective chances, signs, signals and roles which transcend spatial locations and temporal successions. [...] The succession of present presents is only the manifestation of something more profound – namely, the manner in which each continues the whole life, but at different levels or degree to the preceding, since all levels and degrees coexist and present themselves for our choice on the basis of a past which was never present."¹³

2.1.2 The Living Present

The living present is the passive synthesis of time characteristic of the present. Deleuze characterizes the present as a succession of instants motivated by need.¹⁴ The living present consists in the repetition of these instants in a passive mode of time. In passive time, every present instant produces an echo in past and future of an n^{th} dimension. The strength of this echo depends on the duration allowed for the contraction of past time into the present. The repetition of a present moment within passive time makes out of a given present a living present. The longer the interval is in-between two instants in which the echo of these instants unfolds, the more the given present can become, through the communication of signs in passive time, a living present.

12 See *ibid*, p. 237.

13 *Ibid*, p. 83.

14 See *ibid*, p. 77.

"The present extends between two eruptions of need, and coincides with the duration of a contemplation."¹⁵

"It is not that the present is a dimension of time: the present alone exists. Rather, synthesis constitutes time as a 'living present', and the past and the future as dimensions of this present. This synthesis is none the less intra-temporal, which means that this present passes."¹⁶

Habit, with Deleuze, is grounded in the living present. On the actual level, habit is the repetition of the ever-same sequence of actions in the present. Through the echo in passive time, habit becomes an expression of a living present. As expression of a living present, the repetition of the ever-same sequence of actions in the actual present structures time far beyond the actual present. The memory of the repetition of an ever-same present movement in the past produces an anticipation of the return of the repetition of this ever-same movement in the future. The anticipation attaches itself as expectancy to the present movement.

"Passive synthesis [...] constitutes our habit of living, our expectation that 'it' will continue, that one of the elements will appear after the other, thereby assuring the perpetuation of our case. When we say that habit is a contraction we are speaking not of an instantaneous action which combines with another to form an element of repetition, but rather of the fusion of that repetition in the contemplating mind. A soul must be attributed to the heart, to the muscles, nerves and cells, but a contemplative soul whose entire function is to contract a habit."¹⁷

"In every way, material or bare repetition, so-called repetition of the same, is like a skin which unravels, the external husk of a kernel of difference and more complicated internal repetitions."¹⁸

Expectancy forms a 'living rule' for the future.¹⁹ If there is expectancy, the time of the future is structured. This is not a static grid, but a living structure. The living structuring of the future through expectancy is grounded in passive time. Deleuze, in the end, strives with everything he says towards the over-turning of any kind of structuring of time in the living of the present. Deleuze is interested most of all in what comes after the passive synthesis of the past and the passive syn-

15 Ibid.

16 *ibid.*, p. 76.

17 *ibid.*, p. 74.

18 *ibid.*, p. 76.

19 See *ibid.*, p. 71.

thesis of the present. The passive synthesis of the future starts off with an explosive moment that sets free an open-ended movement in which time goes completely out of joint.²⁰ Passive time (the passive synthesis of the past) and the repetition of the present through passive time as a living present (the passive synthesis of the present) are pre-conditions for time to go out of joint (the passive synthesis of the future). Chapter four of this book will deal especially with the passive synthesis of the future. This chapter, however, will focus on the passive structuring of time by expectancy. It will do so through the work of Walter Benjamin. In Walter Benjamin's work on tradition, there is an emphasis on expectancy as the precondition for passive communication (communication within passive time) to emerge.

2.1.3 Tradition

Through the concept of experience, Walter Benjamin's work is compatible with Deleuze's notion of the 'living present'. Walter Benjamin distinguishes between the experience (*Erfahrung*) and the event (*Erlebnis*) of the given.²¹ An experience emerges where a moment has been lived as a living present. In the event, by contrast, the actual present remains simple, as it is given. Experience unfolds within passive time. Experience takes place where things stay. The individual past is deeply interwoven with the collective past. The event, by contrast, lasts for hardly more than an hour.

Traditional subsistence is the realm where experience is at home. Experience takes place below the level of consciousness.²² Walter Benjamin distinguishes, as does Deleuze in his reading of Bergson, between consciousness as the realm of action and the unconscious as the realm of the passive unfolding of the dynamic among signs that signal intensities. Passive time as the realm of signs that signal and envelop intensities, in Walter Benjamin is brought back to the actual conditions among which people subsist. In traditional subsistence, as Walter Benjamin reads it, time unfolds non-mediated and non-abbreviated in all its weight. Through the figure of the storyteller, Walter Benjamin gives a nuanced account of the production of passive time in tradition. In Walter Benjamin, the story comes to stand for many things: it is a mode of communication, a mode of living, and a mode of work characteristic for the premodern time of tradition. Expectancy, the figure of the storyteller read through Walter Benjamin reveals, in times of traditional subsistence goes back to an eternal interwoven-ness of the local people with the local natural and cultural en-

20 See *ibid.*, pp. 88-9.

21 See Walter Benjamin 1968: *Illuminations*, p. 159.

22 See *ibid.*

vironment. However, expectancy in the figure of the storyteller read through Walter Benjamin also has concretely to do with the way people relate to their work in traditional subsistence. Work is grounded in passive time. To extract the concept of the living present from the way people in traditional subsistence relate to their work, allows the emancipation of a concept of expectancy from the natural time-space of traditional subsistence.

The story, according to Walter Benjamin, always contains, overtly or covertly, something useful. 'The usefulness may, in one case, consist in a moral; in another, in some practical advice; in a third, in a proverb or maxim. In every case, the storyteller is a man who has counsel for his readers.'²³ In traditional subsistence, one can infer from this, there is no time reserved for life, such as weekends, leisure, hobbies or holidays. Time is completely structured by the instants of need that fulfil the tasks of subsistence. Nevertheless, there is much life in traditional subsistence. The repetitive nature of the actual instants of need that fulfil the task of subsistence, suggests a move away from active time into passive time. 'The more self-forgetful the listener is, the more deeply is what he listens to impressed upon his memory. When the rhythm of work has seized him, he listens to the tales in such a way that the gift of retelling them comes to him all by itself.'²⁴ Slowness, sturdiness and quietness are actual conditions under which passive repetition can unfold best. When the actual present proceeds slowly, one step after the other, in-between the instants of need that fulfil the task of subsistence, there can unfold a passive echo of the present. Not acting as quickly as possible, not doing various things at the same time, not always watching out for intellectual conversation, just letting time pass-by, passively, in all its weight.

Then, Walter Benjamin goes on, there emerges '[...] that slow piling one on top of the other of thin, transparent layers which constitutes the most appropriate picture of the way in which the perfect narrative is revealed through the layers of a variety of retellings.'²⁵ Passive time, one can infer from this, has so much presence in traditional subsistence, because the structuring of the present is in the end second to the living of the present. Traditional subsistence works with nature in a very raw and unmediated state. Nature sets an example for an orientation by passive time in the living of the present. Naturally, procedures take all the time they need to unfold their perfection. There are hardly any means for abbreviation. The way people do their work and interact with each other in W. Benjamin's reading of tradition, reflect this passive structuring of time. Things are ready when they are ready.

23 See *ibid*, p. 86.

24 See *ibid*, p. 91.

25 See *ibid*, p. 92.

Further, in a passive structuring of work, the actual distinctions between object and subject fade away. ‘Traces of the storyteller cling to the story the way the handprints of the potter cling to the clay vessel.’²⁶ The time of the worker and the time of the work project, one can infer from this, are inseparably interwoven. The worker gives himself to the work task and in response, the finished work project expresses the time of the worker. It is about devotion – giving one’s time into an encounter, rather than getting something out of it. The degree of absolute devotion in traditional work refers also to the body of the worker: The work expresses the soul of the worker, and it is done with full bodily involvement. ‘After all, storytelling, in its sensory aspect, is by no means a job for the voice alone. Rather, in genuine storytelling the hand plays a part which supports what is expressed in a hundred ways with its gestures trained by work.’²⁷

The storyteller, Walter Benjamin concludes, has an ‘incomparable aura’.²⁸ ‘Aura’ is Walter Benjamin’s term for a mode of passive communication that emphasizes expectancy. It is an effect of the unbroken interwoven-ness between a material body’s past and the past of the wider collective in which it exists. First, aura is about looking at things in a passive way. Passive here means involuntary: everything that happens is a reaction to a received impulse. Aura starts in the object one looks at.²⁹ The inanimate object seems to look back,³⁰ because through signs, it sets free impulses that signal intensities. Second, aura refers to the object that is looked at. The object communicates correspondences with a local, ‘prehistoric’ past.³¹ Thus, aura communicates sturdiness: the eternal, continuous web between the given object and the local environment. Aura unfolds in the experience of things that stay. In aura, however, the living structure of expectancy is just the pre-condition for passive communication to unfold in an open and unpredictable way. The expectancy of the ever-same provides a temporal frame in which, on the level of signs, the ever-new of living communication can take place. In aura, Walter Benjamin seems to suggest, the other looks back from a distance, as other.³²

“What is aura, actually? A strange weave of space and time: the unique appearance or semblance of distance, no matter how close the object may be. While resting on a summer’s noon, to trace a range of mountains on the horizon, or a branch that throws its shadow on the observer, until the mo-

26 See *ibid*, p. 91.

27 See *ibid*, p. 107.

28 See *ibid*.

29 See *ibid*, p. 182.

30 See *ibid*, p. 184.

31 See *ibid*, pp. 177-8.

32 See *ibid*, p. 184.

ment or the hour become part of their appearance – that is what it means to breathe the aura of those mountains, that branch.”³³

While in the daily tasks of traditional subsistence, the passive communication of aura gets produced naturally as a kind of by-product, in the religious ritual, the production of aura is the whole reason for an action to take place. First, the religious ritual is about an actual repetition of the ever-same sequence of movements in a way traditional subsistence provided naturally, so that on the plane of passive time, time gets perceived as structured through expectancy. Second, the original place of art was in ritual, where it was meant to express authenticity. Authenticity as well produces expectancy, the passive perception of an unbroken web of space and time that traditional subsistence naturally provided by itself. Expectancy in the religious ritual is produced as a condition for passive communication between the Bible and the believers to emerge.

“Originally the contextual integration of art in tradition found its expression in the cult. We know that the earliest art works originated in the service of a ritual – first the magical, then the religious kind. It is significant that the existence of the work of art with reference to its aura is never entirely separated from its ritual function. In other words, the unique value of the ‘authentic’ work of art has its basis in ritual, the location of its original use value.”³⁴

2.2 EMPIRICAL EXPLORATIONS

The empirical explorations of this chapter set out to show how much passive time there is in traditional forms of life. There is a tacit general impression of time standing still, unfolding in all its intensive weight and impact. This atmosphere of passive time will be first traced back to material conditions through the example of the preparation and maintenance of wood-fire. The second section will be on the temporalities of water. It explicitly focuses on slowness as a condition for a passive structuring of time. The third section will be on the temporalities of sweetcorn. It is about a form of structuring time that is grounded in an awareness of what there is, empirically. The fourth section will address the temporalities of Saints. Here, passive communication is found in the sensitive reception of Catholic rituals. While in everyday life in Guatemala, passivity is usually perceived in terms of a lack of action and a lack of comfort, Catholic rituals seem to fulfil their function only if through them a leap into passive time is induced.

