

**Here I want to be**

Wandering through poetic fieldnotes

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Design and publishing by Amba Klapwijk  
Printed on 100% recycled paper

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*Introduction* **Why am I sitting here?**

February 20, 2024

dune grass dances, sand whizzes past ears and waves grow and  
wash away  
I am home again

home by water, home by vista, by wind, by deafening humming  
home by grains of sand up to the bed

hair in the wind  
    high water  
        waves like white snow  
            by sunlight

on off  
    on off  
as if a sailing ship past  
grey clouds  
    light clouds  
        small  
vast

endless colors in the sea of gray brown green blue<sup>1</sup>

foam accumulates

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<sup>1</sup> In the original I added, 'I miss more specific names' such as ultramarine and cobalt blue, appropriate for the sea. Finding the correct color names of the sea is not easy, but while searching for color names I found that colors of water change depending on the season and sometimes over longer time scales. You can help the research community by using the Eye-on-Water color app when you are nearby open water and use the app to determine its color. The color of water reveals a lot about the quality of the water, and has been documented since 1890 with the Forel-Ule scale, a color chart used to determine the color of a sea, ocean, river or lake. (Vroege Vogels, 2016)

shaked by wind  
    lets them sail over coastlines  
    or disappear over sand

the light performs a film play today  
    sometimes a spot in sea lights up  
    then again at the beach far left at Kijkduin  
or it is gray- everywhere  
and suddenly everything lights up around me  
a few seconds - and she's gone again

the wind is louder than the sea  
    I turn my head  
the sea is louder than the wind

my eye falls on the dunes  
    unruly        strong  
dune grass dances, beach grass waves  
and two jackdaws sit on top

I turn my head again  
and I notice lower sounds  
        a thumping  
    I imagine it getting closer - surrounded by all  
the elements

no mountains  
    no river  
        no trees  
            but sea

why am I sitting here?

    just being here  
with sand and wind in face and hair and chilled fingers and  
some voices in the distance

In what follows, I explore how writing poetic fieldnotes relates to my artistic practice.<sup>2</sup> I examine a method of repeatedly visiting the same locations, wherever I am at the time, and writing about and reflecting on those situations and places when I'm there. Through this process of exploring and returning I hope to wander into ideas, connections, or otherwise inspirations for my life and work.

In my fieldnotes, I reflect on what I see in my natural environment, I notice changes, colors that catch my eye, and write them down. Ideas spring to mind and end up in my notebook.<sup>3</sup> Some thoughts are related to the books I am reading at the time, or to the compositions I am writing, and sometimes they come from further away.<sup>4</sup> Writing about all that I see around me is like a path through experiences, which eventually leads to poetry and music. During my compositional process, the fieldnotes help me understand what I am composing. Words come to me consciously and unconsciously. The musical notes feed the words and vice versa the musical notes get meaning through the words.<sup>5</sup>

When I left for a few months to study at the Hochschule der Künste Bern as Erasmus exchange in September 2023, writing about what I noticed around me became even more important. In a place where you are unfamiliar, it is valuable to take walks and write about what you see in your surroundings. It is an attempt to get grounded in that place. I committed to make this writing a weekly habit.

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<sup>2</sup> While writing, I took a lot of inspiration from *Vuurduin, notes on a world disappearing*, an essay published in a small book by Eva Meijer (2021). Some phrases I have freely adopted.

<sup>3</sup> Field note-taking is sometimes undervalued in science, but G. F. Barz, ethnomusicologist, writes about its importance: 'Fieldnotes (...) are not only critical in determining what we know, but also illustrative of the process of how we come to know what we know. (...) I suggest that fieldnotes are part of the process that informs both interpretation and representation, understanding and analysis of experience- in and out of the field. (...) Notes written in the field affect perception, memory, and interpretation and are a part of an individual's way of knowing and process.' (2008, p. 206).

<sup>4</sup> Many sources I consult are from visual artists, writers or poets. This stems from my intention at the beginning of the master studies to bring my musical ideas closer to my visual ideas and eventually let them merge.

<sup>5</sup> Poems written for previous compositions - for example, in *Over zee, Remnants of a lost time*, and the *very lightweight thread floats in the moving air* - emerged from earlier fieldnotes.

This little book covers my time abroad from September 2023 to February 2024 and arriving back home in The Hague. Fieldnotes, written in a different font for clarity, are alternated with reflections and context. Some theory is placed in footnotes to maintain the flow of the poetic texts. The book starts with an artist residency in the Swiss mountains in Praz-de-Fort, continues with my first wanderings along the river the Aare in Bern with *The Living Mountain* by Nan Shepherd in mind, followed by experiencing the sky in Val Grande across the border with Italy, to thoughts on wandering and cyclicality, to composing *How long will the orange sea remain?* An occasional chapter I elaborate on writings I made a year earlier back in The Netherlands, about this research and a composition I was working on during that period. It ends when saying goodbye to the river during last days in Bern. I think back with warm memories of my time in Bern, which was actually far too short.

In Bern, I:

...walked at least once a week to the Aare, a river that runs from the mountains through Bern, or the green area along its banks  
...always saw the mountains and a growing white world in the distance  
...learned about different theater lights and scenography  
...got to know about and use the programs Max/MSP and Spat 5  
...experimented with worlds of foam in image and sound  
...wrote two new works: *How long will the orange sea remain?* and *thin worlds move on, upwards, sideways*; the former following up on *the days, they wonder away* that I wrote in winter-spring 2023  
...saw a green world turn into a translucent world  
...traveled to Val Grande, a nature reserve just across the border in Italy  
...swam in the Aare the day I first arrived (summer), and the day before I left (winter)  
...was longing for the sea, for home

The process of exploring and returning to a place during the writing of my fieldnotes, could relate to ideas of wandering and cyclicality. Within the writing I was wandering, freely writing about what I sensed and observed, while the repetition of the writing, and the notion of words coming back in different fieldnotes, can be seen as cyclic.

At the beginning of these two years, I began reading *The Weather Detective* by Peter Wohlleben, also known for the book *The Hidden World of Trees*. He writes about how different (cyclical) processes in the garden are related to

each other and the time of year. Through conscious observation, you can see these processes already in little things in your immediate environment, and deduce one phenomena from another process.<sup>6</sup> These connections, from the largest to the smallest, fascinate me. Composing *the days, they wander away* for Kristia Michael and Kali Ensemble in the winter and early spring of 2022-2023, revolved around the concept of cyclicity. Instruments were amplified and this amplified sound moved in circles across four speakers. I was inspired by the notion of days after days, nights after nights, from fall to spring and summer to winter. During the performance of the piece it went from dark to light and light to dark. I wanted to continue working with these cyclic ideas and light.

During my time in Bern, I took many walks along the Aare river. Slowly the river and its banks began to feel familiar over the months. I wandered, sometimes walking extremely slowly and writing my words at the same time. My intention at the beginning of the exchange was to have an open mindset and without a clear goal. Nevertheless, I had plans: to take advantage of as many opportunities as possible, to follow classes that interested me and make use of the spaces and guidance offered by the school. I dived into the world of Max/MSP, Ableton, the fundamentals of electroacoustic music and sound space work, and continued to explore sounds with these tools. My practice became experimental, and instead of working with traditional instruments, I explored computer sounds (sine waves and frequency modulation) and the sound world of soap foam. From this experimentation and wanderings, two pieces emerged: *How long will the orange sea remain?* for voice, field recordings and electronics in 4-speaker setup and *thin worlds move on, going up, sideways* for an aquarium filled with water and foam, live video projection and two performers. Both are works continuously in progress.

*'Yet often the mountain gives itself most completely when I have no destination, when I reach nowhere in particular, but have gone out merely to be with the mountain as one visits a friend with no intention but to be with him.'* (Nan Shepherd, 1977/2019, p. 15).

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<sup>6</sup> Such as flowers that predict weather changes by air pressure difference or diminishing brightness of a cloudy sky, or birds singing differently when bad weather approaches; or estimating the temperature by observing which organisms are active in your surroundings. (Wohllleben, 2019, pp. 20, 23, 36).

To wander is to move around without clear direction. Nan Shepherd wrote beautifully about this in *The Living Mountain*, a book I find very special. In this quote, for me the mountain could be replaced by any place you explore and that is dear to you (in my case, walking along the Aare River, or exploring electronic sounds). I find the idea that something reveals most of itself when you don't have a clear destination or purpose for it beforehand inspiring. It is an encouragement to be more open and listen to what is around you. This booklet is not a manifest or, in the words of Robert Macfarlane, who wrote an introduction to *The Living Mountain*, 'there is no message here or neat take-home moral' (p. xxxiii). I hope this research can connect to how Macfarlane writes about *The Living Mountain*: 'the knowledge it offers arrives slantwise, from unexpected directions and quarters, and apparently limitlessly'.

## I Where do ecosystems end and where do they start?

August 21, 2023 Praz-de-Fort

At the beginning of the land surrounding the chalet one can find a very large erratic boulder.<sup>7</sup> The stone is enormous. It is bizarre to think how it ever got here. Brought here from far away, extracted from its environment, with a new ecosystem emerging on the surface. In this area it is not protected, in others it is.<sup>8</sup>

That afternoon we had arrived for a week-long residency in Praz-de-Fort, a small town in the mountains of Switzerland on the route to La Fouly. The residency was the first project I did for my studies at the HKB in Bern where I would be studying for the next 5 months. We were invited by interdisciplinary collective MALM, who were there for a month doing artistic research on *Ecotones*. An ecotone is a steep transition between ecological communities, ecosystems or ecological regions (Kark, 2017). It is an area where two habitats meet and integrate. Ecotones range from mountain treelines to transitions

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<sup>7</sup> Erratic boulders or glacial erratics is a term from geology and are rocks that have been transported by ice to a location elsewhere, away from where it originates. Often they have been relocated hundreds of kilometers, differing in their geology from the surrounding landscape. Then they form habitat islands for regionally rare rock dwellers like mosses, ferns and lichens (Hepenstrick, 2021, p.1). In Dutch, an erratic is called *zwerfkei* or *zwerfsteen* which literally means a wandering or roaming stone. Something *erratic* is something that is not following a system, moving or behaving in a way that is not regular, certain, or expected.

<sup>8</sup> The protection of erratic boulders was in several cantons of Switzerland the first initiative for nature conservation (Reynard, 2015), protecting the habitat islands they became for rare rock dwellers (see previous footnote). In The Netherlands there are erratic boulders from the Ice Age, originating from Scandinavia, used in the prehistoric to build dolmen. A member of collective MALM explained that not every erratic is protected, even in Switzerland, some have even names and others don't, but later on I could not find out exactly when an erratic is protected and when it is not.

between large biomes and ecoregions. The term is used in ecology, although MALM's perspective is not fixed to that; what constitutes an ecotone can be open to interpretation. The border from one country to another could also be seen as ecotone, or our skin that separates us from the outside world, or one art discipline working with another one. After a warm lunch, each of us took their own exploratory walk in the area. By the end of the afternoon, we had all walked to the boulder.

Taking the erratic boulder as a point of inspiration or starting point for collecting ideas. I had to think of filming different stone surfaces, of recording rolling stones that sound like thunder when a large amount of water flows through the river.

stone surfaces: shadow play, depth of field, contrast, dark and brightness

moss

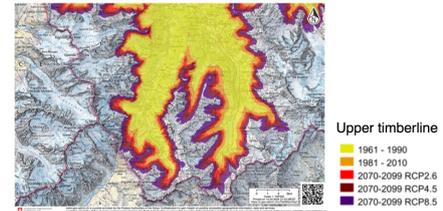
spider silk

glimmers/sparkles

light

Collective MALM suggested taking the boulder as an inspiration point to gather ideas and material. That afternoon, I made videos of stone surfaces and shadow play, varying in sharpness, contrast and brightness. I liked how the heavily overexposed and underexposed video became a new abstract world. The overexposed video reminded me of a map of a mountain area showing the treeline over a longer period of time. The treeline is a clear ecotone; it represents the limit to which trees still occur, and it shows where the alpine zone starts. With climate change making mountain areas warmer, the treeline is slowly shifting upward each year. Other circumstances, rock fall, avalanches, snow beds, can move the treeline down in specific places. It shows that ecotones are not fixed positions, but rather zones that are changeable by human intervention, invasive species, bigger (disrupted) cycles, or climate change. Ecotones 'do not simply represent a boundary or an edge; the concept of an ecotone assumes the existence of active interaction between two or more ecosystems with properties that do not exist in either of the

adjacent ecosystems.' (Kark, 2007).<sup>9</sup> Perhaps we could think of them as wandering ecotones, subject to external factors and bigger cycles.

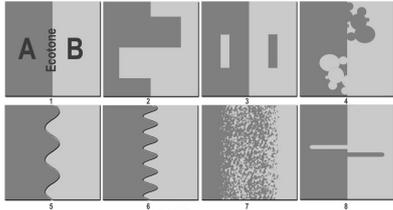


Map with the upper timberline over a longer period of time, from map.geo.admin.ch

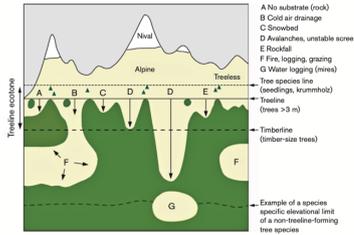
<sup>9</sup> Another interesting thing about ecotones is that species richness and abundances tend to peak in ecotonal areas. (Kark, 2007).