33 Walter Benjamin 1979: *One-Way Street*, p. 250.

34 W. Benjamin 1968, p. 217.

Is the reading of passive time in tradition through Walter Benjamin ‘realistic’? It does not express the primary concerns of the people I lived with in Guatemala, as the last section of the chapter under the title ‘line of flight’ will show. According to my perception, in the traditional home there was so much passive time that local people did not particularly appreciate the fascinating sides of it. Walter Benjamin’s reading expresses the gaze of someone who looks at traditional subsistence from afar. Walter Benjamin, from his background of experience in a society where the material conditions that led to a natural production of passive time were gone for good, could wonder about things that for those who live passive time in abundance on an everyday basis, leave little to wonder about. In this, Walter Benjamin’s reading of tradition corresponds with Bergson’s reading of duration. In their concern with living the present impelled by life, both Walter Benjamin and Bergson help to extract from traditional subsistence those conditions that make passive time unfold. Vitalism will be explored in this chapter as a form of life that makes out of the present a living present. The living present is grounded in sensation. Sensation unfolds through passivity. With Walter Benjamin and Bergson, sensation goes beyond rationality.

2.2.1 Temporalities of Fire

In passive time, all time is one. There are only impulses and intensive movements. The present is grounded in passive time the more its actions are reactions to received impulses. In subsistence, temporalities of nature produce an atmosphere of passive time. There is no abbreviation and no mediation in the name of action. Processes take all the time necessary to achieve their perfection. With bare eyes, often no transformation at all is perceptible. Time seems to stand still. The more relaxed time is, the more signs can unfold passively their intensive communication. Passive time is time in its full intensive weight. People seem to endure the temporalities of nature passively. Their actions seem to be reactions to received intensive impulses.

2.2.1.1 Chopping Firewood

Firewood produces an atmosphere of time passively unfolding in all its weight, full time. This atmosphere gets produced through signs that signal the co-existence of the non-abbreviated and non-mediated temporalities of nature and the non-abbreviated and non-mediated temporalities of people

Firewood comes twice a week in bundles from the coast³⁵. It is piled up along the wall in the *patio*³⁶. Its warm colour, its resinous smell and its solid texture, act as signs that produce an atmosphere of full time. Everything has inscribed in itself a natural temporality that consists in all the time necessary to accomplish its perfection. In nature, there is no abbreviation and no mediation in the name of action. Before using it, the wood has to be chopped into smaller bits. In front of the piled up *leña*³⁷ (firewood), there is a trunk and an axe for chopping the wood. One slice of wood is placed on the tree trunk, half on it and half in the air beyond. The axe is taken in both hands. In a movement that involves the whole upper part of the body, it is thrown onto the wood. Two or three of such movements are necessary to chop the wood into small enough bits. The chopping of the wood also produces an atmosphere of passive time. It is a movement that requires full physical and spiritual engagement of a chopper. It is a heavy movement that requires considerable force. The movement involves risk, potentially the risk of life: an unskilled positioning of the wood might produce a kind of leverage. It might make the throwing down of the axe throw up the wood and injure the head of the person who meant to chop the wood.

There is both mediation and abbreviation: *Doña Maria* does not go, as people do in villages in the countryside, herself into the forest to fetch the wood. The wood is even brought from the coastal area, rather than from the humid forests around Xela, because this wood is drier and thus starts to burn quicker. Finally, there are the axe and the trunk for chopping. However, the wood's temporality is still passive enough to determine a considerable part of *Doña Maria* and *Don Arsenio*'s daily activities. It contributes to the full time presence of these people at home. It contributes to the feeling of these people just being there in the home whenever one might look for them, full time. The movement of chopping wood contributes to the feeling of home and these people just belonging unquestioned together. It binds the two to the home: one of the two is doing this job every morning, and sometimes during the day as well. *Doña Maria*'s creased hands seem to give testimony of her wood chopping activities day in day out throughout her long life. The powerful, concrete, concentrated, but

35 Quetzaltenango, 2300 metres above sea level, is located within the cold climate zone. 'Coast' is everything that belongs to the hot climate zone, from about 1500 metres height downwards. The border between the cold climate zone and the hot climate zone is reached by car from Xela in about one hour. To reach the water front, takes from there about two hours more.

36 English: An open-air, inner court yard. Traditionally, houses in Guatemala are built around such a court yard. It is the open-air centre of the house. Modern houses, by contrast, are constructed as a closed entity.

37 Read: [lenjʌ]

warm and natural sound of the axe when it comes down into the wood acts as a passive sound. It expresses the described assemblage of full times involved in chopping firewood. It is vibrating through the whole living space every morning and afternoon.

2.2.1.2 Tending the Fire

Tending the fire is a passive movement. It is based in the passive endurance of what there is. On an actual level, nothing is going on. Within passive time, by contrast, there are movements of intensification that at some stage actualise themselves. Movements within passive time are open-ended. Every movement is set free by an impulse that triggers unpredictable effects within an unpredictable time-span.

In the kitchen, there is a stone-built, knee-high enhancement that takes up about three-quarter of one side of the room. It is used for work, for storage and for cooking. On one side of it, in the corner of the room, an iron grating is positioned on the enhancement. The grating allows for the pots of water to be heated. The roof above the grating is slightly open, in order for the smoke to leave. This is the fireplace. About four pieces of *leña* are positioned under the grating. The wood is set on fire. The wood is just there. The centre of concentration for the subsequent time is whether and how the wood will accept the fire. This is a passive movement, based in endurance of what there is. It takes so much time for the wood to react to the fire that it is hardly possible to make out any movement at all with bare eyes. On a visible level of the linear time of action, nothing is going on. Time seems to stand still. On an invisible level of full time, heat intensifies. At some point the *leña* accepts the fire and burns by itself.

When a wood has burned down or is fallen into ashes, the whole wooden arrangement changes its position. Therefore, keeping the fire going requires relating to the temporalities of the fire over time. One looks into the fireplace, into the dancing of the flames or the smouldering of the embers. Sometimes, the wood has to be repositioned so that there remains enough air and space for the fire to be fed, and enough fresh wood for the fire to ‘eat’. *Doña Toria* and *Doña Maria* spend their day nearly full time in the kitchen. This is mostly due to the fire. I thought for a long time when I came into the kitchen that the two were just sitting there. I thought they were letting time pass by. They do not talk much. Usually, the ‘*Estereo Cien*’³⁸-radio program is running with low sound in the background. The two are looking into

38 A local radio station. ‘*Cien*’ means 100, the position on the tuning scale.

the embers. But I was wrong. They are tending the fire. They passively endure the temporality of the fire.

Every movement in this activity is open-ended. Every movement is an impulse that triggers unpredictable effects after an unpredictable time-span. Impulses are reactions to received impulses. What kind of impulses will combine to trigger the next action or which direction a reaction to an impulse will take, is unpredictable. One gives an impulse through re-arranging the wood or through blowing wind through a fan into the fire, and then one has to wait to see how the fire will respond. Was it a repressing impulse, or was it a pushing, awakening impulse? The result is only too temporary, falling into ashes in the next moment or so already. Tending the fire is a passive movement. It is based in enduring and taking up what there is. Everything that happens is related to something else that has happened before. Everything is communication. Everything is emergence of something new. In passive time, every action is reaction to a received movement.

The required amount of big-sized cans and pots, filled with water from the *pila*³⁹, stays on the grating over the fire. The water passively endures the heat produced by the fire. Nothing visible seems to happen until after maybe an hour, it starts bubbling. This long time-span, however, is the condition not only for the movement of intensification of heat that terminates in the visible effect of bubbling. It also acts as a condition for a movement of intensification of excitement that ends in a visible movement of lifting the lid of the pot and the exclamation ‘¡Qué alegre!’ (How joyful!) in reaction to the sight of the bubbling water. More than once when I am sitting in the kitchen with *Doña* Maria and *Doña* Toria, *Doña* Toria lifts the lid of the metal milk jug that is used in the afternoons for heating water. She calls me to come closer to watch the bubbles from the almost boiling water. The bubbling of the water and the steam that is evaporating from the jug when the boiling water is refilled into another pot are moments of joy. The passively endured time acts on the present in manifold, invisible ways.

The passive endurance of the temporalities of the wood is related to money. Some kind of kindling has to bridge the time between setting fire to the wood and the big chunk of wood burning by itself. Old newspaper or plastic trash is used for this, anything. For three *Quetzales*, a small bundle of *ocote* can be bought on the open market. *Ocote* is a local red wood. It is sold as pieces of kindling. It catches fire particularly easily and it burns for a particularly long time. If available, two *ocote* are lit and placed in-between the *leña*. *Ocote* shortens the interval between setting fire on the *leña* and the big chunk of wood burning out of itself. If money for *ocote* is available, the time of the

39 The *pila* is a particular type of stone washbasin that people in Guatemala have in their *patio*. See below, section on ‘temporalities of water’.

leña to accept the fire can be actively abbreviated. Then, the dynamic is impelled by a movement that does not come from the wood, but from somewhere else. An interest in accomplishing the activity as soon as possible, emerging as a temporality of the guarding person, can develop the power to impact the time of the wood. Money can mediate the dynamic produced by guarding the fire in a way that increases the activity of the temporality of the guarding person in relation to the temporality of the fire. The less money there is, the more the full time of the heating-up of the wood gets endured passively. The more passivity there is in relation to the fire, the more impact the temporality of the fire has full time on the dynamic in the home.

The passive endurance of the temporalities of the wood is also related to tradition, to repeating things the way they have always been done. The assemblage of wood and fire produces smoke. Smoke develops its own temporality as well. The temporality of smoke contributes to the atmosphere of full time. There is no mediation: the smoke vapours into the kitchen and enters into assemblage with eyes, noses, skins and walls. The walls of the kitchen are black from the smoke. There is no abbreviation: *Doña* María always complains about her hurting eyes. Her eyes give testimony to a life-long endurance of smoke produced by wood-fire. Probably, on a level not yet sensible, her entire body has endured serious damage from interacting with the smoke of the fire throughout her long life. However, the damage by the smoke has been endured passively. There had been impulses to react, to dis-empower the smoke's impact on the dynamic in the kitchen: often nowadays, people in Guatemala do not have the fire on top of a stone enhancement, but in a stone depression. The depression is covered with an iron tile and thereby forms a fire-hole. This is the local successor of the way, *Doña* Toria and *Doña* Maria cook. The smoke then is led out through a pipe that leads from the back of the fire-hole along the wall directly out of the roof. *Don* Arsenio had offered to build such a chimney. However, in the end this has never happened. *Doña* Toria rejected the offer. The cooking of *nixtamal*⁴⁰ and the cooking of *paches*⁴¹ requires more heat than a fire that is mediated

40 Read: [ni:ʃtʌmʌl]. *Nixtamal* is the soaked, swollen sweetcorn that is brought to a local mill for grinding the dough from which *tortilla* (sweetcorn dough cakes, read: [torti:jʌ]) and *tamales* (sweetcorn dumplings) are made. See below in this chapter the section 'temporalities of sweetcorn'.

41 See photo 1 in appendix. Read: [pʌtʃes]. *Patches* structure special events in indigenous Guatemala. They are eaten at special family reunions such as birthdays or marriages, at religious activities such as novenas (nine days of mourning when someone has died, see below in this chapter section 'temporalities of Saints'), or even in the interval at public concerts. *Patches* have their peak-time between Christmas and

through an iron tile would have been able to produce. There would have been possibilities to circumvent this problem. *Nixtamal* and *patches* could have been cooked on a *temascal*, an iron three-leg that elevates the pot high enough from the ground to build-up a wood fire below it. This is the predecessor of the way, *Doña Toria* and *Doña Maria* cook. Only, with a *temascal* the open fire is on the earthen ground in the patio, not on an enhancement in the kitchen. Somehow this possibility had never achieved decisive impact on the dynamic around the smoke in the kitchen. The power of doing things the way one is used to doing them seems to have been stronger.

2.2.2 Temporalities of Water

In the traditional home, water acts as a sign of passive time. It stays. It takes its time in all relaxation. Passive temporalities of nature make people who build their subsistence on them, move a lot. The movements, however, repeat the passive velocity of the water – they are slow. Slowness is passive in that it is a relaxed form of movement. A slow passing of the present opens up the present towards a wide response from passive time.

2.2.2.1 The Pila

Passive time acts through intensities. Through slowness, intensities passively unfold their power within the actual present.

The *pila* consists of three parts. In the middle there is an open water depot and to the left and right of this there are wide, riffled washbasins. A tap leads into the water-depot. It is the main water connection in the house. When the water base is filled, maybe 20 litres are contained there. The water stays in the open water depot. In the water depot there are small-size plastic pots. With them, water gets poured in manifold, repetitive movements over the singular cloth or dish that is to be washed. The sound of water when it is falling out of the little plastic pots expresses relaxation. From being temporarily contracted,

New Year. During this period, people eat them up to three times a day. There is a custom to cook patches not only for oneself, but also as presents for friends, neighbours, acquaintances and relatives. *Patches* consist of either a rice-dough or a potato-dough. The dough is formed into square and flat packets. In the middle is a piece of meat, a piece of vegetable and a spicy sauce. The packet is wrapped in big, green leaves from a plant that is called machate. The leaves are meant to give additional flavour. Besides, wrapped in the leaves, the packets really look like gift items. (On gift-giving see below in this chapter the section on water-gifts.) The wrapped packets are cooked in water over the open fire. See photo in appendix. *Patches* are eaten with white bread.

the water falls back into a mode of full time. The interval from this sound to the sound of splashing water that emerges when the little plastic pot is scooping new water out of the reservoir of standing water, seems to correspond to the velocity of falling water. The passivity of the water seems to impulse the slow velocity of washing. Several times during the day, the reservoir of standing water in the *pila* has to be filled again. In an encounter with *Doña* Toria and *Doña* Maria, the *pila* would rather be characterized through this sound of water rushing out of the tap. They would take this sound as an expression of comfort, of mobilising the natural passivity of water. I had once taken a photo that showed washing soaking in the patio. The colourful plastic water buckets for me expressed passivity. Water was standing around in its natural state of full time. The two women, by contrast, said they saw only the tap above the buckets when they were looking at the photo. They said they thought that I had taken a photo of the tap above the buckets. They started to tell me about the decrease of passivity that the tap had brought to their life. Their narration expressed the far bigger impact of the temporalities of water on the slowness of the passing of people's present in the past.

Nowadays, the *pila* is in the patio. People have to walk about ten metres every time that there is a need for water in the kitchen. Before the *pila* came to the house, about thirty years ago, however, *Doña* Toria and *Doña* Maria had to go to public taps for every bit of water. One was behind the '*Mercado de las Flores*'⁴² about 150 meters away. Another one was at the park '*El Calvario*'⁴³, about 800 meters away. Sometimes there was no water at one tap, so one had to go to the next one. There was a *tanque*, a public place for washing clothes, about 700 meters away. But people were occupying free washbasins for friends or acquaintances, so there was a good chance that one had to walk all the way to a river outside the town. Later the *tanque* was privatised and one had to pay 40 *Quetzales*⁴⁴ per month to get access to the washbasins. Going the long way to the river then became a matter of saving money. After washing, one had to carry the troughs with the wet washing or the pots filled with water, home on the head. The water pots were made from clay. Nowadays they are plastic. Sometimes one had brought successfully a full clay water pot home, took it down from one's head and then, through putting it too hard on the floor, the

42 See below exposée to chapter 3 for further introduction.

43 A green space in-between streets in front of the cemetery. There are trees, some benches, a basketball field, some plants and a paved path.

44 1 *Quetzal* are 100 *Centavos* in Guatemala; 8 *Quetzales* are 1 Euro; 12 *Quetzales* are 1 Pound Sterling. '*Quetzal*' is the name of a bird with very colourful plumage that used to be at home in the Guatemalan forests and that Guatemalan authorities declared to be one of their national symbols.

clay smashed into bits and the water spread all over the floor. With the *pila*, every movement of scooping is impelled by the weight of the water. However, before the *pila* came to the house, this intensity had much more impact on the movements of people around the subsistence on water. There were more movements, but they were kept slow. The weight of the water imposed slowness onto them. Nowadays nearly everyone has a *pila* and water connection at home. People made an effort to get it.

2.2.2.2 Cleaning Clothes

Traditional subsistence produces an atmosphere of passive time, because it is grounded in the slow and intense temporalities of nature.

The heaps of clothes get separated by colour. Everything is distributed into several of *Doña Toria*'s colourful plastic-buckets. Some washing powder is spilled onto the washing. Then the clothes get covered with water until it is approximately a hand-width above the clothes. Some drops of chlorine are poured into the white cloth buckets to dissolve the stains from the clothes. Thereafter, from time to time, the washing gets stirred with a wooden stick. The human has to wait for the soapy water slowly soaking the dirty clothes, lightening the grip of the assemblage of dirt and cloth. This takes from an hour up to one night or even longer, depending on the degree of dirt in the clothes. During this interval of soaking, not just loads of water, but also the used clothes enter full time into the human present through standing around in the corner of the *patio* in large numbers of colourful plastic buckets. The bright colours of the plastic neutralise in part the impression of darkness produced by the used clothes. The buckets signal relaxation.

One piece of cloth is taken out of the water and into the right washbasin of the *pila*. After fishing with one hand for one of the small plastic pots that are around, either in the water basin or at one of the side-areas, clear and cold water gets scooped out of the water depot and poured onto the outstretched cloth. The movement of scooping lets one feel concretely how much water is needed for washing clothes. The act of scooping also transmits the weight of the water in the pot, the coolness while dropping into the water basin to get new water into the pot, and the movement of pouring when the water is dropped down onto the cloth. Meanwhile the one hand is scooping, the other hand kneads the wet cloth to get the soap out. Then new washing powder gets spread onto the piece of cloth. A bit of fresh water gets sprinkled over the cloth. Then the hands rub the cloth with the support of the full weight of the upper part of the body in repetitive back and forth movements over the riffled stone to erase stains and bad smell. Again, the duration of the lightening of the stains in the

cloth determines the duration of the rubbing. If the objective is just fresh smell, about eight rubbing back and forth movements will do. Then about four loads of fresh water come down with the plastic pot out of the *pila*. They rush over the now stretched out cloth to get the soap out. The coming down of the water in many repetitive movements produces the powerful, heavy, refreshing sound of falling water. Usually then the cloth will smell fresh and the stains have at least lightened up. If not, the soaping-rubbing-rinsing-sequence can be repeated once more. Rinsing implies a lot of movement. However, the movement is relaxed. It receives impulses not only from the full time of water, but also from the silence and the continuity of the warmth and brightness of the sunlight in the *patio*.

Now the water gets wrought with both hands and all physical strength available out of the cloth. The cloth is hung onto the clothes-line. There are six clothes-lines in the *patio*. The entire *patio* is lined. Because the *patio* is the centre of the house and the doors are usually open, the washing on the line can be seen from all the rooms. For example a white blanket reflects the sun and transmits a sensation of brightness and transparency. It also transmits the wind breezes, producing an atmosphere of slowness and calmness through the encounter of people's temporalities with the often slower temporalities of nature. The blanket goes into assemblage with the fig tree in the *patio*, whose leaves are also moved slowly by occasional breezes. Their green shines brilliantly when touched by rays of sun. As well the temporalities of the pets, the two dogs, the cat, the duck and the squirrel, contribute to the atmosphere of full time through their respective forms of hanging around in the *patio*, letting time pass by. If the act of washing has taken place at about nine o'clock in the morning, and the sun shines as it usually does, until about three o'clock in the rainy season or five o'clock in the dry season, the clothes will be dry in a day or two.

Doña Toria washes something nearly every morning. The extensive impact of the temporalities of water on her time make her try to avoid the accumulation of washing. This is the main reason why she does not want to go out for work. While the description given here emphasises the relation of slowness to passive time, in the considerations of the people involved in subsistence the relation of slowness to active time, to the amount of time spent or saved, has more priority.

2.2.2.3 Washing the Body

The passivity of water makes people who use the water, move a lot. The movements of the people are slow, repeating the passivity of the water.

Washing the body is an activity that happens for most people only once a week because it is so time demanding. First, for taking a shower the water is heated up before use. This takes about an hour.⁴⁵ Xela is situated that high in the mountains that the temperatures demand this in order to avoid a cold. Second, for *Doña Toria* and *Doña Maria* who both do not cut their hair, there is another hour or so after the actual washing that is part of the process of taking a shower: when the hair dries, it is wrapped in huge towels. This ties the two women to a chair. During both times, the passing of the womens' present is impelled by the full time of water. The fear that they might catch a cold and the joy of the washed body extend themselves into the temporal dynamic within the kitchen. One condition for this is that on an actual level, there is not much going on in these times, just time passing by.

As well during the washing itself, the water takes its time. People improvise with plastic pots and all kind of other jugs and jars available to solve the problem of carrying the large amounts of water that are needed for the process of washing. This solution leaves the weight and the volume of the large amount of the water used for washing in its full time and it makes people carry and walk a lot. The velocity of the movements is kept low through the weight and volume of the water. For bathing, the metal milk jug, a water jug and a large cooking pot are used. Apart from this, there is a big and sturdy stone jug. The jug is always positioned right next to the fire, so that it is heating up water without taking away space on the grating. The small pots are brought to the *pila* and filled with fresh water. Then they are tapped with a lid and put onto the open fireplace. The big stone jug is filled with water from a plastic bucket. When the water has heated up considerably, an extra big plastic trough is brought in from the *patio*. It is positioned next to the fireside on the floor and filled in the same repetitive pouring-movements as produced from the plastic pots at the *pila*, with the hot and steamy water. The filled trough is rolled to the toilet hut in the *patio*. The bucket with the used toilet paper is taken out into the *patio*. The toilet hut now becomes the shower place. A towel, soap and one of the small plastic pots are positioned on the lid of the toilet. Clothes are taken off and hung over the toilet hut door. Then the same process begins as with washing clothes or washing dishes. The little plastic pot pours water from the water basin over one's body (soaking). Then

45 See above section on 'temporalities of fire'.

body and hair are soaped. In many water pouring movements the soap gets cleared off with the little plastic bucket (rinsing). After drying oneself with the towel and getting dressed, the water trough is rolled out into the *patio*. A brush clears off the soapy water from the paved floor, the bucket with the used toilet paper is brought back to its former location and the shower place transforms again into a toilet.

The amount of time that it takes to pour the water over the body is for all those in the house who wash themselves once a week about three times as long as for me and for Manuel who take a shower every morning. If there is more time left in-between the pouring movements, the need-aspect of washing seems to be relatively lower. Intensities that are passively contracted from the water then receive more time for extension. The feeling of freshness of the water on the body can be enjoyed more fully.

2.2.2.4 The Water-Gifts

Slowness sets free a passive response to the actual given. This effect finds its repetition in a local value in Guatemalan culture: 'con cariño'⁴⁶. In giving one's time passively, giving water can become a way of giving one's time.⁴⁷ In the water-gifts that I receive from Doña Toria, the passive temporality of water acts as a sign that transmit the offer of and the desire for mutual whole-hearted engagement.