Six film stills from stones, made in Praz-de-Fort, Switzerland on August 21, 2023



Schematic representation of different types of ecotones on a square surface  
 1 & 2 equal & homogeneous surfaces  
 3 & 4 inclusion of each medium in the other, creating multiple ecotones  
 5 & 6 lengthened ecotone without excessively modifying the environment  
 7 shows a common interpenetration of media (such as found at the edge of a forest.  
 8 ecotone that could have been formed by an animal, modifying its environment.  
 From *Ecotone* [Graphic], by Lamiot, 2009, Wikipedia.



Schematic representation of the treeline ecotone, showing various ways in which the treeline can be displaced downslope by disturbance, snow beds, or substrate. From Körner, 2012, p. 19

I wrote down some loose thoughts.

I have not yet landed  
 I see the mountains  
 I hear the river  
 I smell the pine trees  
 the grass

but am I really  
 there  
 the long journey in a short time<sup>10</sup>  
 gone is the sense of reality

even though I can point to the place on the map

it is true that the mountains themselves have something unreal  
 how will this feeling be in a week?  
 what do I want to add to this landscape?

avoiding the magnificence of the mountains, focusing on the  
 details around me

We showed each other our findings. Someone mentioned my videos were almost a personal look from one stone to another through perspective. Another saw my feeling of being overwhelmed reflected in the overexposed video, the close up of the stone and the shadow play of leaves, and understood in this feeling the focus on details. Someone else mentioned getting connected to a place by walking. These comments were valuable; some of them I had not formulated in this way yet.

<sup>10</sup> A day before arriving in Praz-de-Fort, we drove from Porto in Portugal to Paris by car, from where I took the train to Switzerland.

August 22, 2023

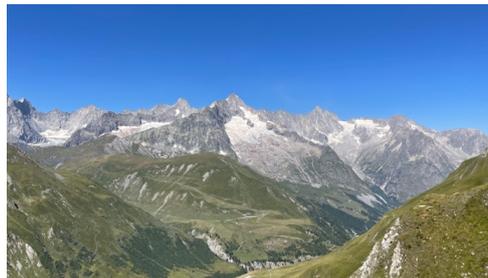
The next day, we took a mountain hike to the Fenêtre de Ferret mountain pass, from where we had a view of Italy. The border between Italy and Switzerland is on the ridge here. This too is an ecotone: on the one hand, it is a border between two countries, between two languages; on the other, it is a border between two mountain sides and climates: the northern and southern sides of the mountain, a windward and leeward side, and so, depending on the main wind direction, a wetter side and a dryer side. It is a point where water flows either to the valleys of Italy or to the valleys of Switzerland.

Along the way there was time to get to know the other students better. We paused at a beautiful mountain lake full of fish where, of course, we took a dip. Later, we did several assignments, such as drawing a southern mountainside towards us, little covered with snow or glacial ice, leaving a gritty rock, morene, behind; or an assignment in which we worked in pairs to imitate the landscape around us. On the trip back down, I chose my own pace and thought a lot about being there.

The landscape still felt unreal, even though we had walked all day, feeling the fatigue in my legs, the warmth of the sun on my face, stones in my pockets....

Perhaps this was partly because joining the residency had been a sudden decision while I was on vacation in Portugal. In a short time, and earlier than planned, we had driven back by car. Suddenly, I was in a new environment, alone, in a group where mostly French was spoken, a language I don't speak well enough. This made me sometime feel excluded and homesick. It felt strange to be in such a beautiful place, and at the same time preferring not to be there, or actually wanting to be there but preferring to be alone, in your own pace, or with people close to you.

From where I was walking I had a sweeping vista, different heights, different colors, different rocks. So many layers of time visible in a single glance: young grass with pink clovers under my feet, older firs against the hills below, and then all the rock and glacial ice in the distance. I felt small. 'What can I add to this landscape?' I wrote the day before, pondering a new composition for there. This question lingered, being overwhelmed by the amount of material: I could dive deeper into type of rocks, into ecotones, into treelines, into erratic stones, into the history of this area....



On the way down from Fenêtre de Ferret - La Fouly, August 22, 2023

August 23, 2023 – writing workshop

On Wednesday afternoon one member of collective MALM gave a writing workshop. We sat on the ground among the trees, two curious cows were grazing around us. The answers I wrote down in the writing exercises, gave me insight into why writing fieldnotes is important to my compositional process.

write answers to the following questions, don't think about it for too long:

*why am I sometimes not able to write or create?*

when my head is full

or when my body is tired

when my head is empty

when there are too many possibilities

when I cannot choose, and not yet willing to try out just one of the possible options

when I don't find a quiet time

to be alone, or in silence

or when I cannot listen to myself or to the environment

where I am in

*choose three things that help you create*

- reflect: how do I feel, what do I see  
let the thoughts go freely while writing or thinking
- ask: what do I want to experiment with in this moment?
- a good conversation or a good tea

For many pieces I wrote poetry: as performative element of the piece itself, as program note, or in the process of creating the piece. 'Perhaps I use poetry and associations to get a grip on the world around me, and to give meaning to that what I listen to, what I attempt to create, and what I see.', I wrote last year in a notebook.

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During the process of composing, I go back and forth: the musical material, the listening, my own mental or emotional state or moment of living, the season we are in, reflecting on that in words, coming back to the music, relating the words on the music, the music defining the words.<sup>11</sup>

August 24, 2023

from here I gaze into the rocks  
the millions of stones  
small, round, massive  
and in the distance the large, rough, protruding

there's a light welcome breeze  
in this heat

in this moment, the water knows no stopping  
I do not want it to stop either

am I here  
am I really here

sitting for a while  
did the little bird not realize I was there  
or has it gotten used  
to my presence

it is hard to let your thoughts go free with a goal in mind<sup>12</sup>

out of focus, they went  
a soft meandering  
overwhelmed  
after dusk

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<sup>11</sup> This is how my composition *the days, they wonder away* came into being, see chapter 4.

<sup>12</sup> At the beginning of the residency, we were invited to start making something with no final goal or realization of the work in mind. This while we also knew that two weeks later there would be an exhibition around the chalet, where we would exhibit the work.

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from here I see the water  
the path that is carved out

what trees are around this place?<sup>13</sup>

The words above are fragments of what would later become the installation *Vana hier / From here*. We were invited by collective MALM to choose a spot around the chalet where we wanted to make a work, which would be exhibited on location a few weeks later. A place among the trees at the edge of the river, overlooking a mountainside caught my attention. It had different aspects: the mountain in the distance, the sound of the river, red, grey and white-ish stones within it, trees on the other side, green covered stones around me, pine needles on the ground. Here, I imagined a speaking voice, wondering and observing its surroundings.

I wanted to get to know this place, so I returned to this spot as much as I could and noted down all that I saw, heard, smelled, thought and took in.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> 1) the first tree when you enter the forest: *Larix decidua*, 2) above the chair: *Abies alba*, 3) the tree directly in front of the chair: a hazel, 4) a little behind nr. 3: *Carpinus*, 5) the dead tree: a birch, 6) on the waterfront: *Populus*.

<sup>14</sup> Composer David Dunn created a work called *Purposeful Listening in Complex States of Time* (1997-98), for one listener in twenty outdoor environments of low level ambient sound. Each score page has instructions on what to listen to, for example: sky, body or ground level, a specific direction or omni-direction, the distance of the listener to the environment to be paid attention to, and whether it should concern a realtime, a remembered or an imagined sound event. Each realization of the score has to be documented through various media such as sound recording, photographs or verbal descriptions.



August 24, 2023 Praz-de-Fort



August 25, 2023 - Recording stones

In addition to the stone videos, I recorded sounds related to stones. Further upstream, the river was wider and less deeply eroded. The bed was littered with stones. The water was low; in many places you could stand on the riverbed without your feet getting wet. I listened to the water up close. Here and there I noticed a low irregular rhythm, where water splashed over a stone. The sound was difficult to record, overpowered by the rushing of water, but some EQ helped.

On the banks of this same section of the river, I dug through gravel and pebbles with my hands. I pushed them down, let them hit larger stones. Halfway down, I placed my zoom recorder and tried to capture this sound of gravel falling onto the stones.

A third sound that I recorded was the rotational movement of a small stone over a larger stone. While making the circle, the sound on the surface changes. I made recordings of fast rotations and slow rotations, speeding up and down and rotations becoming movements of only going back and forth. These sounds fascinated me, and they gave me ideas for a new (still to be written) piece. I imagined two performers on location, making these rotational sounds on one big stone for as long as they can endure, since it's a pretty physical task. I could also imagine a more composed work with these different rotational sounds. Listening back to the recordings, some parts of these rotational stones became quite abstract.

With all the fieldnotes and stone recordings, I returned to The Netherlands at the end of the week. Back home, I pulled all the sentences together that I had written in my notebook about the place among the trees and view on the river. I added words, erased words, and recorded the English version of the poem with my voice. Our teacher Angela Koerfer-Bürger, who organized our participation in the residency, made a translation into French and recorded her voice, as the majority of the coming audience to the exhibition in Praz-de-Fort on September 2<sup>nd</sup>, would be French speaking. The work, titled *Vanaf Hier / From Here* was heard through a speaker placed against a tree. There was one chair on which the visitor could sit in my shoes, so to speak, and contemplate the same sound and view as I did while writing the text.

A few weeks later, a second exhibition was organized in Bern at Cabane B, a small exhibition space next to the train tracks in Bümpliz. This required some adjustments in the work. No longer would the sounds of the river, the creaking of the trees, the smell of earth and views of mountains be present, with which the text went into dialogue in Praz-de-Fort. I made a second

version, in which I added the recordings made from stones and water. People visiting the exhibition, could listen to *Vanaf Hier / From Here over headphones.*

The residency in Praz-de-Fort on Ecotones was a special experience. I could not imagine a better project to start the semester at a new school with, as this encounter with the Alps in Switzerland, with people that knew the area. Not that the mountains were entirely new to me: just last summer, I had hiked a part of the *via alpina* with tent and backpack with my partner Hidde, on a section of the mountains close to Bern. However, this time I learned more about them, about its treelines, rocks and plants; and by repeatedly writing and visiting the same place.

Being there was also a sort of 'in between' period. A transition from my life in The Hague to a place unknown, looking forward and wondering about how my time in Bern would be like: how the school would be, the classes, the teachers and fellow students. Strangely enough, coming home after the residency to pick my things for moving to Bern, I suddenly didn't want to go. I returned to a familiar place, reunited with people I care for, and now I was leaving again.. Perhaps this could be considered an ecotone too: where does the place that is familiar to you end, and where does a new one start?

The residency and the mountains set a tone for what was to come. In the work I made, I used a way of noticing and writing that I wanted to keep exploring. It gave me curiosity to see how the landscape near my new home in Bern and the mountains in the distance would unfold and how it would change over the seasons.



Exhibition Praz-de-Fort, September 2, 2023 Photo by Théo Héritier



Finisage at Cabane B, Bern, September 21, 2023 Photo by Mathilda Olmi

**From here** – Amba Klapwijk, 2023

between the leaves, I gaze into the rocks  
millions of stones  
small, round, massive  
and in the distance large, rough, protruding..

I feel a light breeze that is welcome  
in this heat

in this moment, the water knows no stopping  
I don't want it to stop either

from here  
I try to see you  
branches and leaves block my view  
I know that you are slowly, but ever faster,  
moving upwards

do you see the red stones in the river?  
here, green, or brown, covered with pine needles  
above, sparkling  
below, they seem snow white  
but those... are red

am I here  
am I really here?

at night, in the twilight  
I smell the earth beneath my feet  
the leaves of the trees  
it has finally rained  
the crickets are singing  
it is quiet

the next morning  
clouds slowly move  
passing by, over and around  
the mountain

rustling sounds in the silver fir above me  
from branch to branch  
a pine cone falls down besides me

I remember, the day before yesterday, the rumbling of stones  
when a huge amount of water  
rushed through the river  
as if a thunderstorm was coming

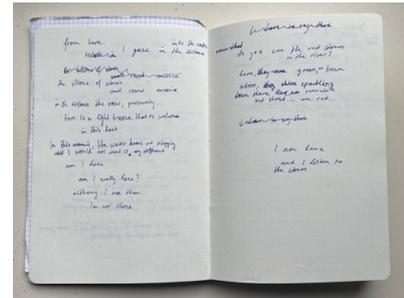
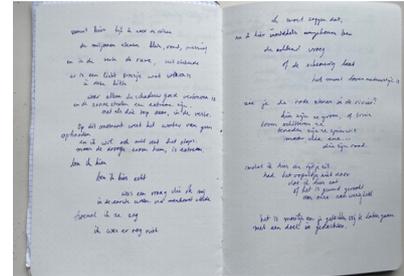
now it is calm, except for the jays  
that have perched in the branches around me

I get up  
my path passes a large stone  
covered with green velvet  
I put my hand on its flank  
and feel its warmth

I am here,  
and I listen to the stones



Red stones in the river, September 2, 2023 Picture by Angela Koerfer-Bürger



Fragments of *From Here* in my notebook, August 24, 2023

## II The living mountain

September 12, 2023 - in the train

On the way to Bern, via Utrecht, Frankfurt, and Basel.  
Gradually the landscape changes.

September 20, 2023 - an afternoon in the garden

A while back I started reading the book *The Living Mountain* by Nan Shepherd (b. 1893, near Aberdeen). Nan Shepherd was a Scottish mountain lover, writer, poet and educator, and explored the Cairngorm Mountains in northeast Scotland her entire life on foot. It led her to writing *The Living Mountain*, in which she examines all facets of the mountain - the plateau, the valleys, the inside, the recesses, the water, air and light, being there.<sup>15</sup> Although she wrote this book in the last years of World War II, it was not published until 1977.