To make water from the *pila* drinkable is a process of considerable slowness and considerable duration. The water has to be heated up and then it has to be boiled for about ten minutes in order to kill all the bacteria inside. Otherwise one might catch serious illnesses, because the pipes through which the water runs before it comes out of the tap are fully left over to their natural processes of rusting and dirtying. The way people try to reduce the quantity of time necessary for this is by keeping a number of thermos in the kitchen. People heat water

46 English: 'With heartfelt engagement'.

47 This reading is inspired by Marcel Mauss' (1950) reading of the gift. For Mauss, one can argue in accordance with Mary Douglas in her preface to the English edition of the text (1990), gift-giving is not about utilitarianism. It is not about need or the calculation of what one might get back, but about value. The gift-giver gives something of oneself to the other. This is for Mauss an expression of embeddedness within the natural and social environment that for him was characteristic of archaic societies as opposed to modern industrial societies (see also Durkheim/Mauss 1903). The idea in my example of the water gifts was that the more time the production of the gift entails, the more the giver grounds herself into the gift and the more she gives of herself. Giving oneself, however, produces debt – the necessity to receive and to return the gift.

once and then guard it in a thermos flask, so that there is hot water throughout the day. *Doña* Toria and *Doña* Maria have constantly two in use, one thermos for hot water and another plastic jar for boiled water that is cooled down again, so that it is cold, but can be drunk. However, the process of storing portable water by way of thermos involves its own dimensions of slowness.

In the afternoon, when lunch is through, *Doña* Toria and *Doña* Maria heat up the water for the water bottles. A while after I came to join the house, they have given me as well one of the big thermos that they have in their storage room. The storage room is crammed full of plastic pots in all possible sizes and forms. A while later, *Doña* Toria gave me a pink plastic can which she had bought new. This can was for boiled water that had cooled down. Giving it to me seemed to be impelled by the observation that I like to drink pure cold water. The two women cannot understand this habit. They live in such a close contact with the full time of water in its pure state that drinking it becomes joyful only through putting large amounts of sugar or artificial flavour into it. However, *Doña* Toria relates herself to my desire for portable water in a way that seems to envelop her own desire to be on good terms with me, and the ways she knows to express this. She starts to fill my two jars every day. She comes to my door in the afternoon and asks for '*el termo y el patchon*'. Then, later, when it is dark already, she comes again and I hear her voice from outside: '*Julia, su termo*'⁴⁸.

At stake seems to be much more than the functional provision with portable water. I feel confronted with a basic value of Guatemalan culture: '*Con cariño*'. This expression means that someone gives one's time without limits in what one does. No mediation and no abbreviation, all intensity and all extensity of one's time are given. Giving one's time seems to become a way to signal an interest in friendship, in including me in *Doña* Toria's present and in becoming herself part of my present. The way this happens is so much about full time. It is so much more about the never-ending repetition of receiving and giving intensity than about words. It takes the two women an hour or longer at the wooden fire to boil this water while for me on the gas-stove in our room it would take maybe ten minutes. Though I feel so much good intention from her, and though I feel so much intensity for this woman myself, I do not really feel comfortable with receiving these constant gifts. I like to be independent in everyday activities from Manuel's parents. I do not want to feel pressured to give this much intensity constantly back. However, though we have found compromises in many other respects, this is not something that can be

48 English: 'Julia, your thermos flask.'

changed. When I try to put an end to it, the gifts come with more pervasiveness, producing a bit of a tension.

2.2.3 Temporalities of Sweetcorn⁴⁹

Sweetcorn is the main staple in Guatemala. It is consumed in all possible forms. First of all, it is baked into tortilla (sweetcorn dough cakes) and tamales (sweetcorn dumplings) which make every meal go further. If there are tortilla, people need much less vegetables or meat or whatever else is available in order to keep going for a day. Tortilla fill the stomach for a long time. The most basic staple in Guatemala is tortilla with some salt. Apart from this, sweetcorn is consumed as drinks, as food on special occasions, as cakes and as vegetable. Doña Toria once commented: 'We never get tired of sweetcorn. Although we eat so much of it, that would never happen.' In one of the interviews with local teachers at the Spanish school, Vivian said something similar when she told me something obvious in Guatemala: 'A meal without tortilla would not be a proper meal.'

The seemingly eternal and unbroken web of time between people and sweetcorn makes time appear to stand still with regard to the past. Traditional subsistence consists in habit as the repetition of ever-same movements day in day out. Deleuze is interested in habit in terms of expectancy⁵⁰. Expectancy is a passive structuring of time. The actual repetition of the ever-same contraction sets free a sensual and psychological contraction that structures time passively.⁵¹ Expectancy makes one passively repeat the ever-same movement from the present through an echo in the past into an indefinite future. Things are done the way they have always been done and the way they will always be done.

In the following examples from traditional subsistence, work is structured by expectancy. There is always something to do. Time is structured. It has a direction. However, this structure is a living structure, not an imposed grid. It is grounded in the expectancy of what one will do next, and then, and then, and then. Structure goes together with a living present. This is an actual present to which life passively responds.

49 See photos 2-4 in appendix.

50 See above, pp. 58-61.

51 See Deleuze 1968a, p. 74.

2.2.3.1 Peeling Corn

When work is structured by expectancy, there is one clearly circumscribed movement after the other, until the project has achieved completion. The actual time of work is open. The structuring of time is orientated by the passive engagement with the given

Every second afternoon, a *nixtamal* has to be prepared. *Nixtamal* is the local name for cooked, swollen sweetcorn. It is brought for grinding to a mill and then processed into *tamales* or *tortilla*. If one cultivates one's own sweetcorn, the corn is stored on the dried cob. Before preparing the *nixtamal*, about one and a half hours are spent peeling the dry corn from the cob. *Doña Maria* does this job every second morning. The movements of her fingers are slow. This seems not only conditioned by the 85 years of age of her body, but also by the hardness of the corn. The fingers have to dig somewhere into the dense rows of the slippery, stone-hard grain. They have to find a starting-point for breaking off a grain from the cob. At the beginning this hurts a lot at the finger tips. Once the corn is off at one point, the rest follows more easily and therefore the process becomes quicker. Empirical reality imposes hesitation upon movement, grounding it in full time. Its tempo is determined by the physical contact with a particular materiality.

The range of what gets contracted to impel the passive structuring of time is open-ended. The stool on which *Doña Maria* sits while she is peeling corn is small. The level of distancing from the earthen ground is low. The stool's height makes it appear more like one for children. The temporality implied by the stool offers a solution to the problem of sitting that gives relatively little regard to the temporalities of the joints of an elderly lady. The joints endure the sitting in a hardly mediated intensity. An old transistor radio is running at a low level in the background. The radio transmits everything that 'Estereo Cien' has on offer, the whole day through. No matter what the radio brings, it seems to be endured passively. Some of the news or advertisements get commented on, some of the information on burials or weddings is remembered. The radio is covered with a woven cloth. It stands below a plastic case. Both are means of dissociating the fragile temporalities of the radio from the temporalities of the dust that lies down everywhere. The continuous, never-ending fall of dust is hardly visible in its slowness. Yet, it is powerful in its effects. It causes *Doña Maria* to make many movements to reach the buttons of the radio, to switch it on or off or change the volume. Besides, the sound that the radio transmits into the room is reduced by the cloth and the plastic case. The open door lets into the otherwise dark room sparks of sun, warm breezes and the echoes from occasional steps in the *patio*. All changes

of light or air in the room come from the *patio*. The contrast between the obscurity and coldness within the room and the light and warmth of the *patio* act as one more sign of a passive structuring of time in the kitchen while *Doña* Maria is peeling corn.

Doña Maria's manual movements are repetitious. The passive repetition of the actual movements sets free expectancy. Not only do the hands repeat the same movements over and over again, but *Doña* Maria has been repeating the process of disgraining every second morning as long as I have known her. The thick horny skin on her fingers even seems to signal that she has been repeating these ever-same movements throughout her long life. Whenever the arm reaches into the raffia basket, I expect a corn cob to be taken out, followed by an approximately five minutes of disgraining. Then I expect the arm to go back into the raffia basket to take out another corn cob. This will be followed again by the fingers finding their way slowly under the cob, then the arm going back into the basket etc. The time to come, the future, seems structured. This structure emerges through reflection from the past. A particular past is reflected into a general future.⁵² The weight of the future is conditioned by the weight of particular movements in the past. If the repetition of manual movements makes me contract the last three times that I have sat in the kitchen while *Doña* Maria was peeling corn, the contribution of the manual movements to my subjective perception of the temporal atmosphere in the room as passive will be relatively smaller than if I contract the past eight months or, with regard to *Doña* Maria's horn-skinned fingers, the entire life of this sturdy woman repeating these ever-same movements throughout that time. The perceived certainty that the sequence of slow, ever-same movements will go on and on and on, also makes the future appear full time, allowing time simply being there in itself. Relaxed it acts in all its weight onto the present, like the past.

Doña Maria starts after breakfast at about nine o'clock. She tries to finish by about half past eleven, when she and her daughter will start preparing lunch. If she does not manage to finish by midday, she will finish off in the afternoon, before starting the fire for cooking the corn. It does not really matter whether she finishes by midday or not. It seems to be more a question of experience from the past that she *can* finish by midday, if nothing unforeseen happens, and that then the afternoon will be calmer. Her movements are one by one – concentrated, continuous, relaxed. Her activity seems to be structured by passive time. Time takes its time. Movements take as long as they take. Time is structured by what there is, by the living present, rather than by what there should be, which could be called an ideal present. If there were pressure to fulfil the plan to finish the peeling by midday as

52 See Deleuze 1968a, p. 71.

an actual deadline, from a certain point on the passive structuring of the future that is grounded in the lived temporalities of the given, would disappear into a structuring of the present based in ideals. No longer a particular past, but a particular future would structure the present. The empirical present would become general. Mechanism would take over. Time would lift out onto the level of need-fulfilment. The lived repetition of movements would become routine repetition. Open-endedness, a relaxed attitude towards set ideals of efficiency, are a condition for a passive structuring of time.

2.2.3.2 Cooking *Nixtamal*

The passive structuring of time is heterogeneous. There is space for other expectancies than the one related to the actual work project to enter the structuring of the time of work.

Every other afternoon, a *nixtamal* is cooked. The process involves about two hours of waiting. In this time, the two women are working on something else. Their work seems to repeat the passive structuring of time by the cooking of the *nixtamal*. It is ready when it is ready. For cooking the *nixtamal*, things are done the way they have always been done. It is a sequence of concrete, clearly circumscribed work tasks. These are carried out one after the other. Whenever movement A appears, one expects the appearance of movement B, C and D.⁵³ A big fire gets started. An iron ten-litre-bucket gets half-filled with water. It is placed on the open fireplace in the kitchen. About three handfuls of lime are added to the water. The lime is for conserving the sweetcorn. Then one has to wait for the corn to cook. All the time, the fire is kept in sight. The cooking of the corn is a process so slow that progress is hardly perceivable with bare eyes. After roughly two hours, the bucket is full to the brim from the swollen corn. At this point, the *nixtamal* is ready. The bucket gets taken off the fire and cools down over night. The next morning it is brought to one of the nearby sweetcorn-mills for grinding. From the dough coming out of that, *tamales* and *tortilla* can be made.

While waiting for the *nixtamal* to be cooked, sorrow-dolls⁵⁴ get packed. The colourful dolls and the colourful cases come ready-made in huge packages that pile up in the family bedroom. The women have to fill the cases with the dolls. The way the two women carry out their task is as a seemingly never-ending repetition of concrete, clearly circumscribed movements, one by one. One yellow case is taken out of a plastic bucket and opened. Then three little 'girls' (dolls with skirts)

⁵³ See Deleuze 1968, p. 72.

⁵⁴ See above chapter 1, section on 'location of the research'.

and three little ‘boys’ (dolls with trousers) are taken out of another plastic bucket and put into the yellow case. Then the case is closed and left in a third plastic bucket. Then another yellow case is taken out, opened, filled with three ‘boys’ and three ‘girls’, closed etc. The amount of cases and dolls seems endless. *Doña* Maria and *Doña* Toria get paid by a sack of filled cases. The progress of filling a sack is so slow that it is hardly possible to see any difference after a day of work. One could build up 20 open cases on the table, take a handful of ‘girls’, spread three into every case in one single movement, then do the same with the ‘boys’ and then close all 20 cases in one go. That would be much more efficient. The time of work would be relatively more structured by the output of filled cases. Manuel told me that this was the way he was working when helping the two women from time to time. He wanted them to earn more money. However, his interference was only temporary. He got bored very quickly. The two women, by contrast, achieved in their way of working a constancy of doing the job for years and years, day in, day out. They seemed to have managed to maintain their life quality not through money, but through slowness. They say that they are satisfied with the conditions of life available to them. Whenever one enters, the generally calm and communicative atmosphere in the kitchen seems to support this statement.

Although there is a rough idea about how many sorrow-doll packages one can fill in a day, this seems to be in no way a strict plan. There is always something to do. But when someone knocks at the door and there is one of the many unforeseen visits, there seems to be always the time to have a break. One offers the person a drink and something small to eat and sits down for a small conversation. There seems to be no concept such as ‘I don’t have time’. This would be an expression of a structuring of time orientated towards the actual outcome. It would be very impolite. Rather, work proceeds step by step, movement by movement, ‘*poco a poco*’. Time is structured by expectancy and this is an open form of structuring. Heterogeneous expectancies can resonate with each other. The expectancy of how to treat an unexpected visitor can be integrated into the expectancy of work.

2.2.3.3 Baking *Tortilla*⁵⁵

A passive structuring of work is grounded in a heterogeneous engagement with the given. When there is fresh sweetcorn dough, tortilla get prepared for breakfast. Baking tortilla depends on the passive structuring of one's time by various temporalities other than the intention of the acting self.

First, a blank gets formed. A half ball of a thumb-size portion of dough is flattened by pressing it in-between the balls of the thumb. Then it is rounded by rotating it in one hand while softly pressing an even edge with the fingers of the other hand. The success of forming a *tortilla* blank depends on the temporalities of the hands. Firstly, if they are not clean and of a moderate temperature, the dough will stick to the hands and tear apart; secondly, the size of the *tortilla* is determined by the size of the hands. The dough blank starts being smacked from one ball of thumb into the other in quick and short movements. By this method, the intention to get the dough cake as thin and large as possible can circumvent to a certain degree the limitation imposed by the size of the forming hands. However, by being smacked, the middle of the dough cake tends to become thinner while the edge remains the same. From a certain size on, the edge's weight will tear the dough cake apart from the middle.

The dough cake is baked on a *komal*⁵⁶ over the open wood-fire. Again, the concrete movements that take place are impelled by a plurality of temporalities other than the intention of the acting self. The *komal* gets treated with a hand-brush and sprinkled with lime. It is heated up on a wood-fire. These movements are impelled by an expectancy of the reaction between *komal* and dough. If the *komal* is not clean and hot enough at the moment when the dough cake gets placed on it, the dough will stick to the iron after the process of baking. The hand places the dough cake on the *komal* by first establishing one point of contact only and subsequently unrolling the rest of the dough. This movement is impelled by an expectancy of the reaction between air and dough. Air will extend and produce bubbles in the dough from below when heated up. When one side of the *tortilla* is done, it gets tossed. When tossing a *tortilla*, the acting self contracts the heat of the baking dough unmediated. A bare finger touches the hot dough cake to perceive whether one side is done. If the dough sticks just minimally to the skin, the *tortilla* can be tossed. With bare thumb and forefinger the hot dough cake gets taken up from the hot *komal* and turned around. There is a good chance of burning one's finger by doing this.

⁵⁵ See photo 3 in appendix.

⁵⁶ A round baking tray.

The baking of one side of a *tortilla* takes about five minutes. A *komal* takes four *tortilla* at a time. For a meal of six people, at least thirty *tortilla* will be prepared. There is a constant repetition of forming a *tortilla*, putting it on the *komal*, turning it around, taking it off the *komal* and storing it in a basket under a woven cloth. The movement is relaxed. Its tempo is determined by the slow transformation of the dough by the heat. The meal starts when half of the *tortilla* are ready baked. Eating likewise proceeds slowly and in relaxed fashion. Before starting to eat, one after the other, every person at the table addresses explicitly every other person at the table by his or her name and wishes him or her to enjoy one's meal. ('*Buen provecho Arsenio, buen provecho mama, buen provecho Julia, ...*') Time seems to unfold passively in all its heterogeneity.

2.2.3.4 Unwrapping *Tamales*

The dumplings are wrapped in the leaves that cover the cob when growing in the field. These corn husks are called 'doblador'. They communicate sweetcorn's deep and far-reaching inter-woven-ness with local time and space. Time gets passively structured by the impression of a seemingly eternal and unbroken web of time between people and sweetcorn.

Every second day after breakfast, *Doña Maria* prepares '*tamalitos*'.⁵⁷ Elongated dumplings are formed that have the size of about two centimetres in width and five centimetres in length. They are stapled in a big pot which is covered with water at the bottom. They cook in about two hours in the steam from the boiling water. For the next two days or so the pot is in the corner of the kitchen and the *tamales* used for each meal are taken out from there. During mealtimes, the gesture of unwrapping the *doblador* produces an atmosphere of gift reception. Arms reach slowly over the table about three or four times per person per meal. Within a woven cloth in a small raffia basket the hand searches for a warm *tamal*. The *doblador* is unwrapped from the *tamal*. The texture of the *doblador* feels and looks like wrapping paper. The dis-used *doblador* piles up on and around the table.⁵⁸ The *tamal* is eaten up. The passive repetition of the actual movements produces an impression of people receiving sweetcorn as a gift from nature. The impression contracts a wealth of signs from the local past that support the impression of an eternal and unbroken web between the temporalities of people and the temporalities of sweetcorn.

57 In the family where I lived, people often used the ending '-ito', expressing affection, when referring to this daily food item.

58 See photo 4 in appendix.

For example, the annual cycle of cultivation of sweetcorn is used as a means for measuring the time during the year. The year is structured naturally, through its pervasive presence in people's everyday life, by the different phases in the cultivation of sweetcorn. The sweetcorn year culminates in the harvest in November. After harvest in November, most roofs of the houses in the countryside shine yellow from the corn cobs placed on them for drying in the sun of the dry season climate. In rural areas, villages often consist of dispersed huts in-midst of extensive corn-fields. At a village near Lake Atitlán⁵⁹ where I spent a day in November, shortly before harvest time, the roofs of the huts were hardly visible from the street. Houses were always located one family's cornfield apart from each other. The only connection between them were narrow paths along the edges of the cornfields. At the house where I live, the *doblador* is part of the present of the people throughout the year. It gets stored in big nets in the *patio* along the wall, similar to the corn cobs. The impact of sweetcorn on Guatemalan people's life used to be so pervasive that among the Quiché-Maya, the indigenous community around Quetzaltenango, the famous creation myth even states that human beings were created out of sweetcorn.⁶⁰ Their creators failed in two attempts when they tried to make bones out of clay and wood. The third time they made bones from sweetcorn and it worked. Human beings considered themselves to *be* sweetcorn because they *ate* so much sweetcorn. To be the other here seems both a way to acknowledge one's total dependence on the other, and to acknowledge the great presence of the other in one's everyday life.

The weight of particular past instances on the present does not get doubled into an expectancy towards the future. Partly due to technological innovations, the signs that the future will be different are too obvious.

2.2.4 Temporalities of Saints

Catholic rituals seem to be an artificial way to passively structure time by expectancy. The anticipation of the repetition of the ever-same sequence of movements gives the interaction between people and Saints a dimension of security that allows them to leap into the realm of passive time. Catholic rituals seem to be designed to act not through rationality, on the realm of active time, but through passive communication. A passive mode of communication is based in sensitive perception and sensitive reaction towards the perceived. In pas-

59 See map in appendix.

60 <http://www.sacred-texts.com/nam/maya/pvgm/index.html> (visited 20 November 2005).

sive communication, everything is intensity, signalled out by signs. When perceived as intensive signs, words act on the same level as smells, sounds and images. The present acts on the same plane as all of the past and all of the future. Every sign envelops a variety of other signs. Through the examples of names, death and Christmas, the following descriptions will show how passive communication determines the interactions between people and Saints.

2.2.4.1 Names

Passive communication is integrated with a belief in destiny. With Deleuze, destiny is when there seems to be a relation between two or more instances in the actual, either within one life or in-between different lives, that cannot be explained only by the actual. For the one who believes in destiny, the distinct instances 'play out in the same thing, in the same story, but at different levels: here more or less relaxed, there more or less contracted.'⁶¹ Destiny is the belief that the actual is expression of a variety of lived temporalities that I am not aware of, but that act on my action. Catholic faith is the belief that a life dedicated to God secures a good destiny. God is a principle that ensures that only the favourable energies are able to impact on life. Giving one's time to God seems to secure a good destiny.

One day after my birthday *abuelita*⁶² says to me: '*ya se fue su Santo*' (your Saint has already gone). I am surprised by this formulation. I do not understand what it means. In Catholic Guatemala, traditionally one is named after the Saint to whom the day is dedicated on which one is born. This Saint is said to be one's guardian spirit. The day of birth of *Don Arsenio* is the day of the holy Arsenio. The birthday of *Doña Victoria* is the name day of Victoria, the birthday of Manuel's grandmother Maria Bernadette is the day of San Bernarda. Manuel's grandmother and her two sisters all received as first Christian name a link to the earthly mother of Jesus Christ, to Maria. Apparently, it did not matter to the parents of Manuel's grandmother that all of their three daughters had to live in the same family with the same name. The name was not so much about individuality than about establishing a spiritual link to the guardian energy of the most important of all women in Catholic religion, to the mother of Jesus Christ, who in Catholicism is seen as a Saint. Traditionally, one does not celebrate the person that was born on a birthday. Rather, the person who has birth-

61 Deleuze 1968a, p. 83.

62 English: '*Abuela*' means 'grandmother'. In the family where I lived, everyone addressed *Doña Maria* only with '*abuelita*'. On the ending '-ita' see chapter 1 above, section on 'location of the research'.

day shows gratitude for the guardian Saint. Traditionally, therefore, one goes to church on one's birthday.

A similar belief in the passive structuring of one's time by destiny expresses itself in the conviction that everything that happens in life does so because God wants this to happen. Such an idea seems to come through in the full admiration expressed by *Doña Toria's* comment while exploring her newly bought alarm clock: '*qué chulo que hizo Dios*' (how beautiful is it what God made). Or when *Doña Maria* on entering the *patio* in the morning, starts a new day with the words '*a ver que hizo Dios*' (let's see what God made). When the two women talk like this, the lived experience of passive time within the dependence on the variety of temporalities of nature and the Catholic faith with its belief in something bigger than oneself, seem to resonate with each other.

2.2.4.2 Death

2.2.4.2.1 Novena

When a Catholic person in Guatemala has died, a novena⁶³ is held. The activity makes the community accompany those to whom the passed away person was nearest during life-time. The expression of compassion takes place through passive communication. In various ways, the ritual of the novena seems to provide a structuring of time that supports the emergence of passive communication. Structure supports a sliding from a logic of need into a logic of sensual contraction. The relaxation necessary for the leap into passive communication seems to go together with a subordination to God as principle of identity and order.⁶⁴

There is a *novena* for someone in the neighbourhood who has died a year ago. I go with *Don Arsenio*, who is invited to lead the preaching. We are led into a specially prepared, small, green-coloured room without windows. There are about 15 plastic chairs lined up in a row around the walls. In one corner, in sharp contrast to this, an altar is built up. On a table there are three candles and four big vases with real flowers. On the ground there are two more big vases with real flowers as well. Over the table, white linen is arranged. The linen heightens the arrangement to the ceiling of the room. On the altar, on top of the linen, the Image of the Virgin Mary is represented by a large oil painting in a gold-coloured frame. In contrast to this, the image of the man

63 English: '*Nueve*' means 'nine'. The term '*novena*' refers to a sequence of nine days of morning after the death of someone.