The Living Mountain is difficult to describe. 'A celebratory prose-poem? A geo-poetic quest? A place-paeon? A philosophical enquiry into the nature of knowledge? A metaphysical mash-up of Presbyterianism and the Tao? None of these descriptions quite fits the whole, though it is all of these things in part.' (Shepherd (1977/2019), introduction by Macfarlane, p. xiv).<sup>16</sup> I am captivated by her book. She writes with such delicacy that you can almost taste or touch the environment, you become immersed in *being with* the mountain. She manages to draw an energy out of you that makes you want to head out there yourself, right now, to those mountains, to take in the landscape with all your senses.

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<sup>15</sup> This is unique. Most books about mountaineering have been written by men who are mostly focused on the climb to the summit. 'But to aim for the highest point is not the only way to climb a mountain,' (Shepherd (1977/2019), introduction by Macfarlane, p. xvi).

<sup>16</sup> Robert Macfarlane, writer of books, films and music, wrote an introduction for *The Living Mountain*. He is deeply inspired by Nan Shepherd. His books concentrate on landscape, places, and our relationship as humans with different environments.

I find this embodied experience that Shepherd writes about special, it distinguishes itself from other books about experiences in nature. That afternoon in the garden on September 20<sup>th</sup>, I noted these words from Macfarlane in my notebook:

‘Shepherd’s belief in bodily thinking gives *The Living Mountain* a contemporary relevance. More and more of us live more and more separately from contact with nature. We have come increasingly to forget that our minds are shaped by the bodily experience of being in the world – its spaces, textures, sounds, smells and habits – as well as by genetic traits we inherit and ideologies we absorb. We are literally losing touch, becoming disembodied, more than in any previous historical period. (...) One should use ‘the whole of one’s body to instruct the spirit’, Shepherd wrote decisively to Neil Gunn. ‘This is the innocence we have lost,’ she says, ‘living in one sense at a time to live all the way through.’ Her book is a hymn to ‘living all the way through’: to touching, tasting, smelling and hearing the world.’<sup>17</sup> (Shepherd, 1977/2019, introduction by Macfarlane, p. xxxi).

These words resonated with me that afternoon. This is exactly how I want to experience the world. Shepherd inspires me in the way I can look at my surroundings, and to communicate that in my own words. Perhaps the composition *Vanaf hier / From here* was such an attempt at ‘living all the way through’. I admire Shepherd’s knowledge gained from years of experience in the area, but also her talent to express it all in such rich language. This immersive experience also reminds me of the experience I aim for when I compose some of my compositions, through the use of light and placement of the audience.<sup>18</sup> The way you listen to music, in a dark room, sitting on the floor or in a comfortable chair, among the musicians or in a classical theater set-up, outdoors in the open air, in a black box or during the day in a church with natural light... these factors all contribute to how you experience a work, and I like to work with them.

<sup>17</sup> And he continues... ‘if you manage this, then you might walk ‘out of the body and into the mountain’, such that you become, briefly, ‘a stone... the soil of the earth.’ (Shepherd, 1977/2019, introduction by Macfarlane, p. xxxi).

<sup>18</sup> Later on I will describe my composition *Hoelang zal de oranje zee blijven? / How long will the orange sea remain?* in which I used light and let the audience sit around me.

More importantly the words remind me of the belief that any form of awareness towards your environment through your senses and awareness that you are a part of that environment, makes you interact more carefully with your surroundings and the planet. This awareness and sensibility is something I hope to convey to my listeners in my own compositions.<sup>19</sup>

October 1, 2023 - near the Matterhorn

a white world

I long to go to you  
peril on a silken thread  
seems invisible

a light breeze  
first pines turn yellow

and I look at  
the white world  
infinitely endless  
endlessly infinite

I had intended to think about projects while being here, but..

I don’t want to think with my head  
I want to record everything with my body  
as best as it can  
as much as it can<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Pauline Oliveros, accordionist and composer, began in the 1960s with *deep listening*, to explore how music can play a healing role for individuals and in society, in response to a number of political events. True listening is more than just a musical thing, it is a constant activity in daily life, an attitude towards the world. When you learn to listen better, it turns out there is much more to hear than you thought. (Meijer, 2021, pp. 68, 69).

<sup>20</sup> Here I am referring to words of Macfarlane: ‘What Shepherd learns – and what her book showed me – is that the true mark of long acquaintance with a single place is a readiness to accept uncertainty: a contentment with the knowledge that you must not seek complete knowledge. (...) This is not a book that relishes its own discoveries; it prefers to relish its own ignorances.’ (Shepherd, 1977/2019, introduction by Macfarlane, p. xxvi).

I want to be  
here I want to be  
breath all the air there is

no cloud in the sky  
only endless blue sea  
of sky air  
a gossamer thin  
curtain-like glow  
looking towards  
sun and the matterhorn

now and then I hear a black bird  
krr krr  
an alpine chough?

I could stay for hours  
ever wandering to the treeline

An excerpt I read today:

'Then we looked into each other's eyes, and again into the pit. I waded slowly back into shallower water. There was nothing that seemed worth saying. My spirit was as naked as my body. It was one of the most defenseless moments of my life.' (Shepherd, 1977/2019, p. 13).

Sometimes things come together without knowing yet why. Sometimes they don't necessarily come together but exist side to side.



Near the Matterhorn, October 1, 2023

October 4, 2023 - a day in train: Bern, Brig, Domodossola

A train route between mountains, through greenery, views of clouds.

The day before yesterday during a walk along the river the Aare, I talked with Hidde about research. About how I struggle with finding a research question, or any good direction at all. He mentioned the question, what happens when I repeatedly write, reflect and go to a certain place? A concrete and at the same time poetic question, it stuck with me.

A recurring question from my research supervisor Alison Isadora: from what perspective do I want to approach seasonal time?<sup>21</sup> Today my answer to that is: from my perspective, from my own being, with associations to other perspectives.

'That's the way to see the world: in our own bodies,' wrote the poet, Buddhist and forester Gary Snyder. (1990, p. 106, as cited in Shepherd (1977/2019, introduction by Macfarlane, p. xxviii)

and

'Here then [in the mountains] may be lived a life of the senses so pure, so untouched by any mode of apprehension but their own, that the body may be said to think.' (Shepherd, 1977/2019, p. 105).

Macfarlane considers this the most radical proposition in her book because it was ahead of its time as a philosophical position. He mentions similarities in Shepherd's thinking with philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in her conclusions about color perception, sense of touch and embodied knowledge. Merleau-Ponty considered the body-mind dualism of post-Cartesian thinking unjustified. 'He argued that knowledge is 'felt': that our bodies think and know

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<sup>21</sup> From my own perspective, from the perspective from objects, or the perspective of places, or other time scales... to name a few. This came from an earlier research question that focused about the passage of seasonal time, that I was interested in while composing *the days, they wonder away*. I will elaborate on this piece later.

in ways that precede cognition (the processing of experience by our minds). Consciousness, the human body and the phenomenal world are therefore inextricably intertwined or 'engaged'. The body 'incarnates' our subjectivity and we are thus, Merleau-Ponty proposed, 'embedded' in the 'flesh' of the world.' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, passim but especially pp. 144-46, as cited in Shepherd (1977/2019), introduction by Macfarlane).

Reading about this bodily thinking attracted me in *The living mountain*. The natural outside world and our relationship to it has enchanted me for a long time. I was already working with this in my very first creations.<sup>22</sup> I enjoy reading nature journals and going out on my own, but I realize more and more, or perhaps I know how to phrase this better now, that it is the relationship with that environment that fascinates me. That it is not just about focusing on that natural world, but about being in that world as a human being with also a body.<sup>23</sup>

Eva Meijer wrote an essay called *Vuurduin - Aantekingen bij een wereld die verdwijnt* (Fire dune, notes on a world disappearing), in which she philosophizes about nature that is disappearing, the extinction of species, disrupted ecosystems, winters that become autumns, and what we could do about it. She wrote this while returning to one of the Wadden Sea Islands Vlieland, a place with memories from her youth and whose ecosystems are under pressure. She explains how nature is a vague concept that is often interpreted romantically or conservatively, especially in the Netherlands, where everything is constructed and managed. Non-human animals are reduced to this concept, as if they have no cultures and as if people are not made of natural materials. What is seen as natural is itself a cultural construction. Eva Meijer mentions that she does worry about the disappearing of what we call nature, the living world where we are all home in. At the same

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<sup>22</sup> For example, in a video work *Reflets dans l'eau* and a photo series in which I photographed my high school classmates with leaves, stones, flowers, earth, water, found in the environment around the school. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MwJWUmLSHjg>

<sup>23</sup> A few years ago I collaborated with scenographer Paul Boereboom, on the work *Alterations*, a virtual world of a slowly aging and decaying landscape of human skin, in which you could explore worlds of objects and organisms. It was an ode to the other than human and it revealed connections between the human and its environment. We were inspired by Timothy Morton's philosophy on object oriented ontology. To see the work: <https://gaudeamuscreendive.com/alterations/>

time, everything will disappear: family, loved ones, pets, and the natural world shows us that that's part of it. (Meijer, 2021, pp. 10, 11).

'Something moves between me and it [the mountain]. Place and mind may interpenetrate until the nature of both are altered. I cannot tell what this movement is except by recounting it.' (Shepherd, 1977/2019, p. 8).

Nature and culture are not opposites. Donna Haraway points to the role physical micro-processes play in our existence and that these processes are the foundation of our lives. We are made up of matter and owe the fact that we are alive to it, but these biological processes are at the same time thoroughly social. We are always connected to others: both as matter (for example a virus) and in numerous symbolic relationships and processes (language or social relationships between groups of people). They determine what our living worlds and bodies look like and what meaning we give to them. (Meijer, 2021, p. 32).

Shepherd writes that the body thinks best when the mind stops: 'I like it to be so light that I am continually coming to the surface of awareness and sinking back again, just seeing, not bedevilled with thought, but living in the clear simplicity of the senses.' (Shepherd, 1977/2019, p. 93). This resonated. On the train on the way back to Bern, I wrote:

I don't want to write a research that attempts to be only rational. When I go out I often don't want to think at all, I just want to be.

Sometimes that feels simple, but maybe that recognition is of value, to embrace, and so I should just write, write, write, and not think too much.

Writing became my way of using my senses, of observing everything as much as I could. I resolved to make this writing a regular habit, for noticing my environment, the changing of the season, and for grounding in this new place called Switzerland. And so I saw a green, sultry landscape changing into sparsely yellow, brown, red, until white and grey made their appearance.

There is no artist who works with the seasons like Andy Goldsworthy. He works with the passage of time in interactions with outdoor places in all weathers. From fleeting moments, leaves drifting away on the river, a dry imprint of his body on ground that is for the rest rained on, to water from tides flooding a work of art, or works that change over the season. His work thrives on ecotones, a transition zone from one situation to another. He spends hours, days, and weeks learning about the environment and its materials he chose for a work.

'Whenever possible, I make a work every day. Each work joins the next in a line that defines the passage of my life, marking and accounting for my time and creating a momentum which gives me a strong sense of anticipation for the future. (...) I thrive on disruption forced by seasonal changes – a hard freeze, heavy snow, a sudden thaw, leaf fall, strong winds – which can change dramatically any working patterns that have become established in a particular season. Not that seasons can be easily separated from one another. The smell of autumn can often be detected well before the season fully arrives, just as emerging growth can be seen in winter. For some plants, such as mosses, winter is their summer.' (Goldsworthy, 2008, p. 7)

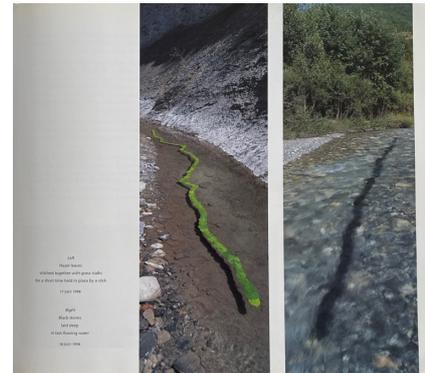
I recognize myself in his work. The experiences or prospects of seasons other than the one you are in, is something that keeps recurring in my own writings. He is interacting with his environment and he studies it attentively. He doesn't create a representation of that environment, as for instance, by drawing or taking a photograph of a landscape, or by making a field recording, but he has deliberately changed something there, however quickly it may vanish. I recognize that in my recordings in Praz-de-Fort, where I was interacting with the stones among the sounds of the river.

October 10, 2023 - an afternoon in nature park Gantrisch

cow bells tinkling sounding  
first leaves of small trees turn yellow and brown  
and leaves of rosebay willowherbs



From *Time* by Andy Goldsworthy (2008):  
*Rain Shadows*, 1992-2000, p. 21  
*Eleven Arches*, Scotland, 1995, p. 31



*Hazel leaves stitched together with grass stalks for a short time held in place by a stick, and Black stones laid deep in fast-flowing water*, France, 1997, p. 81  
*Dead hazel sticks*, Scotland, 1997, p. 34-35

the landscape is still bizarrely green  
we are in a mountain inlet landscape - or mountain outcrop -  
however you look at it  
the transition from hills to mountains

October 12, 2023 - in the garden

leaves swirl down  
the grass carpet slowly covered in yellow and brown  
leaves in the hedge, ivy, glow from orange to stunning red

I sit outside without a coat - is it even autumn?

I headed out with a certain place in my mind. To a place in Eifenau close to the river, but then a little higher, with benches overlooking a meadow that falls into the valley. Down below flows the Aare, you can't see it from here because of the trees. There is a view of Gurten, and behind the trees houses and some apartment buildings are visible. It is a nice spot for the last rays of sunlight.