64 See Deleuze 1968a, pp. 86-7.

who has died is represented only through a small, black and white passport-size photo that is left somewhere in-between the vases on the table. The photo is hardly visible in the midst of the flower vases even when one is standing right in front of the altar. It is not visible at all when one is sitting on one of the chairs. The activity is based on a pre-structured prayer known in Catholic tradition as the ‘rosary’. Set phrases are spoken by a preacher and answered by the community. The prayer expresses gratitude and obedience to the Virgin Mary. The passed away person and his family do hardly appear. Only at one point, wishes for them are expressed. God is something bigger than the human being.

When the activity starts, all chairs are occupied. The chairs are left and people kneel on the naked floor. *Don Arsenio* holds a necklace with wooden pearls (the rosary) in his hands. Using both hands, for each phrase spoken, a pearl is counted off on the necklace from one end of pearls to the other. With every repetition of this movement, his voice is repeating the same verse. The other voices are answering his prayer with another verse, also always repeating the same words within one section of pearls. Then there is his voice with another phrase. The phrase is again repeated for as long as it takes to count another section of pearls off on the necklace. The necklace helps the preacher not to lose himself in-between repetitions that have already happened and repetitions that are still to come. The community does *not* have a necklace. Their sliding into passive orientation by intensive impulses seems to be desired. All voices merge into a kind of one-dimensional trance-talk – hammering, quick and rhythmic, lasting about 45 minutes. A rattling vocal forest. The collective agitation constantly increases. It reaches its peak when at one point the rigid segmentation between front-speaking and answering disappears. All voices kick over into singular rhythms. It seems like chaos – pure intensity. But then the antiphonal structure comes back. Everyone knew exactly what to do.

Novenas are held in Guatemala for nine days in a row when a person has died, from the third day after the death onwards. After the nine days there is a mass, a church service. Then again one year after, to remember the day of the death, there are nine days in a row of praying the rosary followed by a mass. The duration of the nine days of prayer together with the daily repetition of the ever-same movements produce a similar kick-off into passive orientation by intensity as the praying described above. After some days one tends to forget whether one evening of praying has passed and eight are still to come, or whether three have gone by and six are still to come, or whether seven have passed and two are still to come. It seems that every evening there is a *novena*. The orientation by days slides into a general feeling of being in the midst of mourning. A general feeling of compassion

passively structures one's time, rather than the two hours every evening that one goes to the ever-same house to pray with the ever-same people the ever-same words for the ever-same person. The concrete movements induce the memory of the passed-away person and of those who were close to him.

Last but not least, the structures provided by a *novena* give a time-space for passive communication among people from the community. Socialising also seems to take place mainly through passive time. Flows of words seem to be indicators of the state of relaxation within the energetic field within a room. For example, during the *novena* mentioned above, I arrive with *Don Arsenio* at about 7:30 p.m. when the event is meant to start. At that time, only three of the fifteen chairs provided are occupied. There are three middle-aged women. *Don Arsenio* introduces me to them. Then there is silence. About 20 minutes after the arranged starting time, still no one else has arrived. One and then all three of the women start to ask me questions. Their words seem to emerge as an effect of the relaxation of boredom. After the prayer, something similar happens. *Patches* and something to drink are served. One can choose between Coke with rum and coffee with sugar. People wait in silence to receiving food and drink, then they start eating in silence. Slowly, seemingly in accordance with the relaxation of the warm meal and the assurance that everything is as it always is, there emerge spare flows of words here and there. In the end, there is chatting. Verbal communication seems to come after passive communication, as an effect of it. There seems to be little need for verbal action. Words seem to be not an expression of a pressure to say something, but an expression of passive time.

2.2.4.2.2 The 'Day of the Saints' and the 'Day of the Dead'

The first and the second of November in Catholic Guatemala are celebrated as the 'Day of the Saints' (1 of November) and the 'Day of the Dead' (2 of November). No one around could give me a convincing explanation concerning the difference between the two days. The event that is performed on both days is the passive communication with those who have passed away. The passive communication with the Saints seems to act as a frame for the communication with the dead, much as in the novena. Framed by the communication with Saints, the death of a close loved one might prevent impulses of rage or hate towards the Saints from being actualised. The event expresses itself in form of a party. A party is chosen to stage the communication with the dead. On the first and the second of November, passive communication with the dead receives a formal frame.

The passive communication with the dead works through the intensity through which the dead are still present for those living. This

intensity depends on the closeness with those who have now passed away during one's lifetime and on the time that has passed since the other has passed away. On the plane of passive time, to feel intensity for someone alive or for someone dead is a difference of degree, not of kind.⁶⁵ The atmosphere of the party therefore is explicitly joyful, although serious. Communication adapts to circumstances. Kites (bariletes⁶⁶) become a means for communication between those who are still on earth and those who might be in heaven. In front of the cemetery, kites are sold. People fly kites in-between and on top of the graves at the cemetery. Sometimes, food and drink are shared next to the grave, to overcome the actual separation imposed by death. Especially during these two days, ghost stories and jokes that involve ghosts are told to offer accounts of the encounter between the living and the non-living.

Fr, 01.11.

Today is the Day of the Saints here in Guatemala. Tomorrow is the Day of the Dead. Yesterday, I had already noticed that in front of the cemetery it looked more like the preparation of a funfair before a public party than like the preparation of a day of mourning. There are merry-go-rounds, places for table-football, lots of places to buy sweets, drinks and all kinds of nuts, hot-dogs, pizzas and flowers. More than anything else what struck me were all the flowers! There are asters, dahlias, gladioli, '*flor de muerte*'⁶⁷ and all the various shapes of '*coronas*', of wreaths with green plants and flowers around.

Yesterday, I went to the house of Carmencita to prepare the '*fiambre*'. This is a cold food, a kind of salad with every kind of ingredient one can possibly imagine of here in Guatemala. It entails everything that the local markets and the supermarkets have on offer. Vegetables, meats, cheeses and fish – some say that up to 80 different ingredients go into this meal. Fiambre is the traditional meal for the first and second of November here. It costs more than many families are able to pay for a meal, about 200 *Quetzales* for us six here in the house. But everyone asks everyone else if one is going to have a *fiambre*. It seems to be an indicator for social status, whether the answer is positive or negative. We spent all day long, from eight o'clock in the morning to seven o'clock in the evening, cutting the various vegetables, cooking them and preparing the *salsa*. The day before, Doña Toria already went to the market at 'La Terminal' to get the ingredients, together with Don Arsenio and Oswaldo. They told me that everything was much more expensive than normal, instead of 3 *Quetzales*

65 See above, p. 38.

66 Read: [b̥ari:jetes].

67 English: 'Flower of Death'. A yellow species of flower.

they paid 4.50 and so on. Peas cost 20 *Quetzales* instead of 10! The sellers cheated with the measures more than on other days.

Today then, at eight o'clock in the morning *Don Arsenio*, *Oswaldo* and I are going to the cemetery (planned for seven o'clock). (The family of *Carmencita* even planned to go at six o'clock, in order to be there before the masses of people would arrive. However, they arrive when we are about to leave.) *Manuel* told me in the morning that this would be a day of party, the day of colours, for flowers are around everywhere. He told me that this day really is a day of joy, rather than a day of mourning and melancholy. He is right: at the cemetery they are selling kites to use on the cemetery, or on one larger grave children are even playing football. Graves in Guatemala are not made from earth, but from stone, often painted in bright colours. At the two Days of the Dead they are decorated over and over with flowers. People are selling ice cream, chewing gum and nuts. The weather is great, lots of sunshine. A *mariachi* band⁶⁸ offers, for some money, to play melodies in front of the graves. The combo consists of a *marimba*, a *shirimía* and a *túm*⁶⁹. The cemetery is huge and very nicely positioned in front of the volcano Santa Maria. So many people are there. They come with their families and with all the flowers; some are with food. There is a bright and cheerful atmosphere.

Sat, 02.11.

Today at breakfast, *Don Arsenio* is telling me ghost stories. These are always present here in Xela, but especially during the Days of the Dead. I am told about 'La Llorona'⁷⁰. This is a female ghost, stalking in her white robe at night through the streets of Xela. *Don Arsenio* keeps saying that he met her once as an adolescent, when he had to go out late at night to buy medicine for his sister. She crossed his way and he felt electrified. He says that he could not move until she had passed by. *Don Arsenio* tells me as well a joke about death as a person, consisting of a skeleton, walking through the village, knocking at doors to inform the inhabitants that the next dying person would be from their family. The young man living there got scared and thought, 'what on earth can I do to escape death?' Then he had an idea. He shaved his head completely. He thought, if there were no longer hair on it, death would not recognise him. Death came at the promised day and went into the saloon of the village. All the inhabitants of the vil-

68 Read: [maɾi:ʌtʃi:]. Traditional Mexican music combo.

69 Traditional Guatemalan instruments, said to be of Indian origin. A *marimba* is a xylophone that Guatemalan officials declared to be the Guatemalan national instrument. A *shirimía* is a wooden flute, a *túm* is a drum.

70 Read: [jəʊrəʊnɔ]. English: Llorar means weeping.

lage were present. He looked around and looked around – and could not find the one he was looking for. So finally death said, ‘well, then I take this shaved guy here’, and took accidentally the poor man he was originally looking for!

2.2.4.3 Christmas

Events in the Catholic year in Guatemala are anticipated by passive communication. Images⁷¹ of Catholic Saints are carried by a procession through the town. Processions are very popular in the street-life of Xela. By way of the Images, they perform some event from the Bible. The Biblical content to which the respective festivity relates, gets translated from the level of ancient, abstract words onto a level of concrete intensities that act on the present. The procession seems to suggest that people connect to Catholicism on a plane of passive time through making experiences with it. Passive communication makes one connect to the Images in a way that these become signs that are speaking to the people through transmitting intensities. Passive communication works through the reception of sensation and the passive repetition of these. With Walter Benjamin one could say: an inanimate object is invested with the power to look back at one in the way a human being would look back when feeling that he or she were addressed directly by a gaze.⁷²

Passive communication allows signs from Biblical scenes to open up to signs from contemporary contexts. On the plane of passive time, the ancient contents merge with present preoccupations and context-conditions. The Images transmit an air of distance despite all their concrete materiality. Adopting a W. Benjaminian perspective, one could say: the Image communicates ‘correspondences’ with the Divine.⁷³ The correspondences express depth – an eternal, unquestioned web between the human and the Divine. Again, from a W. Benjaminian perspective we might say that passive communication requires a passive way of looking at things. The following material will show how slowness and actual repetition seem to suggest a leap from the actual into passive time. However, an abundance of actual repetition seems to prevent a seizing away into passive time.

71 Human-size wooden painted figures.

72 See introduction to this chapter.

73 See W. Benjamin 1968, p. 178.

2.2.4.3.1 *Las Posadas*

The nine evenings before 24 December there are posadas in Guatemala. Posadas are one kind of Catholic procession. Posadas enact the search by Joseph and Mary for a shelter during their first night in Bethlehem. Every one of the nine evenings, various religious groups organise these collective marches through the different parts of the town. Everyone has a focada, a self-made red lantern with a candle inside, and a picos, a whistle. The Image, Joseph leading Mary on a donkey, is carried on a tray. It is illuminated by an electric bulb connected to a generator that is carried by two men or driven alongside the pedestrians on the back of an accompanying pick-up. With Don Arsenio, I join one of the posadas.