With some disappointment, I took a seat on one of the benches. Last week the field was still full of tall grasses and flowers, red clovers, I think cleavers too, but there is nothing left of that. The grass has been mown. I had thought this could be a nice place to return to and write regularly.

The freshly cut grass is so green that it stands out against the dark leaves of the trees. A brown ochre glow stretches out here and there over the trees, though they are still mostly green. I wonder how long it will take for everything to turn yellow, red and brown, from this viewpoint. The small tree above me is almost bare, except for a few leaves. Tomorrow we head to the mountains in Italy. I am curious what it is like there.



Eifenau, October 2, 2023



At the Aare with view on the mountains,  
September 24, 2023

'I had thought this could be a nice place to return to and write regularly.'

When moving to Bern, I had resolved to pick a particular place not far from home, to return to again and again as I had done during the residency in Praz-de-Fort. I was very lucky with my room in a large house with a garden, just a five-minute walk from park Elfenau and ten minutes to the banks of the river Aare. Consequently, I could often be found in those places. In the weeks that followed, however, I could not decide on a fixed spot. On some days I went to the riverbank in the direction of Thun, looking out on the distant mountains, at other times I preferred taking a long walk along the riverbank in the direction of Bern. Or I went, as on this particular day, to a somewhat higher point in Elfenau where you have a view of the Gurten. I felt then that I wanted to write words in all these places. In retrospect, I find this interesting and it raises questions. Maybe I found it difficult to make one choice because it was a large area? What does a place have to offer to make you want to come back weekly? Why was the choice at the residency in Praz-de-fort so easy? Did I need to get to know this area of the Aare riverbed better before I could pick any favorite spot?

By the end of my time in Bern I had found a favorite place a little further down the river, where in clear weather there are beautiful views of the mountains. It is also the spot where I took twice a dip, where the water flows in circles in some areas so you don't drift away immediately.

'Yet often the mountain gives itself most completely when I have no destination, when I reach nowhere in particular, but have gone out merely to be with the mountain as one visits a friend with no intention but to be with him.' (Shepherd, 1977/2019, p. 15)

This quote, where Shepherd describes a wandering, a moving around without clear direction, became a motto for me in the months that followed. I thought of it not just for the majestic mountains, but for any place or thing that you hold dear. It would linger through my thinking, through my words, through my compositions (mostly in *How long will the orange sea remain?*) and through my walks around the river.



### III Val Grande - Sky grief



Pictures taken near bivacco Scaredi, October 14, 2023

Just across the border with Italy, near Domodossola, there is mountain range called Parco Nazionale della Val Grande. Surrounded by mountain peaks, it is an area you can only access on foot. A magical place, where nature has free space. Farmers used to live there and the forests were used and planned for wood production. Since the end of the Second World War, people no longer live here. Partly due to the decimation of partisan that sheltered in the wilderness of Val Grande, partly because the area was cut off from new modern conveniences like running water and electricity. Traces of human settlements can be seen in the landscape. We visited this area for three days.

October 14, 2023 - Val Grande

A quick note

hiking from bivacco Scaredi to bivacco In la Piana and up from there

surrounded by mountains covered in mist  
somewhere far away rushing water  
closer I hear crisping leaves  
sometimes a chirp  
sometimes a blowfly  
browning fern tops

it's still quite comfortable in a t-shirt  
for the time of year

grasses are golden white  
green lichens on the rocks

a valley

so secluded  
mystical almost

ants  
beetles  
raspberry leaves

thin clouds move on  
upwards  
sideways<sup>24</sup>

different sides of the mountain range reveal and  
conceal, hide themselves

rrrr rrrr rrr krrr a crow? a raven?

a jackdaw?



Pictures taken near bivacco Scaredi, October 14, 2023

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<sup>24</sup> Became the title for a new piece for *Input Duo*, with 'worlds' instead of clouds: *thin worlds move on, going up, sideways*

October 14, 2023 - 18:51

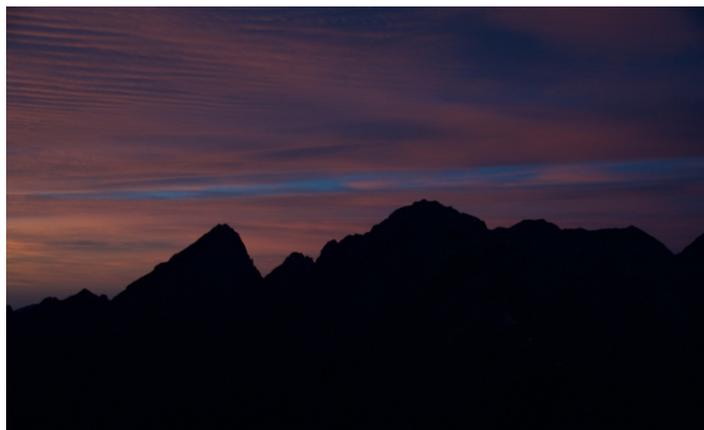
Arrived at bivacco Alpe Mottac  
surrounded by mountain peaks  
fog in the valley  
and halfway up the mountains  
the sun has set  
dusk sets in slowly, from now on  
pink, purple, gray, gray-blue skies  
pastel  
half an hour ago, a mountain goat on the path  
wow  
and speechless.



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October 15, 2023 - 10:46

This morning we got up early to watch the sunrise  
from darkness to dawn to orange blue-red glow lights in the  
distance, pink streaks, slowly landscape contours can be seen  
with the first light, or even with just darkness, you only see  
the line where the mountain meets the sky  
the mountains felt very close, like a shell around us  
with more light you started to see the relief, and the distance  
between me and the mountain grows larger and larger  
a single birch rustles beside me, mostly green, a few yellow  
leaves, in a big enough gust of wind now and then they flutter  
away.



58



Sunrise at Bivacco Alpe Mottac, October 15, 2023

Yesterday we were talking about poetry, I had to think of a poem by Rutger Kopland (1985), from the collection *Voor het verdwijnt en daarna*:

De doden zijn zo hevig afwezig, alsof  
niet alleen ik, maar ook zij  
hier staan

en het landschap hun onzichtbare armen  
om mijn schouders slaat.

Ons ontbreekt het aan niets zeggen zij,  
wij zijn deze wereld vergeten,

maar het zijn geen armen, het is landschap.

-

The dead are so fiercely absent, as if  
not only I, but they too  
stand here

and the landscape wraps their invisible arms around my  
shoulders.

We lack nothing they say,  
we have forgotten this world,

but it's not arms, it's landscape.<sup>25</sup>  
(own translation)

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<sup>25</sup> This poem has a different context. In *Natzweiler*, the cycle this poem is a part of, Kopland visits the former concentration camp, now situated in an idyllic peaceful landscape. (van der Vegt, 1986). The poem fits Val Grande: "In June 1944, the Val Grande and the Val Poggallo were the scene of bitter clashes between the partisan formations and the Nazi-Fascist troops. In Poggallo, a plaque commemorates 17 young partisans, some of whom were unknown, killed on 18 June 1944. In the upper Verbano area, the victims of the mopping-up operations were over two hundred, with battles and executions that culminated in Fodotoce, with the execution of 43 partisans captured in various places of the Val Grande."

The twilight hour has something magical to walk through or to experience. So many changes in color, in feeling, observing. Alertness increases, it seems quieter. Your vision is more quickly deceived.

The night before last we walked to the first hut at dusk.

It was exciting and stunning.

We had to keep walking to get in before darkness. We succeeded, virtually without extra light.

Yesterday a longer day's walk to where we are now. In the valley we doubted if we would do it, if we would make it before dusk would set in.

While walking I tried to forget my thoughts and 'walk the body transparent'

but thoughts are unstoppable and go in circles.

I think it would take several more hours and days to get into such a state of being.<sup>26</sup>

The sparse light, with which the dark mountains around us felt so close like a cocoon, the sky changing light beam by light beam imperceptibly, were a special experience. They reminded me of James Turrell's sky works, also called *Sky Spaces*, spaces with an opening, an aperture, in the ceiling to the sky. There are many of them in different places and museums and they are all unique.<sup>27</sup>

Richard Bright describes his experience of James Turrell's *Air Mass* in *When Light is Lost, Life is Lost*:

"The sky is not 'out there', but actually in the ceiling. I can 'see' it and, if I could, I could reach up and 'touch' it. It hovers above me, but somehow it looks two-dimensional, a picture plane suspended. (...) it has a physical presence. It has solidity. I am aware of an imperceptible change in its colour. Time seems to be running slow.

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<sup>26</sup> Shepherd writes in a chapter about *being*: 'after hours of steady walking, with the long rhythm of motion sustained until motion is felt, not merely known by the brain, as the 'still centre' of being ... [you] walk the flesh transparent.' (1977/2019, p. 106)

<sup>27</sup> Museum Voorlinden in The Hague has this work in their permanent collection. Unfortunately, the aperture to the sky was closed when I was there due to rainy weather.

(...) It is as if I am suddenly being shown how to look at the sky. I have lived under it all my life, and yet I have been either too busy or too distracted to notice it. Of course, I have felt the excitement and wonder at its continual changes, of the glorious sunrises and sunsets, but for most of the time the horizons have always been local, a boundary to my understanding. (...) Throughout my life, changes in the sky always seem to be happening 'out there', somewhere else, but that is not how I am feeling at this moment. I feel companioned with the sky.

Its colour is so intense; I have never seen it so blue. I can touch it, not with my hands, but with my eyes. (...) I can feel it changing, getting darker. Is this colour just a memory, or perhaps a dream? It is now black, a black so deep it makes you shiver. Looking out through the aperture I cannot see any stars, although I know they must be there. But this is not blackness; it is full of something from long ago and with the potential of something yet to be. I look around the enclosed space and notice that is now occupied, but I hadn't noticed anyone enter. I go outside, into a clear starry night. That blue is still with me, and I have a feeling it will never go away. For a moment in time, I feel I have learnt how to touch the sky.' (1999, pp. 9, 10)

I liked how Bright described his experience of seeing the sky in such a way that he could 'touch' the sky and how he suddenly began to look differently at something he had been seeing all his life. He later writes that because of the way Turrell uses light, light does not refer to something 'other,' but to 'itself' and to 'our' experience of it. He quotes James Turrell:

'What is important to me is to create an experience of wordless thought, to make the quality and sensation of light itself something really quite tactile. It has a quality seemingly intangible, yet it is physically felt. Often people reach out to try to touch it. My works are about light in the sense that light is present there; the work is made of light. It's not about light or a record of it, but is light. Light is not so much something that reveals, as the revelation itself.' (1990, p.212)



James Turrell's *Air Mass*, In de Hayward Gallery, London, photos by John Riddy (1993).

It led me thinking of Shepherd and the earlier described philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, where mind and body are not separated but that knowledge is felt, that consciousness, the human body and the phenomenal world are intertwined. In Turrell's work, this comes together, it is 'seemingly intangible', yet 'physically felt'.

Looking at the sky and experiencing it so consciously reminded me of cyclicity. Richard Bright writes about this:

'To watch and interpret the skies has always been one of man's most basic instincts, providing a way of placing oneself in the context of the universe. From the moment when connections were made between the alternation of day and night and the motions of the heavens, there has been a fascination with astronomy, and a need to understand the unchanging regularities of the cosmos. Ancient civilizations built up a knowledge of the skies that was in many ways more precise than their knowledge of the world in which they lived. The regularity of the motions of celestial objects enabled them to gain a profound sense of cyclic time and of the predictability of nature. (...) In our age of urbanization and artificial light, it is difficult to appreciate how paramount the sky was to our ancestors. There is now no need to watch the sky to tell the time of day or year. Under the polluted lights of our cities, we scarcely see any stars in the sky. By evolving as an industrial society, we have managed to shut out the sky, and have removed ourselves from one of the most fundamental components of our cultural history.' (Bright, 1999, p. 11).

There is a newly invented term for the grief of no longer being able to see stars because of light pollution: *noctalgia*. It means 'sky grief', the collective pain we experience as light pollution blocks access to the night sky.<sup>28</sup> (De Standaard, 2024).

The disappearance of darkness impacts natural cycles. Migratory birds become disoriented by excessive light at night, bats and other nocturnal

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<sup>28</sup> Half as many stars can be seen in Europe every 11 years. Between 2011 and 2022, the night sky in Europe became 6.5 percent brighter per year. (Kyba, 2023).

animals need darkness to live. Night lighting also disrupts the production of melatonin which in turn affects our health.

Photographer Vincent van Gaalen searched for the last dark areas of Europe in his series *Absence*. With only his cameras, tent and some provisions, he photographs our human absence amid the darkness of the night. Leaves, rocks, water and sky catch the light of the moon and stars. 'Then when I look up, I, like many, am confronted with my nothingness and vulnerability. I believe we need the stars as landmarks, to place ourselves in a bigger picture. Light pollution is an outgrowth of ourselves. It is very healthy for the human brain to be able to look at a world we did not make ourselves. It prevents us from thinking of ourselves as too important.'<sup>29</sup> (De Standaard, 2024).

These words are valuable. Seeing the stars makes us feel small and shows us that we are part of a larger system, if Haraway has not already shown us that. Would we interact the same way with the earth if we were overwhelmed by stars or complete darkness nightly?

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<sup>29</sup> Our time is also called the Anthropocene - the geological epoch defined by human actions. Eva Meijer mentions a few things about that in her essay. The name Anthropocene immediately turns humans back into an exception and a center, when in fact we should learn to think of ourselves as part of the whole. Secondly, it is not about all human actions, but that of a rich western human. It also makes it seem as if people caused the current ecological problems on purpose, which is not always the case. But the name does make the problem clear: the destruction of the natural world made possible by humans seeing themselves as exceptions, as separate from it. (2021, pp. 52, 53).

IV **Where have the days  
with words gone?**

Back in time – to the first few months of this research.

February 23, 2023

Can my research be in the form of a poem? A poem, or prose text? Formulated lived experiences? Can I challenge myself with going to certain places, and start writing? The thought of making the research itself an artwork on its own, intrigues me. But how could I explain more theoretical knowledge? Would a poem be expounding enough? Or could I try to make an explaining text poetic?

The idea of the research in the form of a poem came to me this morning, thinking about a poem I read last night:

Roelof ten Napel uit *Dagen in huis* (Hollands Diep, 2021)

Nog iets over dagen

Iemand zegt dat de beste dagen van zijn leven  
nog komen, en ik herinner me een ander  
die simpelweg zei: ze zouden achter me kunnen liggen.  
Waarna ik me afvraag of de mijne *deze* zijn.  
Alsof je ze naast elkaar kan leggen, als kwamen dagen niet  
in elkaars plaats. Een dag is  
als wat? Niet als een bladzij,  
maar zoals je hem leest, de beweging waarmee je hem  
omslaait, die even in je vingers achterblijft.

Another thing about days

Someone says that the best days of their life  
are yet to come, and I remember another  
who simply said: they might be behind me.  
After which I wonder if mine are these.  
As if you could put them side by side, as if days did not  
come  
in each other's place. A day is  
like what? Not like a page,  
but as you read it, the movement with which you  
turn it, that for a moment remains in your fingers.

(own translation)

February 24, 2023

The poem from Roelof ten Napel resonated with me. I am working on a composition for the Kali Ensemble and mezzo soprano Kristia Michael about cyclic movement. I am trying to grasp what it is in this poem that got me. Perhaps because of 'days', the 'best days of someone's life' and the hypothetical question 'As if you could put them side by side, as if days did not come in each other's place.' I like the thought of the movement with which you turn the day, that remains in your fingers for a moment.

In the composition that I was writing, the singer walks slowly around the audience in a circle. Each of the musicians – on piano, violin, cello and clarinet – would be in a corner of the room being amplified. They play softly, the amplification is relatively loud. There are four speakers surrounding the audience. The amplified sound moves slowly around the speakers in a circle, each instrument in its own cycle and tempo, through automations that I made in Logic. Sometimes the direction of the amplified sound falls together with the acoustic instrument's placement. The voice, which is also amplified, first blends with the other instruments, later the voice and the words distinguish.

Before I had the idea about amplifying all the players, I started with the voice moving in a circle and the four instruments in a corner of the room. By walking, the singer would be in a different place every moment, with a different spatial relation to each instrument constantly. I was curious about these relations in relation to each other. Cyclicity is the quality or state of something that occurs or moves in cycles: a cyclic quality or state. I wondered what kind of cycles exist. The day-night cycle, the tides, solar cycle, saros cycle, circadian cycle, menstruation cycle, biological life cycle, cell cycle, water cycle, carbon cycle, nitrogen cycle, rock cycle, seasons, wave cycles.. to name a few.

In relation to the poem by Roelof ten Napel, I could see the movement of the instruments over the speakers as the days going by: sometimes almost unnoticeable, sometimes obvious and fast. What is something like, your best days? I found it somehow a bit of a sad thought.. some days are happy, some days are sensitive, some are sorrowful, some are achievements, some joyful, some boring, some days are enough, some days are just days. Later I realized more and more that the poem was not entirely fitting with the piece that was slowly developing. Although I first thought to use the poem as text in the piece for the voice, I decided to leave the text of the poem behind and create a text myself. Nevertheless, the poem has left its mark on the piece, for example in the title that became *the days, they wonder away*.

In the composing process, I alternated between writing musical notes, making fieldnotes, brainstorming about the concept of the work, and thinking about the form. On the paper in the image next, I wrote in the center the question, 'What is my composition for Kali and Kristia Michael about?' Around it are concepts and aspects of the piece. In the outer circle, I continue thinking about those concepts or how I use them in this piece.<sup>30</sup>

Some terms and accompanying phrases:

*the passage of days* - the speed, or agonizing slowness, without realizing it, helplessness, rhythm, regularity  
*orchestration* - subtlety, resonance, long lines, flautando, intervals, flageoles, vibrato and non-vibrato, depth, height, multiphonics  
*sun, moon, stars* - each one's movement, luminosity, the universe, all life that comes from movement

<sup>30</sup> This came from an exercise in *Het Grote Schrijf-Doe-Boek* by Louis Stiller (2011). A book with 365 writing exercises from stories to essays, poems to dialogues.



composition itself and trying to explain in words what the piece was about; on the other hand, it was a way to get what I see, feel, think out of my head in order to be able to proceed with the musical notes or the composition.

final text:

*the days, they wonder away  
where have the days with words gone?*

*a dream  
a ray of sun  
sense spring  
in the dark*

*days, they wonder away*

Sometimes the words emerged while composing, as in the first sentence. 'They' came intuitively from 'days,' and 'wonder away' came about on the spot, singing the vocal line behind the piano. Looking for words, I sometimes looked back in older notebooks, in which I found the phrase 'where have the days with words gone?'

February 28, 2023

To mark the movement of the singer in space, I used light. At first, I considered a following spotlight, however, this did not seem practical since the concert would be in Studio 1 at the Royal Conservatory The Hague. A second idea was to use different lights so the singer would sometimes be visible and sometimes not. I came up with a lamp on the ground that would point up at an angle to the wall, in the lane where Kristia would pass by. It ended up being one light source, which slowly became visible halfway through the piece. Kristia steps into the light with the phrase 'where have the days with words gone?', the light slowly fades to darkness as she disappeared from the light, continuing her path.

March 2, 2023

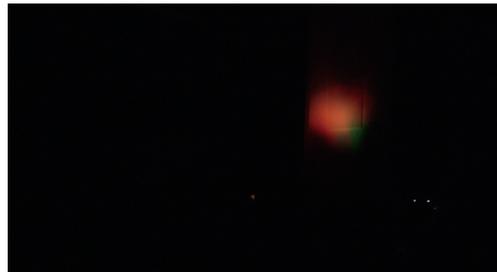
'And not only in time do we expand. In space, too, we expand ourselves far beyond the boundary of what is visible. We leave something of ourselves behind when we leave a place, we stay there, even though we have left. And there are things within us that we can only find again by returning to the place. We approach ourselves, we travel to ourselves when the monotonous thumping of the wheels takes us to a place where we have traveled a trajectory of our lives, however short it may have been. When we enter the platform of the unfamiliar station for the second time, hear the voices from the loudspeakers, smell the typical odors, we have arrived not only at a distant place, but also at the distant domain of our own inner self, in a perhaps very distant corner of ourselves that, if we are anywhere else, lies entirely in darkness and is invisible.'

Pascal Mercier, *Nachttrein naar Lissabon* p. 237

Like more fragments in the novel *Nachttrein naar Lissabon*, this was a fragment that stuck with me, it resonated with me while composing *the days, they wonder away*. For example, 'we leave something of ourselves behind when we leave a place' relates to the amplification of Kristia's voice going at a different cyclic pace than the speed at which she walks and sings. This causes her to 'approach' 'herself' again at another moment, when the cycles meet. 'And not only in time do we extend ourselves. In space, too, we extend ourselves far beyond the limit of what is visible.' In this, I was reminded of the musicians playing in the dark, whose amplification moves past the speakers in a way that as a listener you cannot pinpoint. The circular movement of each instrument over the speakers are only subtly audible, if at all. This is mainly because the note material consists in big parts of long notes. As a listener, you are more likely to feel that something is moving in space, but not knowing exactly how. For contrast, I composed faster circular string movements in the violin and cello in the second half of the piece, and more stuttering words in the vocals, which are slightly more audible in terms of placement over the speakers.



Drawing from my notebook, February 28, 2023



Three moments from *the days, they wander away*, April 21, 2023



## V Wandering and returning

Robert Macfarlane has written a number of wonderful books about our relationship with the landscape. For this research, I read several chapters from *The Old Ways*, in which he searches for paths that have been carved over time by human feet, cartwheels, horses, donkey hooves and by rain, ice and wind. Macfarlane walks these paths, roads and sea trails and discovers stories associated with them.

October 22, 2023 - Sunday

A thought from *The Old Ways* about retracing paths and how one can find something not in the refinding of a particular place, but in the walking itself. I was reminded of a passage by Nan Shepherd where she tells of getting to know the mountain best when she has no specific goal or destination in mind.<sup>31</sup> My research could also be a wandering book, with wandering as the foundation.

On walking roads, Macfarlane wrote: 'These are the consequences of the old ways with which I feel easiest: walking as enabling sight and thought rather than encouraging retreat and escape; paths as offering not only means of traversing space, but also ways of feeling, being and knowing.' (2012, p. 24)

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<sup>31</sup> 'Yet often the mountain gives itself most completely when I have no destination, when I reach nowhere in particular, but have gone out merely to be with the mountain as one visits a friend with no intention but to be with him.' (Shepherd, 1977/2019, p. 15)

October 24, 2023

Rain

A gray dreary sky has nestled in today  
endless and idle  
tapping on the canopy of the forest I'm in  
it is quiet, now that not many go out  
a little walk

to loosen up from the day  
and wander

if this forest were a creative process  
and somewhere I must find the beginning  
or maybe already have found

I wander

not because I don't know where to begin  
even though that is true  
or because I do not know where to continue  
that too is the case

but I wander for the sake of wandering  
would I understand it better that way?

a small tree with pastel red-yellow leaves  
I pass on my path  
different from other colors around here  
birds are more active than expected in this raininess

I record the moment  
a plane flies by<sup>32</sup>  
cowbells below  
what else can I observe?  
a helicopter, a gust of rain  
more drops more wind

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<sup>32</sup> A private airport across the river

a robin shows close up  
the beech tree my umbrella

because of rain I write today walking  
my path, rhythm, so slow  
the water, along I walk might be twice as fast, or  
three?  
and I imagine that I am a sponge and absorb as much as I can  
while at the same time I'm also writing and doing that  
blue tit, blackbird, great tit  
a bird highway, now the dripping slowly stops

maybe this research is a database, where all my fascinations  
and inspirations come together  
I have to think of the bird photographs of Jean Luc Mylayne<sup>33</sup>  
of winning trust from an environment

on ambiguity..

a squirrel across the path, crawls into the tree, runs and  
scrambles from branch to branch, past me  
I stand motionless, turning slowly along..

there, a big muddy pond beside  
ducks float around in pairs

what makes a certain place more special than another? in this  
outside world?

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<sup>33</sup> Jean-luc Mylayne is a photographer whose photos and work ethic I admire. His oeuvre focuses on encounters with birds in their natural habitat and captures their fleeting presence with his analogue camera. Situated in the transition areas between pristine nature and the countryside, Mylayne's photographs are the result of months, sometimes even years of preparation. The title of each work indicates the period during which the artist has explored the surrounding place, observed the bird (which becomes an individual rather than a specimen of a particular species) and gradually gained its trust without feeding or taming it. (Huis Marseille, 2020).

can you tell?  
and what am I looking for anyway?

the sun has broken through  
and blue sky and

shadows emerge

sometimes an idea just forms

is this walking and thinking a meditation

now that the sun is out I don't have to

continue writing today

I am almost back.

That afternoon, instead of going to one place and sitting down, I started writing while walking, which offered me many new insights. My fieldnotes became more associative, due to constant changing of things around me, and my research ideas started to become present in my fieldnotes.

In a chapter on paths, Macfarlane explores the meaning of walking and its relationship to the absorption of knowledge:

'In non-Western cultures, the ideas of footfall as knowledge and walking as a mode of thinking are widespread, often operating in particular as a metaphor for recollection – history as a region one walks back into. Keith Basso has written of how, for the Cibecue Apache, the past is figured as a path or trail (*intin*), trodden by ancestors but largely invisible to the living, which has to be re-approached indirectly via the prompts of certain memorial traces. These traces – which include place names, stories, songs and relics – are sometimes called by the Apache *biké' goz'áá* – 'footprints', 'tracks'. To the Klinchon people of north-western Canada, walking and knowing are barely divisible activities: their term for 'knowledge' and their term for 'footprint' can be used interchangeably. A Tibetan Buddhist text from around 600 years ago uses the word *shul* to mean 'a mark that remains after that which has made it has passed by': footprints are *shul*, a path is *shul*, and such impressions draw one backwards into awareness of past events.' (2012, p. 28)

Macfarlane talks about the etymological relationship between thinking and walking. Our verb to *learn*, which means 'to acquire knowledge', is connected to the Old English *leornian*, meaning 'to get knowledge, to be cultivated'. *Leornian* is then connected to Proto-Germanic word *liznojan*, which has a sense of 'to follow or to find a track'. The prefix comes from the Proto-Indo-European *leis-*, meaning 'track'. And so 'to learn' can route back to 'to follow a track'. (2012, p. 31)

Another interesting thought on knowledge is that from Deleuze and Guattari. Knowledge is often presented tree-like, but according to them, that is not how the world, culture, and thinking works. They counter it with the rhizome, which has a different kind of root system, it stays on the surface and has different points of origin. It can serve as a metaphor for a new way of thinking and acquiring knowledge that is not hierarchical. Phenomena are intertwined

and can be explored in countless ways. (Meijer, 2021, p. 14). This connects to a wandering around without one specific goal or aim, or the quote from Nan Shepherd that I keep repeating.<sup>34</sup>

November 1, 2023

Earlier in this research I asked the question; what does a place have to offer to make you want to return there often or to be special? Macfarlane partially answers that question:

'We lack – we need – a term for those places where one experiences a 'transition' from a known landscape (...) [into] somewhere we feel and think significantly differently. I have for some time been imagining such transitions as 'border crossings'. These borders do not correspond to national boundaries, and papers and documents are unrequired at them. (...) They exist even in familiar landscapes: there when you cross a certain watershed, treeline or snowline, or enter rain, storm or mist, or pass from a boulder clay onto sand, or chalk onto greenstone. Such moments are rites of passage that reconfigure local geographies, leaving known places outlandish or quickened revealing continents within countries.' (2012, p. 78)

Macfarlane then calls these places 'xenotopias', meaning 'foreign places' or 'out-of-place places', a term that could complement terms such as utopias and dystopias. I have to think back on my residency in Praz-de-Fort about ecotones. These ephemeral moments of entering rain, storm or mist, could be thought of as ecotone too.