An atmosphere of slowness, endlessness, surrealness and intensity seems to invite a leap into passive time: the long rows of red lanterns move themselves slowly through the narrow, hilly streets and alleys of the town. Due to curves, the end of a row of people is never in sight. The illuminated Image is far bigger than any human being. Its gaze is directed towards heaven. The Image is floating over the heads of the people. It is elevated by many helping hands, carried through the darkness of the night, through the coldness of the night air in the mountains. Incense is spilled out. It makes the shapes of objects and subjects merge into one another in front of one's eyes. Its smell carries one away from everyday action. There is a loudspeaker and three people with guitars. Their preaching invites a connection with the most general questions of life. The movement of the procession is very slow. It stops when the musicians of the band in front play a tune. It stops when boys fire off jumping jacks in front of the band. It stops when the lines of people who are walking along in pairs of two get so much out of shape that someone comes to re-organise them. The movement is slow anyway, just on account of the weight of the Image and for the vast number of walking people. The repetition of the procession over nine evenings produces once more the impression that this is going on forever and that it has never been different, reminiscent of the temporality of the *novena*⁷⁴.

The atmosphere receives further passive weight in that it seems to express the eternity of the time of God. The atmosphere expresses distance from everyday life. The procession passes zone two of the town, which consists of houses where people live. Where the procession comes near, people step out of their houses, interrupting for a while whatever they have been doing. They watch the red lanterns passing

74 See above.

by in darkness. Then the movement reaches the ‘*Parque Central*’⁷⁵. Other, similar rows of red lanterns and floating, illuminated Images turn out from all directions of the darkness through several of the streets that terminate in the plaza. The whole town seems to be transformed for some evenings through similar flickering – slow, serious messages that something is different from the normal. Then we go up along the shop windows of fourteenth Avenida towards zone 3 to the market at ‘*La Democracia*’⁷⁶. The time of the *posada* contrasts remarkably with the profit-orientated temporalities of business. At the time we are passing by, the shops are closed and the metal security grilles impose a temporary barrier on capitalism. To give one’s time to God seems to be a valid break from the constant gnawing preoccupation with economic survival. At ‘*La Democracia*’, the *posada* ends in front of a church.

We find ourselves in front of a closed door. An antiphonal song called ‘*Las Posadas*’ is started. Singing invites passive communication. It requires particular bodily engagement. The song is very long. It has 13 verses. It is very repetitive. The repetitive melody receives a further repetitiveness through ending on a freely prolonged swerve on a one-tone step. The song repeats the scene represented by the Images that we have been carrying through the streets. It is about the rejection of Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem when they look for a shelter to spend the night. The pilgrims outside the door start a verse, then from inside comes an answer in the form of the second verse and so on. The position of those inside and outside in relation to the closed door seems to repeat once more the dynamic of rejection transmitted by the song and the Images. Many of those outside probably do really feel cold, hungry, tired and a bit impatient after a two-hour walk, like me. Through repetition of the dynamic of rejection on the level of actual movements, the feeling of rejection seems to emerge in the atmosphere in front of the church door.

In the last verse of the song, the dynamic receives a sudden turn. In correspondence, when those inside the closed door in the song have understood that the one who seeks hostage is the mother of the coming Jesus Child, doors are opened. Rejection turns into joy and a warm welcome-party. *Patches* and something to drink are served. There is a *piñata*⁷⁷ and music. This turning appears, when perceived passively,

75 The pedestrian centre of zone one in Quetzaltenango.

76 See below exposée at the end of the introduction to the chapter on the market for introduction.

77 A paper image of a comic figure or something else that attracts children, often child-height, is filled with sweets inside. The figure gets bound on a string in the air on children head height. One child gets blindfolded. He other children stay around and cheer. With a stick the

like a utopia of migration. While standing among all these Guatemalan people in front of this closed door, asking to be let in, I cannot help thinking of all those of whom I know here that they have been for a while to the US, would like to go, or have someone close to them being over there or planning to go soon. It seems as if through passive communication, everyone could open up the ancient story from the Bible to personal circumstances. When I rehearsed the song for the *posada* during the past weeks after breakfast with *Don Arsenio* in the kitchen, he sang the voice of those inside the door and I sang the voice of those outside the door. Then, the signs that got contracted from the story that the lyrics tell, referred to my own being a guest for such a long time in this house already. Then, the signs that emerged by bringing the Bible-story through passive communication into contact with present circumstances referred to Guatemalan hospitality. The local absence of the phrase 'I don't have time' became once more apparent. The phrase stands in stark contrast to the experience of living with Manuel's family who are always ready to share with me the little they have.

2.2.4.3.2 *Nacimiento*⁷⁸

A 'nacimiento' is a scene built around the Image of the Jesus-Child in the shed where He was born. Here in Guatemala, the build-up of the scene around this Image expresses so much passive communication. People say the nacimiento expresses 'cariño'⁷⁹. The actual seems to lose ground in favour of passive time. The logic of need seems to be left behind in favour of a logic of intensities. People's own needs seem to be forgotten in favour of the self-forgetful reception of Jesus when He is born on earth.

On the plane of passive time, objects and subjects merge with each other. The *nacimiento* seems to merge with the people's realm of life. Often *nacimientos* occupy up to half a room of space and all the space from top to bottom of a room. Often there are sky-or cave-backgrounds made from painted blankets. There seems to be an excess of intensity that receives its impulses not only from the Bible-story, but also from the normal experience of lack in everyday life. People manage to afford things for the *nacimiento* that those whom I know here do not consider to be able to afford simply for themselves. Often there are frames around the *nacimiento*-scene decorated over and over

blindfolded child will try to hit the figure in a way that the paper destroys and the sweets spread over the floor for all children to grab for.

78 English: 'Nacer' means to be born.

79 Heartfelt engagement. See above the section on water-gifts.

with Christmas-flowers (plastic or real) or fruit-strings of *manzanilla*⁸⁰ (orange-like, but smaller than mandarin), lemons or red apples. Christmas light strings are never missing. In everyday life, *Doña Toria* and *Doña Maria* would rather sit in darkness than use the electric bulb in the kitchen in order to save energy costs. In the *nacimiento*, by contrast, various Christmas light strings are often installed side by side.

On the plane of passive time, signs envelop other signs.⁸¹ The light-chains seem to be an expression of various impulses. A love for the technological envelops a love for the artificial: often, a light-chain is still packed in its plastic wrap, just connected to a plug, when illuminating the *nacimiento*. A love for action and intensity envelops a fascination with the far away: the light-strings come in all colours imaginable, with blink-functions and ever-repeating melodies. Such melodies become expressions of movement, either as experience or as desire. Most often, there is the US-song 'We wish you a Merry Christmas'; frequently there is the Spanish song '*Feliz Navidad*'⁸² and also the European song 'Holy Night, Silent Night'. Only sometimes I hear the local song '*Las Posadas*'⁸³. All of them are bleeping along in never-ending repetition in mobile phone ring-tone quality.

On the plane of passive time, past, present and future act on the same level. Ancient Bible-stories open up to the experiences, interests, preoccupations and desires of contemporary people. Figures of the Christmas story from the Bible are often included in miniature down to the most incredible level of detail. There are Mary and Joseph, sheep and the ox and the donkey close by the crib, maybe a cat and some chickens as well. The shepherds are coming from the one side and the three Magi are coming from the other side. The angel Gabriel and the morning star are hanging over the shed. There are balls of glass or some cheaper brilliant and colourful material. Moss, foil and painted wood shaving in various colours indicate fields, small streams, paths, sand and grass. Specific Christmas adornment tends to mix with the local everyday. Sometimes there is sweetcorn in the four colours yellow, white, red and black. In one house I see indigenous figures in traditional Indian clothes among the shepherds. In another *nacimiento* there is a small doll in form of a blonde lady with sunglasses and bikini. In yet another there is a plastic robot and a broken small can. The animals that appear in the Bible-story, such as ox and donkey, get supplemented through the imaginative power of passive perception by all kinds of miniature animals, from elephants to pigs.

80 Read: [manzanilla].

81 See above, p. 51.

82 English: 'Happy Christmas'.

83 The song accompanies the interaction described above. See section on '*Las Posadas*'.

Actual repetition increases passive communication: the Image of the Jesus-Child is at the centre of every *nacimiento*. It is doll-size, far bigger than anything else in the scene. Often there are two Jesus-Child-Images side by side. In one house there are even six of them. They intensify each other. At the same time, they drag the *nacimiento* towards passive communication. The scene is an expression of a passive repetition of how things are received that are told in the Bible, rather than an actual repetition of how things might have been in fact. In another house, about eight calendars from present and past years adorn the wall around the *nacimiento*. The effect is similar to the one achieved by the six Jesus-Child-Images. The actual repetition of the calendar on the wall drags the calendars towards passive communication. Having eight calendars on the wall from present and past years is not functional. They do not seem to be meant anymore to orientate people within measured time. Rather, they act as intensities. The outlines of temporal standardization together with the accompanying pictures act as adornment – a sign of modernity. At a family meal at the house of Carmencita at the 26th of December, the traditional *marimba* music played from cassette and the screechy noise from the light strings from the *nacimiento* continued together for the whole afternoon. The sound clash and the constant repetition made me so nervous. When I asked Jenny, the seven-year-old daughter of Carmencita, how she felt about this meshing, she did not even understand what I was talking about. Of course she loved it – a polyphony of intensities. As with the improvised diversity of objects built into the crib-scene, it did not matter that the different intensities clashed with each other on an actual level. The important thing was the *cariño*, the heartfelt engagement, that spoke through the constant actual repetition from the virtual.

2.2.4.3.3 'The Visit of the Child'

On 25 December there takes place another visit of an Image. The event is the visit of the Child of God, 'la visita del niño Dios'. The Jesus-Child, according to the Bible, has been born the night before. It is now carried into the different houses, to the different families to let everyone know that Jesus has been born on earth. I join the hermandad⁸⁴ that Don Arsenio is a member of. The hermandad has to visit eighty families in this one day. In order to do so, they have split themselves into two groups of about 15 people each. So we have to visit 40

84 English: 'Hermano' means 'brother', 'hermana' means 'sister.' An *hermandad* is a community of active Catholic believers. In Quetzaltenango, the practicing of the Catholic religion takes place in that people organise themselves in one of these communities.

families in that one day. The event starts at about eight o' clock in the morning. It finishes at around half past ten in the evening.

The Images and all the kinds of formal devices that are described in the following, could have induced a spark of spirituality through people's passive communication with them. However, this intensity could only have been produced in passive time. The abundance of actual repetition prevents passive repetition to emerge. Things remain things. They do not turn into signs.

Two of the younger people are carrying trays covered with woven cloths on which the Image of the Jesus-Child is placed. The Image appears human and non-human at once. It looks like a big baby-doll with brown hair. Apart from some white linen underwear, it is naked. Its legs and arms are thrashing about in the air. Make-up has been used to give the eyes the expressiveness of an adult woman. They are looking towards the skies, beyond the human. The Image has been baptised by the church. When we come to a house, we make noise with whistles. Two of the children are carrying turtle-shells on a strip around their neck. One of the shells is painted gold. On the back of these they are drumming with sticks in a given rhythm. The two people who are carrying the Child are in front. Someone opens the door and lets us in. The more visits are already behind us, the more readily the functionality of the doorbell is preferred to announcing our visit by the festive sound produced by turtle shells and whistles. The latter creates distance from the everyday. The bell produces quicker responses. Increasingly the functional substitutes for the spiritual.

We are lead to an altar, where a *nacimiento* is built up. *Don Arsenio* in front and the others behind kneel down in front of the *nacimiento*, say the rosary and sing to God. Repetitive, monotonous, hammering – everyone knows exactly what to do. However, on this occasion, all this takes place 40 times in one day! After the first few visits, it tends to become a speedy reeling off. Not the whole rosary, but only one section of pearls is prayed. Nor do we sing the whole of a song, only one verse. After a while, *Don Arsenio's* voice becomes so hoarse that he is hardly able to speak anymore. There emerges something like an insecurity every time he starts to pray or to sing. Will his voice support him? Movements tend to become routines. They remain on the level of the actual.