'One does not need to displace oneself vastly in space in order to find difference.' (Macfarlane, 2012, p. 78). These ecotones exist everywhere, even in my own direct environment. I realize that there is much more to discover than I could imagine.

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<sup>34</sup> 'Yet often the mountain gives itself most completely when I have no destination, when I reach nowhere in particular, but have gone out merely to be with the mountain as one visits a friend with no intention but to be with him.' (Shepherd, 1977/2019, p. 15)

November 5, 2023 - at the Aare

The winds  
a realm that reminds me of a passage by Robert Macfarlane<sup>35</sup>  
noise from afar, swelling  
and suddenly the trees right next to you begin to blow  
and rush

leaves in a massive rustling

it is immersive

very immersive

sunbeams appear and sail away

on fast flowing water

beside me

the swell,

behind

later from across, or from the higher fields and

trees above

and suddenly it erupts again

leaves fly everywhere

This fieldnote reminded me of an excerpt by composer Eliane Radigue, whose music I admire:

'How, why, the sound of the wind, of the rain, the movement of clouds across the sky as they appear and disappear against the blue of space, the crackling of fire, how, why, through what mysterious alchemy will all this turn into a chanted recitative for one of these beings, recently appeared; how, why does the experience of an impression become sound, music?' (2008).

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<sup>35</sup> See quote on November 1, 2023

November 6, 2023

First ideas for *Trafic*, a three day concert series in January of the composition department in Bern, during the Playtime festival, a biennial festival of the HKB.

A new work with sound spatialization, a kind of continuation of *the days, they wonder away*, with maybe my own voice, between 10 and 20 minutes, video or not?

A room with 4 speakers, sound in circular movement. Yes/no to live musicians? Solely electronics?

A general idea of light to darkness, opposed to the light that faded in and out in my previous composition. How could this work? Maybe a light already not very strong, then slowly disappearing, so slowly that it is almost imperceptible. Let' s experiment in room 160 with lamps and something I can possibly place in the light.<sup>36</sup>

November 7, 2023

Yesterday I spoke with Cathy van Eck, my main teacher here in Bern, about cyclicity and wandering, and the question, 'What happens when I write, reflect, and go to a certain place over and over again?'

She reasoned that cyclicity and wandering are nearly an opposition to each other. The repetition of cycles, versus the change within wandering.

In German, the words for walking and changing are similar. *Walking* is 'wandern' and *changing* can be translated to 'wandeln', which could also be

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<sup>36</sup> In group lessons with Simon Steen-Andersen, one of my composition teachers in Bern, we discussed several options. For example using smoke to show the light beam or by having a light from the rack in the ceiling with very little light as the focus of attention, it wouldn't really light up anything else. Room 160 was equipped with a theater light set up with analogue lamps, LED lamps and dimmers that we were allowed to use and adjust.

used for *to wander*. The *changing of seasons* can be indicated by 'im Wandel der Jahreszeiten'. Interestingly, 'wandel' sounds similar to the Dutch 'wandelen', which means to walk. Great connections!

In *the days, they wonder away* I made a word play around wander and wonder. There is a similarity in Robert Macfarlane's *The Old Ways* about different words for *to wander*.

'In its original verbform, *sarha* [Arabic] meant 'to let the cattle out to pasture early in the morning, allowing them to wander and graze freely'. It was subsequently humanized to suggest the action of a walker who went roaming without constraint or fixed plan. One might think the English equivalent to be a 'stroll', an 'amble' or a 'ramble', but these words don't quite catch the implications of escape, delight and improvisation that are carried by *sarha*. 'Wander' comes close, with its word-shadow of 'wonder', as does the Scots word 'stravaig', meaning to ramble without set goals or destination, but best of all perhaps is 'saunter', from the French *sans terre*, which is a contraction of *à la sainte terre*, meaning 'to the sacred place'; i.e. 'a walking pilgrimage'. Saunter and sarha both have surface connotations of aimlessness, and smuggled connotations of the spiritual.' (2012, p.212)

Thinking of the erratic stone in Praz-de-Fort during the residency. A stone that has meandered, by huge forces of shifting glaciers, thousands of kilometers, not knowing its destination. It got strayed from where it belonged, to a new unpredictable place, where it contributed to new ecosystems. And yet those stones are part of a bigger process of rock cycles. To look around you and notice all the stones, even the small ones beneath your feet. Where did each of you come forth?

November 8, 2023

In Max/MSP I found a nice sound yesterday: three combinations of twelve sines with different amplitudes. The frequencies and amplitudes came from analyzing a short fragment of an earlier composition *dat mij ontmoet*. Could this be material for the new piece? It could be combined with Spat 5, a feature from

Ircam that we are learning in the Sound Spatialization class. With this I can create automations in which speed and place of rotation are easily changeable. Such an improvement and development compared to last year, where I made automations by hand in Logic for *the days, they wonder away*.

November 10, 2023

Two weeks earlier I had started reading *Terra Incognita* by Sara Wheeler. For several months she resided in Antarctica and in this book she writes about her meditations on the landscape intertwined with history of the places she visits. From writing about the first explorers to the international temporal residents that she meets during her stay there. I found it fascinating to read about the white ice landscape in one of the remotest parts of the world and I longed to travel to mountain peaks covered in snow.

'... and I saw that Antarctica existed most vividly in the mind. It was a metaphorical landscape, and in an increasingly grubby world it had been romanticized to fulfill a human need for sanctuary. Mythical for centuries, so it remained.' (Wheeler, 1997, pp. 2, 3).

'Here in Antarctica there was no concept of ownership. I was travelling to the sound of a different drumbeat. If Antarctica had something to teach me that was more important than nitrate data, it was not about humanity. The landscape drew my thoughts away from worldly things, away from the thousand mechanical details of my outward life. I had found the place where, loosed from my cultural moorings, I could find the space to look for the higher power, whatever it was, that loomed over the snowfields.' (Wheeler, 1997, p.68).

I look outside. I am sitting at my work table in my room. For a moment I see snowflakes wandering down in the corner of my eye. A glance outside, of course there is no snow, the sun is shining and it is the middle of November, and not too cold yet. They are autumn leaves, yellow, orange, red, brown, gold

colored. My thoughts were immersed in the landscape of Antarctica, and for a moment it came together.

'In Antarctica I experienced a certainty amid the morass of thoughts and emotions and intellectual preoccupations seething inside my balaclava'd head. It was what I glimpsed out of the corner of my eye. It wasn't an answer, or the kind of respite offered by a bottle of calamine lotion on sunburn. It was something that put everything else – everything that wasn't Antarctica – in true perspective. I felt as if I was realigning my vision of the world through the long lens of a telescope. It emanated from a sense of harmony. The landscape was intact, compete and larger than my imagination could grasp. It was free of the diurnal cycle that locked us earthlings into the ineluctable routine of home. It didn't suffer famines or social unrest. It was sufficient unto itself, and entirely untainted by the inevitable tragedy of the human condition. In front of me I saw the world stripped of its clutter: there were no honking horns, no overflowing litter bins, no gas bills – there was no sign of human intervention at all.' (Wheeler, 1997 p. 94).

Pondering about this quote.. A landscape so free of human interference, where leaving many marks on the landscape is almost impossible. And at the same time... the place where human involvement is perhaps the most visible, forever held in snow and ice. That even in such an inhospitable area, man must leave his imprint, which also reminds me of the Mount Everest...

I think what drew me so much to these texts (Sara Wheeler, Robert Macfarlane, Nan Shepherd) is describing an experience, and formulating it in words. Why do I want to read that? It gives me inspiration how to articulate my own experiences, or how to look at that what we call natural world. It broadens my own view. Just as they write about this experience in words, Andy Goldsworthy expresses himself in interactions with his environment captured in photographs and James Turrell creates an experience in time and space.

'It happened in a second. I've noticed that it is often the seconds which matter. They can be far more important than the hours. Reason is too lumbering a faculty to operate in seconds, and it leaves the way clear for instinct, or for nothing at all except a bit of

psychic energy flying across a synapse. The glimpse left me with a deep and warm sense of calm and mental wellbeing, like the cosmic glow after some astronomical phenomenon.' (1997, pp. 94, 95).

The description of an experience. This is why I read it. I wanted to discover a place like Antarctica that is so metaphoric, a place it is unlikely I will ever witness. It became a poetic experience in comparison to the writing and observing all the actual places I visit.

'For much of the year, Antarctica enjoys total darkness or total daylight. The cusps between the two are short and exciting: it might be eight weeks from the moment the sun makes its first appearance over the horizon to the day it never sets. The summer season, broadly speaking, runs from mid-October to late February.' (Wheeler, 1997, p. 7).

This fast transition within eight weeks gives a different perspective on my experience of the seasons here, where the transitions are way more balanced. I am curious how it would be to experience such a rapid change, and how it would have an effect on my writings.<sup>37</sup>

Nancy Holt created in 1977 her work *Sun Tunnels*, that marks the yearly extreme positions of the sun on the horizon, the 'cyclical time' of the solar year. Situated in the Great Basin Desert in northwestern Utah, four concrete tunnels are aligned with the angles of the rising and setting of the sun on the days of the solstices, around June 21<sup>st</sup> and December 21<sup>st</sup>. 'Each tunnel has a different configuration of holes corresponding to stars in four different constellations—Draco, Perseus, Columba, and Capricorn. The sizes of the holes vary relative to the magnitude of the stars to which they correspond. During the day, the sun shines through the holes, casting a changing pattern of

pointed ellipses and circles of light on the bottom half of each tunnel. On nights when the moon is more than a quarter full, moonlight shines through the holes casting its own paler pattern. The shapes and positions of the cast light differ from hour to hour, day to day, and season to season, relative to the positions of the sun and moon in the sky.' (Holt, 1977).



*Sun Tunnels* by Nancy Holt, 1977, photographs by Nancy Holt

<sup>37</sup> There are cool animations at <https://www.coolantarctica.com/Antarctica%20fact%20file/antarctica%20environment/day-length-antarctica.php>. They show the length of the day in Antarctica on midsummer's day Dec. 21, midsummer's day June 21, and the equinoxes on March 21 and Sept. 21. The animations inspire me for a work with light. Although it was a little too complex for Playtime festival in January, the movements of light around the pole are interesting. On midwinter day, the light constantly revolves around the pole without revealing it. As animation and seen from afar, it builds tension. What is there, in the darkness?

November 10, 2023 - about 3 p.m.

The two trees next to our house have such a deep orange warm color, it makes me warm and happy with just one look. Especially when the blue sky appears behind them, through gray clouds passing by. How long will the orange sea remain?<sup>38</sup>

Settled down on last week's bench. This time the sunrays shine through oak leaves. A single plant - malva - is still blooming. Dried-out lunaria seeds travel above the grass. Great tits chirp in the tree above me. In the distance, the sound of drill or saws. I continue my way to the river, a little detour through the neighborhood - there is no direct route down the farmland - and past the bus stop. I am reminded of *The Old Roads* of Robert Macfarlane, I would not dare to create a new path here, in this tidy Switzerland.<sup>39</sup>

The drilling and sawing turns out to be the renewal of a roof. I walk on a path in a green lane of trees, next to the houses, just before the bus stop. The path is a mixture of pebbles and beechnuts, my footsteps echo from it, would be nice to record. Drops descend, the sky above blue.

I take a seat under a wide oak tree. How long would you have been standing here? From this spot a view of the mountains. A snowy landscape, almost invisible, veiled in clouds. I must go

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<sup>38</sup> This became later the title for a new composition: *'How long will the orange sea remain?'*  
<sup>39</sup> Paths are the habits of a landscape. They are acts of consensual making. It's hard to create a footprint on your own. The artist Richard Long did it once, treading a dead-straight line into desert sand by turning and turning about dozens of times. But this was a footmark not a footpath: it led nowhere except to its own end, and by walking it Long became a tiger pacing its cage or a swimmer doing lengths. With no promise of extension, his line was to a path what a snapped twig is to a tree. Paths connect. This is their first duty and their chief reason for being. They relate places in a literal sense, and by extension they relate people. Paths are consensual, too, because without common care and common practice they disappear: overgrown by vegetation, ploughed up or built over (though they may persist in the memorial substance of land law). (Macfarlane, 2012, p. 17).

to you, I am quite sure. What would it be like there? I suddenly realize that I have never really experienced such a vast white world - except for brief city snow days.

Got it. The beginning of a very narrow path. Can I get through? Brambles on either side, when was the last time anyone walked here? The ground is littered with huge foliage. With each step, the leaves (of the sycamore? maple?) turn further dark brown, mixed with rain, earth, decay. My footsteps have a different sound than the ground covered with beech nuts. I wonder if I can make recordings of leaves, in a similar way as I did with the stones in *From here*: an interaction with the field, surprising and alienating.