Then there comes the greeting. We stand up and form a line at one side of the room. The host and his family do the same on the opposite side. One representative of the *hermandad* starts the greeting. Then the vice-president of the *hermandad* speaks. Thereafter the male house-owner and head of family speaks, and finally one of the two from the *hermandad* who spoke in the beginning makes a reply. The greeting seems to be meant to express monumentality. The words and

sentence structures are more formal and festive than those used in everyday life. They express how nice it is to have been considered by the *hermandad* to be visited, that Jesus Christ has been born and that we are wishing each other a nice Christmas and a happy New Year. It is emphasized what a great pleasure it is to be invited. However, after the first ten times the words are increasingly sped up and reeled off. After the first 20 visits or so it is not only the children who seem to be on the lookout when they enter a room for a place where they will find support, a wall or some kind of furniture. Besides, Christmas celebrations traditionally have started the midnight before, meaning that people are already short of sleep. As an effect of all this, movements remain actual.

Then the host or his wife invites us to sit down and rest for a while. We are offered food and drink. We get biscuits, red custard-like dessert, peaches from a tin, half an apple or sweets.⁸⁵ We also receive something to drink – we receive alcohol, soft drinks, tea, coffee or orange juice. With forty visits this is a lot! People from our group carry plastic bags under their jackets. In these, the food that they do not manage to finish, disappears during an unobserved moment. It is not appropriate to say ‘No thanks, I don’t want any. I am not thirsty.’ That would be an offence. Increasingly, however, women ask the host as soon as food and drink are served if they may use his toilet. This makes equally clear that there have been already 20 refreshments or so before the present one, and that the gesture of drinking another one does not correspond to bodily need, but to good manners. (Men go outside in the fields to urinate.) The atmosphere increasingly transgresses from passivity into an active search for strategies as to how to evade the abundance of formal interaction. Clock-time acts as an additional pressure, for it really would not be appropriate to do the Visit of the Child at any time other than on Christmas Day. Again, movements remain actual.

At the beginning of the visit, when we enter the room, the Images are placed in front of the *nacimiento*. Towards the end of the visit, the family members kiss the Images and put some money (between ten and 100 *Quetzales*) underneath their back onto both trays. Then the rest of our *hermandad*-group lines up behind the Image-carriers and shakes hands or embraces the family members. Everyone again wishes them happy Christmas and a good New Year and off we go, to the next house – by foot or, if the way is longer, luckily by pick-up. In the early afternoon, after maybe the 15th visit, the second president of the *hermandad* reflects on the large amount of money that one host has

85 Traditionally, people are served at the Visit of the Child sweet-corn-foed, such as ‘patches’, ‘chuchitos’ (dumplings with meat filling) or ‘cambrais’ (dumplings with sweet filling).

given. He jokes that next year, they will come only to this house to do the Visit of the Child. He suggests that this would be an easier way to make money. Spiritually, the money that the hosts put under the Image's back before leaving a house is meant as a material expression of opening one's heart and house to God. In fact, however, it will be used to fill a hole in the financial household of the *hermandad*. The link between organising a Visit of the Child and financial necessity is real. However, it is not appropriate to mention it. When this aspect is actualised, spirituality disappears. The activity gets once more lifted out from passive time.

2.3 CONCLUSION AND LINE OF FLIGHT

In Deleuze, as this chapter has shown, passive time is a value: it allows the present to be lived as a living present. Orientation within passive time entails the power to open up the actual given towards the realm of life. In passive time, the given is allowed to unfold itself on its own terms in all its sensational richness. The voice of the given in passive time is more heterogeneous than one can possibly be aware of at any moment. Passive time opens up a communication with the actual given that is deeper and more multi-dimensional than words can express. People in Guatemala, however, tend to live among so much passive time, but not to appreciate it particularly. With Deleuze, one can characterize the Guatemalan notion of passivity as active.⁸⁶ An active notion of passivity perceives in-activity only in negative terms, as a lack of activity. In an active notion of passivity, action is the background against which passivity gets perceived and evaluated. Action, rather than communication and sensation, is the all-encompassing point of reference.

For example, in one of the interviews with the staff at the indigenous NGO I was working with, Luisa made particularly explicit how living within time that seems to passively stay in all its weight is for her something negative. Her entire life seems to be moved by the desire for distance from the full unfolding of temporalities of nature in everyday subsistence. Her means of achieving such distance has been education. She had to fight for education. By all means available, Luisa fought against the passive endurance of that formally for her, the realm of education was very much closed. Education meant for her the possibility of action. She wanted actively to do something that would mediate and abbreviate the impact of the full unfolding of the temporalities of nature in daily subsistence. The following text is an extract from the interview.

86 See Deleuze 1968a, p. 87.

'I am from a community near Totonicapán⁸⁷ that is called Puschnakuk. I was born in 1963, so I am already very old. I come from a very numerous family. My father didn't have a stable income. We were nine brothers and sisters. Together with my parents and my grandmother we were 12 people. At the age of five or six I came to school. I have been five years at school. There was discrimination for being indigenous and for being woman. Women were meant to be for the house and for marriage, not for school. I had to earn myself the money for exercise books and pencils. A pencil was very valuable and it had to hold for a long time, so we had to take good care of it. With 11 years, I lived at the house of a cousin of my father because of the poverty. I took care of his children. By this, I earned my food, because that was what it was all about. Later, at the age of 13, there was a family who wanted to adopt me as their child. First my parents agreed, but then they changed the arrangement to 'renting' me away, for the funny price of one *Quetzal* per year. My parents decided and I was fine with that. I thought I would live better there than at home. I stayed there for three years, until the age of 16.' [...]

I always went on studying by any means available, although I didn't have the chance to go to school for very long. I learned typing, I did a first aid course and exam, and I got seminars on health training and on family planning. I always went on educating myself. I discovered that social work was my area, other areas not. When they told me in the NGO that I would now stay in the office and be responsible for the condition of handicrafts, (a program which later became the women's program), it first made me anxious. I always attempted, independently of my parents, to achieve something that would make life a bit easier, that would allow us to live a bit better. For example, I wanted us to be able to sleep in a bed and then I wanted us to cook on an elevated place, not on the ground. Television is a necessity for me. We have had a telly for three years by now. In the last years, when I was studying for my secondary school degree, there was no time to watch television because I had to study during the evenings.⁸⁸ [...]

There was a very difficult time in my life, but then I educated myself and now I am very happy, although I always have headaches. If I were married and had children, I would not be here in the office to do the work I am doing. I have always understood the NGO as a child that you have to care for so that it can grow. It is a gift from God. We don't have Internet here in the office. But there is a place in Xela where we can use Internet for free. I have my own Internet address.

87 See map in appendix.

88 After finishing secondary school, Luisa started to study for a '*bachillerato*', a bachelor's degree, which in Guatemala is the entry requirement for university. But she could not finish due to constant headache.

People give me a call, they write to me by email. Although I don't know them, I see them as friends. As well with the conferences that I give and with the Spanish that I learned in primary school, there have been huge changes for me. (I ask: 'Do you live quicker now than you did in earlier times?') I live slower now. Because the telephone is here in the office and I don't have to go anymore to Salcajá or Xela to use a phone.⁸⁹ As well, I can take a taxi or a car to come here. [...]

My brothers went to the United States, some seven or eight years ago. The younger one went for four years, the other one stayed for three years over there. One of them managed to get a visa. Now he is travelling often. From my community, many have gone, as well women. But there is not much change through this in the community, because there was always the idea that there is no income to be made within the community. In earlier times, people went to the *finca*⁹⁰; now they go to the United States. Over there, people want to earn the money to build a house here, for example. The difference between thinking of leaving for the *finca* and thinking of leaving for the United States is that at the *finca*, the people around you are also peasants. By contrast, in the United States you lose your customs. Even those who have just been for a month over there come at us all the time with their 'OK'. I would love to go there, too. But I wouldn't want to go wet⁹¹. I am going to try to get a visa. No one wants me to go, but I have got this idea. I wouldn't go for a long time. If one stays for a long time over there, one is changing a lot.'

Another expression of the negative perception of passive time among local people is the desire for television. Traditionally, as has been explored above, there was no specific time for leisure. Relaxation comes with the natural slowness of work, built into the daily tasks of subsistence. This was a passive form of relaxation. Temporalities of television, by contrast, express a desire for more active modes of leisure. Television enables a broad range of movement, a broad choice of movement and quick movement. People claim a right for movement and they claim a right for leisure. Television sets free inner movement.

89 Both villages are about half an hour away, if taken into account the foot-march to the bus, waiting for the bus and the time for the bus-ride itself.

90 A finca is the land property of a ranch owner. In Guatemala, the fertile coastal area is distributed into huge *fincas* while land in the highlands is less fertile and with every generation more segmented. Peasants from the highlands used to go to the coastal area for earning money as day labourers.

91 English: 'Irse mojado' (To go wet) means to cross the border between Mexico and the United States through the river 'Rio Bravo'. This way of border crossing is illegal and it involves a long and dangerous foot-walk through the mountains.

On Thursday, Manuel and I got cable TV in our room. We had planned to get a legal connection, for 60 *Quetzales* a month. When Manuel's mum heard this, she told us that the neighbours had offered her to get a connection to their cable TV and to split the monthly costs. The company, according to the neighbours, would just come to check the connection if one failed to pay the monthly rate on time. As they would pay always at the first call, there would be no risk. We agreed, and the neighbours' son installed the cable. Manuel's brother got quite excited as well. Four days later, while Manuel and me were out, he built a connection to his TV in the other room. Cable TV is very popular in Guatemala. The way we did it is the only way most people here can afford it. It is seen as mobilising daily existence: it enables one to achieve a distance to the passive co-existence with the local given.

Manuel introduces his friend Mario to the headphones that he has installed at the TV. With these, he can watch as much telly as he is used to and I can have as much silence for work or relaxation as I am used to. Mario sits down and we talk a bit. He does not understand, why we need headphones. 'And why?' he asks. 'In Guatemala, television is the form how we relax. When you enter a room, the first thing is to start the TV. The TV is running in the background all the time.' Mario goes on: 'When my wife and I married, the first thing we thought about was where we could get a TV from. The people from Almolonga⁹² are said to be a bit richer than people from other villages here in the area. They export to Honduras, El Salvador and Mexico. There is a joke here in the area that says that you may enter any house in Almolonga, there will never be missing the television. There might be no oven or no bed, but two things will be never missing – the television and the pick-up⁹³. Sometimes people have a big screen from Sony, which is much more expensive.'

Later, Manuel and I reflect about Mario's comment. Do people find a TV more important than a bed? Manuel replies that in Guatemala, people would not have much chance to move around, and if they would not have a TV, it would be so much more boring, and very unjust. His mother for example would not go to the *feria*⁹⁴, because the exhibition salon would cost three *Quetzales*. The bus to go there would cost three *Quetzales* as well and together this would be already so much money that she would better stay at home (while her husband and sons would go). Television and radio would be important means of mobility. They would get something else into people's heads and function as a means of transportation. Often, it would be not so much

92 A village in about ten minutes bus-ride distance from Xela.

93 An open van.

94 The annual village festivity.

the content of a particular show or film, but rather some technological noise and flow of Images all day long running in the background by which people would create an atmosphere where one would feel OK. There would be a strong priority for action-films.

I recall that in one of the interviews with teachers at the Spanish school, a daughter from a wealthier *mestizo* family in *Xela* expressed the local fascination by television to the extreme. She said: 'I am sleeping with television. All the rooms are equipped with a big television. In the house, there are eight televisions in total.'