The walks of Shepherd, Macfarlane and perhaps Wheeler too, are long. Mine usually aren't. They tend to be slow, stopping or writing down thoughts everywhere, and usually lasting half an hour, or an hour, or two. I would like them to be longer, but writing music takes up most of my day. I prefer to go regularly rather than a few times for a whole day. Although that would also be good. The fall colors are warming. Even though it's cold. The sun is behind the hill; it's only 4:30 p.m. I have reached the Aare. In this part she is almost silent. The stones at the water's edge are covered with moss, weed or algae. I can hear the first drops beginning to fall.

More stones on the surface of the water makes the water more audible. Each combination of stones sounds different. I discover a path along the Aare where I haven't walked before. A small path, starting at a bench made from a still intact tree trunk. I pass poles in the water at the water's edge, worn, rotted, that look like perhaps a former mooring. A little further a tree trunk with SO many fungi. I am walking towards the section by the Aare where there is a view of the mountains. I am not sure if they will be visible

today. Although the sky seems clear in the distance, there is also a large gray cloud.  
Passing a heron, and a fire...  
And there she appears, a white landscape. Is there more snow than before?  
With the landscape in mind, I turn back. At an accelerated pace due to the cold.

*back home*

In the dusk, I walked back home. It was a nice walk; I think I was gone for 2.5 hours. On the way back, I thought about the new work I am going to write for Input duo, for two percussionists. I could work out the idea I got in Praz-de Fort with stones: One large stone and two performers who move over the stone with small stones in circular movements. It could be performed onsite near the river, or another place where large stones can be found.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Unfortunately, this idea did not prove feasible within this project for Input Duo. One of the performers would only be in Bern for a few days with little time to go to the river. I ended up making a completely different work with an aquarium and foam from soap: *thin worlds move on, going up, sideways*. However, I am quite looking forward to still make this work with stones!



River the Aare with in the distance the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau misted in clouds,  
November 10, 2023





River the Aare, 15 November 2023

‘As I envisage it, landscape projects into us not like a jetty or peninsula, finite and bounded in its volume and reach, but instead as a kind of sunlight, flickeringly unmappable in its plays yet often quickening and illuminating. We are adept, if occasionally embarrassed, at saying what we make of places – but we are far less good at saying what places make of us. For some time now it has seemed to me that the two questions we should ask of any strong landscape are these: firstly, what do I know when I am in this place that I can know nowhere else? And then, vainly, what does this place know of me that I cannot know of myself?’ (Macfarlane, 2012, pp. 26, 27)

## VI How long will the orange sea remain?



*How long will the orange sea remain?*  
during try outs on January 16, 2024

In Bern, I started learning Max/MSP, a program with endless possibilities for creating interactive software. In three different classes, we used Max: in *fundamentals of electroacoustic music*, *sound spatialization*, and *voice and live electronics*. These classes taught me how to build sounds from scratch, how to use them as synthesizers, and ways how to organize sound sources across different speakers. At first, this was somewhat overwhelming. Learning a new program takes time, especially a program like Max. Not surprisingly, therefore, I occasionally wondered whether I should spend so much time on this, at a stage in the process when one should be collecting sound material. After all, the *Traffic* composition concerts were already in January. And even though at some point (see November 8) I found usable material - three sets of sine tones of different frequencies and corresponding amplitudes, taken from an analysis of an earlier piece - whatever you want to do next with that material takes time to develop in Max. The prospect that I could make the rotations of sound across four speakers much more automated in this program than in Logic Pro, where I created everything manually, kept me going. It would offer so much flexibility in trying out different speeds of rotation. With just a few clicks, I could change this - once it was set up, of course.

November 19, 2023

Thinking of the sound of footsteps on leaves when it has just rained. Maybe I can use this sound in the new work?

November 26, 2023 - near Kandersteg, experiencing a 'xenotopia' as Macfarlane described:

among the trees, on a mountain trail  
a white world  
it is windless

pine trees are covered  
stones, plants, fallen tree trunks  
all footsteps visible since the previous snowfall (last  
night)

it is silent  
the occasional chirping of birds  
the murmur of mountain streams, a river ahead

all the time walking here it feels unreal  
the same feeling as then, in Praz-de-Fort:  
am I here  
am I really here?

a few snowflakes fall on this sheet of paper  
a little bird waggles in the tree above  
the sky is blue-white, like a haze

I wonder if anyone will pass this path today  
remarkable how the snow covers everything, whatever is hidden  
underneath, creating an even, magical world  
the first steps through this forest, two hours ago, made me so  
very happy

November 27, 2023

I'm stuck with the Max patch for my new piece. I'm not so sure  
what I want to take out of it, or how I want to use it.  
Maybe I need to break up the material more? Let the sound of  
footsteps recur several times combined with words from my  
fieldnotes? A large white cloth hanging on the light rack to  
project the sunset lamp on?<sup>41</sup> And text?

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<sup>41</sup> On the Internet I had seen a sunset lamp that I wanted to try out. A lamp whose colors you can change and recreate the atmosphere of a setting sun. The colors range from deep red

November 30, 2023

white  
crystal  
wet - from solid to liquid  
flakes

I look at a white world  
in the morning, from the window  
a dancing tangle

now, from a bench  
the flakes have turned into wet drops  
that the snow slowly

slowly  
without you noticing

orange leaves, brown stems  
many little birds fly upwards

December 5, 2023

Last week I tried different sine frequencies and glissandi  
between sequences. I was not satisfied with them. Instead of  
adding more frequencies to the Max patch, I decided to use the  
three frequency series I already had. By changing and varying  
amplitudes, I can already develop such a rich sound world. It  
would give even more freedom if I connected them to midi  
controllers. The amount of sine waves can thin out and expand,  
which does something to the space in which you experience the  
sine tones.

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and yellow orange to fluorescent blue, pastel pink and green. I was reminded of my  
experiences in Val Grande. However, ordering from Switzerland turned out to be not so easy  
or cheap, and I dropped the idea for January.

I discovered a whole world of sound within the material I had. I divided the frequencies into four groups and created volume faders for each group, that way I could fade them in and out and set a rotation speed for each group for spatialization across the four speakers. I wanted to seat the audience facing the center of the room. The goal, similar to *the days, they wonder away*, was not for the listener to follow the rotation of the sound exactly, rather for one to feel the sense of changing spatiality. However, where last year's piece still had elements that were more locatable (faster bow movements, stuttering voice), this was not the case with the constant sine tones that I had now. The footsteps I recorded on one of my walks, with audible wind and environment, offered a counterpart to this. The footsteps and sounds of the surroundings are more locatable, and create a different space compared to the sine tones. In addition to the footsteps, I wanted to use my own voice in the work. This was partly as a connection to the earlier work, partly because of the classes I had taken with voice and live electronics, and partly because it would make the work more personal.

Gradually the idea of performing the work live rather than playing it as a composed tape emerged. I missed the vulnerability of the violin, cello and clarinet of my composition last year. How could I still reveal that vulnerability in my work with electronic music? I realized that in the live modification of faders and controllers, and in not exactly knowing where it would lead to, vulnerability and tension were already hidden. However, I did record my voice in advance. It proved difficult to both sing and listen in the same moment and make choices for the progression of the piece based on that. At the beginning of the composition process, I had the idea of writing a text, just as I had done for *the days, they wonder away*. How that text would be expressed in the piece I didn't know at the time. Perhaps in the form of singing text, or projected words in space. Later I decided to omit this and focus only on sound and light; there was already more than enough material.

January 6, 2024

An overview:

Two identical systems both with three sets of twelve sine frequencies with amplitudes that are adjustable. The twelve frequencies are divided into 4 groups: a low register, two

middle registers, and a high register. Each group is adjustable in volume. In addition to the systems with sine frequencies, a recording of my voice – some long notes – with choice of effects such as reverb and delay, and the field recording of my footsteps.

Why two identical systems? Firstly, to be able to create organic transitions between different sequences. When you change sequences within one system, it is audible as an immediate change; with two systems, you can slowly fade out one sequence in one system while the other does something else. Secondly, doubling sequences gives interesting effects, such as interferences and beatings.

By way of a score, I had a plan in my head, I knew where I wanted to go, but there was a lot of room left for details and timing. For example, it was not fixed when the voice should fade out, or when the footsteps came in:

Start with the first system in series 3 with only a few frequencies audible in the middle register. Slowly adjust amplitudes and add frequencies of the series. Add voice. The second system also sets in with series 3. Fading in and out of these creates subtle rhythms. Slowly swell the lower register of series 3 into system 1. System 2 fades out and then changes to the 2nd series in a high register. Direct transitions between series 2 and 3 in system 2, while system 1 - still in series 3 - slowly fades out and swells with series 1 in a low register. The oscillation in system 2 disappears and fades in with the low register of series 2. Beatings and interferences occur between the lows of series 2 of system 2 and series 1 of system 1. End in an independent wave pattern between these two sounds. One moment the first system is more audible, the next system 2 overpowers, and back and forth.

*How long will the orange sea remain?* Instructions for myself.

Before the musical ideas took shape, I had already many thoughts for the visual aspect: projection of text by a projector or slides, or adding videos (like the one of the stones in Praz-de-Fort). The final choice for light however, came late in the process, although I actually came back to my first thoughts: light to

dark. I placed a profile lamp in the center of the room on the floor facing upward. Above was a yellow-orange stretched canvas, on the floor another yellow canvas, where I would sit with my laptop. A light on the rack would beam a circle on this canvas on the ground, so that when the audience entered, they could see that they could sit around me. Before the music began, the light on me faded out and the light on the canvas above became visible. Throughout the piece, this light extinguished very slowly. I had set this via QLab over a time of 13 minutes, fading slower and slower towards the end. A twilight unfolded in which you wondered if you were still seeing light or not.

I performed this work twice on the 16<sup>th</sup> of January at the second *Trafic* concert, during the intermissions in a different room than the rest of the program.<sup>42</sup> I had time on the day of performance and the day before to adapt the composition to the space and to do some run throughs. The two performances that I did were very different from each other. For the first performance I felt many nerves, but I was very focused and it went very well. The second time, my nerves were gone. I was in the middle of the piece, and suddenly two groups in the second system in Max did not work anymore. For a few seconds I tried to fix it, but it was too tricky to do so without losing the flow of the music. I decided to keep going with what I had and just see where it would lead to. Other combinations than I had planned came up. I kept wondering if the problem happened because my nerves were almost gone, and the same thing happened once more in try outs some months later. I haven't found the problem so far.

*How long will the orange sea remain* is a work that grew from the idea of making something I didn't need other musicians for, and working with materials I had on hand. In this case, myself, my microphones and computer. It is a work that is still evolving. In every performance I improvise differently through my plan, and in every performance I discover new things. It is also a work that grew with my experiences in Val Grande and Nan Shepherd's quote in mind: 'Yet often the mountain gives itself most completely when I have no destination, when I reach nowhere in particular, but have gone out merely to be with the mountain as one visits a friend with no intention but to be with him.' (1977/2019, p. 15). In addition to the area of the Aare where I wandered, I explored the sounds of this new instrument,

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<sup>42</sup> A three day concert series of the composition department in Bern, during the Playtime festival, a biennial festival of the HKB.

trying not to envision too much where the piece would end and listening to where the material was going, straying from the plans I had made in advance.

Later I read this quote by composer Eliane Radigue, and I regret not finding it earlier.

'The freedom to let yourself be overwhelmed, submerged in a continuous sound flow, where perceptual acuity is heightened through the discovery of a certain slight beating, there in the background, pulsations, breath.

(...)

I dreamt of an unreal, impalpable music appearing and fading away like clouds in a blue summer sky. Frolicking in the high mountain valleys around the wind and grey rocks and trees, like white runaways. This particular music, that always eluded me. Each attempt ended in seeing it come closer and closer but remain unreachable, only increasing the desire to try again and yet again to go a bit further. It will always be better the next time.

(...)

How can sounds or words transcribe this imperceptibly slow transformation occurring during every instant and that only an extremely attentive and alert eye can sometimes perceive, the movement of a leaf, a stalk, a flower propelled by the life that makes it grow? How to know a little, just very little, simply to try, to train oneself to look better in order to see, to listen better in order to hear and to know these transient moments of being there, only there?' (Radigue, 2008).

It makes me wonder if Radigue may have read Nan Shepherd's work, or how Shepherd would have experienced the music of Radigue.

January 7, 2024

In search for a title  
from earlier written sentences in my notebook

how long will the orange sea remain?  
from November 10, 2023

'one walks the flesh transparent' (Shepherd)  
from October 15, 2023

'Then we looked into each other' s eyes, and again into the  
pit.' (Shepherd)  
from October 1, 2023

defenseless

thin clouds move on  
going up  
sideways  
from October 14, 2023

clouds - worlds  
worlds, surfaces, waters

During this period, I was simultaneously working on a composition for Input Duo, comprising two percussionists. For this piece, I experimented with an aquarium filled with soap foam. I have been fascinated by foam for some time now, especially the foam in the sea. In this piece, I wanted to mysteriously illuminate and visualize foam with a live camera while the foam is sounding and triggering other sounds. It was a very experimental writing process. Trying out, testing, developing further what seemed to work, and so on. These experiments shaped the piece that became titled *thin worlds move on, going up, sideways*.



Two stills from *thin world move on, going up, sideways*  
(2024) during try outs on December 19, 2023

## VII Last days

January 25, 2024 - in the train from Bern to Brig, a week after  
the concerts

The sun shining - it is warm  
last week's snow  
    and the weeks before  
        is gone  
    only on the tops of the mountains  
    with exposed pieces of rock

It could be, that for now this is the last time I see these  
mountains up close  
my feeling of the mountains in Switzerland - new, lonely, alone  
in one place, - have given space to a sense of connection, with  
the place, with the people, with independence

I don't want to leave - I' m going to miss it.  
the past few weeks have been intense, but also incredibly fun  
and energizing

working on the pieces, fine-tuning them, getting feedback from  
Cathy and Simon, and then all the fellow students, now friends,  
who were also at school working, all day long, with whom we  
ended the days with drinks.

January 29, 2024 - Elfenau

This is a day that makes me think of a quote by Andy Goldsworthy<sup>43</sup>

it feels like spring  
a warm sun  
a warming orange glow  
birds chirping  
everyone is outside  
windless

the last sun beams  
past the mountain hill  
and an itchy nose.

It's a pity I haven't always been able to keep up my weekly notes, but: things happen in waves. For weeks my attention is here, then there again. I focus on one project, then another. A project needs full attention to reach a certain level. Maybe that's why the two pieces from January don't feel entirely complete yet, I wrote them at the same time. It feels like they have not yet gone into a 'wordy depth': for *How long will the orange sea remain?* I still wanted to write text, and now I will have to go into the depths in research.

a second rainbow sun in the sky  
a reflection? it's not raining

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<sup>43</sup> 'I thrive on disruption forced by seasonal changes – a hard freeze, heavy snow, a sudden thaw, leaf fall, strong winds – which can change dramatically any working patterns that have become established in a particular season. Not that seasons can be easily separated from one another. The smell of autumn can often be detected well before the season fully arrives, just as emerging growth can be seen in winter. For some plants, such as mosses, winter is their summer.' (Goldsworthy, 2008, p. 7).

For the first time in days, I look forward to being back in the Netherlands. Feeling spring at home, on my balcony, with the first snowdrops and grape hyacinths coming up. I long to be outside, to go into dunes and forests, to feel the sea.

it was  
blinded by the sun and the rest was gone  
though it feels warm  
I would call it icy yellow

a warm ochre yellow – may come back again and again

in piece 1  
piece 2  
piece 3?

what is opposed to that?  
is there anything opposed?  
(thinking about light and a new composition for next)

the rainbow sun is still there.  
what could it be?

January 30, 2024 - in the garden, Muri bei Bern

fresh air, warm sun  
how nice it is to be in the garden again  
for the first time this year  
and I am back again  
the first writings were here  
not in my room, or anywhere else inside  
but here  
the leaves of the pumpkins were big  
the herbs plentiful

rustling leaves of the trees in the wind  
now it is bright  
the sky behind, through the trees  
blue-white  
and once again I sit here with Nan Shepherd's *Living Mountain*

a bird  
and away she goes

'The immense leaf that it drains is bare, surfaced with stones, gravel, sometimes sand, and in places moss and grass grow on it. Here and there in the moss a few white stones have been piled together. I go to them, and water is welling up, strong and copious, pure cold water that flows away in rivulets and drops over the rock. These are the Wells of Dee. This is the river. Water, that strong white stuff, one of the four elemental mysteries, can here be seen at its origins. Like all profound mysteries, it is so simple that it frightens me. It wells from the rock, and flows away. For unnumbered years it has welled from the rock, and flowed away. It does nothing, absolutely nothing, but be itself.' (Shepherd, 1977/2019, pp. 22, 23)

and again I think of why I read this: her descriptions of what she sees, how she notices - it inspires me in my own writing

Could I create a work similar to *from here* in my last days here? Would it be different because this place is now familiar? Sounds of footsteps combined with stones, or leaves, my writings and of course - inevitably - the sound of water.

'As I stand there in the silence, I become aware that the silence is not complete. Water is speaking.' (Shepherd, 1977/2019, p. 22)

February 4, 2024

I imagine: a white world around me  
rays of sun turn orange  
as does the glow on white snow  
tracks of skis, footsteps, wild animals, paint the landscape,  
beyond the trodden paths  
wind comes and goes  
it rushes, past clothes, past helmets  
I am reminded of films: *Piedra Sola*, films with hardly any music, only the sound outside, of wind, of landscape; or the sound of Bill Viola's *The Greeting*  
sometimes thin snow rattles across the snow fields, a high hiss thinking it doesn't feel real to be here - it is like a dream, a world far away  
when a day has passed, what do you remember from such a day?  
what stays with you most?

February 5, 2024 - at the Aare

the water ripples  
birds whistle  
the sun just setting  
with wet hair  
I sit here  
a last greeting  
to the Aare  
smoke from fires rise  
and the ever-white mountain peaks  
planes take off  
descend  
swell  
die away

I don't want to leave here  
just when a sense  
of spring is coming  
days getting longer  
being outside more  
reading, writing, dreaming

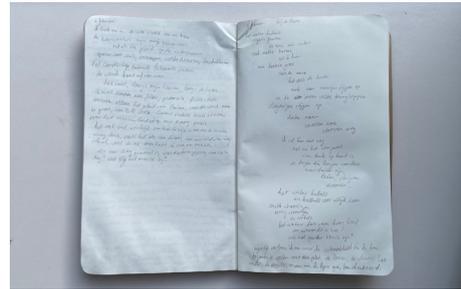
the water ripples  
and ripples forever on

rapid currents  
back currents  
in circles

the water that comes from high  
and flows into the sea

who will get home sooner?

I marvel at the familiarity I have begun to feel with this  
place: the trees, the stones, the water, the birds, and now  
that I am about to go, I am moved.





Pictures made by my dear friend Stijn Brinkman who was visiting me.  
February 5, 2024, river the Aare, Muri bei Bern

**Back by the sea**  
by way of conclusion

In the beginning of February I returned back to The Hague. A few more fieldnotes closed my notebook: one at a local coffee place SunSun Coffee, two at sea, one in Rotterdam.<sup>44</sup>

February 14, 2024

One week later  
at sunsun coffee  
a grey day  
drops fall down  
a spot at the window  
is this a last time to write in this book? or do I save this  
for a moment by the sea?  
or until all the pages are filled?  
  
music is on  
people are talking  
noise  
  
meanwhile reading in *Vuurduin* - notes on a world disappearing.

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<sup>44</sup> One of the fieldnotes at sea can be found in the introduction.

February 21, 2024 - at sea

rain and rain

young seagulls  
drifting on the wind  
against the wind

waves crash against the square rocks  
the sea sloshes  
here at the pier the water is muddy  
further on green and in the far distance it is blue, grey

the horizon visible in mist  
Kijkduin is shrouded in haze and Scheveningen pier too  
is surrounded by grey sky

I am home again  
it's raining it's grey  
the wind is rough around me  
yes I am home again

(how) could I miss this?  
to stand here  
hair in the wind  
drops on my nose  
overlooking wide open space

cormorants  
sitting on the edge of a rock  
two next to each other  
and a seagull  
and oystercatchers, with red..  
no! I see them  
sanderlings flying over the sea

I walk on  
with drops on my neck

a kite surfer  
a dog  
some people  
other than that it is empty

empty at sea  
empty on the beach

I turn back  
rain hasn't stopped

March 20, 2024 - Rotterdam

Day and night are exactly the same length - almost anywhere on  
earth, including Antarctica.  
On this roof terrace it is spring:  
tulips bloom, hyacinths, daffodils, tree buds come to life,  
grape hyacinth, green buds on the pine tree, fig fruits small,  
sparrows chirp constantly, pass by from time to time.

A little later..

Sparrows are gone, a blackbird sings its song. I try to see  
you, in vain, somewhere hidden among the roofs.

Day and night, equally long -  
could be a form for a composition, a light design..

How would Nancy Holt's *Sun Tunnels* look today?

This closed my notebook. I was back home, back by the sea, back by grains of sand everywhere. Back to where all these ideas began. Frankly, nothing has changed. The sea still goes in an ever-repeating ebb and flow. The days pass by. I walk again through dunes, through the woods, along the coastline. As I did before.

And yet, it feels different.

I know the area around my home in The Hague well, texts and poems have also grown here. But now, walking around slower than before, I am more aware of my surroundings. Never did I do such a repeated writing as I did during the residency in Praz-de-Fort and the months close to the river the Aare in Bern. I am curious what I discover when I aimlessly explore my environment in The Hague in the way I did back then. Although I would love to go back to the Aare, and I am sure I will, I agree with this quote from Macfarlane: 'One does not need to displace oneself vastly in space in order to find difference.' (2012, p. 78). Apart from curiosity, I feel a certain responsibility to explore my own close surroundings, as traveling further away leaves a negative impact on our climate, sometimes even with traveling by train.

During the months in Bern, my fieldnotes of repeatedly visiting the same places, transformed into wandering and writing while walking. From summer to winter, those places had various states of being: sunny, green, blue skies, yellow, extremely windy, orange red, rainy, in fog, grey, brown, in snow. By experiencing all these facets, this unfamiliar place turned into familiarity.

*The Living Mountain* by Nan Shepherd taught me to use all my senses to experience the world. I admired her belief in bodily thinking, 'a living all the way through', to touching, tasting, smelling and hearing the world: 'We have come increasingly to forget that our minds are shaped by the bodily experience of being in the world – its spaces, textures, sounds, smells and habits – as well as by genetic traits we inherit and ideologies we absorb. We are literally losing touch, becoming disembodied, more than in any previous historical period.' (Shepherd, 1977/2019, introduction by Macfarlane, p. xxxi).

I hope that this booklet will inspire and encourage others to focus on their environment and notice entanglements and changes in the same way it encouraged me while writing it. By going out, by noticing, by discovering. Hopefully this awareness towards our environment through our senses and

awareness that we are part of that environment, makes us interact more carefully with our surroundings and the planet.

This research has had many phases and versions. At the beginning of these two years, I started with the concept of ecology, which shifted to a focus on the passing by of seasons, to cyclicality, to working with light, to an investigation into wandering, to finally arrive at the common thread of all this: my poetic fieldnotes. All these phases were important in my work, and so I decided to leave this path, this wandering, throughout the final book.

Sometimes I wondered if by writing my fieldnotes, something got lost. One could say there is a sense of contradiction between just wanting to be with your body, using your senses without thinking, and writing those experiences down. As if you cannot experience to the fullest when writing, and never being able to completely capture the experience in words. But for me those two feed each other.

Eva Meijer states in her essay that those who write are spectators as well as participants. She explains that knowing that you can choose a different perspective, that you can put reality and experience in brackets, produces a different type of opinion and a different experience of the experience. This is a richness and also a loss. She continues that it is similar to the relationship between language and the world: language never exactly fits what is there, never fully captures it, but in the space that emerges when you try to grasp something there is room for the new. Words can show what there is differently. (2021, p. 28). Later on she tells this: every writer knows how it feels to want to capture trees with words that push those trees away, how it feels when the trees push the words away. But the description also makes something visible that wasn't there before - not like sliding snow off the ice to be able to see under it, rather like how snow makes the shape of the world visible again, because everything is white now. (2021, p. 31). By writing my own fieldnotes other things became visible. Not only in my surroundings, but also in my thoughts and artistic projects.

As a result, this research has made me more aware of the value of my fieldnotes for my compositional process. Going back and forth: from the note material, the listening, my own mental or emotional state or moment of living, the season, reflecting on that in words, to visual ideas, to coming back to the music, relating the words on the music, the music defining the words. I aimed to make my poetic writings open and ambiguous, for readers to choose their

own path through it. This turned out better with fieldnotes that had more edits after, where more original lines were taken out.

I am grateful for the wonderful work I have discovered through this writing. Of course the words of Nan Shepherd, her ode to 'living all the way through' and her language and way of observation. The philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, of which I glimpsed only a fraction, but which kept appearing in several sources (in Macfarlane writing about Shepherd, and Bright writing about Turrell). The artworks of Nancy Holt, whom I did not know before, but whose work I long to get to know better and hopefully experience one day. Eliane Radigue, whose music I already admired, but I still knew little of her writing and ideas. Andy Goldsworthy, in showing so many layers of time in his interactions with his environment. Eva Meijer and her critical thinking, from her essay I drew much inspiration in writing. Robert Macfarlane who writes about our relationship and history to landscapes, and who will soon release a new book called *Is a River Alive?* that I can't wait for. And one I didn't write about due to lack of time, but I would have liked to: composer Annea Lockwood, who made detailed 'river maps' of the Hudson, Danube, and Housatonic rivers.

And so this book, which I don't consider complete, left me with much more material to explore in cycles of hours, days, seasons, years to come.

*'Knowing another is endless. And I have discovered that man's experience of them enlarges rock, flower and bird. The thing to be known grows with the knowing.'*

Nan Shepherd in the final chapter of *The Living Mountain: Being*.  
(1977/2019, p. 108)

## Words of thanks

I want to deeply thank:

my supervisor Alison Isadora for believing in this research and supporting me

the musicians for putting their time, attention and effort in performing my work:

Kristia Michael and Kali Ensemble with Nirantar Yakhtumba, Giuseppe Sapienza, İdil Yunkuş, Beste Yıldız  
Input Duo: Alberto Anhaus and Nùria Carbó  
Carlota Carvalho

my composition teachers in The Hague: Mayke Nas and Yannis Kyriakides  
my composition teachers in Bern: Cathy van Eck and Simon Steen-Andersen  
Angela Koerger-Bürger and Collective MALM

my dear friends and colleagues in The Hague and Bern

my dear friend Stijn Brinkman for reading some sections

my dear mother Marianne E. Klapwijk for always thinking along and especially reading the poetic writings

my dearest Hidde Kramer, for sharing so many walks, wanderings and ponderings during these last two years

and last but not most important: a thank you to all the places I visited and wrote about

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